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THE IMPACT OF CIVIL WAR ON THE SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG
SUDANESE REFUGEES IN THE U.S.

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by

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ABSTRACT

Refugees from Darfur, Nuba mountains, and Beja of eastern Sudan represent a large portion of Sudanese refugees resettled in the U.S. Devastated by civil war, the Sudanese social fabric has been affected as a consequence. This paper examined whether social solidarity values follow Sudanese refugees in the country of resettlement, in addition to whether internal conflict haunts their social relationship as well as how Sudanese ethnic groups perceive each other in the United States. Utilizing a qualitative research method, I interviewed ten Sudanese refugees from civil war zones over the phone and in person. I learned from participants' experiences that Sudanese refugees of African origin maintained a social distance from Arab northerners and created their ethnic community organizations to navigate their lives and overcome genocide trauma. However, social solidarity values are practiced among refugees regularly, regardless of ethnic or religious background, which contradicted the findings of some studies on refugees from other countries.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

The Republic of Sudan was the largest country in Africa before it split up into Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan. It is located directly south of Egypt, with a population of 35 million (Nielsen, 2008). The country is unique in its geographic and ethnic characteristics in the continent as it is part of both the Arab and Black Africa (Sawant, 1998). The term Arabs in Sudan means those who trace their origin to the Arabic Peninsula. The formation of the state with its current border goes back to the nineteenth century — the establishment of a new rule in Egypt by the Mohamed Ali dynasty (Sawant, 1998). In a series of military expeditions, in search of gold, and exploration of the source of the Nile, the Mohamed Ali dynasty was victorious in subjugating the country (Sawant, 1998). A revolutionary movement led by Mahdi liberated the country from the Egyptian occupation in 1882; however, the country was re-occupied by the Anglo-Egyptian forces in their quest to protect the source of the Nile from other competing European colonial powers in 1898 (Sawant, 1998). The conquest of Southern Sudan was associated with Christian missionaries' educational activities in the region (Sawant, 1998).

To isolate the south from the influence of Arabs in the north, the Anglo-British administration adopted "Closed District Ordinance" which had included remote areas in Sudan other than the south (Sawant, 1998). According to these regulations, Sawant (1998) reported:

From 1922 onwards, Governors of the three southern provinces were not required
to attend the annual meetings of Governors held in Khartoum. Instead, they were
to have their meetings in the south and keep in touch with their counterparts in
Kenya and Uganda.

Under the Closed Districts Ordinance of 1922, the provinces of Darfur, Equatoria,
Upper Nile parts of Northern Kordofan, Gezira, and Kassala were declared as
closed to the extent that no person other than a native could enter or remain there
unless he held a permit from the Civil Secretary or Governor of the province.
The permit to trade order of 1925 provided that no person other than a native
would be allowed to carry on trade without a permit to that effect. Besides, it is
ordered that in Equatoria and Upper Nile provinces, no native could trade in
anything other than local products. (p.348)

These regulations resulted in a devastating situation in the country. The isolation of large
parts of the Sudanese society from interactions in social, economic, political, and cultural
levels, in addition to the religious rivalry, is responsible, for the eruption of the civil war
in different parts of the country following its independence.

The military coup leaders of 1952 in Egypt offered the Sudanese the right to self-
determination. The self-determination step was followed by an agreement between the
British and Egyptian new authorities in 1953 to realize Sudan's political independence
(Sawant, 1998). The beginning of southern politicians' resentment stemmed from the fact
that they were marginalized from independence negotiations, which had developed due to
calls for South Sudan self-determination. This accumulation of events resulted in the first
civil war in 1955 when a "mutiny and disorder" took place in the south.

Darfur is the far western province of Sudan, with an estimated six to seven million people. It is located in the African Sahel and the geography is characterized by its semi-arid climate (Nielsen,2008). The region is named after the largest ethnic group, the Fur (Dar is the Arabic equivalent for home). For centuries, the area has been connected to its western neighbor Chad, and north-western neighbor Libya, through ancient trade routes of the Maghrib and the migratory patterns of herders (Nielsen, 2008) Besides the Fur, Darfur is the home of a considerable number of African tribes such as Masalit and Zaghawa. Earlier Arab migration occupied the southern parts of Darfur and formed the Baggara Arab ethnicity. Arab ethnicity in Darfur had been receiving support from the central government in Khartoum. They fought for ethnic dominance in the region (Ylonen, 2009).

Wadi (2000) reported that in 1970, the central government ended native administration, which escalated disputes among ethnic groups. Even though the central government in 1990 abandoned centrality and adopted a federal type of governance, ethnic conflict continued in the region as the resources grew scarce. Clashes between nomads and farmers escalated as the government supported certain ethnic groups against others, mainly Arab descendants against African ethnicities such as Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaleet.

By 2003, a massive civil war erupted. The National Islamic Front (NIF) government recruited militia from Arabic ethnicity in the region and neighboring countries, such as Chad and Niger, to fight African tribes in Darfur. The war between the NIF government militia and rebel movements intensified and drove hundreds of

thousands of civilians in Darfur out of their villages and in some cases, outside the country seeking refuge in Egypt, Chad, and Central Africa.

Overview of the problem

The central government in Sudan purposely marginalized non-Arab ethnic groups of the periphery that do not conform to the dominant elite's culturally established Arab-Muslim nation-building project (Ylonen, 2009). The Arab and Islamic cultural heritage is perhaps more clearly evident in shaping cultural values in northern Sudan. The Arab migrated to northern Sudan several centuries ago. They brought with them not only nomadism as a mode of living but also certain behavior patterns characteristic of nomadic life (Mohamed, 2003).

Ethnicity has been a significant cause of civil war in Sudan since its independence in 1956. Ethnic background determines socio-economic status, favoring Arabs over other ethnicities in Sudan. According to Sawant (1998), the military coup of 1957 barred Christian publications and expelled missionary personnel because of their condemnation of forcible Arabization and Islamization policies in the south.

Although the Nuba people are diverse linguistically and religiously, they share a long history of oppression and slavery by the Arabs (Morton 1989). Bradbury (1998) defines the word 'Nuba' as a generic name given to a group of more than fifty tribes who inhabit in and around the range of cliffs known as the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan. Some of the Nuba tribes have ancestry traced back to the Kingdom of Kush, making them among the oldest indigenous peoples of Sudan.

Bradbury (1998) explained that the Nuba live in what is known the 'transitional zone' between the Arab in the north and Africans in the south. The Nuba had been

historically subject to slavery. The word 'Nuba' means black people to Arabs and Egyptians, and it has a derogatory and racist tone. Bradbury (1998) described the tragic situation of the Nuba peoples as:

> War came to the Nuba mountains in July 1985. Over the subsequent years, tens of thousands of Nuba have been killed, and thousands more forcibly displaced from their homes and villages. Government military strategy has followed a pattern familiar to that employed against southern political movements and population: the arming of Arab surrogate tribal militia (murahilin), buying off political and religious leaders, the systematic abuse of civilian populations- including rape, the military conscription of children, mass arrests and selective killings of Nuba intellectuals- and attacking the social structure of Nuba society through the forced separation of families, the forced relocation of populations to government protected "peace villages", and an aggressive policy of Islamization which includes the prohibition of cultural expression of identity. The systematic nature of the persecution against Nuba peoples since 1989 has led some to describe the campaign as "genocide by attrition" (p. 464).

The Beja of Sudan is the indigenous people inhabitants of northeastern Sudan. Composed of three major tribes and many other minor tribes, the Beja speak dialects of Cushitic language (Abdel Ati, 2009). The Beja economic activities are based on agrarian, agriculture, and wage labor (Morton, 1989). Divided into three countries, the Beja people live in Sudan, Eritrea, and Egypt (Abdel Ati, 2009). Most Beja people have a sharp sense of ethnic marginalization and grievances (Morton, 1989).

By the middle of the 1990s, the number of Sudanese citizens who relocated to the United States has increased dramatically due to the escalation of civil war in southern Sudan, Blue Nile, and the Nuba Mountains. Economic hardships and suppression of the opposition in the north have also contributed to increasing the Sudanese community in the U.S. Refugee resettlement agencies such as Church World Service and Lutheran Church have played a significant role in resettlement process of Sudanese refugees (Eby., 2011).

This research will address the following questions: Does social solidarity follow Sudanese to their new setting? How do Sudanese ethnic groups perceive each other in the U.S.? Do internal conflicts in Sudan haunt Sudanese relationship in the U.S.? If so, how? The paper seeks to answer these questions through telephone and in-person interviews with Sudanese refugees in the U.S.

Social location

As a refugee relocated to the United State in Central Pennsylvania, and as a participant of several social and political events held by the community, specific social behavior among Sudanese community members grabbed my attention. From random observations of Sudanese community events, ethnicity and place of birth indicate a specific social behavior, such as withdrawal, a feeling of isolation, and social marginality. The community is dominated by those from the north who claim Arabic heritage in terms of number of members and executive committee position. Following the separation of South Sudan, Sudanese from northern Sudan, Darfur, and Nuba Mountains formed separate communities. On the other hand, individuals from Darfur maintained a noticeable distance from Arabic ethnicity groups from the north. Complaints about being

unwelcome, ignored, and marginalized from assuming key positions in the community's

structure is often either whispered or spoken among small ethnic circles. It is worth

noting that most individuals from Darfur are those who survived the genocide and

relocated as refugees in the United States. Victims of genocide from Fur, Zaghawa, and

Masalit ethnicities maintain a relatively low socioeconomic status compared to their

northerner counterparts. The next chapter reviews relevant literature from previous

studies and theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The U. S. is one of the largest refugee and immigrant-receiving countries. There are abundant studies about those who entered the country in different ways, legal or illegal—this chapter is dedicated to reviewing the literature on several aspects of the refugees and immigrants' experiences. The chapter is divided into six subsections. The first subsection examines the means through which these groups assimilate and integrate into the dominant White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) culture using assimilation theory as a framework. The next subsection traces the history of Sudanese migration to the United States. The following subsection reviews the history of African refugees and immigrants in the U.S. The rest of the subsections outline adjustment difficulties facing African refugees, African refugees' community organizations and their role in providing social support, and the experiences of refugees from other countries fleeing internal conflicts, respectively.

Assimilation theory

Immigrants to the U.S. have long been subject to a process of cultural transformation. Alba and Nee (2003) remarked that Anglo-conformity, which means immigrants giving up their cultural heritage while absorbing the Anglo-American culture, is the earliest version of assimilation.

Sebahattin (2015) explained that the Anglo- conformity perspective predicts that new immigrants' descendants will drop their original cultural and institutional connections and embrace the dominant culture and institutions. Alba and Nee (2003 traced back the first definition for assimilation concept to the beginning of the twentieth

century when the Chicago School of Sociology sociologists carved a broad definition as

"a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the

memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their

experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (p.19).

Alba and Nee (2003) remarked that the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences defines

social assimilation as a process by which communities from different racial and cultural

backgrounds, sharing a country and maintain a national existence.

Alba and Nee (2003), however, confirmed that attainment of White Anglo-Saxon

Protestant cultural standards does not entirely guarantee social acceptance. As a result,

individuals from groups considered minorities in the U.S. continue facing prejudice and

discrimination even if they absorbed the behavioral basis of WASP upper-middle class.

Alba and Nee (2003) noted that unlike the mainstream culture in the U.S., minority

groups in France who acquire absorption of French culture thoroughly will gain

unquestioned acceptance as French no matter what their racial or cultural origins.

Sebahattin (2015) noted that assimilation processes apply to each ethnic or racial

group differently and at different paces. Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters (2002)

confirmed this in their study Becoming American/Becoming a New Yorker as:

> Those who live among American blacks or Latinos and face racial discrimination
>
> will adopt reactive native minority ethnicity. But those who come from groups
>
> with strong ethnic networks, access to capital, and fewer ties to U.S. minorities
>
> will, follow one of two other paths: the "linear ethnicity" of assimilation into a
>
> native white ethnic category, or "segmented assimilation" into a retained

immigrant identity that distinguish them from African blacks or Puerto

Ricans/Chicanos (p.1030).

Kasinitz et al. (2002) argued that immigrants' first-generation model of incorporation into

the mainstream culture endow their children with varying amounts of cultural and social

capital, which in turn, provide different opportunities and paths toward incorporation and

social mobility.

Alba and Nee (2003) asserted that for the second generation of immigrants and

their descendants to succeed outside their ethnic enclaves, they need to acquire

proficiency in the English language and specific aspects of the mainstream American

culture. Kasinitz et al. (2002) confirmed that the new second generation of immigrants

will undergo downward mobility as they assimilate into the native black or Latino groups

living in intense poverty communities.

Carl and Schneider (2010) argued that the difference in the social and political

context is especially significant for social and cultural participation and belonging. Carl

and Schneider (2010) further explained that:

> We distinguish three basic types of discursive contexts: political discourse, the
>
> social discourse of everyday communication and interaction, and media discourse.
>
> The political climate and implicit or explicit stereotypes and hierarchies of groups
>
> have a constant effect on feelings of belonging. In addition, institutional
>
> arrangements can have 'discursive qualities. Citizenship regimes, for example, are
>
> frequently reflected in everyday discourse on the national belonging of groups
>
> and individuals. (p.15)

Thus, it is crucial to distinguish assimilation from integration. The latter refers to "the processes that increase the opportunities of immigrants and their descendants to obtain the valued "stuff" of a society, as well as social acceptance, through participation in major institutions such as the educational and political system and the labor and housing markets" (Alba & Foner, 2015, p. 5). According to Alba and Foner (2015), immigrant groups of low status over generations are inclined to advance their economic, social, and political situation through integration that occurs over-time.

Sudanese migration to the U.S.

Migration of Sudanese individuals to the U. S. began as early as the 1930s when the first comers were composed primarily of missionaries and scholars (Fadlall, 2009). Following Sudan's independence in 1956, the country's economic and political instability led to a tremendous flow of refugees to different parts of the world (Fadlalla, 2009). The U. S. had the lion's share of those relocated refugees. In addition, a considerable number of asylum seekers poured into the U. S. in the middle of the 1990s as the Sudanese security apparatus laid a heavy hand on scholars and politicians.

In most countries of resettlement, Sudanese refugees maintain strong ties with their country of origin and among Sudanese people through establishing communities that serve their needs; these communities often tend to assist members with the necessary support and access to services, such as education, bridging the language gap, and help to fulfill their obligations in the host country and to their extended families in Sudan (Lim, 2009).

While men are assigned the role of protectors for their communities, women are assigned the role of being the arbiters of men's conduct. They see to it that their men folk

demonstrate bravery, endurance and generosity, among other desired behavior patterns

(Mohamed 2003). In rural Sudan, up to now, men dread women's tongue:

> The women's tongues are greatly feared if they sing against a man's courage, he
>
> will probably leave the country to be quit of this intolerable nuisance. I have seen
>
> a boy almost in despair because the women, quite unjustly, accused him of
>
> running away from robbers and leaving his brothers to be plundered. I have
>
> known three Nazirs (tribal leaders) give extravagant bribes to one of these
>
> "Hakkamas" who threaten to sing against their meanness. (p.72)

The Sudanese communities also play a significant role in maintaining their original

cultures and identities by strengthening extended family ties in Africa and the U. S. (Lim,

2009). Lim (2009) found out in a qualitative study the cultural aspects that drive

individuals to share what they have with their community and family member in Africa.

Sudanese culture considers individuals who overlook their family and community needs

as "bad" people, and their Sudanese resettlement communities are obliged to reinforce

these values. According to one participant in Lim's study, he reported that "to be

Sudanese is to share," which reflects the strong ties within their current community and

communities in Africa.The Sudanese community also provides support to members in the

obligations that are related to the home country when individuals fail to meet these

obligations (Lim, 2009).

As immigrants and refugees from Darfur represent a considerable number among

Sudanese Communities in the U.S. solidarity plays a significant role in their new

communities. A qualitative study carried out by Meffert and Marmar (2009) examined

survivors of civil war in Darfur who resettled in Israel as refugees. They found out that

most of the refugees from Darfur have experienced strong shocks such as rape, the

murder of family members, and escape from death (Meffert & Marmar, 2009). As a

result, the Darfur refugees showed various degrees of emotional instability, indications of

hopelessness and trauma, and tendency to act violently within their families and in their

community. Being subject to such tremendous stress and trauma after surviving genocide,

most of the refugees from Darfur rely on the community to navigate their lives and move

on. Therefore, a community is central to Darfur refugees' lives regarding providing social

interaction and maintaining their culture which helps emotional recovery from their

traumatic experiences (Meffert & Marmar, 2009). However, the consequences of the

genocide encouraged most of Darfur ethnic groups to restrict such emotional and social

support to a narrow circle of relatives and ethnic group's members.

Being aware of the importance of community centers, Darfurians have established

their communities which enabled those who could not respond to "self-heal process

(Meffert & Marmar, 2009). These separate communities in most cases represent a threat

to the broader Sudanese community and encourage regionalism as it had been the case in

their country of origin. Morton (1989) explained that the competition between ethno-

regionalist movements has represented regionalism in the political arena.

Lavie-Ajayi (2017) approached refugees and asylum seekers differently by

studying the strengths rather than the prevailing view that considers refugees as a

vulnerable and dependent group. Lavie-Ajayi (2017) stressed that "understanding how

refugees and asylum seekers struggle to survive and to succeed under extreme conditions

makes it possible to engage with them as a resourceful and active group of people, who

can be integrated into society and who can contribute to its prosperity" (p.826).

Among factors that contributed to Sudanese refugees' resilience are self-confidence, support received from community, religion, and their capacity to work (Lavie-Ajayi, 2017). However, religion is central to most members of these communities who tend to start their social life from the mosque or Islamic centers. Adedoyin et al. (2016) described the influence of Islam on its followers as:

> The Islamic religious practices and belief system have a huge impact on its adherents' daily lives. Therefore, Islamic religious practices, and especially the recitation of the "Quran" (the holy book of Islam), are seen as the indispensable for coping with difficult situations and living a righteous life. (p. 101)

Adedoyin et al. (2016) found that African refugees resettled in the U. S. practice Christianity and Islam as a coping strategy to overcome traumatic experiences. Islamic religious practices and belief systems have a significant influence on refugee Muslims. Adedoyin et al. (2016) asserted that Islamic practices, such as the recitation of the Quran, perceived as essential for coping with stressful situations.

African immigrants and refugees in the U.S.

Soon after refugees' entry to the U.S. is accepted, an allocation committee, composed of resettlement agencies, share the cases among the agencies based on refugees, numbers needs, and geographic location (Eby, Iverson, Myers, & Kekic, 2011). Poulin and Shaw (2014) state that the refugee resettlement program in the U.S. aims at assisting newcomer refugees to achieve self-sufficiency soon they arrive. Eby et al. (2011) reported that in 2010, six percent of the US refugees were resettled by ethnic agencies, 24 percent by secular agencies, and 70 percent by faith-based agencies. Church World Service, for example, hires local co-sponsors to support refugees in their first

months of arrival to the U.S. Co-sponsorship may include responsibilities such as providing housing, furniture and children's school supplies (Eby et al., 2011). However, Poulin and Shaw (2014) found out that resettled refugees' urgent needs are employment, English language skills, information, and job training.

Although the majority of refugees in the U.S. were resettled by faith community organizations, Bushnell and Patterson (2018) noted that conflict over President Trump executive order of 2017 about refugee resettlement in the U.S. divided the community of faith leaders. Some church leaders backed President Trump's order, and others were welcoming refugees to the U.S.

Covington-Ward (2017) attributed the dramatic changes that occurred to the demographic characteristics of the immigrant populations in the U.S. to a significant policy shift that took when the government introduced the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, family reunification policies, the Diversity Visa lottery program, and Refugee Resettlement programs. According to Covington-Ward (2017), the number of African immigrants in the U.S. has witnessed tremendous growth as:

> In the decade from 1950 to 1959, for example, there were only 13,016 Africans or 0.52% of the total foreign-born population who were granted permanent resident status. Fifty years later however, in the decade from 2000 to 2009, 759,734 immigrants or 7.4% of the total population granted permanent resident status was from Africa. (p. 1016)

Among those black African immigrants Covington-Ward (2017) estimated 25% either entered the U. S. as refugees or received asylum. In a study on Liberian immigrants'

adjustment in Petersburg, Covington-Ward (2017) found out that experiences of the shortage of food, housing, uncertainty, unemployment, and hatred from local populations in host countries imply that difficulties with adjusting to other countries started long before Liberian immigrants came to the U. S.

African refugees' adjustment problems

African refugees resettled in the U. S. face upon arrival to the country, a variety of social adjustment problems such as communication in English, lack of translation services into their native languages, as well as prejudice and discrimination. In a study about refugees from Sudan, Fox and Willis (2009) found that difficulties face refugees even before relocation to the U.S. Such hardships include long air travel to a country with a different culture and climate, various languages and educational systems, and widely different legal codes and procedures.

Borjas (1994) argued that some studies reveal that the changing of national origin mix of the immigrant flow contributes to much of the deterioration in skills across successive groups. Espenshade and Fu (1997) noted that immigrants from countries where English is the dominant language speak better English. However, Covington-Ward (2017) noted that although Liberia is an Anglophone country, Liberian immigrants expressed their inability to communicate with Americans of all races because of their accent. This led to the Americans' assumption that Liberian immigrants were intellectually inferior because of their accents. Moreover, the age of immigrants at arrival is a significant factor—the older the immigrant, the lower the ability to speak English (Espenshade & Fu 1997). Refugees' inability to communicate in English or limited

translation services are significant restrictions in finding profitable jobs and is a great

source of stress. (Kondili, Interiano-Shiverdecker, & Parikh-Foxx, 2019).

Covington-Ward (2017) observed that the perception held by African immigrants'

families back home that money in the U.S. is easy to gain puts more pressure on

immigrants to work multiple jobs or work overtime to send money back home.

Espenshade and Fu (1997) stated that a significant factor that ignites anti- immigrant

sentiment in the U.S. is the perception that new immigrants are either unwilling or unable

to learn English the way people in the earlier waves of immigration did. Covington-Ward

(2017) found out that some of difficulties facing African immigrants in the U.S. include

negative interaction resulting from negative stereotypes about Africans, fitting in

difficulties, and finding jobs. Moreover, Covington-Ward (2017) concluded that cold

weather, lack of African stores, problems with law enforcement, as well as difficulty

making friends are also some of the adjustment problems.

Hadley and Patil (2009) asserted that discrimination against newly arrived

refugees likely frustrates the prime purpose of resettlement in the U.S., discrimination

limits refugees' opportunities for health and general wellbeing. They point out that

discrimination happens when a person or a group of people is seen negatively by others.

It works through both structural and inter-personnel levels and can influence health by

limiting access to essential health resources or by magnifying the negative effects of

stress, which in turn results in a devastating mental and physical health outcome (Hadley

& Patil, 2009)

Covington-Ward (2017) explained that such experiences may have influenced

most immigrants' pictures of the U. S. as a heaven, building high expectations that do not

match with reality. Covington-Ward (2017) argued that such hard experiences and their consequent high expectations of life in the U.S., probably affect social adjustment process, their overall well-being, and state of mental health. Adedoyin et al. (2016) concluded that religiosity is one of the essential coping strategies that helps African immigrants deal with numerous stressors while they incorporate into U.S. mainstream culture. Adedoyin et al. (2016) also found that "African refugees use spirituality to heal both the physical body and the mind from post-traumatic experiences" (p. 103).

African refugees' communities and social support

Refugee resettlement programs tend to create community of refugees from the same nation, however these attempts failed to realize the fact African nation states were created arbitrarily by colonial powers (Adedoyin et al., 2016). African immigrants in the diaspora seek pan-African identity when they are in a small number from different countries. However, they resort to national, religious, and ethnic identities when there is a larger African population (Chirimwami et al., 2014).

An attempt to create a "Sudanese community" of refugees by the U.S. government failed to acknowledge the enormous ethnic and cultural diversity within a small group of 300 refugees who speak 13 distinct languages (Adedoyin et al., 2016). This attempt indicates that the resettlement programs assume that refugees from one nation mean they belong to one culture; therefore, all African refugees can be processed as though they come from the same culture (Adedoyin et al., 2016).

Alba and Foner (2015) noted that for immigrants learning American culture's perspective about race is an integral part of life in the U.S. Therefore, distancing from

American blacks is prevalent even among African immigrants who share the same ancestry origin to avoid stereotype.

Stewart et al., (2008) related immigrants' and refugees' sense of belonging or isolation to the influence of social support. Failure to secure such support increases integration problems.

Ethnic communities are essential for immigrants' and refugees' children. These communities offer temporary protection from stresses associated with the early stages of relocation (Alba & Nee 2003). Therefore, immigrants and their children draw socio-economic benefits from ethnic solidarity (Alba & Nee 2003). Kondili et al., (2019) described social and cultural capital as the resources that refugees leave behind in their country of origin. While cultural capital is the knowledge and skills gained by individuals, social capital is the network of relationships. Social and cultural capital allows social mobility and helps to advance their interests. (Kondili et al., (2019). Raza et al. (2013) assert the importance of inter-ethnic social networks in immigrant social and economic incorporation and economic wellbeing.

Experiences of refugees from other countries fleeing internal conflicts

Although internal conflicts in Sudan plagued the country for over half a century, Sudanese refugees remained within the African continent. Only about the middle of the 1990s refugees from Sudan resettled in Europe and North America. The relatively recent existence of Sudanese refugees in the U.S. likely explains the scarcity of studies on the impact of the Sudanese internal conflicts on refugees' social relationships in their country of resettlement. Therefore, the only available literature is on refugees from other countries in Africa and Asia.

In a study done about Cambodian refugees in Canada, McLellan (2004) found out that past civil war in the country has negatively influenced communication among Cambodian refugees in Canada as well as mistrust, weakened social interaction and network.

Conflicts in the homeland are more likely to obstruct the development of social capital within refugee communities relocated to a third country. McLellan (2004) found this to be true for Cambodian refugees as a result of mistrust. McLellan (2004) defines social capital as "an asset created by trust, solidarity, and social cohesion embedded in the individuals of a community" (p.105).

LeBlanc (2002) found that ethnicity among West African immigrants is only significant when it is backing an ongoing conflict in the homeland. LeBlanc (2002) reported that ethnic and religious differences erupted among Ivorians in Montreal during the 1990s conflict that redefined national identity. As a result of that conflict, Ivorians Muslims allied with other Muslims from Senegal, Mali, and Guinea**.**

Chirimwami et al. (2014) confirmed that internal conflicts in Africa followed most Africans in the diaspora as they live with horrific memories of these conflicts, which affect their communities in different ways. Chirimwami et al. (2014) reported a Hutu woman experience with a group of Tutsi ethnicity from Rwanda, where horrific genocide took place in the 1990s:

> During our country's [Rwanda] independence celebration, the women were asked to cook our traditional food and the men were asked to bring beverages to the program. I prepared some food and took it to the program. When I entered the hall with the food and sat it on the table, the person in charge of the food asked me

who asked me to bring food to the program. I told her that today was Rwanda

independence celebration and every Rwandan was asked to contribute. After that,

a group of Tutsi women spoke among themselves. They were in the majority and

I was the only Hutu. Th e leader came to me and said that they had enough and

asked that I take my food off the table. I felt terrible and embarrassed and took my

food and left the program. (p. 185)

Chirimwami et al (2014) reported another experience told by a woman from Bantu

ethnicity:

During my first day in college, I was very nervous and scared because it was my

first time entering college since my transition to the United States. When I entered

the orientation hall, I saw a couple of students who looked like people from my

country. I decided to sit with them. When they realized that I was a Bantu after I

introduced myself, they decided to change their seats after the break. I felt

different and rejected by my own people in a strange land (p. 185).

In a different context, Chirimwami et al. (2014) noted that even human rights' activists

fail to overcome ethnic conflicts' consequences when they encounter an individual from a

rival ethnic group. Chirimwami et al. (2014) reported a story of a Congolese human

rights' activist visit to the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization classroom:

I told the visitor, "You know what, there is a Congolese family here. Let me go

introduce you. They are in the class." I took her to the class. She didn't even say

hi; she just looked at that client and said, "She is not Congolese. This is Tutsi

Rwandese. I am not even going to say hi to her." She walked away. This is a

human rights activist; she was paid by the Department of State to come to the

United States and learn about human rights. She walked away without saying hi to

this lady. (p.186)

In Liberia, the conflict between the native Liberians and the "Americos," the descendants

of liberated slaves, followed them to their resettlement in the U. S. Chirimwami et al.

(2014) stated:

The victim and the perpetrator of the civil war are all in the community. People

know each other individually and there is nothing done about it, so people, when

you talk to them about coming together in [the] Liberian community, they just

say, "Oh, if this person is there I'm not coming," so it makes it hard. (p. 186)

Allen (2008) found in a study among the Sudanese community in Portland that some

refugees from other ethnicities were not interested in working with the Acholi ethnicity in

projects that could benefit the broader Sudanese community, preferring projects that

concentrated mainly on the needs of their tribal community in Portland. Clan barriers

represented a significant obstruction for building a unified Somali community in

Portland, which made it challenging to benefit from resources offered by both the city

and state (Allen 2008). Refugees resettled in the United States encounter a cultural

transformation process, during which they abandon some of their original cultures and

institutions. As victims of government persecution and ethnic cleansing, individuals from

Darfur, Nuba Mountains, and the Bega of eastern Sudan fled the country and relocated to

this country. In order to examine the social effects on Sudanese refugees, the next chapter

discusses the method used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

Design

      To examine whether internal conflicts in Sudan follow Sudanese refugees to their

country of resettlement, I employed the qualitative method to interview Sudanese

refugees relocated in the U.S. Th rationale for the selection of this methodology and

particular population of the U.S. was diverse. First, a qualitative method was appropriate

for the study because of its descriptive nature and the scarcity of research on Sudanese

refugees in the U.S. The use of the qualitative method also provided a significant amount

of data that would not be available if this method was not applied. As a Sudanese refugee

in the U.S., and at a personal level, this paper was an excellent opportunity to examine

the effectiveness of Sudanese values in a different setting.

Setting

      Concerning geographic location, all participants were Sudanese individuals who

relocated to the U.S. through the refugee resettlement program. Except for two

participants, the rest of them relocated to the U.S. through Church World Services and

Lutheran Church. Participants reside in New York, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and

Texas. The state's selection basis was the number of Sudanese refugees who resided

there, as well as on the diversity of their place of origin in Sudan. These categories served

the purpose of the paper in examining the relationship between the African and Arab

northerner groups. A significant factor regarding the geographical setting is that some

participants lived in more than one state, which had enriched the data collected from the

interviews and provided a comprehensive evaluation of their social relationship.

Participants' profile

A group of 10 Sudanese refugees in the U. S. were interviewed to collect data about their social relationship with other Sudanese refugees and immigrants identified as Arab northerners in their community. Two of the participants were interviewed face-to-face, the rest of them were interviewed on the phone and via WhatsApp (audio only) for confidentiality reasons as they requested.

The interviewed group included men and women ranged in age from 34 to 68 years old, two women, and eight men. There were also two Christians and eight Muslims participated in the interviews. The participants came from areas devastated by civil war and social and economic marginalization in Sudan, such as the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, and eastern Sudan. At the time of the interview, their length of time in the U.S. from 31 to 6 years. All participants were married. Four of the participants had finished high school, one had some college, and five had a college degree.

Participants were recruited among refugees from ethnic groups that have been victims of civil war in Sudan over the last three decades. These groups included individuals from Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit from the Darfur region. From southern Kordofan, the sample also included participants from Nuba ethnicity. In addition to a participant from the Beja ethnicity in eastern Sudan.

Although eastern Sudan has not been part of the civil war, the Beja people have been suffering from marginalization since the independence of the country. This state of exclusion made them an essential target of the interviews. The Beja are native, non-Arab speaking ethnicity that includes several marginalized tribes and clans.

Procedure

Before carrying out the interviews, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval

was obtained, and participants were contacted soon after IRB approval was granted;

consequently, contacts with participants were made using snowball method. The purpose

of the study was explained to participants before the interviews. Participation was

voluntary, and participants had the choice to cancel if they did not feel comfortable with

the interview questions.

Formal consent to take part in the interviews was obtained from participants with

the guarantee of confidentiality of information they provided. Participants' names were

concealed, and they were given different names in the study for confidentiality purposes.

The interviews took place between March 7 and 21. All participants spoke fluent Arabic,

which was the language used in the interviews, besides their mother tongue (see

Appendices A and B for a complete list of interview questions in English and Arabic,

respectively).

A priority was given to states of relatively large density and diversity of Sudanese

refugees. The district of residence was also carefully selected to balance urban and

suburban distribution. Interviews were guided by open-ended questions as well as follow

up questions, to ensure that issues relevant to the study were covered during the

discussion.

An example of an interview question was, "If you participated in a Sudanese

event, public or private, have you ever felt unwelcome or been intentionally ignored

because of your religious affiliation or ethnicity?" The questions' guideline was meant to

be flexible to allow the investigator to engage in an in-depth discussion and to enable the

interviewee to elaborate on points that were crucial and relevant to the study. Questions

were drawn from a review of the literature and investigator observations as an active

member of the Sudanese community.

Analysis

Following the completion of interviews, the data obtained were transcribed and

translated into English in Microsoft Word format. Once data were transcribed, the

researcher read and reviewed participants' narratives thoroughly and each statement was

matched with regard to interview questions and how well it represented their experiences

(Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Relevant statements were reorganized and recorded in a

separate Microsoft document after removing overlapping and redundant statements, with

special consideration to key meanings. The next step involved sorting examples into

groups of similar meaning into themes.

CHAPTER 4

Results

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a qualitative interview method was employed to collect data from participants who represent several African ethnicities in Sudan, where they had been subject to government atrocities. This chapter is divided into five subsections and begins with interpreting significant themes identified from information provided by the participants. These themes included firstly, sense of belonging to the participant's ethnic community group, or a Sudanese national-level community association. The second theme highlighted was interethnic and interreligious marriage. Historically, it had played a significant role in shaping social relationships in Sudan. The importance of these marriages stems from the fact that Sudanese ethnicities in the past used it as a shield from intertribal wars, and a source of social and political alliances and cooperation in political and social levels. The third theme highlighted in the information provided by the participants was social marginalization and isolation, which was expressed through the interviewees' narrative as an actual social and political behavior practiced by Arab northerners. The fourth theme was social relations, and social interaction among Sudanese refugees in the U.S. The last theme identified was social solidarity among Sudanese refugees.

Sense of belonging

Sense of belonging to the community, whether exclusively ethnic or broader Sudanese community, emerged as a central theme as the participants shared their experiences. Nine out of ten participants reported their membership in ethnic and regional based community organizations in the United States. Participants' reasons for becoming part of these organizations were their drive to support their ethnic groups in Sudan, most of whom are living either in displacement camps or are refugees in African countries, where they are experiencing a dire situation. Kuku from Nuba mountains explained that he is an active member of an international Nuba association before his resettlement in the U.S. He said, "The international Nuba association is an all-Nuba association that has been active in different areas to serve the Nuba people in Sudan and abroad. The association coordinates with Nuba friends to send money, clothes, and other necessities to those in displacement camps besides its cultural activities that preserve Nuba heritage." Regional and ethnic organizations, according to Kuku, provide a comfortable environment for marginalized people to "speak their languages, hold them together in hard times." Fayez, a participant from Masalit ethnicity in Darfur summarized the reasons and history of forming an ethnic/regional community in the U.S. as:

> In 2001 we established the first registered Darfur community in the U.S. and established branches in different states. Before the war in Darfur, I had a good relationship with Arab northerners, things have changed afterward, and they became racists. Only Sudanese leftists from the north were supporting our association. Most of the other Sudanese Arabs had been on the side of the government. Ironically an African American leader (Louis Farrakhan) was on the

side of the Sudanese government that denying the genocide. They propagated that we are paid by the Jewish and Israelis to destroy the Islamic regime in Sudan by fabricating genocide stories. During the war in Darfur, an Arab northerner religious leader invited us to discuss the situation in Darfur. A couple of weeks later, we found out that the conversation was videotaped and sent to the Sudanese embassy in Washington, D.C. From that point, Darfur refugees reconsider their social relationship with northerners, and trust problems erupted.

Sense of belonging to a broader Sudanese community is dramatically decreasing in the rise of ethnic and regional associations among Sudanese refugees in the U.S. Membership in a Sudanese community either halted or not was favored among participants. Bakheet is a Christian from Nuba Mountains who said that "I was a member of Sudanese community organization in New York, but when I moved to Georgia, I decided not to have membership in Sudanese community anymore after the second civil war in my area escalated in 2011. I do not feel I want to be with them in one organization because they support the government that kills my people. The majority of them say bad things about the Nuba and consider us rebellious" Osman, a participant from Darfur, favors his ethnic community association over a Sudanese community because he does not feel Arab northerners' sympathy with his people's suffering in Darfur. He said, "In our city, there is a community organization for all Sudanese, this community is part of a state-level Sudanese community. However, I am sticking with my ethnic community, and I do not regret my decision to avoid them-Arabs."

Interethnic and interreligious marriage

Interethnic and interreligious marriage is a controversial issue among participants. However, eight out of ten participants consider marriage is a personal choice, and they are not against such family union. Problems arise when men from African ethnicities propose to Arab women as Bakheet explained:

I am not against interethnic marriages. In Sudan, Arabs marry Nuba women, but Nuba men, most of the time, are not allowed to marry Arab women because they think we are inferior. I know some Nuba men married Arab women, but their children suffer prejudice, and they often called 'sons of the abbed', an Arabic synonym for a slave. That is why most of Nuba, including myself, do not like marry Arab women.

Saadia, a Fur female, refused interethnic marriage and insisted that:

Arab northerners maintain a notable social distance from Darfur African people about marriages, and they call them "Abbeed" (slaves), so they do not marry from us, and we do not like marrying from them. I often hear this word from Arabs when they think I am not a Fur individual. I have some cousins married to Arab northerners in the past and when the war escalated, they limited their relationship with my family because they think we are rebellions and "Abeed," that is why I do not agree with this kind of marriages although it is a personal choice.

As a Christian, Abdo raised a religious issue restricting marriages; he said:

Muslims do not allow their women to marry a Christian man. My friend, a Nuba Christian in Georgia was in love with a Muslim girl from the Bagara Arabs, before he proposes to her family he contacted the girl's relatives in Sudan to pave

the way, they advised him not to mention this to anyone because her family will

kill her immediately.

However, Sharaf from Darfur, Zaghawa ethnicity said that he is married to an Arab

woman from Darfur and confirmed that his marriage survived for over twenty years, and

they still live in peace and happiness. He said, "I am not the only one in my family

married to an Arab woman. In fact, almost all of my relatives are married to women from

Arab northerners and Arabs of Darfur, my uncles, and cousins."

Social marginalization and isolation

Social isolation and covert rejection are an important theme that emerged from

some participants' experiences, while socially interacting with Sudanese Arab

northerners in the U.S. Bakheet explained his experience as a Nuba individual with the

Sudanese community in New York, saying that:

> Before I come to Georgia, I was living in New York with many northerners. Some
>
> of the northerners were not aware of what was going on in the Nuba mountains,
>
> and others do not care about us even if they knew the Sudanese government
>
> crimes in Nuba mountains because they do not think we are human like
>
> themselves. For example, a Sudanese cloth vendor was selling T-shirts for
>
> Sudanese community members in New York, and he put a price for these shirts.
>
> He was not aware that I was interested of the T-shirts and want to buy one. He
>
> said to his clients, without knowing I was listening, 'but for those, pointing to me,
>
> I sell them for a different price.' When I confronted him with what he said, he did
>
> not apologize, and some northerners blamed him for saying that.

Religious affiliation also plays a significant role in social interaction among the Sudanese community. Bakheet remembered that:

> As a Christian, most northerners feel uncomfortable when I say I am a Christian. Some northerners argue with me that Christianity is not a religion that came from God, and I should convert to Islam. When I refuse conversion to Islam, they get mad and stop talking to me for a long time.

However, another Christian shared a different experience in a different setting where the majority of refugees are from war-torn areas. Abdo explained:

> In religious events such as Muslim Holydays, I visit and say happy holidays to Sudanese Muslims, sometimes over the phone, and they do the same at Christmas. I have never felt unwelcome because in the state where I live, Georgia, the majority are from Nuba Mountains, South Sudan, and Darfur, so we are all non-Arabs, and we as Christians do not feel alienated among these groups.

Although Mahgoub, a Zaghawa participant asserted that social isolation and marginalization never happened to him personally, he said he was sure it did exist:

> I have never had this experience when I participate in Sudanese public events in the U.S., but I am sure it happened to other people from Darfur, Nuba Mountains, and Beja because the Arab northerners always act as superiors. In our Sudanese community, there is a hidden conflict over which group should lead the community, in general- assembly elections; you feel that Arab northerners had already decided who gets what position in the executive committee, they act the same way and say the same things just like the others do not exist. I stopped going to such events because these kinds of conflicts are not healthy.

Social exclusion in some experiences resulted from conflicts over Sudanese community leadership in the U.S. Haroun; a Fur community leader confirmed Mahgoub point that:

> I have no membership in the Sudanese community organization in the state, but I do participate in public events, I also participate in private events such as weddings and funerals. The Sudanese community established in 2014, some of Fur ethnicity individuals wanted to be in the leadership of the community, but Arab northerners refused to give them leadership positions in the executive committee. They want us to be just members. As Fur, we decided to withdraw from public participation and maintained our relationship with them on a personal level. In 2018, they established a new community body to support the uprising in Sudan. I contributed to establishing this group in Pennsylvania, and I was the president. Because Arab northerners were the majority, they used to marginalize me and plan ahead of the meetings and make decisions without consulting with me.

Social inclusion in some participants' experiences related to previous contacts with Arab northerners in higher education institutions in Sudan. Kuku explained this point saying:

> When I came to Lancaster from Louisiana, I was so enthusiastic about participating in Sudanese public events. Later, I gradually withdrew from these events and limited my participation to personal occasions. I only go when there are funerals or weddings. I can feel from the events' environment that some Sudanese from Darfur and Nuba Mountains overlooked, but it never happened to me, probably because I lived in the north during high school and college years.

Political affiliation also plays a significant role in social relations. The military coup of 1989 brought to power an Islamic group that excluded other political parties. Some members of these parties, mostly Arab northerners, fled the country and resettled in the U.S. as refugees. Saadia explained this experience:

> Before I move from Philadelphia, I had never participated in events organized by the Sudanese community because it was controlled by the Sudanese government supporters who were in significant numbers in the city. In some public events, when we had discussions with Arab northerners in politics, they often deny the genocide in Darfur, and they are feeling uncomfortable. When I moved to Harrisburg, the Sudanese community is more welcoming because almost all of them are active in opposition groups.

A participant reported self-isolation from Arab northerners because he had mistrust experience with them while he was an active member of his ethnic community association, in addition to "their" support of the previous government in Sudan. Fayez explained his relationship with Arabs:

> As a consequence of the Arab northerners' support of the Sudanese government, as a Darfurian, I decided to cut off the relationship with them, and other fellow Darfurians follow suit. Social marginalization among Sudanese educated individuals was not prevalent, and people sided along with political views. Now it prevails even among the educated because of the government propaganda against Darfur people.

Sharaf experience with Arab northerners was different. He left Sudan over three decades, before the war in Darfur breakout. Sharaf came to the U.S. in the mid-1980s; he said, "I

had never felt unwelcome, maybe because of my age (68) and most Sudanese individuals consider me to be neutral. I was one of the founders of the Sudanese community."

Social relations/Social interaction

Bakheet evaluated his social interaction with Arab northerners in a suburban area in Georgia by saying, "There are many Arab northerners around my place of residence, I maintain a normal relationship with them, I manage to limit my interaction and keep them out of my personal life, but when we meet, we act normally." Bakheet explained "normal" by saying:

> I mean, it is not like when we meet each other in Sudan, you know that we have a
> unique way of greeting each other. We hug, joke, and show kindness, sympathy,
> and sincerity, but here, I do not do that, just normal!

Bakheet stressed that this was not the way Nuba used to interact with people. He said "Nuba, in general, are open in their relationship with all other Sudanese, but what happened was too much and we feel that Arabs had misinterpreted our generosity and welcoming nature." Bakheet described a slight change in social interaction with Arab northerners during the uprising that led to regime change in Sudan, saying that "during the protests in Sudan, I joined a WhatsApp group that support protesters, we were from different ethnicities including Arabs, now I have some Arab friends."

Mariam described her social interaction experiences with Arab northerners in the U.S. as humiliating. She said:

> When I moved with my husband to this city, Arab women did not welcome me in
> a "Sudanese" way; that is, women newcomers always got welcoming visits from
> other women. They receive gifts like blankets, kitchen utensils, and Sudanese

made perfumes. Guess what, only women from Darfur and Nuba Mountains

welcomed me in my new resident! In another occasion, an Arab woman delivered

a baby, in this occasion, we treat according to Sudanese tradition and visit her as a

group to give money and other stuff. They visited her without telling any woman

from Darfur or Nuba, including myself. What a shame!

Mahgoub blamed successive Sudanese governments, not Arab northerners, for weak

social interaction among communities in the U.S. He said:

I maintain good social interaction with all Sudanese regardless of their ethnic

origin; these are our traditions, we should not be rude, support each other and

always act as a "true Sudanese" no matter what is going on in Sudan because we

are strangers here. I was living in different countries before I come to the U.S.; we

always act as one and maintain our traditions in social solidarity.

Social solidarity

Social solidarity emerged as a central theme that all participants experience

regularly. Sudanese traditions, as some of the participants explained, value social

solidarity because it holds people together. In funerals as well as weddings Sudanese

communities provide support in terms of money and services, regardless of religious and

ethnic background. Some participants even claim that such type of solidarity does not

exist in Arab Middle Eastern or African communities. Bakheet, a Nuba Christian, said:

As Sudanese, we support each other, especially when someone dies in Georgia or

Sudan, we give money to the deceased family. We help each other as Sudanese,

even those from southern Sudan who had already separated from the mother

country, contribute financially to these events. We do not care what region in

Sudan the person comes from, what tribe belongs to, and whether he is poor or

rich, Christian or Muslim. We may not like each other, avoid each other as much

as we can, but not in these cases.

Abdo, another Christian Nuba participant, said:

I do participate in private Sudanese events like marriages and funerals, and other

Sudanese, including Arab northerners, do the same to me. When my aunt died, all

the Sudanese communities, including Arabs, have supported me. They came with

financial and material stuff; they organized a Sudanese mourning ceremony where

people bring food and money to the deceased family. I also remember that a

Sudanese from Darfur had mental problems. All Sudanese collected money ($50

per person) to help to send him back to his family in Sudan.

Mahgoub emphasized that although Arab northerners do not like being around African

ethnicities in typical situations, they maintain a Sudanese type of solidarity in certain

events such as funerals and mourning ceremonies. He said, "We do have death fund in

case someone died, and this fund is for every Sudanese regardless of ethnic or religious

background."

The information shared by the participants revealed that a sense of ethnic

community among Sudanese refugees in the U.S. was prevailing as the majority of

participants confirmed their involvement in ethnic and regional-based community

organizations. The interethnic marriage was accepted by most of the participants.

However, the participants concurred that marriages involving men of African origin were

not allowed by Arab northerners. Interreligious marriages for Christian men were also

found to be problematic and rejected by Muslims. While social marginalization and

isolation were not widely experienced among refugees, most of the participants agreed that it did exist covertly. Trust was a significant problem that negatively influenced social interaction and limited social relationships; however, the area of residence, number of the Sudanese refugee population, and the position from the former Sudanese government were factors that had also influenced relationships. Social solidarity is the prevailing practice that participants agreed upon without regard to ethnicity, religion, or place of origin. The analysis of the interview data will be covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses and analyzes the outcomes of the experiences of Sudanese refugees resettled in the United States. The participants of the study represent individuals from African ethnicities who have been subject to severe civil wars.

Sudanese refugees' tendency to establish ethnic communities upon their arrival to the U.S. to navigate through the new environment is consistent with Alba and Nee's (2003) findings of the importance of ethnic communities as temporary protection from pressures resulting from the first stage of resettlement.

For example, while the Nuba Mountain's international community association plays a significant role in maintaining Nuba refugees' culture and heritage, as well as providing a sense of belonging and other services, the association also extends its activities to a transnational level. As for Darfur refugees' community associations, the first association, according to a founding member participant, was a regional organization that included all ethnicities from Darfur and contributed to working with U.S. based organizations to raise the awareness of the genocide in Darfur and pressures for an international intervention to stop the genocide. However, participants from Darfur at the time of the interview had reported affiliation to smaller communities based on ethnicity rather than region. For example, the Fur ethnicity community organization is a central hierarchical body in the U.S., with branches in all states where Fur individuals reside; the same applies to Masalit ethnicity. It is noteworthy that participants from Zaghawa are more likely to be involved in national-level community organizations than other participants from Darfur. The reason is that Zaghawa individuals were known among

Darfur ethnicities as more advanced in terms of political awareness and political ambitions. Also, they were among the first to join new Sudanese political parties, and their economic activities as merchants enabled them to spread across Sudan. According to Meffert and Marmar's (2009) study, ethnic communities provide genocide survivors with emotional recovery from genocide trauma.

Although these ethnic community organizations represent an essential resource for social and cultural capital, that advances refugees' interests and allows social and economic mobility in the U.S. as Kondili et al., (2019) confirmed, the downside is that ethnic communities narrow and minimize social networks to a single ethnic group, as nine out of ten participants stated that they favor their ethnic organization over an inclusive, all- Sudanese community. This situation resulted from the experiences of internal conflict in Sudan and lack of trust that dominated refugees' social interaction.

Ethnic background is not the sole barrier that diminishes the possibility to establish a healthy social relation among Sudanese refugees in the U.S. Religious affiliation was also a factor when Christians from Nuba Mountains communicate with Arab northerners. From the Arab Muslim perspective, Nuba Christians have been a target of conversion to Islam as a precondition for a limited inclusion, as some participants expressed. Therefore, interreligious marriages are forbidden if it involves Christians. However, African individuals from a Muslim background are not socially accepted and fully incorporated into the dominant Arabic culture in Sudan, which is consistent with Alba and Nee's (2003) findings regarding White Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture, though in a different context.

The results of the study revealed that some of the Sudanese refugees from African origin, particularly those from Darfur and the Nuba Mountains, experience social isolation and marginalization while interacting with northern Arab groups. Furthermore, they are seen as inferior, racially, and religiously. This finding is consistent with the same experience found in Chirimwami et al. (2014) study of Hutu ethnicity refugees in the U.S. However, some participants practice self-social isolation because they consider that Arabs have not shown sympathy to their sufferings during the conflict. It was evident from the information shared that the majority of Sudanese refugees have not experienced an overt rejection and marginalization, though they recognized the existence of such practice. Experiences of participants with limited educational attainments and no previous social interaction with Arab northerners indicated that they were more likely to be treated as inferior.

The findings in this study showed that social interaction outside the ethnic group was problematic. Lack of mutual trust, feeling of betrayal, and superior social and ethnic status of Arab northerners within Sudanese communities in the U.S. obstruct building a substantial communication process. Avoidance and limited interaction in personal and public Sudanese events are prevalent. Social interaction within relatively smaller Sudanese communities is significantly different for some participants who experienced moving from big cities to small cities. It is also notable that those who live in suburban areas have a significantly better relationship than those in urban areas.

Another factor that influenced social interaction among Sudanese refugees from opposing ethnicities is the individual's political opinion. Ylonen (2009) emphasized that the formation of Sudan as an Arab-Muslim state following its independence from the

British colonialism shaped the current relationship between Sudan's ethnic groups. Arab northerner's domination created an elite with a broad social base that supported the successive government. Most participants emphasized that they have no social relations with Arab northerners who support the former government. On the contrary, refugees maintain relatively good relations with those who support the opposition groups.

Although the social interaction experience of Sudanese refugees in the United States is similar to the experience of refugees from other communities resettled in the U.S. and Canada, social solidarity among the former is stronger. All participants in this study showed a tendency to maintain and value social solidarity with no regard to ethnic background. Social solidarity overcame even religious differences as Christian participants asserted. The current study finding suggests that Sudanese values and traditions, which are more potent than ethnic and religious differences stem from values that prevail in agricultural Sudanese communities.

The regime change that took place in Sudan following a combined armed and civilian opposition activities had also changed Sudanese ethnicities' attitudes toward each other. In a visit to Sudan during the process of writing this paper, a couple of observations are worth mentioning. The beginning of the social relation shift was during the massive sit-in in front of the presidential palace on April 7, 2019. Activists from all ethnicities gathered under an unprecedented unified leadership that included Sudanese from all ethnicities and practiced a unique sort of social solidarity. For example, women came from Darfur and Nuba Mountains to the sit-in place and provided food for all protesters, as well did Arab northerners women. Sudanese abroad collected money in support of the regime change process. Protesting slogans, for the first time during the

former regime rule, were chanted in the memory of all victims of civil war, mainly in Darfur. The new spirit forced the army leaders to form a transitional government that included members from almost all regions. Armed resistance declared a cease-fire, the transitional government responded by halting military operations in Darfur and Nuba Mountains.

Another factor contributing to improving social relations among Sudanese ethnicities is a large number of casualties and missing persons among activists, which resulted in the formation of "resistance committees" that demanded to hold police officers accountable for the incidents. These committees extended their work to almost all Sudanese cities and villages and formed with no regard to ethnicities. For the first time, I noticed that there was no conflict over leadership in the city where I live, which was historically dominated by Arab northerners no matter how long they have been living in the city. It was also surprising that negative comments that targeted people from Darfur and Nuba Mountains disappeared; the principle that prevailed during the sit-in (if you have, donate. If you have not, take) became a general behavior in bakeries and grocery stores, where people leave money or groceries for the poorest, who are mostly from Darfur and Nuba Mountains. Attitude towards war victims who live on streets and in the poverty belt in Khartoum and other cities had also improved.

Although the current study findings indicated negative social interaction among Sudanese refugees in the United States, it is also evident that the former government played a significant role in broadening the distance between ethnicities in Sudan. The blatant Arabic-Islamic policies and scorched-earth military operations had forced African

individuals to retreat to their ethnicity for protection from one side and fueled superiority complex among Arab northerners.

Throughout the last three decades, a substantial number of refugees of Sudanese origin resettled in the U.S. as a result of the civil war and political instability. The Sudanese refugees represented the regions devastated by fighting in the Nuba Mountains, Darfur, as well as individuals from the Beja people and Arab northerners. The current study of the influence of war among Sudanese refugees found out that, although social interaction and social relationships had been negatively affected by the internal conflict as a result of mistrust and hatred, social solidarity among the Sudanese refugees was stable even with the ethnic and religious differences.

The study also found that regime change that took place in Sudan on April 11, 2019, brought Sudanese people at home and refugees in the U.S. together, which indicated improvement in social solidarity and social relationships. The acceleration of the ongoing peace process would also be a decisive factor for social reconciliation.

Limitations and future research

The data provided by the Sudanese refugees in the U.S. were informative and valuable. However, the limitations of the study included a small sample size, insufficient gender, religious, and ethnic diversity. Future research could include a larger sample and more diversity of the latter groups. In addition, future research might consider whether the peace process that is now underway in Sudan could also lead to changes in social relations among Sudanese in the diaspora.

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Appendix A: Open-Ended Question Guide

- What region in Sudan are you coming from?

- How do you identify yourself in terms of ethnicity?

- Please explain your membership/ involvement in your ethnic group's community in the U.S?

- How would you describe your social relationship with Sudanese individuals from ethnicities other than yours?

- If you participated in a Sudanese event, public or private, have you ever felt unwelcome or been intentionally ignored because of your religious affiliation or ethnicity?

- What do you think of intertribal/ ethnic and interreligious marriages?

- Are you a member/participant in any Sudanese community? Describe the type, regional, ethnic, or all-Sudanese organization?

- Have you ever prevented from assuming an executive position in a Sudanese community organization because of your ethnicity or religious affiliation openly or covertly?

- Have you ever felt marginalization comparing to other Sudanese individuals?

- How do you evaluate your social relationship with other Sudanese of Arab ethnicity in the U.S?

- During your residence in the United States, what kind of Sudanese community gatherings (marriage, funeral, prayers, Ramadan breakfast, and Eid) have you ever involved in? Does that depend on what region/ tribe participants are coming from? Please explain.

APPENDIX B: نماذج الأسئلة مفتوحة النهاية

• من أي منطقة في السودان قدمت ؟

• كيف تعرف نفسك من حيث الاثنية؟

• هل لديك عضوية ومشاركة فى رابطة او جمعية خاصة بمجموعتك الاثنية في الولايات المتحدة؟

• كيف تصف علاقاتك الاجتماعية مع أفراد سودانيين من اثنيات أخرى ؟

• إذا كنت قد شاركت في حدث سوداني ، عام أو خاص ،هل شعرت يوماً بانك غير مرحب بك أو تم تجاهلك عمداً بسبب انتمائك الديني أو الإثني؟

• ما رأيك في الزواج بين القبائل / الإثنيات وبين الأديان؟

• هل أنت عضو / مشارك في أي جالية سودانية فى محل اقامتك فى الولايات المتحدة؟ من فضلك وصف نوع الجالية, إقليمي أو اثنى أو شاملة جميع السودانيين؟

• هل سبق لك أن منعت من تولي منصب تنفيذي في جالية سودانية بسبب انتمائك الاثنى أوالديني بشكل علني أو خفى؟

• هل شعرت من قبل بالتهميش مقارنة بأفراد سودانيين آخرين؟

• كيف تقيم علاقتك الاجتماعية مع سودانيين آخرين من أصل عربي في الولايات المتحدة؟

• أثناء إقامتك في الولايات المتحدة ، ما هو نوع التجمعات المجتمعية السودانية (الزواج ، الجنازة ، الصلاة ، الإفطار الرمضاني ، العيد) التي شاركت فيها؟ هل يعتمد ذلك على المنطقة او الاثنية التي ينحدر منها المشاركون؟ يرجى التحدث بالتفصيل.

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