



Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services

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The First Years:

An Ethnographic Record of “The Lost Boys”

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March 29, 2003

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to create an ethnographic record documenting the resettlement experiences of five of Bethany Christian Services' unaccompanied minors from Sudan. This document hopes not only to capture their resettlement stories, but to provide a reference for those working as cultural liaisons for Sudanese youth in the future. At the time of this research the youth had lived in the Grand Rapids, MI community for two years and four months. The data records their perceptions on a number of factors including the Kakuma refugee camp, their expectations of America before their departure, foster families, Bethany Christian Services as a resettlement agency, issues with time and food, language, school, and freedom. The youth provided candid commentary on all issues. Their words were recorded by hand written notes and have been represented in this research in a synthesis format to ensure anonymity of subjects.

Purpose	1
Methods	1
Design	1
Sampling	1
Measurement	1
Limitations	2
Introduction	2
First	2
Lituration Review	3
Bethany Background	3
A History Lesson	5
Kakuma	7
Food	8
Education	9
Data	9
Expectations of America	9
Coming to America	10
Foster Families	10
Bethany and Caseworkers	12
Time and Food	13
Language and School	14
Freedom	15
Five Year Plans	15
A Statement of Faith	16
Words from the Authorities	16
Discussion	17
Appendix A	List of Questions
Appendix B	Consent Form.

Purpose:

The purpose of this research is to create an ethnographic record documenting the resettlement experiences of five of Bethany Christian Services' unaccompanied minors from Sudan. Each subject was settled in Grand Rapids, Michigan between November of 2000, and November of 2001. All of these youth have participated in both foster care and independent living settings. This document hopes not only to capture their resettlement stories but to also provide a narrative for use by Bethany and for the education of those given the opportunity to help facilitate the settlement of future Sudanese Refugees.

Methods:**Design**

This research will be done using an ethnographic design.

Sampling

Subjects were chosen based on a number of factors. First they are all male youth between the ages of seventeen and twenty. 90% of Bethany's refugee clientele is male providing a dominant perspective to the data. Second, they have all arrived from Kakuma refugee camp to the United States between November of 2000 and November of 2001. And finally, youth were chosen based on referral or permission from their caseworker.

Measurement

Interviews were conducted with all subjects at Bethany Christian Services on the main Grand Rapids campus or at their home. One-on-one interviews will be used to compile data. Follow-up questions were used to clarify any misunderstanding or

confusion. Each subject was asked to be audio recorded. Four of five declined. Note taking remained the primary data collection method. Initial interviews took place between January and March of 2003. There was no time limit set for the interviews. The question list can be found in appendix A.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the small sample afforded by the qualitative study format. Subjects were chosen in a purposive method based on a number of specific criteria. This can be considered a limitation when comparing the data across the larger population.

As stated previously, the study was initially to be an evaluation of the refugee department at Bethany Christian Services. As the data was collected, it became apparent that the boys had little to say in critique of the program and were much more interested in telling about their resettlement experiences. An agent of Bethany Christian Services collected the data. This could have been contributed to concern by the subjects to keep face in regard to the agency.

Introduction:

First

I have been working for Bethany Christian Services Refugee Foster Care unit as a Master of Social Work intern for a little over nine months now. My educational background is in Cultural Anthropology and my current studies focus on a multi-dimensional perspective on social work. My field of choice was immigrants and refugees, a decision made with little information and limited personal experiences with either population. What I have found at Bethany, in the Refugee department, is a goldmine of passion and personality.

A little over one hundred youth enrolled in Bethany's program are from Southern Sudan. They began coming to the United States during the early winter of 2000. They have since become the breath of this agency. In the short time that I have been involved with the Sudanese I have had the opportunity to be shown the purpose of faith, the successes of hope and the determination of a population furiously dedicated to living life.

These boys have taught me more about living life than I've ever been witness to. They are a brave, ambitious group with an amazing story to tell.

The story of these boys has been well publicized since their arrival. On the streets of Grand Rapids I am hard pressed to find someone who has never heard of The Lost Boys of Sudan. One woman remarks that they must be "the African boys overflowing the local grocery stores." They have come to Grand Rapids in full force and Bethany has opened not only their doors, but their hearts to ensure their resettlement remains a positive experience.

Literature Review: Bethany Background

For over thirty years, Bethany Christian Services has offered assistance to a diverse population through its unique and specialized refugee programs, including refugee foster care, and independent living skill training. Bethany, being one of approximately ten organizations in the United States to offer a program specializing in service to unaccompanied minors, remains unique in its approach to service. Its mission is to manifest the love and compassion of Jesus Christ by protecting and enhancing the lives of children and families through quality social services.

The organization was established in 1944 as an orphanage for homeless children in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It has grown since then to include over sixty offices throughout the United States and abroad. The Bethany team has expanded to a staff of over 900 people who are actively involved in ministering to the needs of children and families.

Since 1975, with the fall of Saigon, Bethany began serving refugee children from Southeast Asia by providing them with foster care placements. It's Unaccompanied Minors Program has since served children from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, China, Haiti, Liberia, Bosnia, Ethiopia, Somalia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan.

Since 1985, Bethany Christian Services' Unaccompanied Minors Program has had a cooperative placement agreement with Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services (LIRS) and United States Catholic Conference of Bishops to place unaccompanied foreign born minors in foster care. The purpose of the foster care placement is to provide

for their needs, physical, emotional, intellectual, vocational, and cross-cultural interpretation (Bethany Christian Services, 1998).

These adolescents are curious about the United States and filled with high, often unrealistic expectations. They are independent and need to be treated as young adults. Most are committed to receiving a good education. Many are mourning the loss of all the family and people they have ever known. In fact, they are mourning the loss of their previous way of life (Bethany Christian Services, 1998).

A History Lesson

O God, into the pain of the tortured, breathe stillness...Into the misery of displacement, breathe comfort ...Into the hunger of the very poor, breathe fullness...Into the death of the innocent, breathe life...Into the pain of the widowed and orphans, breathe hope. (Church World Service, 2002).

The government of Sudan, now considered “transitional” by most standards is in the midst of “the world’s longest running civil war”. Beginning in 1983, death tolls reached a record two million, this not including the displacement of more than 4.5 million people internally and another 500,000 outside the borders of Sudan (Church World Service, 2002; McCollum, 2001).

The history lesson necessary to understand the state in which Sudan fails to function begins before the independence that came in 1956. Prior to 1956 Sudan was a colony of Egypt and Britain. During the colonial period developmental emphasis was given to the northern region, and the south (then below the 12th parallel) was left in a state of impoverishment. The north, comprised of a Muslim majority, held nearly two-thirds of the land and in 1956 took over the government in Khartoum, the capital city. In 1983, President Jaafar Muhammad Nimeri imposed Sharia, or Islamic law, on the entire country, including the southern portion, which was mostly made up of Christians or those practicing traditional faiths.

In the midst of this total chaos the southern peoples formed the SPLA, or Sudanese People's Liberation Army, in defense of their land, religion, and way of life. This force is in constant battle with the northern government and is predominantly made up of tribal peoples from the Dinka and Nuer groups. The SPLA has also fractured into two groups that now fight with one another.

Author Taylor-Robinson of the Journal of Media Ethics, pinpoints three major reasons for the current upheaval in Sudan. First, it has been discovered that southern Sudan holds major oil and mineral resources. Second, the SPLA is receiving support from an intimidated group of neighboring countries. These countries do not follow Sharia and are fearful of the implications if all of Sudan were to fall under such a regime. The third, the continuing divisions among the SPLA, further complicate the struggle against the north (Taylor-Robinson, 2002 pp. 49-51).

To make way for oil exploration and extraction in the Upper Nile Province (Southern Sudan) the Sudanese government has pursued a 'scorched earth' policy using aerial bombardment, strafing of villages, torture, and mass executions to terrify and displace southern Sudanese from ancestral villages. One fourth of the residents in some parts of the province are malnourished as a result.

Aerial bombing of civilians by the Sudanese military is commonplace. In 2000, Amnesty International documented more than 250 bombings of civilian or humanitarian targets in a single month, including schools, hospitals, markets, and other civilian centers (Church World Service, 2002).

The loss of over 2 million people is only the beginning when it comes to the list of casualties imposed by this war. As those flee from their traditional homeland, they have been further brutalized, women kidnapped and raped as a form of dehumanization, and abduction and forced labor reports vary between 5,000 and 200,000 people (Church World Service, 2002). Famine and long term health issues remain unresolved. Land

mines and forced marches have taken their toll on those who continue to live in such conditions. The youth that have been running for their lives beginning in 1983 have fled into the wild without the knowledge of whether their parents, siblings, or neighbors remain alive.

The orphaned children banded together and walked first to a camp in Ethiopia, where they stayed for many months. But when new rulers came to power in Ethiopia, they wanted to get rid of the refugees. They bombed the camp and ordered soldiers to herd the refugees out of their country. The fleeing orphans had to cross the Gillo River. Many children drowned or were eaten by crocodiles crossing the river. The refugees walked to various places in Sudan, but in 1992 they ended up in Kenya in the Kakuma Refugee Camp. Of the roughly 17,000 kids who began the march, 10,000 made it to Kakuma. The others were killed by soldiers, starved to death, or eaten by predators (Pipher, 2002, p. 248).

The young survivors of this story, of this history, have since been named the Lost Boys of Sudan. Since 1999 more than 3000 of these boys have been brought to the United States for resettlement.

Kakuma

Kakuma refugee camp is located approximately 120 km south of the Sudanese border in Kenya, in the harsh desert-savanna. The camp was established in 1992 by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. In 2002, it was predominantly populated by Sudanese but also had Ethiopians, Burundians, Ugandans, and Congolese totaling 85,000 (3, 4). 12,000 of those residents were the Lost Boys who arrived in Kakuma after being militarily escorted from Ethiopia beginning in 1992. Since that time many of the boys moved on from Kenya returning to Sudan to fight with the SPLA.

In many ways, life in the camp has been like that in any other African village, with the youth living in clusters that serve a family-like function. It should be noted that most are male, but there is a small number of females. (www.culturalorientation.net/fact_sudan.html).

In Kakuma people are living under the umbrella of darkness without hope. Multiple cultures in one place. You are not a citizen, you have no rights, you just wait for food. Nothing changes. Everyday it's the same thing. You live in a thatched house with no outlet to any other part of the world. You can't do anything to help yourself. You can want, but you have no chance. In Kakuma you live a life of stress.

It is often perceived by those of us outside the Sudanese experience that the trauma that these youth experienced stopped once they reached the camp. In a study conducted by Grand Valley State University faculty, entitled, *Trauma of Children of the Sudan: A Constructivist Exploration*, researchers address strongly this misperception. They address the narrative form in which we describe the lives of these children. First they were run from their homes. Next, they found safety in the camps, and finally were brought to America. The reality of the situation is that though the camp provided a safer environment it was nowhere near non-life threatening.

People called Turkana, they were Kenyans, they lived around the camp and came in and robbed and killed people. If you went out on a Saturday night you'd get shot. People would go to bed early. The Turkana would kill people for their food, their money, or anything that they had.

In Africa I was told to go to school. There, I was told about human rights and was elated! In Africa you have to be worried. There is fighting all over. You never know when people will attack you.

Food

The majority of the Sudanese diet consists of milk, rice, lamb, chicken, and vegetables. Meals are generally served in a common dish and eaten with flatbread. (www.culturalorientation.net/fact_sudan.html). In Kakuma food is distributed through the use of ration cards that identified you to camp food distributors as a refugee.

We would get one gallon of maize flour for two weeks, and some lentils. There would be long lines and many people fighting because they all wanted some. We would get two to three kg of food for two weeks, a half a cup of oil, one cup of beans and a spoon of salt. Each person would get eight liters of water per ration day to be saved for the next two weeks.

We would wait in line for water for five or six hours a day. We would fill a bucket to use. Water only ran at certain times. It would just be shut off. If you didn't get any you'd have to come back again another day.

In the camp there is much malaria and disease. There is not enough nutrition in the food that we would eat so that bodies were not built up to fight disease. We lacked minerals bodies would not fight.

Education

Education for those in the camp varies. Many of the boys received educational services in Ethiopia before they were forced to leave. In Kakuma approximately a quarter of the youth attend school. It is a central part of their lives and has proven to be one of their strongest sources of hope throughout their traumatic experiences. The statement "Education is our mother and father" is a theme that resounds from the Kakuma refugees. Despite this refrain, education in the camp for women and girls is a very different story. To some women, receiving an education is considered almost rebellious behavior (Bolea, 2003).

Education has been an important part of refugee assistance in Kakuma, with more than 30 schools serving more than 33,000 students. Child welfare workers note that the Sudanese youth generally have very high expectations about education, which is seen as a "recovery strategy"—a way to take back control over their lives. (www.culturalorientation.net/fact_sudan.html).

To pass the time we would play football (soccer) and attend school. There was school for young children and school for older people too. We would also pass time dancing and talking.

Data:

Expectations of America

When I came I had high expectations for America. I was going to increase my education and make a lot of difference. I was told that I would live with a family; that I would have a mother. This is what I wanted, what I expected. I knew that a family would help me.

In the camp we knew that if you were approved to go to the United States that we would be happy for the rest of our lives. In Kakuma we were told that America was a good place with lots of freedom where we could come and work hard.

Coming to America

The boys were asked a number of questions about their initial resettlement experiences. Questions centered on various topics including, their first days, food, weather, foster families, and the Grand Rapids community in general. The following is a synthesis of their responses.

When asked about the *most* surprising thing that they encountered in the States the boys all had a candid response to snow. Included are other initial surprises!

The weather was terrible! All my bones and all the parts of my body were cold. I would not drink for three days I was so cold.

We didn't know we'd be somewhere like this place. Everything was new to us. SNOW! I had never seen it. It looked like salt or sugar. When I touched it I thought it would go through me and kill me.

People here were wearing clothes in the winter were we could only see their eyes. They covered their whole bodies. That was so weird.

Foster Families

From our perspective, we thought, they are in the camp, they are fine, and that was not true. When Paul first came we had bought clothes for him; he folded them neatly, and hid them in his bed. We tried to tell him that there was no danger, but he still perceived the danger and recalled the times when his clothes or shoes were stolen during the night (Bolea, 2003).

The first night I came I stayed with my friends. I was so scared. I told one of them that if I could go back to Kakuma and I would stay there forever. They told us that we would go to a foster home alone and that we would not be with our friends that was very scary.

I wanted to be with a family. I knew they could help me learn English. It was hard at first, but I adapted. I watched them and the way they treated and talked to people and I tried to do like they did.

When I was at the foster home we did all kinds of things. We went up north and would play and go to church. On Sundays we would all eat lunch together and sometimes we would celebrate each other and give presents on birthdays.

It was very hard to learn their rules, but I shouldn't have expected that all things would be good. Sometimes it was good and sometimes it wasn't. The best times were when we would play around with our dad. Our mom was so good to us. I "related to her like my own mother" She never spoke bad of us.

We did all kinds of things together. We went to Lake Michigan and swam. I helped them build a house, and on Saturdays we would go to church, and play basketball. I lived with them for seven months before moving to independent living.

The boys were asked if they could give advice to future foster parents what would it be?

In America when you are sick people leave you alone. People from Sudan make us feel better. You need to be with your folks. Also they need to be patient. We make mistakes. All children are the same! One time I blew something up in the microwave and my parent yelled at me. I didn't know! There are so many new things here. They need to understand the basic setting that we are coming from.

They need to know our culture and the way we do our things is different then the way they do it. If we do something that upsets them we do not do it against them.

When the Sudanese children came to the United States, they were uncertain what parts of their culture they could express. They were unsure of the consequences of their expressions of culture. One theme in the data included the boys feeling alone, lost or confused when foster parents did not talk to them as much as they expected. The foster parents came to understand the importance of finding more time to sit and interact with the Sudanese children who defined care as time spent talking (Bolea, 2003).

The need to understand that when we come to their house things will be different. They need to be prepared for family changes. They also should treat us like their own kids.

They should know that I grew up independent, and that I need their help regardless of what comes with me. If I am in your house...I am a human being in your house. My foster father told me "the light will still be on, the water will still be flowing—I will take nothing from you." This was good because I knew he wanted to help me, not because of the money he would receive to keep me.

Bethany and Caseworkers

The initial purpose of this research project was to do a qualitative evaluation of Bethany's refugee foster care program. What I found in asking questions of the boys was that they had nothing but positive regard for Bethany and the staff. They were unwilling to share suggestions to improve the services that Bethany provides. Below are their comments.

They are helpful. They really care. Bethany took good care of me. That was surprising, I didn't expect that.

Bethany is doing a great job. Some of the boys want more, but I look at the people around me and see that they pay rent, food, and health expenses. Their situation and education are conflicting. I can go to school and work because Bethany pays for my house. Things are not easy, but they take care of you when you are sick.

Bethany helped us with groups. We would be together like a family back in the camp. We would get together every Monday. They helped us with problems with our foster families, homesickness and helped pay my rent.

I can call my caseworker with my problems. She would help. She was a close person to talk to. I can consider her like a sibling. My caseworker gave me a bed, found us a house ...but she didn't show us how to cook. It would have been good to know how to do that.

Bethany did good job to me. If they hadn't cared for me I would not work and go to school. I got to get my high school diploma and work. They will be with me half way through college. I am grateful.

Time and Food

“Hurry hurry has no blessing” is a Sudanese saying. What if you rush driving and get pulled over—you could be four hours late!

Here you have to respect time. In Kenya you go wherever whenever you want. Here everything is on a schedule. It’s hard to get used to and sometimes I forget and think I’m still in Sudan.

Everything here is hard the first time but you do it and it gets easier. This is how it is with time in America.

I used to miss the bus a lot. One day my mom and I went to the bank and the clock said 4:59. They said, “sorry we’re closed” I thought if this was a hospital and we were sick would they help us?

All five of the boys began living in foster homes. Within their first year in the States all five had moved to an independent living setting. By that time they had come to “respect time”. The story that became much more of a challenge was that of cooking. One youth told me that in Sudan, if you are a man and you cook you are no longer considered a man. The others talked extensively about the most shocking thing about moving from their foster homes, second only to the loss of transportation was to cook.

When it came to cooking in America I did not think I was going to make it, but I learned. My house-parent taught me to cook spaghetti and how to bake chicken. But we all eat out a lot.

I don’t like American food. It makes a lot of mess with your mouth and your hands. Seafood looks like insects...I do not eat insects. Fish is okay. We eat a lot of rice at my house. I don’t eat broccoli and garlic makes me gag.

Pizza looked uncooked. On my second day I would not eat it. I knew I could get a disease from uncooked meat. But now I eat it all the time. At first, chocolate was nasty. I am still trying new things.

The way Americans cook is different then ours. Americans eat meat with blood in it. I say, "cook it well." When you eat something with blood in it some people say you are not a human being. You are a wild beast or something.

I make okra, peanut butter, tomato sauce, onion and beef. It tastes good. That is my recipe. When you taste it you will ask me to cook it again.

Language and School

Most of the Sudanese youths have solid English and academic skills, says Yee, who tested them. Though they're all in need of English-as-a-second-language classes, many have reached an intermediate or advanced level of English. Some have already taken high school courses at the refugee camp, though only about a quarter of the high-school-age youths in the camp actually attended high school, experts say (Zehr, 2001).

The five youth interviewed are all students at the local community college. Each of them graduated from area high schools.

Dedication to education as a means of gaining power to do good in the future continues to be an effective way to have meaning in the world (Duncan, 2001, p.1).

When the youth arrive they are placed into classrooms based essentially on their age. As previously stated the boys from Kakuma have attended schools in the camp. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are used whenever possible depending on availability in the district.

I thought I knew English in Africa. When I came here I learned that was not true. I had to write what I was saying because people didn't understand my accent. I did not think it would be hard. I had studied in Kakuma, but the accent was tough. I didn't know slang. Computers and TV were hard. We were told to watch TV and write what we saw. This was very hard.

People were friendly, but it was bright, noisy, crowded and very non-Kakuma. The American kids streaming past us seemed shorter, whiter, louder and more confident. Paul followed behind, looking like he would bolt if we gave him a chance

Our first task was to work combination lockers. That had been a grueling experience in my school days, and it about did them in (Pipher, 2002, p.259.).

At my first school dance it was crazy. I just sat there and girls would come up and sit on my lap. I didn't like it. I told them I was tired when they asked why I was sitting.

I made a lot of friends at school. Nice people approached us and invited us out all the time.

In class we talk about domestication and farming like it's a legend, like it's something from long ago. I grew up in a village where we farmed and raised cows. We are all considered very unique. Some people ask why I am so skinny. One friend asked if he could touch my skin.

I remember my first days in school. I sat there for two hours and watched computer and VCR tapes! I was in class two days and didn't get anything. The third day the teacher told me that he was giving a test. That was so strange!

Freedom

When asked about freedom the youth responded almost in uniform. The question specifically was "What does freedom in the United States mean to you."

Freedom means to do what you want when you want to do it. Nothing will prevent you. You are a man of your own responsibility.

In Africa we didn't have that. Freedom means we are free from enemy. I can continue my education. Someday I will follow my career and I will be somebody. We are all friends here, Muslim and Christian, we are all equal, we can eat together. In Sudan we can not sit in the same room together.

It means a lot. You can say what you want and not worry that someone will be against you. No one can stop you from doing what you want!

There is nothing called freedom. It is what you think and what you do that is wonderful but if you never take a chance it is hell. I came here for a freedom of mind...to be safe. In America there are homeless people, bigots, criminals-I couldn't believe it was here. There is poverty. It's what you do that gives you freedom in this country. Ask and you will be given. Faith without action is meaningless. Have faith and work for it and it will be great.

Five Year Plans

My first job here was as a bagger at the grocery store. I now work two jobs, one at the Amway factory and the other at a fitness center. I am going to school full time and one day I will be a doctor. I want to help people.

I want to be a doctor and help people either here or in Sudan. I think I will stay here and get married. I will have a 100 kids (laughing).

I think I will go somewhere warmer...maybe Arizona, I have cousins there. I haven't decided what I want to do yet. I'll try to be a financial advisor...married someday, but right now I don't think about that.

I will not be working a labor job. I hope to have more political, social, and economic knowledge about America so that I can have a good job. I will move somewhere warmer and have a family. I will have my own house.

A Statement of Faith

They boys were each asked what impact their faith had on their life both now and throughout their journey from Sudan. Each of their answers came quickly and confidently.

There is something fascinating about my life. I have HOPE. I hope that things will one day change. I knew God would change things. I used to question God. Why my generation? Is this punishment? God is the God of good and bad. He has helped me. Now I will help two and they will help four. That's how it works.

There are millions of kids suffering in Africa, they have no education, no health, food, water, clothing, or shelter. They lose relatives and body parts. Some of them leave the world not knowing the meaning of life. Things happen at a certain time. I say, I'm not that special. I sleep on a mattress. Why? I cook very little. If there are leftovers I feel guilty having too much when some people have nothing. People leave life not knowing. God has done so much in my life.

Our war is about religion. It is a big part of my life. I put Jesus first. He delivered me from the camp and brought me here to get a good education. Now I am safe.

I believe God created me and took care of me. He planned for me to come to the United States. Church is important. I pray to God and sing a song. I feel joy that God is with me and that I lived through all those problems.

Words From the Authorities

These boys have experienced and overcome monumental challenges since their arrival. They are a resilient and diverse group each relying on different strengths.

Because of their resilience and keen perspectives it was imperative that they be asked to pass on their knowledge to newcomers. Each boy was asked if a boy from Sudan were to arrive in the United States today, what is the one piece of advice or information you wish to give him?

You will find Sudanese at every corner. We are around. Take your time! People will learn to understand you and you will learn to understand them. Adjust to the food. Open your mind. TRY. Be who you are.

I wish someone had told me more about American culture when I came here. I wish I'd known more about the weather also. In America you can care for yourself, how you go to school, how you live, how hard you will work.

The U.S. is a place of freedom. You do what you want to do. You can get a job, get a car and have money. You will be free from war-no fighting. Everything here is under control. It is good.

Discussion:

The remarks from all five of these boys on their resettlement of course can not be generalized as the experiences of all one hundred plus youth from Sudan, but it can provide a foundation for understanding their perceptions. Dr. Julianne Duncan, in her study on adjustment after six months stated that,

Initial reactions were indeed euphoric. Children reported a feeling of safety for the first time in their memories. Many reported having good dreams of their mothers and few reported any bad dreams or nightmares. Most did connect with supportive religious communities. All enrolled in school (Duncan, 2001, p. 5).

At six months they were still gathering information about their new setting. Coping mechanisms began to be visible as the initial stresses of resettlement subsided. Bethany has taken an energetic role in providing services for these youth through counseling, and group therapy to name a few. Today, two years and four months after

their initial resettlement these boys are not only coping, but are flourishing in their new environment. They have become hard working, determined students and employees in the Grand Rapids community. Their story, hope and faith have made them heroes.

Challenges will face these kids in the future. They will lose financial support from Bethany at their 21st birthdays. Those living in subsidized housing will lose that benefit and will be faced with the challenges of reaching their goals while both going to school and working. Potential concern over issues of guilt and past trauma remain a reality for these youth, but they will continue to stay connected to support services through the church and area refugee service providers.

These boys are laden with strengths. They have one another. They have their faith and their perseverance in education. They have hope for a brighter future.

I will continue to work hard. I will be somebody someday.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions:

Tell me about your first year in the United States.

- a. school
 - b. foster home-family life
 - c. friends
 - d. work
 - e. how Bethany helped
 - f. caseworker
 - g. community
-
1. Tell me about your foster family, what kinds of things do they do?
 2. What should foster parents know when accepting a refugee into their home?
 3. Did you want to be part of a family, or just live independently with your friends?
 4. What is hard about adapting to an American family?
 5. What does freedom in the United States mean to you?
 6. Tell me about American food, time, and driving
 7. What are the best and worst things about being in Grand Rapids?
 8. What kind of contact do you have with your friends and relatives in Africa?
 9. How much quality time do you spend with people outside of your cultural group?
How do you relate to a secondary culture?
 10. Tell me about winter/summer/fall/spring.
 11. What surprised you about America when you first came?

12. How difficult was it for you to get used to how important time is here?
13. Is the Grand Rapids area a good place for refugees?
14. What caused you to be a refugee?
15. What would you like them to know?
16. Do Americans understand how difficult life can be in your country?
17. What do you wish they knew?
18. How important has your faith been to you while being a refugee?
19. What are the best things about your life right now?
20. What are your goals in life?
21. Where do you see yourself in five years?
22. What goals do you hope to accomplish in your educational/professional life?
23. If there was one thing you wish someone had told you at the airport when you first came, what would it be?
24. Do you have any advice for new arrivals?
25. Describe your feelings since you came here. Have you been sad? Happy?

Appendix B

Consent Form

Bethany Christian Services Refugee Foster Care department is committed to providing quality services to refugee youth. To help improve our services, we have developed an interview format for research and evaluation purposes. Interviews will be given to five subjects. Your participation is strictly voluntary, and all information will be kept confidential. Feel free to only answer the questions you feel comfortable responding to, and to discontinue the interview at any time. Your decision not to participate or to discontinue will NOT influence in any way current or future assistance you will receive from the agency. Note that there is no set limit to the length or duration of the interviews. This will remain flexible between you the subject and the interviewer.

A researcher has personally gone over this consent form with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about this research study. I also feel that my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. If I have questions or concerns about this project I will contact Prof. Dave Gabriels at (616) 771-2472, or Paul Huizenga, Chair of the Human Subject Review Board at Grand Valley State University at (616) 895-3356.

I hereby authorize the researchers to release any information obtained in this study to scientific literature. I have been informed that my name will not be identified and that all information that I have provided will remain confidential.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above information and that I agree to participate in the study.

Participant's Signature

Date