

3. Abstract in lay terminology (limit to 150 words)

Transnational family ties: Hopes, resiliencies, and adaptation among Sudanese refugees in San Diego.

This study explores the nature of transnational ties among Sudanese refugees and how these ties affect their coping and their adaptation to their resettled lives in the U.S. Using a semi-structured survey interview with a purposive sample (N = 50), students will be trained to conduct culturally sensitive interviewing with the Dinka ethnic group who have been resettled in San Diego since the early 1990s. Findings from this study will inform service delivery and advocacy for the Sudanese refugee population in San Diego. The researcher hopes that this study will lead to and inform other studies on culturally competent mental health service delivery with other ethnic groups that are represented in the City Heights area where our training site for MFT trainees, the Center for Community Counseling, is located. These groups include the other Sudanese tribes in San Diego as well as other major refugee groups such as the Vietnamese and Cambodian groups.

Project Description

It is estimated that there are 3,500 Sudanese refugees in the San Diego area. Most of them live in the vicinity of SDSU's Community Counseling Clinic (CCC), in the City Heights and North Park areas of San Diego. The refugees belong to different tribal groups, with most in San Diego originating from the Dinka, Nuer, Equatorial, Bari tribal areas of the Sudan. They include the ninety-eight Lost Boys, who arrived in San Diego from the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northern Kenya about two years ago (M. Malur, personal communication, August 11, 2006). Initial contacts with the local Sudanese community reveal two issues that warrant study for a better understanding of the population and its unique needs: first, the transnational characteristic of the Sudanese refugee population; and second, the unique needs of second generation Sudanese immigrant youth. Both issues present unique needs and concerns for mental health service delivery. The issue of transnationalism - its forms, consequences and implications for service delivery - will be the subject of study for this proposal. The issue of the Sudanese immigrant youth, especially as it relates to intergenerational conflict in the family will be studied subsequently.

Transnational families are defined as families where some members are anchored in one place, but where family relationships transcend national boundaries. Research and scholarship on transnational families (e.g. Riak Akuei, 2005; Shandy, 2002) reveal the complexity of these social networks, which serve to meet both practical and emotional needs of refugees in their country of exile and family in their home country. The phenomenon of transnationalism, where there is a cross boundary flow of people, resources, and ideas, has been a subject of increasing interest and research across various disciplines. There is an obvious gap in this research, however, pertaining to how transnational phenomena affect individuals and groups in their different immigrant contexts (Mazzucato, 2004). In the mental health field, this gap is especially significant because it impacts the sensitivity and appropriateness of mental health service delivery to the felt needs of migrant and refugee populations living in transnational spaces and negotiating simultaneous engagement in two or more countries. Refugee families present with unique needs that must be adequately understood for contextually appropriate mental health service delivery (Miller & Rasco, 2004). Shandy (2002), in her paper exploring transnational linkages between resettled Sudanese refugees and those who remain in Africa, asserts the need to consider the transnational dimension of the Sudanese refugees' experience if we are to respond adequately to the complexities of refugees' lives.

This study focuses on Sudanese refugees from the Dinka ethnic group who have been resettled in San Diego since the early 1990s. The Dinka ethnic group have their own unique history and culture, which are **icicut** froiii other "o'w'S of Suu'cu'ic'z'u'c' z'u'ic' 'loupJ of rellAgees ~1 San L1egU. t ms research will explore the ways in which the Dinka ethnic group in San Diego deals with the many responsibilities they face towards family members in their homeland or in refugee camps in Africa and how this affects their lives. Taking a strengths perspective (Ahearn, 2000), the hopes and the resiliencies of the Dinka ethnic group will be explored. Findings from this study will inform service delivery and community involvement with this group by our students and faculty at the Center for Community Counseling at City Heights. I hope to be able to extrapolate lessons from this study that will be helpful, relevant, and familiar to other groups of newcomers, as well. This includes the other Sudanese tribes in San Diego as well as other major refugee groups that reside in the City Heights area, namely the Somalian, Ethiopian, Vietnamese, and Cambodian groups.

Project Objectives

The purpose of the study is threefold: (1) to explore the nature of transnational connections that local Sudanese refugees entertain (political, economic, social, cultural activities) with their relatives and community members in their homeland and across the diaspora; (2) to explore the hopes and resiliencies of the refugees and how the transnational ties affect their family lives and their adaptation to the US; and, (3) to explore the implications for mental health service delivery to and advocacy for the Sudanese refugee population in San Diego. The research questions are:

1. What kinds of transnational ties do Sudanese refugees have with their homeland?

2. How do the refugees manage these cross-boundary obligations? What are their hopes and resiliencies?
3. How do these transnational ties affect family life and their integration into US society?
4. What are the unique challenges that Sudanese refugees face? What is their community support?
5. What are the implications for mental health service delivery and advocacy for the refugees?

Methodology

This is a qualitative study using a semi-structured survey questionnaire (Krueger & Neuman, 2006) to elicit data on the lived experience of Sudanese refugees in San Diego (see Appendix A). The structured survey includes questions on (a) demographics, (b) refugee experience (c) the nature of transnational links (political, economic, social, cultural), (d) the motivation for transnational links, (e) the hopes of individuals and their families in coming to the U.S., and how these have/have not been fulfilled, (f) how the refugees have/have not integrated into US life, (g) unique challenges and resiliencies to stress, and finally (h) the kinds of community resources and services they have been able to access.

The questionnaire will go through different phases before it is used in the field. First, they are constructed with the specific research questions in mind, with particular attention to clarity in conceptualizing all the variables and the context of the population being studied. To reduce survey error and interview bias, the interview questions will be field tested in a pilot study. Research assistants will be trained in culturally sensitive interviewing, specifically with the Sudanese refugee population. Trained interviewers will interview participants face-to-face. Questions in the interview include closed-ended and open-ended items with probes. Interviewers record the answers as they are responded to. However, because some items are open-ended, the interviews are also audio-recorded to reduce loss of information and distortion of answers. Contact with participants is through cultural brokers in the community. They serve to be the bridge between the interviewers and the participants. The interviews will be held in locations of the participant's choice. This may be in the homes of the participants, in a community hall, or church. The Dinka participant may not be conversant in English, hence translators will be used. The researcher has identified 3 translators, who speak Dinka, Arabic, and/or Swahili, who are willing to aid in the research.

The number of participants is targeted at 50. The researcher will use a type of quota and purposive sampling so that a sample of both English-speaking and non-English speaking participants will be included. This ensures a better representation of the Dinka experience due to differing acculturation rates. Only adults (male or female Sudanese 21 and above) will be interviewed. In the event that there is a couple, both will be interviewed because each represents different transnational linkages with their families of origin.

Data Analysis

Responses to open-ended questionnaire items will be transcribed and analyzed following the coding and analysis procedures outlined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). HyperResearch software will be used as an aid in data analysis.

Significance of the Project

This project has a direct educational impact on students. SDSU MFT program seeks to train students in cultural competence in mental health service delivery. It also seeks to seek students who can effectively serve the community. Results from this first study with the Sudanese population in San Diego will inform the kinds of mental health interventions and prevention strategies that we provide at the SDSU Center for Community Counseling (CCC) for diverse populations. The students who are employed as research assistants will have direct experience in library research, field interviewing, use of HyperResearch, and data analysis. These students will gain experience in qualitative research design and analysis.

As a junior faculty in the third probationary year, this research project will greatly aid me in obtaining tenure. Other than submission of the manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal and presentation of the findings at a national conference, this study will enable me to apply for future funding with external agencies, which are focused on mental health care of refugees in the community.

Summary of work already completed

I have initiated contact with the Sudanese community and identified cultural brokers and translators. I have also located a mental health professional who works at Survivors of Torture International (SoTI) who can train my research assistants in culturally sensitive interviewing. The first phase of constructing the survey questionnaire is completed (see Appendix 1) and will undergo field testing in a pilot study to ensure that respondents understand each question as the researcher intends it. I have lined up a team who has agreed to be a resource for me:

1. Majur Malou, who is a Dinka and incoming Director of St. Luke's Refugee Network.
2. Dr. Crystal Green, Crystal Green, Ph.D., LMFT, Associate Clinical Director of Survivors of Torture International (SoTI). She has contacts with Catholic Charities and International Rescue Committee, two other agencies serving Sudanese refugees.
3. Dr John McClevie, Chair of the Board, St. Luke's Refugee Network Advisory Board and Volunteer Staff; also retired College of Education faculty.

Timeline of Project

October 2006	Apply for IRB/Human Subjects. Pilot study: Fine tune semi-structured questionnaire.
Nov 2006. - Mar. 2007	Train research helpers in culturally sensitive field interviews with the Sudanese population. Participants answer survey questionnaire.
March - June 2007	Analysis of Data.
June - July 2007	Write up results
July 2007	Submission of manuscript to special issue of <i>Family Relations on Transnational families.</i>

Dissemination of results

The results of this study will be written up for submission to the special issue of *Family Relations*, Vol. 57(4) issue, with the subject area in focus on Transnational Families (See Appendix B). Results will be disseminated through conference presentations (AAMFT Annual Conference). I plan to continue building on this research by seeking external funding, which is focused on refugee mental health.

References

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- Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York: New York University Press.
- Kreuger, L., & W.L., N. (2006). *Social work research methods: Qualitative and quantitative applications*. Boston: Pearson.
- Mazzucato, V. (2004). Transcending the nation: Explorations of transnationalism as a concept and phenomenon. In D. Kalb, W. Pansters & H. Siebrs (Eds.), *Globalization and development* (pp. 131-162). Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Miller, K., & Rasco, L. (2004). An ecological framework for addressing the mental health needs of refugee communities. In K. Miller & L. Rasco (Eds.), *The Mental health of refugees: Ecological approaches to healing and adaptation*. (pp. 1-66). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Riak Akuei, S. (2005). Remittances as unforeseen burdens: the livelihoods and social obligations of Sudanese refugees. *Global Migration Perspectives*, 18.
- Shandy, D. J. (2002). Transnational linkages between refugees in Africa and in the diaspora. *Forced Migration Review*, 16, 7-8.

5. Experience and Qualifications (Limit - 1 Page):

My background and my involvement with immigrant and refugee populations: I graduated with a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Therapy from Texas Tech University in 2002. I am a family therapist and a nationally approved AAMFT supervisor. I supervise Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) trainees in practicum at the Center for Community Counseling (CCC) at City Heights, an area in San Diego that is populated by ethnic minority groups; significantly, immigrants and refugee groups. In my prior experience as a volunteer with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), I worked with Sudanese, Ethiopian, and Somali refugees. Presently, I teach in the MFT program and I train students in MFT practice, which is multi-culturally informed and competent.

My completed research on immigrant populations and how these research findings were disseminated: I successfully completed two such studies that have been disseminated in national and international conferences, and peer-reviewed publications. The details are as follows:

A. Quantitative Research Study: *"Acculturation Consonance and Dissonance: Effect on Parenting Style, Parent Adolescent Relationship, and Adolescent Psychological Well-Being in Immigrant Chinese-American Families."*

- A manuscript on this study is in preparation for submission to a peer-reviewed journal:
Lim, S., Yeh, M., Liang, J., Lau, A., McCabe, K. (in preparation). Youth acculturation levels, mother-child acculturation gaps, and adolescent adjustment in Immigrant Chinese American Families. First draft in process.
- An article based on the literature supporting the study has been published in a peer-reviewed journal:
Lim, S., & Lim, B. (2004). Parenting style and child outcomes in Chinese and immigrant Chinese families - Current findings and cross-cultural considerations in conceptualization and research. *Marriage and Family Review, 39, 21-43.*

• It is also simultaneously published as a book chapter together with other international authors:
Lim, S., & Lim, B. (2005). Parenting style and child outcomes in Chinese and immigrant Chinese families - Current findings and cross-cultural considerations in conceptualization and research. In M.L. Wilson & S. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Parent-Youth Relations: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (pp. 21-42). New York: Haworth Press.

B. Qualitative Research Study: *"Immigrant Chinese American Women: Negotiating Values and Perceptions of Self in the Cultural Borderlands of East and West - A Qualitative Study."*

- This study led to two national presentations. They are:
Lim, S. (2000, November). *Organizing Principles in Immigrant Chinese Families across Two Generations - A Qualitative Study.* Paper presentation at the National Council on Family Relations, Minneapolis, MN.
Lim, S., & Wieling, E. (1999, November). *Immigrant Chinese American Women: Negotiating Values and Perceptions of Self in the Cultural Borderlands of East and West - A Qualitative Study.* Paper presentation at the National Council on Family Relations, Irvine, CA.
- The results of the study were also disseminated in a peer reviewed journal:
Lim, S., & Wieling, E. (2004). Immigrant Chinese American women: Negotiating values and perceptions of self in the cultural borderlands of East and West - A qualitative study. *The Family Journal, 12(2), 148-158.*

My past RSCA Grant record - one of successful completion

- Under the Fall 2004 RSCA Grant, I completed a study entitled *"Transformative aspects of genogram work: Perceptions and experiences of graduate students in multi-cultural clinical training."* The findings of this study were presented at the 2004 AAMFT Conference in Atlanta Georgia, as well as at the 2005 International Counseling Conference in Bangkok, Thailand in December 2005. The manuscript of this study is in its final draft for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.
- Under the Fall 2005 RSCA Grant, I completed the study on *Student Perceptions on WebQuests in MFT Training.* A manuscript titled: *The WebQuest: An Illustration of Instructional Technology Implementation in MFT Training* is in its final draft for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

6. Budget Request Form: Provide a detailed budget showing specific amounts requested. **Note:** Request course release must be approved by the department chair/school director and provide quotes as need for equipment and/or travel expenses.

Authorized Expenses:

- Salary for graduate or undergraduate students who will assist with the research. Salary is calculated prevailing rate.
- Purchase of special supplies or equipment with certification that the supplies and equipment are no available through the Department or College. Vendor quotes must accompany the request.
- Transportation and expenses incidental to field work or travel to special libraries, collections, laboratories, or to present work at a professional meeting or conference. Provide quotes for all travel expenses (airfare, hotel, mileage, per diem, etc.).
- Expenses involving documents or materials, including duplication or recording costs and library load charges, provided applicant can confirm that State funds are not available.
- Preparation of manuscripts.
- Summer stipend or course release request.

Considerations:

Payment of Research Assistants: It is recommended that undergraduate student assistant hourly rates be calculated at \$8-10 per hour, and graduate student assistant rates at \$10-12 per hour. You may go above the range, provided you include written justification that advanced skills are needed to perform the work.

Summer Stipend or Course Release: Enter your gross salary for one month of summer stipend. One course release is equal to \$4,517 and a two course release is equal to \$9,034.