

INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN REFUGEE WOMEN INTO THE FARGO-MOORHEAD
COMMUNITY

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Integration of African Refugee Women into the Fargo – Moorhead
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ABSTRACT

African refugee women (ARW) flee from their home countries due to civil unrest, war, fear of being persecuted, nationality, and membership of a particular social group or political opinion. They migrate to Western countries such as the United States in search of a safe haven. However, limited studies have been conducted to unveil how the women transition into the new societies. This thesis brings into perspective the background experiences and integration stories of the African Refugee Women in form of a testimonio realized through in-depth interview. The women's narratives revealed challenges they encounter in integration, including English proficiency, lack of connection with the natives, transportation limitations, family dynamics, and cultural differences amongst ARW. The study presents avenues for realizing successful integration as articulated by the women and these include female only activities, changes in leadership, supporting already existing projects started by the ARW, and uniting activities in the community.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Having a strong sense of community demonstrated through membership, influence, shared emotional connection, and integration are aspects that are cherished and adored in Africa communities. People's sense of belonging is in most cases realized through their willingness to sacrifice for the group and selflessly participating in community events. The high levels of social integration in Africa appear to be inherent to the individuals, leading one to assume that their social skills can be transferred to any environment or setting without a struggle (at least for me) until a person is faced with a new reality. Nothing is ever as simple as it first seems.

I must admit I was taken back by the first conversation I had with an African woman one week after my arrival into the United States, who happened to be in her early forties. When she told me she had lived in America for 10 years I got excited, thinking that she was going to help me integrate into and get involved in the community through the connections she must have built over the 10 years. I could only imagine with anticipation and excitement how developed her social network must be. Caught up in my fantasy I asked her what she does and I think my heart sunk a little when she said "nothing." A continual probe revealed that she was a stay at home mother, had no significant connection with anybody outside her kin and did not participate in any social programs in the community (she mentioned as her countenance dropped).

My enthusiasm continued to dwindle as I listened to unexpected responses. 'How come?' is the question that lingered in my mind. Could it be that her lack of integration in the society had something to do with her refugee/new American status, language barriers, or her level of education? My interest in sociology led me to different questions and thoughts about the complexity of challenges this woman faced and wondered if it depicts the challenges faced by other women of her caliber. Two weeks later, I met a different African refugee women (ARW)

and when she echoed similar sentiments as the first woman. It was at that point that I developed a keen interest in studying the lives of ARW in America, with a focus on their integration into local societies. The majority of ARW, if not all, are from war torn countries and have encountered and experienced terrible adversities. I believe for most of the women the realization of coming to the United States is met with anticipation and excitement about the possibility of a new life, while totally oblivious of the new culture and way of life they are yet to apprehend.

In pursuit of an explanation to the low levels of social integration and participation in the community, I ended up engaging in a conversation with one of the employees of an organization that serves the refugee population in North Dakota. He provided what I consider a viable explanation to the ARW situation. He explained that when African refugee families move from their respective countries to North Dakota, the children get absorbed into the education system, where they end up building relationships with their peers. The men become incorporated into the workforce, where they develop relationships with their colleagues. Women, on the other hand, occupy homemaking roles that limit their levels of interaction in the community, thus becoming isolated and struggling to participate meaningfully in the Fargo-Moorhead (FM) community. Although this is a viable explanation, I wanted to engage in a study that interrogated the question of ARW's integration experiences. To ground this research, I not only continued to reach out to the refugee community, but I also started to look for research and scholarship in this area of study.

The need to engage in the study of African refugee women and their limited integration into their local communities within the United States was reinforced when my search for supportive literature became challenging. It was nearly impossible to obtain materials that focused on ARW and their level of integration, specifically within American society. This in

itself portends a possible gap on how much attention this minority group has been accorded. Several studies, however, have been conducted in Canada and Australia and these do provide support for the research study I chose to undertake in America, as the countries have similar characteristics under the western world umbrella.

This gap in the literature further reinforced the need to conduct research on ARW, particularly the women most isolated from the FM community. Through this research, my goal was to find out how the ARW relate to and understand the FM community, whether they experience social exclusion and anomie, the factors that influence successful integration of the ARW in the FM community as well as the dynamics to successful integration. Therefore, I initiated a project in which I interviewed 10 women, who were of 40 years of age and above. I conducted multiple in-depth interviews with 7 women and one time interview sessions with 3 women. My participants are ARW who were largely isolated from the FM community. I spent seven months establishing rapport with these women. A key challenge that I experienced firsthand was the difficulty in finding women who were fluent enough in English to be interviewed. All of the participants spoke English as a second language with some having English as a third language. In the style of testimonio, I collected and analyzed the interviews to understand how ARW experience the FM community, paying particular attention to whether or not they experience social isolation and anomie, as well as asking the women what would help foster a more integrated experience for them in the FM community.

The study results and analysis of this research revealed that ARW in the Fargo-Moorhead community experience social exclusion that results from the challenges they experience as they integrate into the community. These challenges include low English proficiency, transportation problems, lack of connection with the local residence, family dynamics, and cultural differences

among the ARW. The study also revealed that the ARW experience traits of anomie such as feelings of despair, estrangement and/or isolation, and the retreatism mode of adaptation as described by Emile Durkheim (1951) and Robert Merton (1961) respectively. Ultimately, my participants provide valuable insight into how the Fargo-Moorhead community and its refugee organizations can better support ARW to improve their quality of life. To ensure a coherent flow of the study, I discuss the historical background of the ARW and their process of transitioning into the United States. This is followed by a discussion of social exclusion, which provides the basis for the study by introducing the research questions.

Understanding the Historical Background of African Refugee Women

A refugee refers to a person who flees or leaves his or her country of citizenship because of disaster and wars, ultimately seeking a new life in another country (Nwadiora & McAdoo, 1996). According to UNHCR (1967), the United Nations established the first definition of a refugee in 1951 to accommodate the needs of displaced European survivors of the Second World War. Before 1951 people fleeing political situations were considered to be in exile. In 1967, the definition of a refugee was expanded to,

A person who is outside his or her home country, or if he or she has no home country, then outside of the country in which he or she last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or well-founded fear of persecution based on the person's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. (UNHCR, 1967, p.16).

African refugee women, prior to their migration to the United States of America, have a wide variety of political, educational, cultural, and employment histories, depending on their countries of origin (such as South Sudan, Sudan, Liberia, Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Ethiopia). Many, if not all of them, happen to be survivors of war or forced migration, a factor that potentially could bring with it limitations to psychological well-being of the women even in

new environments. “In addition to sharing challenges of migration, they survive comparable forms of violence, persecution, and forced migration such as ethnic cleansing, concentration camps, gendered forms of violence (e.g. forced military conscription, rape), and discrimination based on religion, race, political affiliation, and/or gender” (Erickson, 2010, p. 6). For example, Somali refugee women, especially those living in the South of Somalia, face intensified possibility of torture, rape sexual humiliation, and are also subjects to ever-changing religious restrictions and punishments (Abdi, 2005). Pittaway (1991) found that 73 per cent of 200 refugee women studied had suffered either medium or high degrees of trauma and torture prior to coming to Australia. She continues to elaborate that this experience of trauma is not always fully recognized in provision of services particularly mainstream services to refugees.

Redmond (2014) found that the refugees, having fled their homelands with little or no clothes, as well as resources, become severely limited in their options for survival, particularly in camps where they have little or no access to work, agricultural or grazing land, or other means of self-sufficiency. Redmond (2014) continues to say that across Africa, hundreds of thousands of long-term refugees are in remote camps where they are often totally dependent on international help. The refugees in Africa depend on World Food Programme to stay alive with majority of them experiencing unacceptable levels of malnutrition. Some of the refugees resort to so-called ‘negative coping strategies,’ triggering a range of additional problems. These include and are not limited to increase school dropouts as refugee children seek jobs to help buy food for their families. Unable to go home even after the situation in their home countries change, many refugees remain in exile for years and even decades until UNHCR intervenes for relocation to western countries.

According to Redmond (2014), women refugees experience a host of risks in their struggles for survival. Such experiences include: exploitation and abuse of those who venture out of camps in search of work or land to grow crops; “survival sex” by women and girls trying to raise money to buy food; early marriage of young girls; increased stress and domestic violence within families; and more incidents of theft and other activities that raise tensions within camps and with surrounding communities. Considering ARW’s background, problems such as social exclusion in efforts of resettlement and transitioning into new environment surface. Effective integration into the society would be rendered futile if not properly and keenly carried out.

Refugee Transition to America

According to migration policy institute (2014), the number of refugees who arrived in the United States in 2012 through resettlement programs was 58,179 a 3% increase from 2011. Out of these, 12,000 were from Africa region. The high influx of refugees in America brings about demographic changes in contemporary American society that portends serious consequences with far-reaching implications for the future development of the country especially if the refugees are not adequately integrated into the system and programs.

According to Lutheran Social Services (LSS), North Dakota accepts about 400-500 refugees each year who resettle in Fargo, West Fargo, Bismarck and Grand Forks with an aim of helping the refugees achieve economic self –sufficiency as soon as possible. The total number of refugees that have been resettled in North Dakota since 2004 is 4066. Out of these, 2,211 are from Africa and the total number of ARW in North Dakota from 2004 to 2014 was 958 (Lutheran Social Services, n.d.). The services provided by LLS include securing apartment for refugee families, registering adults and children in English classes and public education programs, employment services, foster care solutions for unaccompanied refugee minors,

interpreter services and citizenship classes. Fargo–Moorhead is a metropolitan area described by the United States Census Bureau as encompassing Fargo, North Dakota, Moorhead, Minnesota, and the neighboring communities of Cass county North Dakota and Clay County Minnesota. The two cities lie on the North Dakota–Minnesota border, on opposite banks of the Red River of the North and are educational, cultural, and industrial centers of southeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. The population of the Fargo-Moorhead region was estimated to be 228,291 in 2014 by the Census Bureau.

Williams & Batrouney (1998) mention that refugees have higher unemployment rates, lower earning and occupational attainment than other immigrants. Lack of required skills, English proficiency upon arrival, as well as non-transferability of qualifications create barriers to employment. Certain refugee experiences such as unpreparedness during departure, experience of torture or trauma, disruption to education in refugee camps, grief and loss of loved ones and mental health issues (Bokore, 2012), potentially contribute additional barriers in their transitioning process. Erickson (2010) in her study on the refugees in North Dakota mentions that South Sudanese women for example were considered second-class citizens due to their darker skin tone in some of the countries they escaped to or lived in. While there are important exceptions to this, most women lacked self-confidence.

Taylor (2004) posits that education is often seen by refugees as the key to their future settlement and to their children's inclusion in the host society. Refugee parents often lack knowledge of the educational system and some of them might have engaged in very low scale trade, business, or subsistence production and therefore have not experienced waged labor, (Taylor, 2004). Many ARW who came to the United States had not been formally educated leading to high illiteracy levels and English language barrier. "Without English proficiency,

refugees are readily excluded from many aspects of life, including employment, education, access to services and social interaction” (Taylor, 2004, p. 13).

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is defined as “the lack, or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas,” (Levitas et al. 2007, p. 25). Social exclusion denies individuals the capability to exercise the personal agency of participating and contributing to different aspects of society (Hayes, Gray & Edwards 2008). It can only be judged by comparing the (non)participation of some individuals or groups relative to others, in a given place and at a given time (Atkinson, 1998). The dimensions of social exclusion identified by Burchardt et al. (2002) are production (participation in economically or socially valuable activities), political engagement (involvement in local or national decision-making), and social interaction (integration with community). A sense of connectedness is central to inclusion.

Social exclusion experiences can pose an additional burden acting against refugees in their efforts to recover from their past distressing life experiences. Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock’s (2002) major study of African settlement in Australia (2000) identified settlement problems including education and English language issues, intergenerational conflict and cultural gaps, unemployment, access to employment services, isolation and estrangement.

Refugees of course are also subject to standard indicators of social exclusion such as lack of participation in employment, education and social networks. Social networks warrant further exploration as an aspect of the complexity of inclusion or exclusion. For example, a refugee group may form a tight-knit community with little social contact with the wider host society (Taylor, 2004, p. 16).

Taylor & Stanovic (2005) suggest that the notion of social exclusion identifies a dynamic process and encourages the examination of interrelationships across time and place and also

focuses on the way that host societies may exclude refugees from participation, not necessarily intentionally, and how systems need to adapt to ensure people are included. Successful settlement of refugees depends on their social inclusion rather than exclusion. ARW are often perceived as ordinary immigrants with no reference to their unique cultural backgrounds. The level, quality, and value shifts experienced by ARW in the attempt to make their lives meaningful in America can be psycho-culturally overwhelming (Nwadiora, 2007).

Taylor & Stanovic (2005) argue that in considering the dimensions of social exclusion of refugees in regional areas, the relationships arena is perhaps the most complex because relationships are affected by the diversity within the host community, which can be both welcoming and hostile to the newcomers. Relationship arena represent the social networks and connections that the refugees have in the community. Taylor & Stanovic (2005), in their study on refugees and resettlement, observed that the refugees, particularly women, lived fairly contained lives within their ethnic group with their cultural characteristics also affecting their community relations. This points brings me to the overarching research topic which is the integration of African refugee women into the social programs in North Dakota. With a focus on the experiences of refugee women living in the Fargo-Moorhead (FM) area, the 4 guiding research questions aimed at explicating the overall topic are:

1. How do ARW relate to and understand the Fargo-Moorhead community?
2. Do ARW experience social exclusion and anomie in the FM community?
3. What factors influence successful integration of African refugee women into the FM community in North Dakota?
4. How can Fargo-Moorhead community organizations better support African refugee women to improve their quality of life?

These questions will provide a basis for understanding the perception what integration and assimilations looks like for the African refugee women. These questions not only enable me to explore the experiences of the women, but also to illustrate the possible challenges in successful integration as well as provide insights towards realizing successful integration that will lead to improved quality of life of the ARW.

In the following chapters I outline the literature review and ground in a conceptual framework built through gender literature that draws heavily from the works of Charles Fonchingong (2006) and Chandra Mohanty (2004). The concept of anomie is discussed through the lenses of Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton's. The methods chapter discusses the research methodology and also comprises an epistemological section where I provide a reflection on the encounters that characterized my research endeavors in the process of knowledge production. The fourth chapter of the research provides a description of the results and analysis that is followed by a conclusion to the study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed here provides in-depth information and analysis of the conceptual theories adopted in this research study to provide grounding and address the research questions. This section begins by providing background information on the African Refugee women (ARW) through the gender lens. A discussion is built through gender literature that draws heavily from the works of Charles Fonchingong (2006) and Chandra Mohanty (2004). While Fonchingong's work explores gender relations in Africa with emphasis on the highly patriarchal relations that subdue women in the African societies. Mohanty (2004) provides a critique of western feminism that portrays 'third world woman' as the collective other that generalizes non-western women as traditional, uneducated or poor without considering their differences in terms of class, race, religious or ethnic background. Together, these theorists provide insight into the challenges of doing research with this population. The last section explores the concept of anomie by juxtaposing the perspectives of Emile Durkheim (1951) and Robert Merton (1968) in explaining anomie. Durkheim and Merton conceptualization on anomie is important in the study of ARW because it provided the basis for understanding whether the women experience anomic traits in their integration process. This literature section grounds my approach and focus on ARW who are isolated from the local community.

Conceptual Framework

African Women through Gender Lenses.

Michelle Rosaldo (1980) attests that a woman's place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does or even less, a function of what she biologically is, but rather the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions. The subject of gender is inescapable when explicating the social interactions as well as background information

of women in general. This is because "Male sexual politics in Africa and around the world share the same political goal: to assure female dependence and subservience by any and all means," (Hosken, 1989, p. 14). Women are accorded demoted positions with a view that they are incapable of making any significant contributions. Identifying similar concerns, Lehmann (1994) explains Durkheim's position in discrediting and denouncing gender equality by describing gender equality as primitive. Such positions held in the society has brought with it tremendous marginalization and seclusion of women from various forms of public activities. Bestowing men with power and privileging them over women enables them to continual shape, define, redefine, culture, while giving women no option but to pledge allegiance to the set values.

Fonchingong (2006) reveals that African literature is full of write-ups that project male dominance and inadequately pleads the case of the African woman thereby projecting gender inequality. Women are marginalized and an ideal female is understood as one who acts within the framework of her traditional roles as wife and mother. This is so strongly ingrained that the social values of respect and love that a woman earns is relative to the degree of her adaptations to these roles. "Durkheim exhorts women seeking equality to devote themselves to the family and to attach their own social destinies to the social destiny of the domestic milieu," (Lehmann, 1994, p. 57). Juxtaposing Durkheim and Lehmann's critique of Durkheim against Fonchingong's discussion of patriarchy in Africa enables me to ask questions on whether such ideologies play a role in shaping the experiences and also influence successful integration of ARW in their new environments. African women become the victims of a society regulated by cultural norms and traditional values. "An obnoxious and pestiferous culture provides clauses that inhibit the progress of women and maintains them permanently in the suffocating stench of submissiveness." (Fonchingong, 2006, p. 138). The question, then, of how these values then

follow and continue to affect African women as they relocate to new cultures and communities with different value systems is significant.

General conceptualizations in various societies in Africa situate women as powerless and voiceless victims of ever deepening oppression rooted in layers of male-supremacist 'tradition', colonialism and development. Educational processes both in the traditional precolonial, colonial and post-colonial eras in Africa bearing traces to subjugation of the female gender cannot be overlooked. Fonchingong (2006) asserts that the flagrant misrepresentation of women internalized through the gender socialization process has lowered women and led to a backwash in the social ladder, relegating them to the margins. The societies in Africa are highly patriarchal and women are seen to occupy very low and subordinate positions. Lehmann (1994) asserts that Durkheim views the egalitarian alternative to patriarchy as a thing of the past, part of an obsolete society. He defends patriarchy against the charges it constitutes such as enslavement of women by considering them disputable. For Durkheim, "the relationship of male supremacy and protection and female submission and self-sacrifice constitutes a subordination that is in no way degrading." (Lehmann, 1994, p. 61). It remains interesting to envision that in contemporary societies in United States where radical feminist movements have made strides in emancipating women and strived for equality, ARW experiences in such countries could reveal a prevailing gap. It is evident in the world around us that despite considerable achievements by Western feminists, there is still a range of social ills that negatively impact women.

Mohanty (1991) explains that because women are constituted as a coherent group, sexual difference becomes joined with female subordination, and power is automatically defined in binary terms that is, people who have it (men), and people who do not (women). This ideology is echoed by Erickson (2010) who asserts that women have a muted voice in cultural forms of

citizenship in their own community, while men are adept at increasing their voices and influence over politics in the community. For example, “Sudanese women faced discrimination on the basis of gender within their own communities and by the state.” (Erickson, p. 314). Erickson specifically mentions that more African refugee women rely on welfare than men and have less access to or confidence in their abilities to obtain economic stability. These concerns raise issues around how African refugee women transition and find meaning and value in the new societies and cultures into which they move.

Mohanty (2003) provides a critique on the homogeneous views and presumptions in western feminists, who in their writings discursively colonize, devalue and underprivileged women in the third world (non-western women). Such writings, I believe, can potentially imply non-western women are disempowered and disenfranchised, whose voice can only be heard and represented through the writings and advocacy of educated, privileged western feminists. Mohanty challenges positioning third world women against their female counterparts in the west with disregard to the varying social, economic, political and economic backgrounds that posits the superiority of one group (western women) over another (non-western women). Mohanty suggests that the universal categorization of women in non-western countries is mostly done through constructed monolithic terms and classifications that label the women in the third world countries as run down, poor, uneducated and tradition-bound, while overlooking their diversity and heterogeneity. Discounting the complexities and diverse experiences of third world women can lead to introduction of intervention mechanisms that may not be viable in meeting the need of the women as the cause of women is impeded. This leads me to posit that though ARW come from the same continent, their experiences need to be looked at and understood within their unique cultural contexts.

Mohanty (2003) emphasizes that the experiential and analytic anchor in the lives of marginalized women – such as the ARW – provides the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social injustice. It does not come as a surprise that it is likely to be assumed that all third world women have similar problems and needs and thus they must have similar interests and goals (Mohanty, 1991). Indeed, the interests of urban, middleclass, educated African women, to take for instance, could surely not be seen as being the same as the uneducated, rural or poor African women. Development policies and practices therefore do not affect both groups of women in a similar manner. Feminist work on women in the third world blurring this distinction eventually ends up constructing monolithic images of ‘Third World Women’ (Mohanty, 1991).

Western feminist discourse, by assuming women as a coherent, already constituted group which is placed in kinship, legal and other structures, defines third world women as subjects outside of social relations, instead of looking at the way women are constituted as women through these very structures (Mohanty, p. 351).

The problem in the use of women as a group and hence a stable category of analysis is that it assumes a historical, universal unity between women based on a generalized notion of their subordination instead of analytically demonstrating the production of women as socio-economic political groups within particular local contexts (Mohanty, 1991).

It has been assumed that women immigrating from developing countries to developed countries such as the United States enjoy greater liberties, freedom, equality, and greater opportunities for advancement. A quick assumption therefore would be that ARW migrating to the United States celebrate their economic and political freedom by taking advantage of the opportunities presented to them in the new environment while exploring their hidden potentials, something they were once denied. But, the process of learning a new culture poses a variety of challenges for women coupled up by their experiences as women refugees. This has a potential of causing them to lead very isolated lives behind the shadows of their husbands and children. A

general stereotype is that women in developing countries are thought to endure greater oppression in comparison to women in developed countries who are seen to enjoy greater rights and liberties. “Recent studies are revealing that though immigration provides some opportunities for women, it also poses significant constraints. The constraints posed by immigration are said to disadvantage women and cause them significant acculturative stress and psychological distress.” (Imungi, 2008, p. 107). In exploring the constraints posed by immigration the study seeks to find out whether the ARW experience anomie. Durkheim and Merton provides the base for understanding anomie.

Anomie: Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton Overview

This section provides a general overview that juxtaposes Durkheim’s perception of anomie with Merton’s perception. The section explores how Durkheim (1951) conceptualizes anomie as emanating from rapid social change in society and how, according to Merton (1968), anomie is a result of a disjoint between cultural goals and the institutional means of achieving the goals. Each of the theorist’s views and contributions to anomie are further discussed in the subsequent sections.

“The viability or solidarity of any society, including the family, is contingent on two things: the ascendance of collective integration over individual alienation and the ascendance of collective regulation over individual anomie.” (Lehmann, 1994, p. 64). In the most common sense, anomie is understood as general social lawlessness. Lehmann states that Durkheim describes anomie as emanating from insatiable passions and appetites resulting from a temporary lack of rules for behavior and interaction characteristics of emergent social elements. “Anomie whether progressive or regressive, by allowing requirements to exceed appropriate limits, throws open the door of disillusionment and consequently to disappointment.” (Durkheim, 1951, p. 285)

The rapid change refugee populations experience when they move from their home countries to the United States poses unique challenges for ARW. The intersection of ARW coming from highly patriarchal societies and the rapid change they experience in a new country with different gendered (and other) values leads me to think about how anomie can be a useful tool to help better understand ARW's experiences in the United States and how they integrate into the communities.

In explaining anomie, Durkheim (1951) deliberately focused on suicidal behaviors prevalent in various societies. He argued that "each society has a definite aptitude for suicide" (Durkheim, p.48). Durkheim further posed that the suicidal behaviors in any given society could not be explained by individual characteristics or psychological abnormalities and that, "it must necessarily depend upon social causes" (Durkheim, p. 145). Durkheim attempted to prove that certain states of the social environment are the determining causes of different patterns of suicide from which anomie as an example stems from. Out of this study emerged the concept of anomie.

Anomie refers to an environmental state where society fails to exercise adequate regulation or constraint over the goals and desires of its individual members (Durkheim, 1951). This is a concern for Durkheim, because the experience of anomie, in its original conception, is understood as a feeling of despair, because society is unable to provide clear boundaries and structures that enable individuals to make meaning out of their lives. Out of disillusionment and despair, individuals in an anomic society may take their own lives. Durkheim developed anomie through his analysis of the rapid change and loss of meaning in life that emerged in the transition from traditional to modern society. Transition into the new environment becomes a challenge and poor structural support that can integrate people into society can cause anomie in some groups of people. This is not unlike the ways in which American society may not have adequate

structural support for refugees. Acculturative stress brought about by transitioning into a new culture and environment causes mental health problems such as stress, depression, and suicidal ideation (Hovey & King, 1996). ARW experience rapid change when they migrate from their countries of origin into the United States. Severe and chronic emotional stress develop among refugees after too long exposed to the trauma, loss of home, family members, friends, and social support as they received previously in their original country (Bhugra, Craig, & Bhui, 2010). Emile Durkheim's (1951) concept of anomie provides a way into understanding ARW's experiences with cultural transition and stress. Specifically, I will use it to explore whether or not they experience low integration in the Fargo Moorhead community and how low integration impacts their experiences.

In his work to expand on Durkheim's conceptualization of anomie, Robert Merton (1968) honed in on the way social structures can foreclose individuals' ability to achieve socially revered goals. When individuals are blocked from their pursuit of economic and social success, they must adapt their behaviors in order to tackle the frustrating social conditions. Merton's response to how people adapt to environmental pressures is perhaps his single most important contribution to the anomie tradition (Orcut, 1983). Merton (1968) developed five adaptations that individuals use to manage the disjoint between culture and social structure in American society. These include: conformity, innovation, ritualism, rebellion and retreatism. I will expand on these below with a focus on retreatism, as it potentially provides insight into ARW's experiences.

Durkheim's Concept of Anomie and the Experiences of African Refugee Women

Because of the importance of social activities shaping the meaning of women's lives, I am particularly interested in how social exclusion and other challenges ARW face as they transition into the FM community impact their day-to-day lives. Erickson (2010) states that due

to childcare responsibilities, lack of extended kin nearby, and a lack of knowledge about education and other forms of empowerment, refugee women felt alone and even more isolated. Durkheim's work often disregards the experiences of women and so I am interested in how well (or not) the concept of anomie might explain what ARW are going through.

Durkheim (1984) categorized societies into two forms of solidarity: mechanical and organic. He perceived mechanical societies as having high levels of individual integration into society and this he suggested to be evident in traditional societies that were less developed and modernized. Lehmann (1993) asserts that societies under mechanical solidarity experience a collective consciousness that is absolute as well as collective type of personality in which the component individuals are completely fused and dissolved. Traditional societies entirely absorb an individual who becomes highly integrated into the group. The characteristics of a mechanical society in my opinion depict the type of lives and conditions that ARW knew and had internalized before their migration to United States.

Durkheim viewed organic solidarity societies as having high levels of interdependence and individuality, pointing out that these characteristics marked the modern and advanced societies such as United States and other developed western countries. "The individual exists in as much as it is distinct and independent" (Lehmann, 1993, p. 49). Activities become personal to the extent that they become specialized. An individual develops personal activities that distinguish her from others and at the same time are dependent upon others. ARW arrive in the United States equipped with African values, norms, traditions and conditions that are in sharp contrast with those of the host community. I am interested in the ways in which the women learn to cope with their new environment and whether or not they are successfully integrated into the society.

Lehmann (1994) expands on this to address what she identifies as two different societies that exist within modern society: the society of men and the society of women. The society of men is considered modern with specialized individuals while “the society of women, is a primitive society characterized by relations that resemble mechanical solidarity.” (Lehmann, p. 91). Lehmann points out that the functional unity that organizes a society implies that all the individual elements of society benefit equally from the health, welfare and normal functioning of social institutions and the social whole. Durkheim (1951) is of the opinion that women are less likely to experience anomie compared to men, not because of psychological differences, but because women do not participate in collective life in the same way as men. “In advocating the partial and restricted integration of women into public and social life, the betterment of women’s lives is not Durkheim’s objective.” (Lehmann, p. 71). This provides an interesting piece to the study as I seek to understand what integration means from the perspective of the ARW.

Merton’s Concept of Anomie and African Refugee Women in the Fargo-Moorhead Area

Durkheim’s work provided the intellectual foundation for Merton’s attempt to develop a macro-level explanation of rates of norm-violating behavior in American society (Orcut, 1983). Robert Merton (1968) and his concept of anomie advance beyond Durkheim’s singular concern with suicide to become a general sociological approach of deviance. Merton replaces Durkheim’s conception of insatiable passions and appetites with the assumption that human needs and desires are primarily the product of a social process (Orcut, 1983). Merton conceptualized anomie as emanating from the disjoint between cultural goals and institutional means, “Contemporary American culture appears to approximate the polar type in which great emphasis upon certain success-goals occurs without equivalent emphasis upon institutional means,” (Merton, p. 190). He echoes Durkheim in that the concept of anomie referred to a

property of the social and cultural structure and not a property of individuals confronting the structure. Merton, nevertheless, attests that the utility of the concept for understanding diverse forms of behavior become evident and is extended to a condition of individuals rather than the environment.

Merton (1968) pronounces that no society lacks norms governing its conduct but societies do differ in the degree to which the institutional controls are effectively integrated with the goals that stand high in the hierarchy of cultural values. “The culture may be such as to lead individuals to center their emotional convictions upon the complex of culturally acclaimed ends, with far less emotional support for prescribed methods of reaching out for those ends.” (Merton, p. 189). Social structures define, regulate and control the acceptable modes of achieving the set goals. The disjuncture posed when genuine means of achieving socially valued goals are blocked to individuals within that society can lead to anomie. For example, if a society reveres the goals of independence and hard work for individuals, but a person cannot achieve those goals because they do not possess the right language, or have the education to qualify for any available job, he/she can experience anomie. The chronic discrepancy between cultural promises and structural realities does not only undermine social support for institutional norms but also promote violations of the norms (Orcut 1983). “Some deviations may be regarded as new pattern of behavior, possible emerging among subgroups at odds with those institutional patterns supported by groups other than themselves and by the law.” (Merton, p. 176).

In attempt to explain the relationship existing between an individual and the society, Merton (1968) introduces adaptations. He attests that examination of how the social structure operates to exert pressure upon individuals for alternative modes of behavior must be prefaced by the observation that people may shift from one alternative behavior to another as they engage

in different spheres of social activities. The behaviors exhibited are more role behaviors in specific types of situations and should not be confused for an individual's personality.

Adaptations are strategies employed by members of the society in relation to the cultural goals and the institutionalized means guiding the society.

There are various types of adaptations appropriated by individuals within the society. Merton (1968) describes conformity mode of adaptation as when an individual accepts the culturally defined goals and the socially legitimate means of achieving them. An example of a conformist in the society would be a professional who accepts the goal of acquiring wealth and also the means of acquiring the wealth through hard work. Innovation adaptation occurs when an individual accepts the goals of society but rejects or lacks the socially legitimate means of achieving them. This type of adaptation explains the high rate of crime committed by uneducated or poor individuals who do not have access to legitimate means of achieving the social goals of wealth and power. Merton further explains ritualism adaptation as when an individual accepts the structurally defined means of meeting needs such as the lifestyle of hard work but rejects the cultural goals such a monetary reward. The ritualists in the society would, for example, obtain high levels of education but not with an aim of accumulating wealth. Rebellion adaptation occurs when an individual rejects both culturally defined goals and structurally defined means and substitutes them with new goals and new means. As an example, rebels may use social or political activism to replace the goal of personal wealth with the goal of social justice and equality.

Merton (1968) explains retreatism as a non-productive liability adaptation. This is when an individual rejects both the cultural goals and institutionalized means and, as a result, ends up withdrawing from the society. "Retreatism seems to occur in response to acute anomie involving

an abrupt break in the familiar and accepted normative framework and in established social relations, particularly when it appears to individuals subjected to it that the condition will continue indefinitely.” (Merton, p. 242). Merton explains that people who adapt in this fashion are in the society but not of it. They can be included as members of the society only in a fictional sense. “This mode of adaptation is most likely to occur when both the culture goals and institutional practices have been thoroughly assimilated by the individual and imbued with effect and high value, but accessible institutional avenues are not productive of success.” (Merton, p. 207). Defeatism, quietism and resignation are manifested in escape mechanisms. Upon initial work with ARW, the characteristics of retreatism stand out as a potentially useful tool for understanding how they adapt to the Fargo-Moorhead community. I am particularly interested in understanding with greater depth the nuances and potential complexities that ARW articulate in their experiences.

Thinking about the concept of anomie alongside the work of Fongchigong (2006) and Mohanty (2004), my goal is to better understand AFW experiences and develop a way of exploring the benefits and limitations of a concept such as anomie. With an understanding of the diverse cultural backgrounds that ARW come from, I hope to open up insight into the experiences of ARW in order to provide the basis for developing intervention mechanisms that can be adopted by community organizations to better support ARW and improve their quality of life?

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

In the study on integration of African refugee women (ARW) into the FM community, I adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative methodology is often inductive in nature and allows for identification of previously unknown processes, explanations of why and how phenomena occur, and the range of their effects (Pasick et al, 2009). “In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher or that writers express in the literature (Creswell, 2014, p. 186). Because there is scarce research on ARW, a qualitative approach helped me explore and understand how ARW experience the community and how they have and have not integrated into the community. The approach involved the use of personal interviews as a method of data collection aimed at answering the research questions. It was essential in providing knowledge on the background information of the women as well as elaborating the ways community organizations in FM area can best serve the ARW. In depth interviewing allowed for collection of rich and detailed information. In this chapter, I outline my methodological approach, the participants, the approach to analysis, as well as my epistemological perspective.

Interviews

The research study used personal interviews in a rigorous qualitative data collection process. As suggested by Kvale & Brinkmann (2008), the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject’s points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. Kvale & Brinkmann attest that phenomenology has been relevant for clarifying the mode of understanding in a qualitative research interview. Phenomenology points to an interest in understanding social

phenomena from the actors' own perspective and describing the world as experienced by the subjects, with the assumption that the important reality is what people perceive it to be.

Participants were asked to engage in in-depth discussions in a conversational manner about their own experiences as African refugee women. Developing relationships and trust is key among the African community therefore it was necessary to do multiple visits with the participants to gain substantial and enriched data. I interviewed a total of 10 participants for the study, 7 of these interviews involved multiple interview sessions with the participants while, the remaining 3 were one time interviews. The initial interviews with the 7 participants in the study varied from 40 minutes to 90 minutes. Follow-up or additional interview meetings were arranged where need be and were strictly optional and voluntary on the part of the participants. These follow-up sessions varied from one participant to another and lasted for approximately 30 minutes to 90 minutes.

There was an overlap between the topical and cultural interviews. "In topical interviews the researcher looks specific facts, descriptions of events, or examples that will help answer a particular focused question. In cultural interviews, the researcher tries to understand the norms, rules and values that underlie people's behavior, their sense of ethics, and/or their traditions (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 31). Topical interviews included demographic information of the participants such as age, number of years spent in America, country of origin, level of education, number of children, occupation, and marital status (See Appendix B). These short structured interviews were useful in cases where the women had low English proficiency and also for women who had time constraints due to other commitments. The ARW were asked cultural questions to help clarify how they relate to or understand the Fargo-Moorhead community as well as whether they do or do not face social exclusion. The cultural interview questions

revolved around the past experiences of the women in their home country, their transition to America, the differences in way of life, and other questions about the changes they experienced upon coming to the FM area (see appendix A). Interviewing as a method of data collection proved viable as it granted the participants an opportunity to provide historic information and also allowed me as the researcher to have control over the line of questioning.

Due to the nature of the research and cultural preferences, the study involved face-to-face interviews with the ARW at their homes or any other conducive environment of their choice. A consent form (See appendix C) was read to the participants before the interview commenced upon which they were expected to provide verbal agreement to allow for interviewing. Coming from African decent, I am familiar with the cultural discomfort introduced by signing documents and its potential to cause some participants to withhold information. A signature waiver granted by Internal Review Board boosted the chances of success for the study as the comfort level of the women was enhanced. However, the study ensured that the participants retain a copy of the informed consent form that was read to them before the interview commenced.

Participants

The participants in the study were African women ages 40 and above, who live in the Fargo-Moorhead area and entered the United States on a refugee status. The research targeted women who are 40 years and above because the study focused on older ARW who came into the United States as adults. A total of 10 ARW were interviewed in the study. The women possessed different characteristics as well as diverse experience that contributed in enriching the study. Some of the demographic characteristics of the women are as provided in Table 1 below. The study provides a limited description of the participants in order to ensure that their identity remain protected. The names provided in the demographic table below are pseudonyms.

Table 1.

Participants' Demographics

Participants Name	Age Range	Length of Stay in the United States	Have Kids
Jane	61+	13	Yes
Mary	56-60	16	Yes
Sofi	46-50	7	No
Lucy	46-50	10	Yes
Magy	56-60	10	Yes
Ruth	51-55	15	Yes
Beth	46-50	12	Yes
Anna	51-55	9	Yes
Judy	51-55	7	Yes
Suzy	40-45	5	Yes

The participants in the study reflect the diversity of refugee women in the community. This is because they were drawn from different countries in Africa thereby representing different cultures that are present within African societies. In terms of countries, three of the participants in the study were from Somalia, two from Sudan, two from Congo, two from Liberia and one from Rwanda. Ninety percent of the participants had lived in the refugee camps prior to their transition to the United States. During their migration to the United States, only two of the participants did not come with their family. Six of the participants lived in Fargo and four lived in Moorhead community.

The study provides the age of the participants in range form to protect identity of the women and also during the interview process, although it was clear that more than Eighty percent of the participants were not sure of their exact birth dates and provided their age in approximated ranges. Out of the 10 participants in the study, 3 of them were single parents. 2 out of the 3 had lost their husband to war in their country of origin. 6 of the participants did not have a job and stayed and stayed at home.

Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded hand-in-hand with data collection and the write-ups of findings. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder to ensure accurate quotations and field notes were also taken during the interviewing sessions. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed qualitatively. I employed both open and axial coding. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), open coding is about labeling and categorizing phenomena. Codes are identified without any restrictions and/or purpose other than to discover the pieces of meaning. In open coding, I developed different categories by going through the interview transcripts verbatim and breaking down the available data and information into several discrete parts. Straus and Corbin describe axial coding as creating themes or categorizing by grouping codes or labels given to words and phrases. Axial coding occurred in my study when I focused on discovering codes around a single category that I had created. Whereas open coding is about identification and naming, axial coding is about links and relationships (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I employed both deductive and inductive analysis strategies. I initiated my analysis for themes around social exclusion, anomie and integration. These guided my analysis of the data, as I looked for patterns and emergent themes that rose in the conversation, vocabulary and any

other recurring activities. I altered identifying characteristics such as place of residence, place of employment and anything else that may lead to identification of the participants.

Writing a Testimonio

In data analysis, presenting the findings in form of testimonio proved viable in articulating the experiences of the ARW. Testimonio, as described by Yudice (1985), is an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation. The witness is therefore accorded the opportunity to describe his/ her own experience. The historical knowledge of ARW that involves their experience with war and/or oppression that caused them to flee from their home country and the trauma they faced could only be best understood when presented as in form of testimonio. The women in the study speak of their hardships during civil wars and near death experiences as they escaped to neighboring countries for safety. They also express the struggles they endured and fears that encroached them as they lived in refugee camps. Menchu (1984) explains that the meaning of a testimonial narrative it is to tell the story of a marginalized group and call for awareness and global consciousness of the oppression and violence committed to these groups. In projecting the experiences of the ARW women, I concur with Dorothy Smith's (1987) assertion of the importance of recognizing women's standpoint by articulating that "as women, we had been living in an intellectual, cultural, and political world from whose making we had been almost entirely excluded and which we had no more been recognized as no more than marginal voices" (Smith, p. 1). If my research is to comprehensively reveal the experiences of the ARW as they integrate into the community, then I must be attentive and cautious of mechanism that would blur these experiences.

Testimonio gives voice to many individuals in similar predicaments who have not yet been accorded the chance to express their difficulties. It is, however, as pointed out by Braker

(2011), important to note that testimonio does not seek universal representation or claim universal emancipation but it rather seeks emancipation and survival within specific and local circumstances. Recalling and narrating a past traumatic experience is not easy and can prove distressful for both the narrator and the listener. It need to be conducted with great caution but most of all an environment of trusts and respect has to be cultivated. Brabek (2001) mentions that testimonio allows for both solidarity between researcher and participant as well as cultural distance that maintains difference and engenders respect.

Baker (2011) suggests that testimonio replaces universalism with particularity. In the study on ARW, I was keen on taking into account and appreciating the subjective experiences of the women as they told their story to me. I wanted to ensure that the lived experiences of the women formed the basis of knowledge in the study. Brabek (2001) comments that testimonio produces knowledge that is based on subjective experience and not as empirical historical facts but, as strategy of cultural survival and resistance. Writing a testimonio provides clarity in understanding how the ARW experience and relate to the Fargo-Moorhead community as they integrate. As the ARW explain the challenges they experience in integration, a testimonio representation becomes essential in bridging the gaps because it “involves the interdependence of speaker and audience as members of human community who can work together for life and justice,” (Aron, 1992, p. 189). Testimonio would initiate a model of collaboration between the Fargo-Moorhead natives and ARW as understanding is enhanced through sharing the lived experiences of the ARW. Patricia Hill Collins (1990), through her discourse on Black feminisms, elaborates that “by placing black women’s experiences at the center of the analysis offers fresh insights on the prevailing concepts, paradigms and epistemologies” (Collins, p. 536).

Baker (2011) asserts that testimonio emerges from a need to create social awareness and consciousness to marginalized groups. In this regards, writing a testimonio of the ARW provides an opportunity to the Fargo-Moorhead community to be aware of the experiences of the ARW and the struggles they go through as they try to integrate into the community. This sets an avenue for the introduction of strategic measures that would successfully enhance the integration of ARW into the community. In this regard, I provided an opportunity to the participants in the study during the interview process to articulate the procedures and measures they deem favorable in enhancing their integration experiences in the community.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability in qualitative research is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, participants or the readers. “Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (Creswell 2014, p. 201). The study on ARW incorporated multiple approaches that enhanced my ability as the researcher to assess for accuracy of the findings. The validity and reliability approaches included member checking, rich thick descriptions and triangulation (Creswell).

The multiple interviews with each participant in the study helped facilitate member-checking strategies. It involved conducting follow up interviews with the ARW in the study and providing them an opportunity to comment on the themes and findings. The emerging themes were taken back to the women to determine whether they felt they were accurate and a true representation of their narratives. There was an ongoing dialogue between the participants and I regarding my interpretation of their reality and meaning to ensure truth of the data. The findings

incorporated rich and thick descriptions that helped set the stage for the discussion of the theme. Providing references to support some of the themes in their description added validity to the findings. I also triangulated different data sources stemming from literature review, others studies done on refugees in other countries and the information I obtained in my primary research. I examined evidence by converging these data sources and this enabled me to build coherent justification for the themes.

My Epistemology

The research study on integration of African refugee women in the Fargo-Moorhead community brought into light the concepts of identity relations, insider- outsider positions, personal narratives, experience and how they mediate in knowledge production processes in qualitative research studies. Fine (1994) stressed on the importance of qualitative researchers critically locating themselves in their research work. Going into this research study I could not help but be confused about the position I occupied as a researcher. Was I an insider to the group I was going to study or an outsider? Labree (2002) suggests that the insider- outsider position is an epistemological principle centered on the issue of access (Labree, p. 100).

I occupied both the insider-outsider position in the study. I appear to be and insider because I am a woman of African descent and that placed me within the circumference of my participants. However, I am not a refugee and over the age of forty and that positions me as an outsider. Even though I am very familiar with the challenges the refugee women must have been through prior to their transition in America that in itself was not enough to grant me an insider standing. Being aware of this complicated position, my hope was that I would not appear to the women as a *Professional stranger* as portrayed by Agar (1996) who is prying into their lives while remaining detached from their realities. I must admit that my prior association with some

of the members of the community under study helped me gain intimate knowledge about the group and this played a vital role in boosting my insider status. This status was confirmed to me during an interview process on a side note when one of the participants mentioned that she was “glad for once I have someone like me asking me questions about my life.” I knew at this point that I was going to be able to access knowledge and insights that would be impossible to access by an outsider.

Personal narratives proved a useful tool in understanding the experiences of ARW and the Fargo- Moorhead community. I engaged in face-to-face interaction with the women to share in their life world. Bochner (2001) reveals writers who discredit personal narratives as sources that cannot be trusted. They emphasize that personal narratives must be subjected to methodological skepticism because they are romanticized and highly sentimental and this can distort researcher’s judgement. I must mention that I was able to obtain sensitive pieces of information that would have otherwise not been possible if I had failed to share in the vulnerability and emotions of the participants as they shared their heart-rending experiences. Davies and Davies (2007) provide ways in which experiences can be used without assuming that they are expressions of an individual’s being or consciousness and also without attempting to fix and limit their meaning. This helped me build a high level of trust that forged my penetration into deeper levels of the study. I agree with Richardson (1990) that narratives display the goals and intentions of human actors and makes individuals, cultures, societies, and historical epochs comprehensible as wholes. As much as it was difficult for the women to narrate their past experiences, the interview sessions proved to be therapeutic as the women breathed a sigh of relief at the end of the conversations and extended an invitation for more ‘chat’.

My main concern as a social researcher was to ensure that I assess and represent the women's knowledge claims in a manner that attends to their lived experiences, devoid of my personal feelings or bias. "The people who come to us to with their stories, hope they tell them well enough so that we understand the truth of their lives. They hope we know how to interpret their stories correctly. We have to remember that what we hear is their story" (Bochner, 2001, p. 132). With this realization, I had to forego the universal truths or assumptions regarding the ARW and approach the study with a clear and open mind. The point of personal narratives as suggested by Bochner is to move narratives from beyond the confines of traditional modes of analysis, methodology and genres of writing. This meant disengaging from the views of Methodism that "refer to the idea that there are standards methods or procedures, characteristics of science, which are essential to effective inquiry because they can guarantee the validity of the research conclusion," (Hammersley, 2009, p. 14). In my opinion there was no way the narrations of the lived experiences of the women could be quantified without loss of meaning, to the detriment of the study.

Violence in research as warned by Redwood (2008) is woven into the fabric of human relations and works at many levels and in different forms. For this I believe misrepresenting the true lived experiences in analysis due to loss of meaning poses violence in research. Though all the women were from African continent, they all had diverse experiences in terms of culture, class, age, language, and education that shaped their individual lived experiences and knowledge about their life world. I intentionally refrained from determining what constituted true knowledge versus false knowledge and adhered to real knowledge as described by the participants. Richardson (1990) pointed out that telling one's stories gives meaning to the past from the point of view of the present and future. Listening to the women narrate their

experiences as refugee in African camps helped me understand how those experiences give meaning to their present and future lives.

Fine (1994) emphasized exploring identity relations in qualitative research. This is explained as “specifically asking how our research projects are situated within the context of our identities and how our identities have shifted throughout our research processes in relation to the identities our participants, (Fine, p. 136). As I continued to interact with the women, my identity continued to shift especially as I gained a more insider stance into the community. The relationship with the participant at this point became even more reciprocal as we surprisingly found points of connections in the midst of the diverse experiences. Fine (1994) described the ‘hyphen’ as the moments in which the researcher and the researched are joined. The more I continued to acknowledge the hyphens in the stories, the more I realized how I fit in with the participants and to a certain degree share similar identities. One of the joining points during an interview session was when we realized we share similarly sentiments on gender equality as a result of experiencing life in African societies that are highly patriarchal.

The analysis of the study on integration of ARW into the Fargo-Moorhead community was drawn majorly on experiences of the women as they narrated their individual accounts of experience through interviews. Davies and Davies (2007) emphasized that researchers are actively involved along with the research participants in generating data as well as generating meanings from the data. I did see this playing out in the research study in that as much as I was tempted to rely on my interpretive power as a researcher, I resisted playing the expert in making sense of the participants’ experiences and relied on the participants to help generate meaning. The research study entailed a collaborative process between me and the participants.

CHAPTER 4. STUDY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

Conducting interviews and oral histories for the study of integration of African Refugee Women (ARW) led to the generation of extensive knowledge on how the women relate to and understand the Fargo-Moorhead community. The women perceived integration in terms of the level at which they participated in various activities within the community. Local integration is “the ability of the refugee to participate with relative freedom in the economic and communal life of the host region, cultural and political participation, legal rights and full self-sufficiency,” (Banki 2004, p. 2). Integration requires from the refugee a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host community (Baneke, 1999). Presenting the findings from the study with attention to testimonio, enables me to answer the questions posed in the study through “the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds” (Smith 1987, p. 107). The ARW I interviewed for this study experience challenges of social isolation through lack of connection with the local people, language and transportation problems. They also experience traits of anomie as they navigate the Fargo-Moorhead community.

Testimonio provides an opportunity for the women to voice their concerns and speak for themselves as they share their lived experiences. The subjective experience of the ARW therefore provides the basis of knowledge for the study. Testimonio is labeled as the verbal journey to the past that allows the individual to transform past experience and personal identity, create a new present and enhance the future (Cienfuegos & Monelli, 1983). In this regard, I was not only able to better understand the complex background of ARWs lives but also apprehend the prevailing factors in their experiences of social isolation and anomie, as well as the dynamics that could lead to a more successful integration into the F-M community. The ARW shared the

challenges they experience as they navigate the community and also provided suggestion points that would facilitate success integration.

Drawing attention to the lives of ARW before migrating to the United States, Redmond (2014) revealed that refugees, having fled their homelands, become severely limited in their options for survival, particularly in camps where they have little or no access to work, grazing land, or other means of self-sufficiency. The findings here support the difficult and challenging life experienced by the ARW prior their transition to America. Most of them narrowly escaped death, lost loved ones and contacted various diseases in their search for safety. As the women narrate their experiences in the refugee camp, there was a sense of gratitude in that they felt a little secure but the camps had other issues to deal with such as crowdedness, illnesses, lack of sufficient food and clean drinking waters. As women, especially single mothers, the conditions in the camp proved to be twice as difficult compared to men as they tried to find ways to provide for their children and lived in the fear of being sexually abused.

Jane: Life was very tough. People were fighting and fighting and you know I had many kids so it was very difficult for escape. I thank God because I don't know how we made it to the refugee camp in [African Country]. We used to travel at night and hide in the forest during the day. The war was targeting the people from my tribe [Tribe name]. When we arrived at the refugee camp, it was very crowded. There was no clean water to drink and so many people were dying from diarrhea and many children had malaria. The environment was too small for the people. The food was being measured in small amount to make sure everybody gets little something to eat.

In explaining the challenges experienced by the women, another women mentioned that,

Mary:women had many problems at [African] camp compared to men. One day somebody I don't know enter my tent at night and 'take my body by force' [Insinuating rape]. I feel very bad for long time. I was afraid to tell somebody about it, so I just keep quiet.....During daytime I was ok but at night I feel afraid the person will return.

As expressed by the women, it is clear that, though the women faced tough conditions at the refugee camp, their struggles were diverse and unique to each woman. Their points of emphasis

in pointing out their struggles ranged from fear of contracting diseases, starvation to sexual assault.

The difficult life experienced by the ARW indeed poses psychological challenges to their wellbeing. Certain refugee experiences such as unpreparedness during departure, experience of torture or trauma, disruption of education in refugee camps, grief and loss of loved ones lead to mental health issues (Bokore, 2012). More than half of the women I interviewed explained that it was after they arrived and settled into the new community that the memories of what they had experienced started coming back. Mourning for their loved ones was short lived because they had to be on the go and were also distracted by the challenging and problematic situations they were already encountering.

A deep sense of sadness gripped their heart after memory replayed in their heads. Some of them wondered whether it was even okay for them to enjoy what life presents now and felt guilty as they remember lost lives and family members and friends who continue to endure the harsh life in the camps to date.

Sofi: Some of my brothers are still at the camp and I sometimes get worried about them because I don't know what will happen to them. It gives me sleepless night and sometimes I cry. Sometimes it is also hard for me to eat when I don't know whether my other families and friends had something to eat in the camps.....I don't have many people to talk to here because it is hard for me to get friends. Sometimes I just want somebody to talk to about this memory but I don't know who..... I think a lot and get headache sometimes, maybe it is because I stay home a lot.

Sofi explains how difficult it is for her to be at peace because she constantly thinks of her family back in the refugee camp. Having experienced life in the camp she cannot help but wonder about the safety, as well as whether her brothers and friends are having sufficient food to eat. Such thoughts causes her pain and as she states "sleepless nights." Her predicament is enhanced by lack of close friends to express her troubling thoughts and anxiety to.

When I asked the women how they relate to and understand Fargo-Moorhead community, all the participants were quick to affirm that the community was a safe haven for them. They considered it peaceful and secure as they compared it to the areas where they had lived in Africa prior to their transition to the United States. They emphasized that the environment was conducive for them, as well as their children, as far as safety issues are concerned and this, they added, made it possible for their children to pursue an education without interruption.

Lucy: Life in [African Country] was good but it became very tough because of the killings. I prefer America. Compared to the war we had in my country that made so many people die, here [Fargo- Moorhead] it is peaceful and I raise my children without worrying about war. My children also go to school with school bus and read well and that make me happy.

Magy echoed the tranquility she experiences in Fargo-Moorhead community by stating that:

I like Fargo. It is good here and safe for me and my children. You know now, when I am going to sleep, I don't have to think and worry that someone will light fire and burn me and my children in the house. At the camp we live[d] in tents and fire [could] start anytime. Also, my children here can go to school. I don't get fear that someone will steal them because they use school bus.

Fire in the camps were a concern for the women as it would affect numerous tents that are closely connected and also contribute to several deaths especially if they occurred at night.

The living standards in the Fargo-Moorhead community did not go without notice as the women explained how they relate to and understand the community. In comparison to the life they had in their countries, ARW considered life to be expensive with several bills to be taken care off. For example, having stayed in the refugee camps, the women did not have to pay bills for things like water, rent, electricity, and heating. Some of these necessities such as water and food were provided for by World Food Programme (WFP). Housing in the form of a tent was provided for freely by various humanitarian organizations such as Red Cross. The participants

mentioned that the organization that helped them integrate into the community helps pay for their bill for up to eight months upon arrival, after which they are expected to take charge in meeting their expenses. It was and still is a challenge for them to pick as they try to adopt the lifestyle of their host community.

Ruth:you are also thinking and worried about paying bills. There are so many expenses here [Fargo- Moorhead community] compared to home and life is also very expensive. At home if you had your small piece of land you could grow food, but here, it is not easy.

Beth added that

Life here is very expensive..... for example I lived in the refugee camp before I come [Came] to America and I did not use to pay rent because we live in tent. I did not pay for electricity because there was no electricity in the camp and we use hmmm, what is it called? hmm lamp yes lamp. In winter it is more expensive because it is cold so you pay more for heat. Everything here is money. If you don't have dollar and don't pay bills it is very bad

The women agreed that the change in seasons brings with it various expenses. The additional expenses that the women encountered during winter, especially heating, was reported by half of the participants. The women were however quick to appreciate the availability of electricity and applauded its advantages such as proper lighting over lamps.

Having explored the background life of the ARW, as well as how they relate to and understand Fargo-Moorhead community, by providing an overview of their experiences, the following analysis sections delves into the core themes of the study. The themes are organized in response to the research questions that seek to find out whether African refugee women experience social exclusion and anomie as well as their opinion on what it takes in realizing successful integration in the Fargo-Moorhead community. The core themes are, therefore, organized under the topics of *social exclusion*, *anomie* and *dynamics to successful integration*. In social exclusion, themes emerged that revealed ARW are excluded from participating in the

community endeavors. Themes denoting social exclusion emerged as the women described the challenges they experience as they integrate into the community. These themes included *low English proficiency, lack of connection with the natives in the Fargo-Moorhead community, transportation problems, family dynamics and cultural differences amongst ARW*. In analyzing anomie, some of the participants' narrations revealed the anomic traits such of *feeling lonely and sad, lack of purpose and meaning, unmet expectations and disappointment, social isolation and retreatism adaptation* as described by Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton. Last, but not least, this chapter discusses the core themes that emerged as the participants discussed potential solutions to their experiences of social isolation. These themes included, *female only activities, changes in leadership, supporting already existing projects started by the ARW and uniting activities*. This chapter finally ends with a conclusion that explains the interconnectedness of themes.

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion in the study of ARW emerged as the women described their integration and the challenges they experience in the process. The women spoke of their encounters and factors that hinder successful integration and participation in the community. Popay et. al. (2008) explained exclusion as consisting of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships, interacting across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions and at different societal levels. Hayduk (2006) asserts that immigrants often go through wrenching experience while transitioning into the United States. The immigrants often share the experience of being an outsider, feel social pressures to conform to the dominant group in the society. They experience discrimination or hostility as they struggle to establish a place to survive and flourish within constrained opportunities, generally without the ability to speak English very well, and so

on. Immigrants such as the ARW experience bias that is accelerated by their inability to communicate effectively, thus limiting their ability to access equal resources in terms of employment opportunities. “Being excluded for instance because of accent, ethnicity, religion, color or being identified as a refugee has a negative impact” (Fodzar and Hartley, 2013, p. 6). Hayden (2006) mentions that the stereotypes held by the natives concerning immigrants often leads to the interests of such minority groups to be overlooked.

In exploring social exclusion, the African refugee women explained the reasons that contribute to their exclusion in community endeavors and thus experience social isolation. Gardner et al (1999) defined people as socially isolated if they had poor or limited contact with others and they perceived this level of contact as inadequate, and/or that the limited contact had adverse personal consequences for them. Language barriers as a result of low English proficiency posed as a major contributing factor in social isolation. With an inability to communicate comprehensively with the natives in the Fargo-Moorhead community, the women felt excluded and some of them shied away from community endeavors. All the women in the study spoke English as a second language while more than half of them spoke English as a third language. They attributed their lack of proficiency to limited or no education when they were little or during their youth. The women explained that once they had children it became twice as difficult for them to pursue education and remained within the boundaries of domestic roles.

Language is a form of power. De Fillipis (2013), in *Power of Language*, suggests that language is not only descriptive but also powerfully generative, in that it is able to change and create new circumstances. With insufficient language, the ARW become excluded socially, politically and economically from participating in processes of change in the community. Other factors that were seen to contribute to social exclusion of the ARW in the Fargo-Moorhead area

included lack of connection with the natives in the Fargo-Moorhead community, transportation limitations, family dynamics and cultural differences amongst ARW. The analysis of how these factors contribute to social exclusion by acting as barriers to successful integration in the community are discussed below.

English Proficiency

Being able to speak the main language of the host community is central to the integration process. Not being able to speak English in the United States becomes a barrier to social interaction, economic integration and full participation in the community. In the course of conducting interviews, I experienced the challenge of low English proficiency first hand as it was difficult to find targeted participants who were fluent enough in English to participate in an interview. The participants admitted that their chances of engaging in community endeavors were limited by their inability to communicate effectively. However, they showed interest in wanting to learn English, demonstrated by those who were attending adult learning sessions to help them develop expertise in the language. Williams & Batrouney (1998) mention that refugees have higher unemployment rates, lower earning and occupational attainment than other immigrants. The assertions by William & Batrouney are supported in my study as the women articulate their struggles with the English language.

Magy:...I have been in America for ten years and I am still struggling to learn English. It is difficult to understand. You know, when I was little I did not go to school because there was war in my country. Also, my mother had many children and she could not afford to take us to school. Imagine when I come [came] to America, I did not know [how] to write my name. Now I do, but it is not enough..... Sometimes they say and advertise things in difficult English. I don't understand them so I don't bother. Because I feel bad asking asking people all the time to tell me meaning.

Magy expressed how she at times feels like she is being a bother to people when she keeps asking for meaning and interpretation of texts. In a different light, Sofi, another participant in the

study explained how embarrassing it is for her to not be able to speak fluent English. This causes her to shy off from engaging in the community. Sofi stated that

Sometimes when the[re] is activity in community I don't go. Surely, what will I speak? My bad English [Laugh]. It is embarrassing for a big woman like me. Maybe if I know good English it will be different. Getting job is difficult for me because my English accent is very bad. Sometimes I get job then when I go for interview and they hear my English, they just say I will call you, and they don't call me. I cannot speak like American because I am from African. I am hoping I will speak good one day because I go to school to study English for free. I am very happy that I don't pay to go to school for English here

Just like Sofi, the other ARW women in my sample appreciated the opportunity to be able to go to school and study English for free. All the participants expressed struggles with learning and becoming fluent in English. The reasons for low English proficiency were unique from one individual to another. However, more than half of the ARW claimed that it was difficult for them to go school and study English when they were still in their home country, as their education was largely impacted by war. Some of the women mentioned that they could not afford to go to school in their home countries. In addition, the women expressed how challenging it was for them to learn English in the United States. These challenges ranged from their home making responsibilities, lack of transportation to institution of learning, to having to choose between work and attending the English classes. Anna, one of the participants mentioned that,

You know, when I come to here, I said I will go to school for study English. I go for little time and then I have to stop. I had to find job to pay for bills. When I get small job, the time was the same time as time for English class. I have to make decision if to go to work of go to English class. I choose work because I need it. I want to pay bills. So I stop to go to class. When I leave my after many years, it was difficult to start again to go to class so I did not go.

Besides having to choose between going to work and attending the English classes, all the ARW interviewed agreed that it was difficult for them to be offered jobs especially after an interview process because the employers would deem their limited knowledge of English as

insufficient for the positions. Some of the women wondered how good their English is supposed to get before they can be considered fluent. Beth highlighted that

I don't know how good my English is supposed to get. When I came here I speak very very bad English. But now I think it good. The problem is the people for employment think it is still not good. I don't know, maybe they want to hear American accent (Laugh). I just don't know

It was a concern for the women that after being in the community for a long time and perceiving themselves as being better in English, this improvement was not noticed or did not even appear to be recognized when they are interviewing for jobs or communicating with employers. Their concern was how good of English is good enough.

Lack of Connection with the Natives

Lack of connection with the natives emerged as a barrier that affects ARWs successful integration into the community. The meaning of the term native should not be misunderstand as denoting indigenous/native American population but, rather, as a representation of any white American individual born, raised and belonging to the American society. The ARW explained that they have not been able to build meaningful relationships with the natives and this has led to poor, shallow and/or no interaction with them. Factors such as differences in experience as well as culture developed to explain the reasons to this lack of connection. The women in the study expounded that it was difficult to connect with the natives of Fargo-Moorhead because their experiences in life differed significantly. Having faced various traumatic experiences, half of the participants were of the opinion that it is hard for them to find points of connection with the natives who have no clues or comprehension of what they went through.

Jane explains that some of the difficulty involved in connecting with people native to the F-M community is how to make her experiences relatable to those who are not from her culture.

Sometimes it's difficult to find someone to talk to because you feel like they will not understand you because they don't understand where you came from. And even if you found someone, it's not the same as talking to someone from back home I feel like the person will not understand me because they don't know my background and didn't go through my many problems in Africa. Sometimes I think they think I am different because the people here do not understand the culture and it's hard to explain things to them. The people here know us, but again they don't know us, especially the problems of where we came from and our life.

Because of the limited understanding she perceives in the local community about her cultural experiences, she expressed doubt about being understood by FM natives. This makes it difficult for the two parties to connect effectively. Two of the ARW who seemed to have some sort of connection with a few of the local residents described their level of relationship to be very shallow or casual. Ruth mentioned that,

When I talk to some of my friends here [natives], we talk about things like the weather. It is always cold here [laugh] and sometimes how the children are doing in school..... Other things are difficult to talk about. I don't think they will understand..... I fear that, for example, if I tell them about my experience in the refugee camp, they will get afraid of me. So I think it is good to not talk about it. Anyway those are things of many years ago and I don't like to remember them.

Ruth helps articulate that besides the cultural differences, the lack of connection is also as a result of the traumatic experience the women had. The women chose not to share or talk about their past experiences for the fear of being judged or, as Ruth puts it, "they will get afraid of me" and thus infringe on the already limited form of interaction. The ARW are not able to share their deep hurts and only limits their conversation to the normal day to day life experiences. In explicating the lack of connection, Anna mentioned that

What I go through in time of war in my country was very bad. I don't think the women here have idea. I don't like to talk about it. I think it is secret for me. If I tell, [Pause] no I cannot tell. It is good to be silent. I don't want to give them bad picture of me. I think it will be difficult for them to understand me.

According to Anna, it is better for her to be silent about her past traumatic experience. She fears that it will taint her image because the people might not be able to understand where she is coming from. There is a fear amongst the ARW that projecting a different way of life may be misunderstood, and/or revealing ones past experiences may not be taken well or misjudged. This causes the women to limit their interaction thus posing a challenge to successful integration into the Fargo- Moorhead community

Transportation Problems

Lack of (and limited) transportation leads to the ARW opting out of community programs. The women mentioned transportation problems as another significant challenge to community involvement. The primary mode of transportation in the Fargo-Moorhead area is a car. Sofi discusses how not having a car creates challenges in getting around the FM area. “You know in Africa, you can walk to go to school and job. But here, if you don’t have a car, you cannot do anything you just stay at home. It is even hard visit your friend and just talk.” The women’s desire to interact becomes limited due to not having a car. Besides limited interaction, the women also mentioned the difficulties associated with having a car

Looking at the various modes of transport, more than half of the women mentioned that getting a personal car is expensive as it adds on to the lists of bills that are already challenging to pay. The metro buses came in handy for most of them, but the issue is that the buses do not go to all locations in the community, thus their movements become limited to only bus routes. All the women considered it unacceptable for a woman their age to ride a bicycle. As Lucy explains, riding a bicycle is a shameful and embarrassing thing to do.

I take the bus to go to some place but not everywhere. There are places the bus don’t go. So I can only go where the bus go[es]. I wish they could go in all places Buying a car is expensive. I am struggling to pay bills here to when I buy a car, I it will be difficult to survive. But a car is good. I wish I have a car, especially when it is very

cold.....bicycle? No, no, no, I can't [Laugh]. People will say bad things about me. No bicycle!

The women mentioned that riding bicycles is considered only appropriate for children and youth and not women of their age. Judy elaborates on this further, that, "I can't go anywhere if I don't have transport..... I can't use a bicycle because when I see people from my country they will start to gossip [about] me. Bicycle are for children, not big women like me." Limited transportation is also connected to the problem of low English proficiency.

Magy: I have tried to take the test for driving to get permit many times but I fail. I spend many hours in the room but I still fail. It is difficult if you know not English (Don't know English). I will know my English is good when I passed (pass) the test and my son teach me to drive.

Magy, like the other women in my sample, explained that since she could not understand English, it was difficult for her to pass the driver's permit test so that she can have one of her sons teach her how to drive. The tests are issued in English and this becomes problematic for individuals who do not understand English. In this regards low English proficiency becomes a contributing factor to the challenge of limited or lack of transportation that limits the ARW movements thus, contributing to social isolation.

Family Dynamics

The women interviewed in the study valued close familial ties because it enabled them to share their cultural practices. The women in my study revealed that they engage in home making roles, such as caring for their children, which limits the time they have to engage in community activities. As much as they identified their role in the family as a barrier to community participation, they were quick to mention that they considered it their responsibility to care and nurture their spouses as well as their children. Caring for their family and ensuring their well-

being is of great importance and a priority before they can strive to participate in other activities in the community. As Judy explains,

my husband goes to work and the older kids are in school. I always have to stay home and take care of the two little kids..... It is difficult for me to do other things in the community because who will I leave the kids with? So, I just stay at home. It is wrong here to leave your kid at home without someone to take care of them. I cannot afford to pay [a] nanny.

It is difficult for Judy to get involved in activities in the community because she has to fulfill her traditional role of nurturing the kids. Also, lack of resources in terms of not being able to afford to pay a baby sitter to look after the kids makes it hard for her to leave home.

In placing emphasis on how much they value home making roles, Beth explained that

I have to make sure my family is well before I can do other things. When my husband go to work and my children go to school, I like to cook and clean the house..... I know here in America both man and woman work, but me I like to stay home and take care of family.

As much as the ARW had it in their view that both men and women are expected to work in the Fargo-Moorhead community, they considered the caring and nurturing role they have to play at home as fundamental to them, despite its limitations to community engagement.

Cultural Differences among ARW

Mohanty (2003) suggests that universal categorization of women in non-western countries is mostly done through constructed monolithic terms and classifications that overlook their diversity and heterogeneity. Mohanty (2003) emphasizes the tendency to overlook the heterogeneity of the lives of women in the third world despite the reality that their experiences are incredibly diverse and contingent on geography, history and culture. As much as the ARW come from the same continent, they are endowed with different ideologies and approach to life. Their cultural practices vary from country to country and even amongst individuals of the same country. There exists among the ARW other subcultures that are dependent on tribe, religion,

region, or ethnic background. The women during the interview process revealed how complicated it is to define how ARW interact with each other and their level of association due to their varying cultures. This diversity impacts the women's decision to engage in the community and develop relationships.

Jane, for example, explains that

It is complicated. I don't know how to say it, hmmm, like, for example, it is hard for even women from [African country] to come to a [different African country] woman's house and the other way round. Part of it is because of religion and just different culture. Yes we are women from Africa but we see each other as different with different ways of doing things.

The cultural diversity amongst the African refugee women that is often overlooked, and the categorization of women as if they all share similar cultural experiences, emerged as one of barriers to successful integration. The participants emphasized the importance of paying attention to their diverse cultures and ways of life. Ruth elaborated on this by stating that,

I don't mean this in bad way but I think some activities should be separated by countries. When people mix together, sometimes it does not go well because our cultures are different. Someone can do something from their country and another person will not feel good because they are not used to it, then people start to gossip and it is not good. Now, next time, people will not come to the activity they just stay away..... We are just different people.

Ruth also emphasized on the importance of separating activities in the community according to countries due to differing cultures. She explains the potential misunderstanding that emerges in case of cultural clash. The clash infringes on the relationship among represented groups and this causes the grieved individuals to refrain from future gathering

More than half of the women in the study claimed that they did not appreciate the generalization of experiences and practices of refugees in the community. It is important for the diversity amongst the group to be accorded recognition. In providing clarification, the women discussed affirming cultural differences amongst themselves despite them coming from the same

continent. They asserted that overlooking one's beliefs or carrying out activities without providing explanations or acknowledging that it could be different from another culture within the African sphere creates misunderstandings, feelings of disrespect and infringes on relationships thereby causing some women to shy off from gatherings.

The following section provides a discussion on anomic traits as exhibited in the experiences of the ARW. The themes revolve around feeling lonely and sad, lack of purpose and meaning, unmet expectations, social isolation and retreatism adaptation through the lenses of Emile Durkheim (1951) and Robert Merton (1961). It is clear that the experiences of social exclusion outlined above lay the structural grounding that contributes to the manifestation of the these anomic traits.

Anomie

Mary: Sometime I am asking myself, why I am living. But I remember I have three children. But they are become [becoming] big. My young child will start college and I will be left by self [alone].....My husband died in fighting back in my country. I feel lonely here and don't have job. Life is not easy especially when you don't speak good English and I don't have many friends[Pause]sometimes it is difficult to visit the friends and talk because I don't have transport and people are also busy with familysometimes I wish to go back to Africa but I change my mind when I remember what happened. I just live for my children, I don't have another reason. America is not the way I think in my head before coming here . It is not easy here. It is very difficult and I feel lonely.

Anomie, in its original conception, is understood as a feeling of despair because society is unable to provide clear boundaries and structures that enable individuals to make meaning out of their lives, (Durkheim, 1951). Elwell (2009) asserts that Durkheim characterized the modern individual as insufficiently integrated into society and because of these weakening bonds, social regulation breaks down and the controlling influence of society on the desires and interests of the individual is rendered ineffective as individuals are left to their own devices. This results in

disillusionment and consequently disappointment. “But if nothing external can restrain this capacity, it can only be a source of torment in itself,” (Durkheim 1951, p. 247). Excerpts from the ARW testimonies, like Mary’s above, conveyed anomic traits. According to Durkheim (1951), a society is capable of producing in many of its members, psychological states characterized by a sense of futility, lack of purpose, and emotional emptiness and despair. Looking at Mary’s excerpt, anomic traits that emerged from my interviews included feeling, *lonely and sad, lack of purpose / meaning, unmet expectations, feeling isolated and communal difference*. Using these themes, I expand on the way traditional conceptions of anomie are both reinforced and expanded in ARW’s experiences.

Lonely and Sad

Mary, in her narration, just like almost all of the participants, expressed boredom and lonesome feelings in their lives. Mary mentions that “My husband died in fighting back in my country. I feel lonely here,” The women verbalized how difficult it is for them to even get people to interact with that are not family members thus feeling withdrawn from the larger society. Jane emphasized this by mentioning that, “It can get very lonely here especially if you don’t have family. If you have family it is at least [Pause]. You become alone and sad, very sad.” Jane’s expressions of loneliness contribute to the fact that the women do not only get lonely but they also experience tremendous sadness. This feeling is aggravated when one lacks companionship in terms of family or friends. If these ARW perceive a foreclosure from community structures and institutions because they cannot find meaningful connections with local community members, it makes sense that their day-to-day experiences are filled with loneliness. Similarly, if there is not a space to feel comfortable talking about their past traumas, the feelings of sadness they experience will only be exacerbated by their feelings of loneliness.

Lack of Purpose /Meaning

Lack of meaning became evident through ARW's stories. Most of them could not term their individual purpose and subjective meaning for existence and for the major part attributed their reason for living to their family. Mary, in the opening quote, mentions that, "I just live for my children, I don't have another reason." The participants in the study portrayed lack of ultimate purpose in life as well as personal goals, and where goals existed, it was within a familial context. Ruth echoed similar sentiments by mentioning that

It get to point where I asked myself, why do I struggle so much. Seriously, I don't know [Pause] I don't have reason [Pause] I don't have reason [Pause] Maybe because of family. I don't know. I don't know.

Ruth's statement reveals that she is having difficulty explaining why she is struggling and for whom she is struggling. "Maybe because of family" poses as her only viable explanation. Anna mentioned "in my tribe we say [African Proverb], it means live for the children, and you already lived this life [loosely translated]." This reinforces the theme of lack of purpose and meaning experienced by the ARW, because the transition to American society exposes them to differences in the role of family and they struggle to make sense of their own place in this new society. If ARW feel excluded from integrating into the community and they cannot find spaces where their own familial values are understood and respected, it makes sense that the women would feel untethered from the society in which they are trying to integrate into.

Unmet Expectations and Disappointment

Unmet expectations in the study emerged when the women expressed disappointment in regards to life in the United States. America is said to be the land of opportunities and a result people may develop very high, irrational, or unrealistic expectations. When these expectations are not met, then one is bound to feel disappointed. It is upon community structures and

institutions to provide clear and practical guidelines for accessing and realizing the opportunities and failure in this leads to frustrations.

Prior to their transition to the United States, the ARW had what I consider unrealistic expectations and preconceived ideas of what life was going to be. They expected life to be very easy compared to life in their own countries. All the women in the study revealed that America was not what they had speculated and expected it to be. Ruth mentioned,

I thought it was going to be a land flowing with milk and honey [Laugh]. Like the children of Israelites in the bible moving from Egypt where it was bad to Canaan which was like heaven. But that is not what is here.... You have to work very very hard.... It is a surprise.

The women were surprised and thrown off when the reality of the land hit them. Some of them did not know and still to not know how to cope with the cultural differences and changes they are experiencing. Magy for example says that,

It is a shock, big shock. You know before coming here people tell me America its is good. You want food, you get food, you want water, you get water, you get car, you get big house, you sick, the doctor come quickly to your house. No one tell me I have to struggle to get them. I was to think I was going to have many friends no, no, no, People here do not have time for you and don't try to be friend to you when your English is bad. Everybody go inside their house and close the door. At home yes we suffer in the camp but I have many many friends. We suffer to together. Here you suffer alone. Sometimes I don't know what to do because it is difficult for person like me who like to have many friends.... I don't understand how things work here. I don't know who to ask, but they should do something. It is not what I expect. It is bad feeling when you expect something and you get something different [sic].

In expanding on Magy's experiences, the ARW have experienced a great deal of readjustment in the new environment. They have questions of why things are not as they expected or hoped they would be. Upon realizing that their expectations are not being met, the women have to choice but to make serious readjustments in order to cope "Whenever serious readjustments take place in the social order, whether or not due to a sudden growth or to an unexpected catastrophe,

individuals are more inclined to self-destruction” (Durkheim, 1951, p. 246). Self-destruction for the ARW is not as extreme as suicide but, they exhibit self-destructive tendencies when they become withdrawn and dysfunctional as a result of the challenges they experience as they readjust into a new environment. Coping in the new community does not become any easier for the women due, amongst other factors, to limitations in language, as well as lack of significant relationships outside of the home. It is therefore essential for the communities to provide adequate structures and avenues to help them meet their expectations as they integrate. Failure to do this leads to ARW feeling disappointed and often uncomfortable engaging in community events and activities.

Social Isolation

Having discussed factors related to social exclusion, it becomes apparent that majority of the women in my sample live in social isolation. Language problems, transportation problems, lack of connection with the natives, family dynamics and cultural differences are all but limitations to establishing substantial networks and strong communal bonds. “Research has demonstrated that refugees who do not have a like-ethnic community available to them may suffer a risk of depression three to four times as high as others who have access to this resource” (Beiser, 1993, p. 221). In emphasizing the importance of strong social ties, Durkheim (1984) explained that “anomie is impossible whenever organs solidly linked to one another are in sufficient contact, and in sufficiently lengthy contact” (p. 304). The women in the study also attested that they had felt unaccepted in the community, as discussed in the social exclusion section above.

ARW explained how natives would move out of areas that had a substantial number of refugee families and also they could not shake off the idea that people responded to them with

suspicion and distrust. This caused some of them to retreat to their own small world, enclosed from the rest of the society.

Jane: ...back at in Africa we all lived together as one family and helped one another. It is different here..... you see this area I live in, when I moved here many years ago there was many Americans. But now they are all gone. Maybe they were afraid of many new people. A lot sell their houses. That made me feel very bad. I still feel bad when I think about it. I wondered if we have some diseases..... I think like they don't want to be around me or us and it is not good, and now, it is hard for me to talk to them..... I am mostly by myself and I wish things were different.

Jane expresses how the social isolation she experiences is not simply a choice she makes, but that others in the community see refugees, such as herself, with derision. So much so, that she interprets the movement of folks out of the neighborhood as a testament to their dislike and fear of the refugee community. This reinforces ARW's choices to self-exclude and not share their lives with others. Ultimately, Jane felt rejected and even more isolated.

Closely connected to the issue of feeling rejected is the notion of *second-class citizen*.

One of the women mentioned that she feels like the society has not fully embraced her despite her citizenship status. She does not feel like the society treats her as a citizen and this causes her to wonder whether she will ever be a full member of the society. Collin (1998) poses that "formal citizenship rights do not automatically translate into substantive citizenship rights," (p. 5). *Second-class citizen* reinforces the lower position that ARW see themselves as occupying in the F-M community, regardless of being accorded official citizenship. In their opinion, ARW get served or heard after individuals who are considered true or first-class citizens have been served.

As Judy explains,

Hmmm, sometimes it is hard to talk to people here because they always look so serious. I would like the people to be friendly so that we can be friends. Also I don't know how but even now as a citizen, I still feel like I don't belong here. Maybe it's my bad thought but I feel like people here don't see me as a citizen of this country. They don't treat me as a citizen. This thought disturbs me a lot. I don't know what I can do to change this so I just decide to remain 'second class citizen'. I just take what is left.

Judy acknowledges that there is nothing she can do to change her current ‘second class citizen’ status. Instead of putting up a struggle to be recognized, she chooses to accept the position and submissively accepts what is left. In relation to second-class citizen, more than half of the women expressed that the society always and will always perceive them as foreigner. Collins (1998) asserts that in the United States many individuals, especially those in marginalized communities, currently express feeling of being outsiders, confronting notions of American nationality that insist on viewing them like foreigners, grateful ambassadors or unwelcome intruders. The AWR were of the opinion that being considered a foreigner is a notion that would continue to persist and it is hopeless to think that it will come to end. Ruth mentioned that,

I have been in this country for fifteen years but every time I meet someone they asked [ask] me, where are you from? Or sometimes you hear people say to each other, “she is a foreigner” You know when someone is calling you a foreigner, it makes you think there is different position for you and you are not in same position as other citizens..... I don’t think this will change, you just accept your position to avoid stress.

Ruth mentioned that being called a foreigner even after living in the United States for fifteen years is a continual reminder that she is not of the same caliber as the local citizens. She is pessimistic that this identity will not change and thus consigned to accepting her position to avoid being stressed out psychologically. Again, such experiences and perceptions reinforce the women’s hesitation to engage with the community and create a narrative that shapes their feelings of being outsiders, which contributes to their retreat from the community.

Communal Difference

In comparing the Fargo-Moorhead community to the communities back in Africa, the women noted the strong sense of community lacking in American society. They spoke of their countries as placing value on the community rather than on an individual. People worked together in the fields and this enabled them to develop strong cultural and communal ties. The

women considered the F-M area as a place where everyone lived for themselves by themselves. Ager and Strand (2004) mentioned that “refugees who had experienced close family ties in their own culture found their isolation and the lack of a local strong community to be alienating and depressing” (p. 183). Suzy exemplifies this point.

Back at home we were very close with family, neighbors and everybody....I miss that....Before fighting started in my country, we would go to the garden together and dig and plant. It was good. Here, it is different, you not [don't] see anybody. People go to work, come back home and stay there. Sometimes I don't know if my neighbor is in or out..... I live byself [alone] because my children are big. It is difficult to find somebody to talk to. I miss my family and relatives. I think about them all the time and hope they are doing fine. It makes me very very sad to not have them near me.

Suzy feels detached and separated from the community for the reason that her contact with members of the community is very minimal with almost no one to talk to. Her shift in coming from a community that highly valued community ties to one that has greater focus on individuality is hard to accommodate and that causes her to be sad.

Robert Merton's (1968) conceptualization of anomie honed in the way social structures can foreclose individual's ability to achieve socially revered goals. The Refugee Council Working Paper Document of 1997 describes integration as “a process which prevents or counteracts the social marginalization of refugees by removing legal, cultural and language obstacles and ensuring that refugees are empowered to make positive decisions on their future and benefit fully from available opportunities as per their abilities and aspirations,” (Refugee Council Working Paper Document, 1997, p. 15). Traits of anomie as described by Merton was evident during the interview process as some women narrated their lived experiences.

Anna: ...you know, I used to work at [Name of the company]. I work [worked] there for almost six years then I decided to stop..... I was talk [talking] to my friend after job one day and notice she was get [getting] more salary than me. I say why, and we do same job and same hours. I feel [felt] very bad.... I go to ask manager to increase my salary and she say “If you don't want to work anymore you (are) free to go away” I feel [felt] very

bad. The job was very difficult and tired [tiring].....I was afraid to leave job because it [is] difficult to get job. I continue to work hard for two years, salary still the same..... now bills at home was [were] many and I was not able to pay all of them. I struggle. I went again to manager for salary and she refused. I feel [felt] bad and leave [left] the job..... I am not lazy. I work hard. I need good salary..... After that I look for another job and it was difficult because I speak bad English.... After many months, I give up. Now I just stay home. It is not fair..... I feel discouraged and now I don't want anything. Let me just stay at home. [sic]

Anna's story reveals the resignation that most of the older African refugee women in my sample articulated. In the last part of the quote, retreatism is expressed with deep sadness. *I feel discouraged and now I don't want anything. Let me just stay at home.* The feeling of resignation in her words provides a profound example of how retreatism impacts people's decisions about how to engage in the world.

Retreatism according to Merton involves rejecting both the cultural goal of success and the socially legitimate means of achieving it. Merton conceptualizes retreatism as an escape mechanism whereby the individual resolves internal conflict between moral constraints and repeated failure to attain success through legitimate means (Orcut 1983). The retreatist withdraws or retreats from society and, in the case of ARW, they socially isolate themselves from the F-M community. Striving in this case is considered useless, because they do not see any accepted way to achieve what is socially desirable. Some of the ARW, due to the barriers imposed upon them by the social structures they face in American society because of their experiences as ARW, feel they have no choice but to retreat from the society. They have abandoned cultural goals, such as being financially successful, as well as the means of realizing success, in this case working at a job in which they feel they can never advance. Instead, they choose to stay and focus on their role as mother in the home that further isolates them from the community. They are however not happy with their situation as Anna continued to narrate, "I am

not happy that I not [don't] have a job and not working. But, if [you are] going to job and still can't pay bills, then why [go to work]. I don't want it, I stay home.”

To further explain how social structures can foreclose and individual's ability to achieve the socially revered goals, Mary explained,

I know English is important to get good job and talk to hmm people. When I come [came] here I started to go to school for English, but was difficult because the school have not [did not have] daycare for my child. I ask [asked] the school to start daycare and they say no daycare. Now that is problem. I don't have [I didn't have a] place and somebody to leave my child. It was problem. So I stop to go to school [I stopped going to school] and stay home to take care of family..... with no good English, no good job and not many people to talk to. But I say ok. I will just stay home.

Mary realizes the importance of knowing the host's language as it leads to getting good jobs as well as forming social networks. Her desire to want to learn the language was inhibited by the social institution not providing daycare facilities to help ARW who are in need of them. Such barriers in the society pose a challenge to the ARW as far as channeling the means to acquiring a good job or building social networks. As time progresses, they give up on the goal of learning English and resign themselves to homecare activities and became withdrawn from the rest of the community.

Dynamics to Successful Integration

The research study provided an opportunity for ARW to suggest possible measures that would aid their integration into the Fargo-Moorhead community and improve their quality of life. The suggestions provided by the women varied depending on their ethnic background, traditions, religion, and country of origin. Four key themes however did emerge from almost all the participants. These themes included female only activities, changes in leadership, supporting already existing projects started by the ARW and uniting activities. These themes are explained below.

Female Only Activities.

In explicating the background experiences of African women, Fonchingong (2006) reveals their position as victims of a society regulated by cultural norms and traditional values. The highly patriarchal cultures inhibit the progress of women and maintains them in the stench of submissiveness. Gendered power relations play a vital role in the activities designed in the community as far as the ARW are concerned. The women explained that their cultural beliefs and/or religious practices leave them uncomfortably engaging in activities alongside men who are not family member. Because some of the women were socialized in a culture that maintained separation between men and women, it is hard for them to leave those values behind to participate in structured events that integrate men and women. The participants emphasized that gender differences should be considered when designing projects to allow the women to able to engage with each other freely. Anna explained that

The place(s) I want to go for example the gym, I could not (cannot) go. Because the place is for both men and women. I am not going because my in culture it is wrong. Mixing men and women like that, not good. My culture (does) not allow men and women to mix. Men stay separate and women separate..... They should make women more activities. I would still like to participate in the gym if it women only.

Separating projects for men and women is a very important factor that the organizations helping the refugees to integrate should take note of especially in project(s) design.

Mixed projects pose a barrier to the ARW, especially ones who, under different circumstances, would love to take part. Jane mentioned that

Here, women and men do things a lot together. In my community, we do things separate. For example when we are cooking, women will cook and eat separately and men will eat separately too. That is still going on. Even when we are having parties, we will have parties for women only. I don't see the men in my culture being involved in parties as much as women. We talk to each other well when its just us women, not with men.Also in America they say women and men are equal. But back at home in [African country], it is not like that. The women is different from men back at home.

Even in church, men sit separately and women sit separate, men eat first and women eat last.....if they can stop mixing men and women activities, it will be good. African women we love to talk, I like to talk, but when men are around it is hard. If I talk too much where there are men, they say bad woman.

This excerpt serves to support the idea that AWR women feel limited in terms of participation when they are together with men. They are expected to maintain their composure and avoid being labeled as a *bad woman*, as that would tarnish their identity within their ethnic groups. The women recognize the emphasis placed on gender equality in the community, but this they agree has not completely filtrated into their culture. They continue to respect and live within the confines of patriarchal system.

However, it came out during the interview that there are occasions where both men and women have come together as well as exceptions to joined interaction. Beth, one of the participants brought in this aspect by mentioning that,

...back at home, women go to separate class and men go to separate class. But here its ok, we understand, we can mix man and women in school..... There was a time men and women from Africa come together to discuss and see how we can help our children. Our children are become bad, doing wrong thing. so we worried and all men and women come together to talk and find solution. [sic]

The point made by Beth is essential in understanding that the men and women do not carry out all their activities in complete separation from each other but that there are certain situations that permit the two sexes to come together. Organizations should therefore strive to find out if the activities they endeavor to introduce allows for mixing together of the two sexes or calls for separation to encourage women to engage with the community in meaningful ways.

Change in Leadership

The research study also revealed that the ARW would prefer to be granted more opportunities for leadership in the community, especially the activities that are geared towards them. The women feel that they are able to relate better with individuals they perceive as having

a similar background or share to a certain degree in their experience. Lucy explained that “for some of the projects in the community, it will be good to sometimes have someone from Africa lead. Because the person will be able to understand us better.”

Some of the participants supported the idea of having a leader they identify with by suggesting that it will boost their confidence levels in sharing their experiences. They added that the person will be well versed with the cultural practices and expectations and that would lead to formulating better endeavors in meeting their needs. Ruth mentioned that

You know when I go to [an] office and meet someone from [African country] as leader, I don't be [I am not afraid] afraid to talk to them about the problems. Also we can speak same language. And that is good.....you know someone from [African country] know [knows] the culture and will bring ideas with culture. And that is good also.

Another participant articulated that

Sofi: you know in my small small English sometimes I cannot explained things well. I don't know some words, so I fear saying wrong message.....If I meet a leader who speaking [native language]. I feel happy. I don't struggle with English and we understand one another [sic]

As suggested by Sofi, having a leader who can converse in another language that is not English is essential for the women because a level of understanding is reached and the fear of having information lost in translation is calmed especially, if both parties can speak the same native language.

ARW struggle to find connection with natives of the F-M community. Providing leadership that can communicate and understand their cultural backgrounds could provide an opportunity to find a comfortable inroad into community activities. This could build confidence in these isolated women and encourage further opportunities to not isolate themselves from activities that provide them with meaning and value.

Support Already Existing Projects Started by ARW

Through my conversations with ARW, I found out that as much as the women appreciate the initiatives to help them integrate into the community, they would love the community organizations and individuals in the Fargo-Moorhead community to take notice of the projects they start by themselves and support them. The women poses talent and in their own grouping they come up with activities that they feel are not appreciated in the community.

Jane: Also instead of coming up with new projects for Africans, they can try to support the small small projects we have already started for us [Ourselves]. For example within the (African country) group, we have a project. They should try and understand and learn somethings from us. They need to know that we can also start something and make it work because now, I am feeling like they are always trying to come up with some activities for us. It is not bad, but will be happy when we see them support us.

To further emphasize this point, Mary pointed out that.

When we feel support, we want to do more... It is difficulty [difficult] to continue when you don't feel support. This makes you not to want to go to their [natives] activities also. Support is good.

Supporting already existing projects or projects started by ARW themselves helps built the capacity of the women and also serves to empower them. Their morale is built when they feel supported and this motivates them to want to do more. In many ways, the agency the women experience with this sort of support helps combat the disconnection they feel from the members of the F-M community, providing encouragement that they can contribute in a meaningful way. This can go a long way in the women establishing their own routes into the community, combating their experiences of social exclusion.

Uniting Activities

Half of the participants in study posed the idea of introducing activities that would unite both the Fargo-Moorhead natives and the ARW. Uniting activities would comprise a series of social programs designed to facilitate and enrich relationships between the two groups. The

social programs/ activities can take different forms such as community get together, community picnics, and /or recreational activities. This would be essential in bridging the gap between the ARW and the natives. Ruth explained that,

Sometimes I feel like the people here don't care about our culture. They don't want to know it. It is not their problem. We are just supposed to learn their culture and do them. If they can try and learn our culture also it will be good for everybody..... they should come up with uniting activities to bring everybody together. So that we can learn from one another. I think it will make things different.

Ruth expresses her concern on how she feels like the natives do not care about her culture. This is affirmed to her by feeling obligated to learn the host culture and play by its rules. She considers it important for the natives to try and learn her way of life as this will boost levels of understanding. Uniting activities would help promote culture awareness as the individuals interact as well as provide avenues for building relationships. This would help the women in isolation to be comfortable and thus take interest in community endeavors as their culture becomes recognized and appreciated.

Conclusion

In understanding the integration of ARW into the Fargo-Moorhead community, several themes worked together in constructing the experiences of ARW. Migrating to the United States from Africa with very limited or no prior knowledge of English language marks the beginning of a slow and challenging integration process. Limited communication restricts the extent to which the ARW can become involved and participate in community endeavors that would enhance their integration. As a result most of the women remain isolated within the confines of their homes interacting with only their immediate family members. The women take on home making roles that further marginalizes and detaches them from community engagements. Language indeed is an essential piece of communication and inability to speak the host's language unravels other

related integration challenges such inability to find employment, limited connection with the natives, limited movements due to transportation problems, and majorly social isolation that plunges the ARW into anomic state. The women experience anomic traits in a variety of ways. These include feelings of sadness and loneliness, lack of purpose/ meaning, unmet expectations and disappointments. Lack of proper structures and guidelines has caused some women to resolve to retreatism as a coping mechanism. The women express deep desire to be effectively integrated and more engaged in the community. They propose that female only activities, changes in leadership, supporting already existing projects started by the ARW and uniting activities to be adopted by responsible structuring agencies to enhance their integration process.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

As I draw this study to a conclusion, I am reminded of the time constraints I experienced, especially in the interviewing process. It took time to develop rapport with the women before any interview could be conducted. I also engaged in a series of multiple interviews with some of the women in order to gather rich data. Low English proficiency is a central theme, both in the data collected, as well as in the work to gather the data. I was challenged and limited by the language barriers and found it difficult to access targeted women who were fluent enough in English to participate. For the women who participated, their limited knowledge of the English language proved problematic as they jogged their minds to find the words to describe their traumatic and challenging experiences. As I did the transcriptions of the interviews, I realized that the length of time in the recording device was longer than the actual transcriptions. This was as a result of the pauses taken by the women as they tried to think of English words that could best describe their thoughts. Despite these limitations, I was able to explore a segment of the refugee population that is isolated and silent. Through the narratives of African refugee women (ARW) and an attention to social exclusion and anomie, I am able to provide some first steps to understanding these women's struggles. My hope is that this study can be a useful document for people working with ARW, as well as the local people in the Fargo-Moorhead area. By revealing their individual experiences, ARW create awareness of their diverse and unique situations. This is essential because it helps debunk the stereotypes in the community that emerge through generalizing and categorizing the ARW as a single entity.

I focus on three central points in this concluding chapter: better understanding what it means to be a refugee, the scholarly value of this work, and recommendations for future study and community initiatives. I do this through a reflexive discussion of my own experiences as an African woman studying in the F-M community.

During the course of my study, I interacted with several natives of the Fargo-Moorhead area and, in my desire to know how much they were familiar with the refugee population, I would initiate conversations. It came as a surprise to me that 8 out of 10 of the individuals I engaged in a conversation with had no idea what makes a refugee or how individuals acquire a refugee status. I had a series of conversations where I had to explain to individuals that, yes I am from Africa but I am not a refugee, rather I am an international student. Depending on the individual, some had a hard time comprehending the difference. I live with a host family who are locals in the community. I was yet again surprised when, after six months of living with them, I was in the process of explaining my research study to them and they asked me if I was a refugee. This reinforces the experiences of the ARW in my study. There seems to be a misunderstanding in the community about who refugees are and how they enter the community. If the community does not understand what it means to be a refugee, this makes understanding the isolated experiences of ARW even more challenging for the community to make efforts to reach out and better understand the struggles they face. Knowledge shapes our perceptions and providing a way to educate the community in order to understand, perceive, and even treat the ARW differently, could go a long way to addressing the issues of social isolation and anomie. I recommend, especially for the organizations involved with providing service to the ARW to incorporate or adopt interventions in their system that encourage cultural exchange and enhance the relationships between the ARW and the local people. These interventions would help ARW and the local members to know each other, learn, and appreciate each other's lifeworld. I also note that it will be a slow and gradual process toward realizing change.

Moving on to the contribution of this research study to academia, the study demonstrates the power of testimonio writing by providing comprehensive explanations through the words of

the ARW on their integration experiences that would otherwise not be attained. The study provides essential knowledge on the dynamics of integration and social isolation in its analysis and these can be referenced by other interested researchers in their work. My research study also provides strong support to the deficiency in universal categorization of women in non-western countries and its tendency to overlook the diversities of the women (Mohanty, 1991). The testimonies of the ARW reveal how this universalization is abhorred.

The study also makes a contribution to anomie. The ARW come from societies in Africa that value community ties and then have to transition into American societies that are more individualized. The cultural shift is compounded by a variety of structural barriers that leave the ARW in my sample experiencing a high degree of social exclusion. Exploring anomie within the context of ARW not only provides a framework through which to understand women's experiences, it also expands the possible applications of anomie within the current context of global migration and the refugee experience. Experiences of social exclusion contribute to ARW's feelings of intense sadness, despair, loneliness, and isolation. This study is only a beginning to understanding the relationship between anomie and refugee women. I therefore posit that future studies could render a more developed understanding of anomie.

As I was nearing the end of writing my analysis, I purposefully engaged in conversations with friends and colleagues on the themes that were emerging in my study. Mainly I wanted to find out what their opinions were regarding the themes. Were they aware of the experiences of the ARW in the Fargo-Moorhead area or had they engaged in personal contact with the ARW and were able to attest to the themes. The conversations often ended with a question being posed on what I was intending to do with the information I obtained from the women. I must admit that I feel it is my responsibility to do something that would contribute in one way or another to

enhancing the lives of the ARW. I therefore make a personal commitment to disseminate the information in the study to organizations responsible or work voluntarily with ARW in helping them integrate into the community. This I would do by giving presentations in staff meeting of the respective organizations.

I realized this would be a good start to making a difference after giving a partial presentation on the study at the Annual Red river women's conference at Minnesota State University - Moorhead on the 10/23/15. It came from the audience, who were intrigued by the findings of the study that there is need for the information to be shared with organizations as well members of the Fargo-Moorhead communities. This they believed would provide knowledge and insight to the dynamics of the ARW population that could foresee a difference in the way the women are perceived and treated. I also intend to do a press release that would aid in reaching out to the wider community in, creating awareness and expanding their knowledge on the experiences of ARW.

“At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by ‘I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, I was homeless and you took me in.’ Hungry not only for bread — but hungry for love. Naked not only for clothing — but naked for human dignity and respect. Homeless not only for want of a room of bricks — but homeless because of rejection.” ~ Mother Teresa.

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APPENDIX A. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background information

- Can you tell me when you arrived in America?
- Did you travel to America by yourself or with family?
- If by self: Do you have a family now in America?
 - If yes, who is your family?
- If by family: Who did you travel with as part of your family?
- How was life in Africa before you transitioned to America?
- Please tell me, how was your journey from Africa to America?
- When did you start speaking English?
 - How would you rate your English proficiency?

Experience with the community

- How does your experience in America differ from your experience back in Africa?
- How well do you know your neighbors?
- Do you think it is important to be involved in the community?
- How often do you participate in the social programs /events in the community?
- Do you think it is hard to get involved in the Fargo-Moorhead community
 - If no: Why
 - If yes: What are some of the factors that you think contribute to the difficulty in getting involved in the community?
- What do you think can be done to encourage more involvement in the community?
 - If high participation: What are some of the things you did to boost your level of social integration/ participation in the community?
- How has your daily life changed since you have come to the US?
 - Do you think you are more or less involved in this community than in your community in [country]? If so, how?
- Did the FM community fit your expectations of what it would be like in the US?
 - If so, can you explain what you expected?
 - If not, how has it been different?

- Do you think other ARW highly participate in the community?
 - If no: What do you think are some of the factors that cause low participation among other African refugee women?
- What do you think can be done to increase the level of participation of other African refugee women in the Fargo - Moorhead community?

Experience with social organizations

- How familiar are you with the services offered to the ARW in the Fargo – Moorhead community?
- Have you participated in any of the programs/services?
 - If yes, what was/is your thought on the program?
 - If yes, how would you rate their level of effectiveness?

APPENDIX B. BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Participant Code: _____

Basic Demographic information

1. What is your age?
 - 30-40
 - 41-50
 - above 50

2. How long have you been in the United States?
 - 1-5 Years
 - 6-11 Years
 - 11 +

Marital status

3. What is your marital status?
 - Single
 - Married
 - Divorced
 - Widowed
 - Separated
 - Separated,
 - Other (please explain) _____

4. Do you have any children?
 - Yes
 - NoIf yes how many _____

Place of origin

5. What country in Africa are you from? _____

6. Which city do you currently live in? _____

Educational background

7. In your lifetime, have you attended any formal learning institutions?
 - Yes
 - No

(If Yes, proceed to question 9, if No proceed to question 10)

8. Please describe the formal education you have received so far.
 - Some Primary school
 - Completed Primary School (1st grade through 8th grade)

- Some high school
- Completed high school
- Tertiary/ Technical College
- Undergraduate degree
- Master's degree
- Other, please explain

9. How would you rate your fluency in spoken and written English

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

Employment

10. What is your occupation? _____

11. What is your current employment status?

- Unemployed
- Less than 20 hours
- 21hours to 39 hours
- 40 hours
- More than 40 hours

Lutheran Social services

12. Are you familiar with the social programs / services provided to new Americans by Lutheran Social Services?

- Yes
- No

13. List the programs you are aware of

14. Are there social programs at Lutheran Social Services that are specific to African women?

- Yes
- No

15. How effective are the social programs provided by organizations in Fargo- Moorhead to ARW.

- Ineffective
- Somewhat effective
- Effective
- Very effective

16. What is your level of participation in the Fargo – Moorhead community?

- No participation
- Very minimal participation
- Minimal participation
- Average participation
- High participation

17. What level of participation in the community would you prefer?

- Current level of participation
- Less participation
- More participation