Lost and found: Different integration patterns of the Sudanese Lost Boys living in Kansas City area after resettlement

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The United States has resettled unaccompanied minors before. In the 1960s and 1970s, minors from Indochina were resettled in the United States. In the 1970s, the U.S accepted 14,000 unaccompanied minors from Cuba through Operation Peter Pan. Many of these Cuban minors, aged five to eighteen, were sent to the United States by parents fearing their children would be indoctrinated in communist schools. In the case of these minors, they arrived in the United States with the consent of their still-living family members. In contrast, about 3,500 Sudanese Lost Boys were resettled in the United States in 2000, and more recently in 2010, 53 “lost children” from Haiti were brought to the United States following a devastating earthquake.

This study investigated the integration and assimilation patterns of the Sudanese Lost Boys in the Kansas City area with the purpose of understanding the sociological impact on these Boys from their own perspective. As opposed to previous studies done on these Boys in Kansas and other areas in the United States, the present study used interview-based research and analyzed data using both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.

The study concluded that the Lost Boys were both “Lost” and “Found” in complex ways. The study found that unaccompanied refugees labeled as minors at the time of resettlement integrated more “successfully” than those resettled as adults. Minor Boys received certain advantages over Boys who were labeled legal adults. Over time, those resettled as minors accumulated more social capital relevant in American society, while those resettled as legal adults fell behind. The findings highlighted problems associated with age-based treatment of refugees, especially in the case of the Boys who were arbitrarily classified as adults. Assigned ages significantly impacted their assimilation process into American society. Unlike those Boys resettled as minors, legal adults did not have access to structure and immersion opportunities afforded by foster families, formal education, and social activities. This study concluded that age-based disadvantage was evident in the case of the Lost Boys.

Keywords: Refugees; Minors; Sudan; Legal adults; Social capital; Assimilation

Graduation Month: May
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Department: Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
Major Professor: Robert K. Schaeffer
Date: 2011
Dissertation

Files in this item

Filename: DanvasMabeya2011.pdf
Size: 1.363Mb

Record URL: http://hdl.handle.net/2097/8453
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reasons given above by Janzen et al. as their important motivation. One participant in this study said: “A lot of lost boys came from other states. Many of the lost boys came to Kansas City because of jobs. Another thing is that if you have a ‘Lost Boy’ who is your friend, you can call him to come and live with you.” [18]. Sara McKinnon contends that the resettlement program for the Lost Boys in the U.S. was one of the most successful ever in U.S. history, given that nearly all the Boys who were legal adults at the time of their resettlement got employed [45]. City lifestyle and country lifestyle are two different types of livings. These have many differences in the environment, job opportunity, and cost of living. Therefore, the differences of these make people consider about the advantages and disadvantages of living in the city and country side. There… Some people think living in city is more comfortable. First of all, there are a lot of facilities for people in the city and they have more opportunities for making money. For example: own their businesses can easily support their lives. We have more the job opportunities because there are lots of companies and organizations.