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Secondary Migration and Relocation Among African Refugee Families in the United States

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the secondary migration and relocation of African refugees resettled in the United States. Secondary migration refers to moves out of state, while relocation refers to moves within state. Of 73 recently resettled refugee families from Burundi and Liberia followed for 1 year through ethnographic interviews and observations, 13 instances of secondary migration and 9 instances of relocation were identified. A family ecodevelopmental framework was applied to address: Who moved again, why, and with what consequences? How did moving again impact family risk and protective factors? How might policies, researchers, and practitioners better manage refugees moving again? Findings indicated that families undertook secondary migration principally for employment, affordable housing, family reunification, and to feel more at home. Families relocated primarily for affordable housing. Parents reported that secondary migration and relocation enhanced family stability. Youth reported disruption to both schooling and attachments with peers and community. In conclusion, secondary migration and relocation were family efforts to enhance family and community protective resources and to mitigate shortcomings in resettlement conditions. Policymakers could provide newly resettled refugees jobs, better housing and family reunification. Practitioners could devise ways to better engage and support those families who consider moving.

Keywords

Refugee; Family; Moving

BACKGROUND

When refugees resettle in the United States, there is a reasonable chance that they will move again. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 57% of the U.S. foreign-born population reported living in a different residence in 2000 as compared with 1995. Africans had the highest mobility rate among the foreign-born, with 68% having changed their residence between 1995 and 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003).

“Secondary migration” is a term used in U.S. refugee policy to refer to refugees moving from the U.S. state where they were initially resettled to another state during their first 8 months (Maine, 2009). Only in those 8 months can the benefit package that refugees receive through their resettlement agency follow them to their new location(s) and be distributed through a successor agency. Eight months is the time-period specified in the U.S. Refugee Act of 1980 for the state-administered Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance programs. If a refugee moves after the initial 8 months, then those benefits are not available to that refugee in the new location.

Secondary migration represents a diversion from the intended pattern of resettlement managed by the federal and state refugee resettlement programs as legislated through the U.S. Refugee Act. For example, this act stipulates an “intended distribution of refugees among the States,” and aims to “... insure that a refugee is not initially placed or resettled in an area highly impacted ... by the presence of refugees or comparable populations” (p. 1). Nonetheless, the Refugee Act acknowledged secondary migration by mandating that local affiliates plan for “... the secondary migration of refugees to and from the area that is likely to occur” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009a, 2009b). For purposes of this study, we defined secondary migration as moves out of state in any time period postresettlement. We defined relocation as moves within state in any time-period postresettlement.

The U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement reported that much of the secondary migration of refugees takes place during their first few years after arrival in the United States and that their geographic distribution then stabilizes (2005). The initial distribution of these refugees in the United States is largely determined by family member sponsorship and by sponsoring voluntary agencies (Mortenson, 1981; Wright, 1981). Upon arrival most refugees (called “free cases”) are resettled nearby the voluntary agency or sponsoring religious institution (IRC, 1993; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1993) that will be providing them with service and support. Subsequent refugee arrivals (some of whom may be “family reunification cases”) from Africa have tended to flock to communities of African refugees-turned-permanent residents in the United States (Wong, 1995), finding within these communities benefits to help their adjustment and shared experiences and culture (Desbarats, 1985).

Existing Research on Secondary Migration

Studies on a diverse range of ethnic minority refugee groups have identified the familial, social, and economic factors associated with moving again after initial resettlement. A study of southern Italians in the United States noted that immigrants moved to form communities of their own ethnic background (MacDonald & MacDonald, 1962). These communities may help to shorten the adjustment period, provide protection against hostility and rejection, and maintain cultural traditions (Nann, 1982). They also provide practical support such as assistance in securing housing and employment, counseling, and language translation (Gans, 1958). Zavodny (1998) found that the presence of other foreign-born nationals was the primary determinant of recent immigrants’ location choices within the United States. Comparatively, economic conditions were found to play a minor role.

Studies of Indochinese secondary migration found that California's generous health and welfare programs, combined with the sizable Indochinese refugee population in San Diego, accounted for the refugees' moves (Bryan, 1990; Forbes, 1984). Forbes explained this propensity in terms of three factors: (1) lack of ties to place of initial settlement; (2) proven ability to migrate; and (3) dissatisfaction with employment that is often below the home country level of employment. A study of the Hmong community's initial resettlement to Chicago between 1978 and 1987 concluded that their illiteracy, lack of formal education and marketable skills, and lack of English language contributed to their difficulty living in a highly technologically developed city and to their subsequent successful secondary migration to California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (Thao, 1994). A study of Mexican and Chinese immigrants to the United States showed similar factors driving their secondary migration (Zhang, 2004). A study of Ethiopian refugees in the United States noted that "these migrants are attracted to ... areas with a strong economy, high income levels, good employment and educational opportunities, and the presence of large African communities" (Wong, 1995).

Few studies have examined how immigrants have fared after secondary migration. One study found an insignificant effect of geographic mobility on wage rates among Asian, Central American, and European immigrants who arrived in the United States after 1964 as compared with the native population (Bartel & Koch, 1991). Another analysis of secondary migration, which tested an interstate version of the spatial assimilation model using merged longitudinal data from a survey of income and program participation, found that immigrants benefited from their moves both in terms of employment and earnings. Those with higher levels of acculturation saw additional economic gains when they moved to states with smaller immigrant populations (Hall, 2007). The family therapy literature has described the significance of differing experiences and attitudes of family members amidst the refugee and migration experience (Mcgoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Petro, 2005), including new adaptive modifications to family functioning in transnational families (Falicov, 2009). However, secondary migration and relocation have been understudied from a family perspective.

Burundian and Liberian Refugees

Ten thousand Burundian refugees from Tanzanian refugee camps were resettled in the United States beginning in 2007. The 1972 Burundians are mostly Hutu and fled a violent campaign from the Tutsi-controlled government (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2007). Living in exile in Tanzania for three decades, they experienced ongoing political and criminal violence, sexual assault, poverty, unemployment, dependency, no freedom of movement, family break-up, and poor education for children. In addition to war-related trauma and loss, many Burundian families cope with separations from loved ones due to shortcomings of the refugee resettlement system (e.g., applying a definition of family that does not fit with most Africans), as well as other serious challenges to family functioning associated with social adjustment following prolonged stay in refugee camps and with extreme poverty.

From 1989 until 2003, Liberia suffered a series of conflicts among armed groups. An estimated 200,000 people were killed in the fighting and hundreds of thousands were forced to flee to neighboring nations or overseas (VOA, 2009). According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, over 71,000 Liberian refugees lived in refugee camps in Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and other neighboring countries (2008). Between 1992 and 2004, the United States resettled approximately 23,500 Liberian refugees who fled the civil war in Liberia. Like Burundians, these refugee families experienced separations as well as economic, social, and cultural pressures in resettlement (Franz & Ives, 2008). Liberians generally express a strong allegiance to the United States and the American way of life. They are grateful to the U.S. government for bringing them here and giving them hope for their children's future, though many remain concerned about the U.S. history of slavery and the devastating impact it has had on Liberia and its people (Corcoran & Krua, 2007).

A Family Ecodevelopmental Framework for the Investigation

The purpose of this study was to address the following research questions:

1. Who moved again, why, and with what consequences?
2. How did moving again impact family risk and protective factors?
3. How might policies and programs better respond to the complexities of refugees moving again?

To frame our investigation of the family dimensions of secondary migration and relocation, we applied family ecodevelopmental theory, which envisions youth in the context of family systems and community networks interacting with educational, health, mental health, and social service systems (Szapocznik & Coatsworth, 1999; Szapocznik et al., 1997). We also drew upon resilience theory (Rutter, 1995; Walsh, 2003, 2006), trauma theories (Bracken, 2002; Friedman & Jaranson, 1994; Silove, 1999), and migration theories (Falicov, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rumbaut, 1991). In the refugee field there are a number of small and mostly cross-sectional quantitative studies, and these have identified possible protective resources, such as family and social support (Beiser, Devins, Dion, Hyman, & Lin, 1997; Beiser, Turner, & Ganesan, 1989; Hsu, Davies, & Hansen, 2004), parental well-being and lower caregiver distress (Melville & Lykes, 1992), connection to the large community and to the culture of origin (Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, 2002; Servanschreiber, Lin, & Birmaher, 1998).

Based upon these theories, we devised a conceptual framework to guide this research on refugee families in resettlement. This family ecodevelopmental framework posited that: (1) war, migration and resettlement expose refugees to family and ecological risk factors; (2) protective factors also exist in refugees' family and social environments; (3) these protective factors mitigate the family and ecological risks for negative individual behavioral (e.g., poor educational functioning) and mental health (e.g., depression and alcoholism) consequences. Thus we conceptualized secondary migration and relocation from a multilevel, cross-cultural, and resilience perspective, which we believe is needed to understand the individual, familial, community, educational, and developmental factors that are involved. We will

briefly summarize how this framework focused on risk and protective factors was used to approach refugee families experiencing secondary migration and relocation.

Risk factors were defined as family and ecological characteristics that cause increased vulnerability to individual negative behavioral or mental health consequences for family members. Risk factors may include conditions of resettlement (e.g., poverty, discrimination, social and cultural dislocations, family separations, unemployment, low wage work, lack of English language proficiency), war (e.g., trauma exposure), or cultural norms (e.g., over-dependency on agencies following prolonged stays in refugee camps).

Protective factors were defined as family and ecological characteristics that stop, delay, or diminish negative individual behavioral and mental health consequences for youth or adult family members. Protective factors can include within-family resources (e.g., parenting style, parental monitoring and supervision, and family communication), family-to-others (e.g., family outreach, family advocacy), and community protective factors (e.g., helpful support from church, voluntary agencies, or other families).

The framework considered that risk and protective factors interact in complex ways with one another and with other individual, familial, and contextual factors to impact individual mental health and behavioral outcomes. No known studies have looked at the interaction between protective resources, risks, and secondary migration and relocation.

This framework was used to inform this investigation's qualitative data collection in several ways. One, it helped to identify domains of interest for the interviews and observations. Two, it helped to formulate questions used in minimally structured interviews. Three, it helped in identifying themes as part of a grounded theory approach to qualitative data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

METHODS

We conducted a 3-year, multisite, longitudinal ethnographic study of Burundian and Liberian refugees resettled in Chicago, IL, and Boston, MA. Study subjects were 73 at-risk refugee adolescents, their families, and service providers, interviewed within the first 3 years following resettlement. At-risk was defined as refugee youth with one or more of several specific factors that have been empirically associated with mental illness or behavioral problems in published studies of migrant youth (Hernandez, 2004). These were: (1) a one parent family; (2) poverty (monthly family income below U.S. Census poverty threshold, U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2004); (3) living in a linguistically isolated household (e.g., no one in house over age 14 speaks English very well, U.S. Census Bureau, 2003); (4) a mother or father with less than a high school education; (5) a parent who has sought or received mental health treatment (either counseling or medications). All participants gave written informed consent as approved by the institutional review boards of the University of Illinois at Chicago and Harvard University.

Data collection consisted of minimally structured interviews and shadowing observations of individual study participants, and focused field observations carried out with each family in homes, communities, and service organizations. Minimally structured interviews were

discussions with the participant begun with a small number of introductory questions. The conversation proceeded in whatever direction allowed the participant to speak most meaningfully to the research questions from his/ her personal experience. Shadowing field observations involved the ethnographer accompanying the family or its members on his/her normal daily routine in a variety of sites (to include home, school, community, and services). Shadowing observations allowed the ethnographers to directly witness the interactions between protective resources, risks, culture, and service sectors over time.

The interviewers were Burundian, Liberian, and American fieldworkers trained and supervised by the principal investigator and coinvestigator. Data were collected and analyzed based upon well-established approaches to ethnography and qualitative analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Because we were trying to capture changes over time for each of the families, we applied a case study research design whereby the data for each family (transcribed interviews and field notes of observations) were read sequentially so as to identify factors that changed over time (Gillham, 2000). The initial study questions were refined through an iterative process of data collection and analysis that followed standardized qualitative methods utilizing a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to data analysis until a model emerged.

Of the overall sample of 73 families, this paper reports on a case series of the 22 families (30%) that moved during the initial 1-year study period, from February 1, 2008, to February 1, 2009. In these 22 families, the average age of participating parents was 43 (range 28–66, *SD* 10.5). The average age of participating youth was 15 (range 10–18, *SD* 2.5), and the average number of children per family was five (range 1–12, *SD* 2.5). Thirteen of 22 (59%) of parents were married, none were divorced, 5/22 (23%) were separated, 1/22 (5%) was widowed, and 2/22 (9%) were never married. Parental education levels ranged from illiterate (9/22, or 39%), less than high school (9/22, or 39%), and high school (5/22, or 22%). Each of the 22 families lived in refugee camps before their arrival in the United States.

RESULTS

Table 1 provides data on the demographic characteristics of the families that moved, the places where they moved, and their stated motivations for moving. Nearly one-third of participating families (30%) moved during the study period. Of these, 13/22 (59%) migrated out of state, and 9/22 (41%) migrated within state.

Twenty of 22 families that moved (91%) cited housing as a motivation for migration, specifying the need for larger and/or more affordable housing. Seven of 22 families (32%) cited work opportunities as motivation for moving. Four of these families found full employment following their moves, while 2 families found only partial employment and 1 family found none.

Seven of 22 families (32%) listed family reunification as reason for migration. Eight of 22 families (36%) reported moving for community reunification, 5/22 families (23%) sought increased neighborhood safety when deciding to move, and 2/22 families (9%) also cited educational reasons, including a better school district and an after-school study hall program

in the new apartment building. Thirteen of 13 (100%) of the families that moved out of state and 1/9 (11%) that moved in-state pursued less-urban locations. Six of 13 (46%) of the families that moved out of state moved to warmer climates.

In the study sample, most relocations occurred among Liberian families (6/8 or 75%), and most secondary migration occurred among Burundian families (11/13 or 85%). Of the 10 refugee families initially resettled in Boston, 5 relocated (50%) and 5 moved out of state (50%). Of 12 refugee families initially resettled in Chicago, 4 (33%) relocated and 8 moved out of state (67%).

The average time between initial resettlement and move was 18 months (range 2–42, *SD* 11.1). Among Liberian refugee families, the average time between initial resettlement and moving was 24 months (range 5–42, *SD* 15.1), and among Burundian refugee families, the average time between initial resettlement and moving was 15 months (range 2–29, *SD* 7.0).

Family Narratives

Relocation case—A Liberian family arrived in Chicago from a refugee camp in the Ivory Coast. Jay, the teenage son, was born in the refugee camp. Jay came to the United States with his mother, Nina, along with her other three children. In Chicago, the mother met a new man, Robert, and they had a child together. Although they wanted to marry, they delayed marriage for fear of losing public aid. Robert was employed in a factory and Nina worked as a housekeeper. Nina was illiterate and never finished elementary school. One of Nina's daughters dropped out of high school and moved in with her boyfriend away from Chicago, whom she knew from the refugee camp. Her other son dropped out and took a minimum-wage job. Jay befriended someone at church who offered to sponsor his education at a Chicago private school, where he was thriving.

Seeking a lower cost of living and cheaper housing, Robert moved to another Illinois city, found a job in a factory, and prepared the way for his new family. While the children moved to their new home, Nina stayed in Chicago for several months in order to finish her job. She then moved to the new city to join her family, including Robert's teenage son by another woman. Jay and his sister were expected to learn to respect and listen to their new father. They were told that their father abandoned them by having children with another woman in Africa, so Robert is their real father now.

According to Nina, the new neighborhood was safer, with quieter streets, and without gangs like in Chicago. The family had no relatives in the new town, but there were many Liberians from their tribe and they felt part of a Liberian community. The family was more financially secure, as housing was less expensive than in Chicago (US\$700 vs. US\$825), and the family had a townhouse with three bedrooms, an improvement from their Chicago apartment. Although at first Nina did not have a job, she was sure she would find one. "Mostly," Nina said, "I am happy to be living with Robert and to have some emotional security now." Within 3 months she found a job in a warehouse.

"I don't like this new place," said Jay. "I don't like how quiet it is." Nina thought he would adjust in time. He made two or three friends, although none of them were close. Jay was

going to church without his family. He began going to church in the refugee camp, like many other youth raised in the refugee camps, who became more regular church attendees than their parents. He attended public school, but was being teased by other students for dressing and looking different. He did not like the new school and felt uneasy in the new city. His parents told him, “Jay, we know you liked Chicago, but we left because of the living situation over there. Here you live in a very neat place. You are well taken care of. You should appreciate this.” Jay was expected to listen and not to complain or protest.

Secondary migration case—A Burundian family migrated to Chicago in 2007 from a refugee camp in Tanzania, where they lived for 35 years. The parents, Frank and Gloria, were unemployed in Chicago, but they and their six children received aid from their resettlement agency. From their church they also received clothing, childcare, home furnishings, and money. During their first year in America, when they really needed these kinds of financial, social, emotional, and spiritual supports, the family regarded the church as a kind of second home.

Both parents were uneducated, and their 16-year-old girl, Jane, struggled with having been placed in the ninth grade in Chicago after only completing the fifth grade in Tanzania. Her parents were not actively involved with her education, saying, “There is nothing we can do. We don’t have anything to offer. We have never done this with school.” Neither the agency nor the church did much to help the parents to connect with the teachers, staff, or other parents at school.

Then when the resettlement agency noticed the church’s deposits in the family’s bank accounts, the agency cut their rent money (US\$800 per month) and the other help they provided with furniture and household necessities. The voluntary agencies are themselves under intense financial pressure, and only lend support if the family has no other sources of income or money saved. Frank never expected that the agency would find out that he had money. He was unaware that agencies regularly monitor their refugees’ bank accounts.

After a church representative tried to intervene on behalf of the family, the agency began blaming Frank. He was not supposed to have any money and was supposed to report whatever he had. Frank in turn blamed the church. They should have stayed out of it, because they should respect authority and not do anything that would make him look bad. The resettlement agency eventually reestablished paying the rent, but the ordeal seriously disturbed Frank, adding to already growing tensions at home with Gloria over finances.

The family did not know what to do. Should they stay or go? They were so attached to the church that they did not want to leave, but their situation of not earning money was not acceptable to Frank, who took matters into his own hands and decided on his own that they should move. He decided to move to the southern United States after just one year in Chicago. According to Frank, “I didn’t have a job in Chicago and I didn’t feel I could take care of my family. I heard I would find a job in the South. I also wanted to join my family there. I wanted to find a cheaper house, and I wanted warmer weather.”

Despite the tensions with the church, there were still warm feelings on both sides. At the goodbye dinner, our Burundian field worker noted, “Everybody in the church was crying—you’re talking about 250 members of the church—it was just unbelievable. You know, it’s like your brother or sister. Amazing. Some were trying to stop them, but in the end of course they moved. And they did help them to move—packing and loading the truck. Even now they are staying in touch with them.”

Within a month of arriving at their new locations, Frank found work in a factory. Gloria was employed within 6 months cleaning their new church. The family found a three-bedroom house for US\$450—the same rent they paid for a two-bedroom apartment in Chicago. They had money to cover basic expenses, and they also found assistance through a resettlement agency despite being past the initial 8-month period of agency assistance.

Still, they complained about paying for rent and childcare. Because they had never paid for these things in Tanzania, it was a strange concept. Our Burundian field worker said, “They understand the American way but they still feel like it’s too much money. They say for how many more years do we need to pay? Why do they keep taking money?” For them when you live in a house, it is yours. This was one of many topics that the agency typically covered in lectures, but that often do not get understood by the Burundian refugees.

The family lived near Gloria’s brother. Gloria said, “People here are more friendly. We actually see the people next door. We share things, talk to each other. It’s friendlier. Even if I don’t pick up my child from school I know they will just take him and take care of him.” Indeed, neighbors provided the family with free childcare while Frank and Gloria were at work. They felt like now they could go outside and connect with people around. In Chicago they did not even know their neighbors.

Although Jane still struggled academically, her grades were improving, she spoke well, did her homework, and went to the library. The fieldworker observed, “She knows what she wants and where she wants to go.” Her siblings were also doing well. They regularly attended church and prayed at home. The parents kept a disciplined house and tried to keep the children focused on their schoolwork. Recently, our Burundian field worker received a call from Jane, who said she wanted to come back to Chicago for college. She knew she could reconnect with members from the Chicago church. She could stay with them. They would not let her be alone in Chicago.

The Impact of Moving on Family Risk and Protective Factors

The grounded theory model that was derived through analysis of the interview and observation data collected on the refugee families that moved is depicted in Table 2. It specifies the family and ecological risk and protective factors that changed with secondary migration and relocation. Overall, the analysis found that secondary migration and relocation of refugees in resettlement had a mixed impact upon family and ecological risk and protective factors. Although the multiple risks that refugee families faced did not disappear, moving typically resulted in improvements in the family protective resources that mitigated these risks, thus increasing the families’ stability. The sections that follow provide

additional illustrative details from the case series to illustrate the impact of moving upon family risk and protective factors.

Family and ecological risk factors—As a consequence of secondary migration and relocation most risk factors remained the same; however, some existing risk factors were enhanced and some new risks emerged. For many families, the risks that remained largely the same after moving included: family separation, unemployment, poverty, need to support family in Africa, parents not speaking English, strained spousal and parent/child relationship, overcrowded housing, dissatisfaction with school services, unsafe neighborhood, and not feeling at home.

Many families moved to join family members living in other states after their resettlement agency was not able to bring their family to live with them. However, many refugees who moved continued to be separated from family members, either in other U.S. states or abroad, and expressed frustration. One Liberian father stated, “The U.S. doesn’t get it. You don’t separate people. The most important thing is to be together. Resettlement agencies just don’t understand that. It’s not their priority.” Reunifications with family still abroad were going to be far more difficult to arrange.

Most families that moved did so to reduce their financial expenditures, especially for rent. For example, a Burundian family in Boston was 1 month behind on rent and received a letter from the landlord stating that he would start the eviction process within 14 days. The father stated: “I get social security of US\$500 per month, and my wife’s job ended. The rent is US \$850 per month.” This family’s ongoing struggle to afford food forced them to move to a smaller space in a poorer neighborhood plagued with violence and crime. Another father who moved his family out of state said, “Truly the housing is better ... we are paying less for more space in a well-kept and well-managed building.” A mother said that since moving they have what is most important to them: “... a job, and living with family.”

Those families that moved to suburban and rural environments had to face other difficulties related to transportation. A family that moved from Chicago to a small Midwestern city found employment, but the father stated, “It’s rough, tough, hard. My main concern is it’s very hard for to move around. Transportation in the suburbs is a tough challenge. I don’t have a car. The only way to move around and get to work is to have a car. I have to drive two hours to get to work. I leave home at 4 a.m. and get home at 8 p.m. I would like to go to school. Can’t. No time. My whole day is taken by just work. I would like to have my wife work so I can buy a car, but she cannot start work. Where can she put the children?”

All families that moved lost the material and emotional support of their local sponsors, resettlement agencies, and social service agencies. They also left ethnic and religious communities, friends, and support networks. For children, the disruption of relationships with their friends, school, church, and neighborhoods was often painful. Many youth pointedly said that they did not want to move and that they missed their friends. In their new locations these youth were considering ways to come back to Chicago or Boston, either to live with another family, or by getting married, or by going to college. As a consequence of

moving, youth bear yet another set of losses. On top of that, their sense of belonging was divided even further.

Youth heard two different kinds of messages from adults, which bear upon moving. From their parents they were told what to do, including being told you have to move. Even when they packed to leave, children found that often their possessions were not included. One girl had to choose what was most important for her. She left behind her bed and clothes. In contrast, from their teachers at school they were taught that they had freedom and could make choices. They might have had no say in the decision to move, but when it came to college they said they wanted the freedom to choose like other American teenagers.

Many families coming from rural settings in Africa described “not feeling at home” in large cities where there was one building after another, no open spaces, and you do not know your neighbors, not even the persons living next door. They desired to move to a suburban or rural setting. Many parents from Burundi stated they wanted a place that had “the atmosphere of a refugee camp,” where children could safely be out on their own without adult supervision. For other families, “not feeling at home” specifically meant moving to a warmer climate. Several families were able to satisfy these desires by moving to southeastern states.

While no families indicated that they moved primarily because of their children’s schools, some Burundian refugee parents expressed dissatisfaction regarding school services (e.g., meals and transportation) and cited school services as a potentially important reason to move. Given that no families looked into new schools before moving, it is not surprising that moving had mixed results regarding their satisfaction with school services. No families reported that moving improved their children’s educational experience and none reported any significant changes in this realm.

Family and ecological protective factors—Families that moved reported enhanced protection in multiple areas, including the ability to support family in Africa, improved housing, family solidarity, family pride and agency, neighborhood safety, and feeling more at home.

When families found employment and more affordable housing on their own, parents reported feeling empowered and successful in terms of their moves. Having chosen their new homes themselves, rather than having been assigned to them by resettlement agencies, they often felt a renewed sense of ownership over their futures. Our Burundian fieldworker noted, “They are making progress. This progress is their own making now. Before it was the resettlement agency. Now it is them.” Employment provided not only financial security, but also generated greater respect for the parents within their families and community for being breadwinners. This sense of pride and agency was important because for Burundian families in the study sample, moving was often regarded as something to feel ashamed of, an admission of defeat and a time when other families could see how few possessions you had. For this reason, many Burundian families moved at night without telling anyone. After having moved, and improved their financial and living situation, including their ability to financially support next of kin in Africa, then they felt that they had reestablished the respect of their family and community.

Among Liberians in the study sample, moving was often viewed as a kind of accomplishment on their journey to becoming Americans. They moved because they were ready to move and to face the challenge together as a family. While we found that parents generally did not approach the decision to migrate with a focus on their children, Liberian parents often involved children in the process of decision-making and supported them in taking leave and in entering a new environment. Parents built up their children's anticipation about moving to a new and better place, giving the entire family a new sense of hope. Our Liberian fieldworker noted, "The family is all happy together and celebrating it. It brings the family closer to each other."

As a consequence of secondary migration and relocation some protective factors were diminished, but these were replaced by new protective factors and others were enhanced. The protective factors that were diminished but replaced include support from sponsors, peers, religious community, social services, schools, and the ethnic community. Parents reported that in their new locations they were able to find new persons and organizations that in most cases they regarded as even more supportive. This was largely because most moved into enclaves with relatives or friends who had already established relationships with supports and organizations. Overall, the parents were more satisfied with their new arrangements than their children, who made new friends, but still missed their old friends and classmates. On the other hand, every family was able to identify new helpful supports in their new locales, finding that the new communities could be even friendlier and more supportive than prior ones. One father who moved his family out of state said he "... likes the new place because ... it has many other Burundians and Africans."

One of the most important areas of enhanced protection concerned the refugees supporting their next-of-kin in Africa. This is because all the refugee families we followed saw themselves as part of an extended family with members living in their home country and other countries of exile. The refugee families in the United States felt highly obligated to send money to other less fortunate family members. Thus, they needed to optimize their financial situation in the United States such that they were increasing their incomes and decreasing expenditures, especially rent. They did this irrespective of the resettlement agencies' requests to not send money home until they have met their financial obligations in the United States, which included paying for rent, their plane tickets to the United States, children's school fees, and expenses of daily living.

From the refugee families' point of view, the resettlement agencies had it all wrong. By not getting them jobs or by placing them in expensive apartments, they were interfering with the families' most fundamental obligation, to support members of their extended family. For some, the family back in Burundi had become the main focus and they forgot about their life here. For some it became an excuse to justify why they were not succeeding in the United States. Many moved because they saw it as the only way to rectify this situation. After moving and improving their finances, being able to fulfill their financial obligations to extended family contributed to their sense of agency as parents. They felt like they were more in charge of their situation. It gave them power to feel that they could do more. They said, "I feel good. I don't have to worry about those Burundians." Now, parents could focus more on improving life for those here.

When they could manage it, families from more rural settings in Africa sought suburban or rural settings in the United States. They learned that the cost of living was less expensive and that a less urban pace of life was more comfortable for them. Because they had not chosen their initial resettlement city themselves they took the opportunity to choose a place that better fit their needs and desires. Families from Africa also tended to move to warmer climates. A Burundian family that moved to the southern United States described its new home as follows: “Good schools, life is more African oriented — more neighborly. Neighbors watch out for kids, care about them. Old-fashioned country way of living. Not cold. We like the place.”

Some families that migrated said that their new situation was better because the new school took more responsibility for children than the old school. For example, some parents did not have to transport their kids to school because they were picked up from home, or translation services were available for refugee children. However, we did not find any instances of parents becoming more involved with their children’s education after moving.

Moving did not seem to cause traumatic memories related to violence exposure to reappear. However, it did remind persons from some families of the many times they had to move. For example, the Burundian families had been moving since 1972, to Rwanda, Congo, Zaire, Tanzania, and the United States. For some, the most difficult memories were when they migrated to the United States and discovered that they were put in different U.S. states, like Chicago and Arizona. One reported, “I thought finally we were going to be together and instead, Arizona and Chicago is like in a different country. I just lost them again.” Upon moving, one spoke what many felt, “We’ve been doing this all our lives. I guess this is how it has to be.”

DISCUSSION

Moving is an important issue all for refugees resettled in the United States, including those from African countries. Not all African refugee families move, but enough have moved that most families either know family and community members who moved or have considered moving themselves. Secondary migration and relocation should be a focus for policymakers, programmers, practitioners, and researchers for two principal reasons. One, refugees’ secondary migration and relocation reveal shortcomings in U.S. refugee resettlement. Two, refugees’ secondary migration and relocation reflect refugee families’ approaches to seeking greater family stability.

The most common stated reason for refugees to move, both in-state and out of state, was housing. These families sought more affordable housing than they were provided upon initial resettlement. They were concerned that they were not able to afford to pay high rents, especially in light of their obligation to send money to family in Africa. When they learned that they could live for less money elsewhere, it was difficult for them to turn down opportunities to move.

Another common reason for refugees to move (especially out of state) was unemployment. Refugees who did not speak English and did not have marketable skills were not able to find

jobs. When they heard from other refugees about jobs being available in other locations, moving appeared to be their best option for building their lives in the United States.

Families also moved out of state for purposes of family and community reunification. Many refugees become separated from other family members either during war, flight, refuge, or resettlement. As a consequence many refugees being resettled in the United States lived in different states or countries from their loved ones. Understandably they wanted to be together. When family members lived in other states, refugee families often found that the only available solution was to move. When family members lived abroad, the solutions were much harder to come by. Regarding community reunification, they desired to live nearby other Burundian people who were not necessarily family members but with whom they could enjoy being together and offer support to one another.

Families also moved because they came from largely rural settings and warm climates and were resettled in intensely urban settings and cold climates. Once they recognized that there were other places to live in the United States that better suited their family lifestyles, they chose to move to these places.

We found some differences regarding moving in the study sample between Liberians and Burundians. One, more Burundians moved than Liberians. Two, more Burundians moved out of state, whereas more Liberians moved in state. In our opinion, this trend reflects several important differences between the two subgroups studied. Burundians did not speak English, were newer arrivals, and faced greater difficulties in their adjustment, having lived in refugee camps for 30 years. Most of the Burundians moving out of state cited reasons of needing work, family and community reunification, and feeling at home.

Overall the study findings indicated that many refugee families chose to move because it was one of the few available ways for them to better their lives. Looking at moving through the lens of a family ecodevelopmental framework demonstrated that moving often improved refugee families' lives through enhancing and adding some protective factors, even though many risk factors remained. When families were able to significantly enhance protective factors through the simple act of moving, then it should not be surprising that many chose to do so. We predict that over time more African refugees will, especially from the Burundian group, and predict that given the difficulties involved in refugee resettlement, only amplified by the global economic crisis, that many from other refugee groups will also move. This is a significant and neglected pattern in refugee resettlement that calls for cogent responses from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

If policymakers desire to diminish or prevent the movement of resettled refugees, then state refugee resettlement offices and resettlement agencies must more effectively secure employment for refugees, facilitate family reunification, and provide affordable housing. If initial settlement points in cities with high costs of living, such as Chicago and Boston, are intended to be families' final destinations, then governmental and voluntary organizations should provide families with the basic elements they need to succeed, including affordable housing and acceptable employment. If, on the other hand, these organizations intend for initial settlement to be merely an entry point into the United States, then the government

should make provisions for refugee secondary migration and relocation within the United States to help refugees facilitate their successful final resettlement.

In the current standard of practice, resettlement organizations do not directly encourage nor otherwise counsel refugee families concerning secondary migration and relocation, nor financially support them beyond the initial 8 months. This approach follows from the Refugee Act mandated approach to financing and managing refugee resettlement. Our findings call into question some components of this approach and suggest that voluntary agencies and state offices of refugee resettlement could take several steps to better address the issue of secondary migration and relocation.

One, the U.S. government should consider extending the case management service period for refugees beyond 8 months so that refugees who move may continue to receive support from resettlement agencies as needed. Our findings suggest that if it were 18 months, then most families who moved out of state would still be eligible to receive services. Two, because secondary migration cannot be completely prevented, government and voluntary agencies should aim not to eliminate, but to better manage secondary migration and relocation. This presents an opportunity for family therapists and other psychosocial workers to help families in need and to develop innovative service or training programs that reflect a family ecodevelopmental and cross-cultural perspective in collaboration with resettlement agencies, religious institutions, schools, or government. Family support and education initiatives, such as were developed through the CAFES initiative (Weine et al., 2008), should be developed to assist families with the dilemma of whether or not to move. They could help parents to make the best decisions for their families and help them to implement those decisions in a way that fulfills the best interests of their family. It is especially important that parents be helped to better consider the implications of moving for their children's education and development. This and other roles for family workers will be discussed in the section below.

There are no readily available solutions to several causes of secondary migration and relocation. Regarding family reunification, U.S. policies should and do prioritize reunification such that refugee families can choose to settle nearby their family members. However, multiple difficulties complicate this. Sometimes nieces and nephews are regarded by the family as sons and daughters, as is typical of African notions of kinship, but these are not compatible with Americans' kinship, which is biologically determined, and corresponding governmental policies. Sometimes family members have to choose between being resettled with either the mother's or the father's family. Sometimes all family members do not have the required documentation or are not all present at the screening for resettlement that determines their eligibility. Sometimes information is falsified on the part of the families, which does not allow them to claim their relatives when coming to the United States. Sometimes a family does not know about relatives in the United States until arrival. These causes of family separation may not be preventable or resolvable, but at the state and local level, it should be possible to develop more family friendly approaches to helping refugees to gather information, discuss together, and problem solve their dilemmas and choices.

Regarding the geographic destination of resettlement, it is not feasible to propose that all refugee families from rural, warm areas should be given options to resettle in a more suburban or rural setting, and in a warmer climate. Not all southern states have the economic resources and needs to support large numbers of incoming refugees. The Refugee Act of 1980 mandated that refugees be resettled throughout the entire country. They need to be able to go where they can find work that will enable them to be financially stable. Innovative models of urban gardening may help to ameliorate this difficulty (O'Hagan, 2009).

Findings from this study suggest that not enough is known about the secondary migration and relocation of refugee families in the United States and that more research is needed. One priority would be to examine U.S. refugee families as part of larger transnational families, given that this is how they view themselves. Another priority would be to follow families longitudinally after moving and to assess for changes in risk and protective processes, and individual and family outcomes. A third priority would be to develop intervention strategies for state government and community-based service organizations to assist families that either have moved or may move. Each of these areas calls for well-designed mixed methods studies. The more detailed and accurate is our knowledge about the secondary migration and relocation of refugee families, the more specific and targeted could be changes in policies, programs, and practices.

Implications for Family Therapists Working with Refugees and Immigrants

Family therapists may be able to help refugees and immigrants to address some important issues for families considering moving or having moved within the United States. What form this work takes would depend upon many factors, including so-ciocultural differences, location, funding, and time-point in resettlement and adjustment. Different forms of service or training of workers would be possible in a resettlement agency, a school, a church, or a clinic, which are the most common places for psychosocial work with refugees and immigrants. It is important to remember that most refugees and immigrants do not identify family therapy or mental health as a need, so how to engage them is often the principal challenge (Weine et al., 2005).

Because moving is a part of ordinary life experience, family therapists or other workers should not hesitate to bring up the topic with refugee and immigrant families. Family work may explore family members' beliefs and attitudes concerning moving (past, present, and future). Attitudes are likely to differ for men and women, or boys and girls. Looking at secondary migration and relocation from a family systems perspective can shed light on the differing responses from different family members, and perhaps help work toward building more understanding and acceptance.

One key issue is family decision-making regarding moving. Typically, in Burundian families, the man decides alone, whereas in Liberian families the man and woman make the decision together. Only rarely have the children been consulted. Children are supposed to listen to what they are told, and have little say regarding moving. Wives/mothers typically have more responsibilities than men over the children, leaving them having to manage the new situations. Family therapists might want to advocate for more shared decision-making

and flexible gender and generational roles, though this is likely to be met with resistance from the husband/father.

If families are viewing moving through a short-term lens focused on solving immediate crises, family work can help them to think more long term. Given that moving is often a form of problem solving, helping families to explore other ways of problem solving is potentially useful. Refugee and immigrant families often face increasing amounts of family tension and conflict as they proceed in their adjustment to U.S. life. This often has to do with different rates of adjustment and acculturation of husbands and wives, parents and children. If families can find other ways of responding to these demands, and diminishing tensions and conflicts, the need to move may feel less urgent.

Family therapists can also explore how family history interacts with secondary migration and relocation in potentially significant ways. One issue that merits exploration is the reawakening of memories of prior moves and family separations. Another issue is exploring the family's sense of home that they are trying to reproduce in exile, whether that be their original home or even the sense of home that they had in the refugee camp.

One key need is providing families with information. They do not know what their options are or how to get help. Another key issue is communication between families and the voluntary agencies. Too often communication is one-way from agencies to families and the message being sent is not the one that is received. When there are misunderstandings, families do not know how to productively address them and to appeal for better services. Teaching families how to relate with organizations, including how to advocate for themselves, is an important need. For example, for some families seeking family reunification, they could be helped by openly discussing where they want to live and learning how to advocate with the agency for the transfer of their case before the initial 8 months is over.

Lastly, the needs of children and the impact of moving on their development and education is the issue least considered by families, but an area where family therapists can contribute. One critical issue concerns helping parents to understand and manage the new pressure upon them to be more active in parenting than they have ever been before, including monitoring and supervision of youth and involvement in education. Because parents receive very little guidance and support for their new roles, they often look to moving as a way of diminishing the demands being placed upon them. There is a clearly a role for parenting education and support interventions that can help parents to adjust to this change in expectations and roles, so as to diminish educational disparities and other negative outcomes in youth.

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Table 1

Profiles of Families that Moved

Time after resettlement (months)	Source → destination	Cultural identity	Stated reasons for moving							
			H	W	FR	CR	S	E	FH	
Relocation										
5	B ⇒ B	Liberian	✓							
14	B ⇒ B	Liberian	✓							
41	B ⇒ B	Liberian	✓					✓		
24	B ⇒ B	Burundian	✓							
29	B ⇒ B	Burundian	✓							
2	C ⇒ C	Burundian					✓			✓
42	C ⇒ C	Liberian	✓					✓		✓
12	C ⇒ C	Liberian	✓					✓		
16	C ⇒ C	Liberian	✓							
Totals			8	0	0	1	3	1	1	1
Secondary migration										
21	B ⇒ M	Burundian	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
19	B ⇒ M	Burundian	✓				✓			✓
11	B ⇒ S	Burundian	✓							✓
18	B ⇒ S	Burundian		✓						✓
12	B ⇒ S	Burundian	✓				✓			✓
12	C ⇒ S	Burundian	✓	✓	✓					✓
14	C ⇒ S	Burundian	✓	✓	✓					✓
5	C ⇒ M	Burundian	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
17	C ⇒ M	Burundian	✓	✓			✓			✓
14	C ⇒ N	Burundian	✓		✓					✓
16	C ⇒ S	Burundian	✓		✓		✓			✓
41	C ⇒ N	Liberian	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
19	C ⇒ M	Liberian	✓					✓		✓
Totals			12	7	7	7	2	1	1	13

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Note: B = Boston metropolitan area; C = Chicago metropolitan area; M = Midwest; N = Northeast; S = South; CR = community reunification; E = education; H = housing; FR = family reunification; W = work; S = safety; FH = feeling at home.

Table 2**Impact of Moving on Risk and Protective Factors**

Risk factors after moving	Protective factors after moving
<i>Diminished risks</i>	<i>Diminished protection</i>
Unsupportive neighbors (SM)	Loss of ethnic community support (SM/R)
	Loss of sponsor support (SM)
	Loss of peer support (SM/R)
	Loss of religious community (SM)
	Loss of social services (SM/R)
	Changing schools (SM/R)
<i>Remaining risks</i>	<i>Enhanced protection</i>
Family separation (SM/R)	Ability to support family in Africa (SM/R)
Unemployment (SM/R)	Improved housing (SM/R)
Poverty (SM/R)	Family solidarity (SM/R)
Need to support family in Africa (SM/R)	Family pride and agency (SM/R)
Parents not speaking English (SM/R)	Neighborhood safety (SM/R)
Strained spousal and parent/child relationship (SM/R)	Feeling more at home (SM/R)
Overcrowded housing (SM/R)	
Not feeling at home (SM/R)	
Unsafe neighborhoods (SM/R)	
Dissatisfaction with school (SM/R)	
<i>New risks</i>	<i>New protection</i>
More family isolation due to transportation difficulties (SM/R)	Family reunification (SM)
	Parental employment (SM)
	Financial stability (SM/R)
	New ethnic community support (SM/R)
	New sponsor support (SM)
	New religious community (SM/R)
	New social services (SM)
	New school services (SM)

Note: SM = secondary migration; R = relocation.