



**Statutory Child Protection Social Work and People With Refugee
And Asylum Seeker Backgrounds Living in South Australia**

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ABSTRACT

Statutory child protection work in relation to people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds is frequently pitched as challenging and complex, yet limited research has been conducted on this topic. Existing research highlights the need to consider potential trauma histories, cultural conventions, and settlement challenges faced by people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in the context of statutory child protection. To address the relative dearth of research on the topic, this PhD research examined the views of people with refugee backgrounds on statutory child protection in South Australia. Specifically, the thesis focuses on people from the African countries of South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Somalia. The aim of the research project was to enhance the use of cultural understanding and competency when working with refugee and asylum seeker communities in South Australia in the context of statutory child protection. A total of 30 participants took part in interviews and shared their perceptions of statutory child protection in South Australia and their views on the effectiveness of current policies in supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Themes developed from the interviews focus on experiences of resettlement, engagement with child protection services, and views on how such services could be more inclusive of people with migrant and refugee backgrounds. The thesis concludes by discussing opportunities for collaborative approaches to working with refugee and migrant communities in developing future culturally appropriate statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks.

Key words: Statutory child protection, social work, refugee, asylum seeker, cultural diversity

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honour your resilience. May the impact of your voice be felt through this thesis, as per your wishes, and may it have significant impact on policy change. Thank you.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DRC-The Democratic Republic of Congo

DCP-Department for Child Protection

DHS-Department of Human Services

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

RCOA - Refugee Council of Australia

GLOSSARY

Refugees

While the circumstances by which people migrate may differ, they generally do so as a result of changing circumstances and in search of a good life (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). They may seek passage to other countries, to escape war, conflict, and other adversities, as described in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees:

.....owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country: or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it". (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2002, p. 14)

Based on this description, the term 'refugees' refers to people who have been forced to leave their homeland due to one of the aforementioned reasons. According to Saunders et. al. (2015) refugees are individuals living in a foreign country who are facing persecution and/or significant discrimination that qualifies as serious breach of human rights in their countries of origin.

Asylum Seekers

Ziersch et. al. (2017) explain that asylum seekers are individuals who have been displaced and are probably seeking refugee status, yet their claims have not yet been assessed or approved as of yet.

Parents

The term 'parent' in this study will be used to refer to birth parents, as well as those adults who take on a parenting role for children.

Culture

Birukou et. al (2013, p. 3) define culture as “a slippery and ubiquitous concept”. It encompasses the intricate set of traditional customs and behaviours that have evolved within the human race and are passed down from one generation to the next through learning. It may refer to customary behaviours that are unique to a specific society, a group of societies, a particular race, a specific religion, or a certain era (Birukou et. al. 2013).

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any information previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This doctoral research examines the perceptions of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds regarding statutory child protection social work in South Australia. In Australia, statutory child protection is an area of public law where authorities may intervene in family settings following an allegation of harm or significant risk of harm to a child (Titterton, 2017). Statutory child protection work is often pitched as challenging, punitive and complex (Thomson, 2016; Bijleveld, Dedding, & Bunders Aelen, 2015).

In the context of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, statutory child protection is more complex and challenging. The extra challenges and complexities can be attributed to added disadvantages and vulnerabilities associated with refugees and asylum seekers arising from trauma, resettlement distress, and cultural differences, among others. Thus, additional complexities of working with culturally diverse individuals complicate policy relevance and make the translation of existing policies to practice difficult. Empirical evidence from refugee communities in Australia highlights the absence of statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks specific to working with the constantly evolving and complex refugee, ethnic or otherwise multicultural communities.

Problem Statement: Locating the Research Gap

Statutory Child Protection is a system that is related to enacted statutes, which are laws or bills passed by the legislature. In South Australia, the main law concerning the protection of children and young people is set out in the Children and Young People (Safety) (CYPS) Act 2017. The role of statutory child protection is to keep children and young people safe through protecting them from abuse and harm. When it is no longer an option to keep children and young people safe at home, statutory child protection works to ensure that alternative care for them is provided. Social workers are the main professionals tasked with provision of this service.

The CYPS Act (2017) states, “For the purposes of this Act, a reference to harm will be taken to be a reference to physical harm or psychological harm (whether caused by an act or omission) and, without limiting the generality of this subsection, includes such harm caused by sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse or neglect” (p. 17). According to Bennett et.al (2020), child protection intervention occurs when a report is made regarding a child who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse or neglect. Neglect becomes a concern for child protection when a child’s fundamental needs are not adequately met, leading to negative impacts on their health and overall development. Various factors such as domestic violence, problematic alcohol and substance abuse, mental illness, disability, and poverty can contribute to parent’s inability to meet their children’s needs. It is important to note that definitions of neglect can vary depending on child protection worker’s individual interpretations, which can result into inconsistent outcomes.

In the context of the UNHCR, the protection of children primarily focuses on specific categories, which include child soldiers, unaccompanied minors, children who are legally

recognized as refugees, and those classified as internally displaced persons (Williams, 2012). Holosko et. al (2013) explain that the origin of social work was in the United Kingdom, from “the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601, more specifically the Act for the Relief of the Poor” (p. 12). Under such laws, goods and services were “doled out” to the poor but from the 19th century, social work practice has also been informed by social research. Holosko et.al (2013) describe social workers as professionals who work with families, schools, health care settings, juvenile justice, mental health agencies and across a broad range of welfare agencies. Further, Holosko et.al (2013) explain that a large part of the goal for social work for achieving effective outcomes and interventions is comprehensive assessments, which includes gathering, organising, and presenting information, should be evaluated before and after the intervention, and should engage social work values, skills, knowledge, and tools.

Research by Williams (2012) found that refugee parents are indeed presenting to the South Australian child protection system, and his study sought to find out why this the case. Williams (2012) highlights that the parenting journey of refugees differs from that of the overall migrant population such as those who migrate for economic reasons, as well as from the native population of the host country. The study recommends that early intervention and in particular, by way of parenting education, is significant. Further, Williams (2012) states that the interpretation and application of ‘the best interests of the child’ vary between the UNHCR and child protection agencies in Western countries. This hence causes a gap in policy, practice and service provision to this population group. Indeed, refugee parents have stated that they thought they were safe within resettlement contexts, only to realise that they faced new challenges, including in relation to the potential for child removal where parents did not

“...understand the mandate of child welfare, hence failed to respond appropriately” (Dumbrill, 2009, p. 146).

Further to the above in mentioning resettlement contexts, it is important to note that settlement support services play an important role in settling people with refugee backgrounds and supporting them to rebuild their lives in a new land. According to Sampson (2015), refugee settlement is commonly perceived as a process where people adapt to a new country.

According to DIBP (2013), Australia implemented a two-tiered settlement program since 2014 where upon arrival (and into 12 months of their resettlement), people of refugee backgrounds are supported by the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) to receive them at the airport, provide housing, introduce them to local customs, provide food, household goods and guidance on accessing government social services, and connect them to local support programs. After completing the HSS program, individuals can access the second set of services which remain active for a maximum of five years. The objective of the settlement grants is to support refugees in achieving self-sufficiency (DSS, 2014). Services included in this support are case work, youth programs, and 510 hours of English language instruction.

Australia therefore has a rich background in offering resettlement services however, there are some concerns even from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's) that are tasked with the role of resettling refugees. Nawyn (2010) discussed that some NGO's offering settlement assistance to refugees perpetuate social subordination among them, but there are a few that empower them to challenge this insubordination.

Examples of challenges include insufficient housing which is costly for people to afford. This leaves them to reside in lower social status suburbs, which are again linked to various social challenges. Refugees also frequently require extensive study of English language

to effectively function in Australian society. They normally have 500 hours of learning the English language of which some jobs require very high pass marks in each assessment component (listening, reading writing, and speaking) to qualify for employment. It is difficult to learn a new language within 500 hours, so people may miss out on jobs in which some were already employed in their home countries. Furthermore, due to a lack of Australian work experience, some people may miss out on some employment opportunities given the already limited job opportunities.

Other resettlement challenges include access to culturally appropriate services due to the trauma they experienced in their countries and capacity of service providers to specifically meet the diverse and targeted needs of this population group. Community integration with the wider Australian community is also very important to give them a sense of belonging. This can be hard to achieve when the larger community is not also well equipped with information on how they can support refugee communities.

Another challenge refugee community often experience is that their voices and viewpoints are often disregarded or downplayed within policy formulation. It is important to increase representation of the refugee community so that resource allocation, as argued for by advocates, will increase and ultimately support to meet their needs.

The literature included in chapter two indicates that there is insufficient empirical research and policies to guide best practice aimed at meeting the needs of refugee and migrant parents who engage with child protective services (Dettlaff & Fong, 2011), and so existing intervention measures have proven to be challenging to the child protection system. Further, people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds from the African countries focused on in this thesis (South Sudan, DRC and Somalia) are a fairly new and a minority population group

within the child protection system in South Australia, and so little empirical research has been done with them (Saunders et. al 2015; Kaur & Atkins, 2018). Though this population has generally grown in numbers, the literature review did not find distinct data on the numbers of people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds families involved with child protection in South Australia.

Importantly, research suggests that blame need not be apportioned to social workers *per se*, as they serve to the best of their knowledge, attempting various strategies of working with this population. For example, research suggests that many practitioners understand the silence that may exist for migrant and refugee communities in regard to child protection (Kohli, 2005), and use therapeutic care to enter the inner and outer worlds of the young people (Kohli & Mather, 2003; Dettlaff & Fong, 2011).

Nonetheless, research has found that families with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds involved in child welfare services wish to be included in making decisions pertaining to their children. For example, Dumbrill (2009) found that despite parents' concerns about child welfare services, they were keen to work with child welfare workers and policy makers to ensure that the social work systems worked in the best interests of their children. They highlighted the need for child welfare staff to understand the hopes and fears they have for their children, understand resettlement challenges, and also work with them in the development of child welfare policies and services. However, research indicates that the expert voice may be valued more highly in research and policy and practice frameworks making as opposed to knowledge from lived experience, or by knowledge brokering by relevant refugee community leaders and advocates.

There are calls for further research in this area, with studies recommending various strategies such as coalitions of refugees, school and community (McBrien, 2015). Kaur and Atkin (2018), for example, emphasize the need for trauma informed response from social workers rather than a crisis intervention response. Further, Richards (2016) emphasized the need for a culturally responsive approach and position, rather than emphasising the cultural awareness of practitioners.

According to the UNHCR (2012), families and communities play a crucial role in providing the necessary care and protection for children. The UNHCR aims to comprehend, assist and enhance the existing community systems that safeguard the well-being of both boys and girls. In situations where the family or community poses protection concerns, the UNHCR will serve as a champion for children, advocating against harmful practices.

Involvement of families with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in statutory child protection policy formulation is hoped to provide insight into effective interventions, including early intervention services targeted to vulnerable families and children. This is highlighted in the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 (Department of Social Services, 2018).

It is from this gap in research and practice that this study seeks to explore the voice of families from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds as central concern in statutory child protection social work policy and practice frameworks. Accordingly, the thesis develops a question, four aims and two specific objectives to guide and inform the study.

Research Question

This thesis aimed to explore the perceptions of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds on statutory child protection in South Australia and how their voices can be included in statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks?

Research Aims

This thesis was guided by the following aims:

1. Examine implications of current statutory child protection social work policy and guidelines on people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.
2. Understand the empirical work with communities of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in South Australia, with a view to strengthening the refugee perspective.
3. Identify and recommend strategies that may improve culturally appropriate services delivery regarding child protection for people of refugee and asylum seeker families.
4. Explore the perceptions of child protection of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and suggest an integrated and collaborative approach to working with them in the future child protection policy and practice developments.

More specifically, this thesis sought to:

1. Highlight the needs of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds who have had involvement with statutory child protection (or perceptions of child protection in South Australia if they have not experienced child protection) to address tension between Australian law and cultural norms.

2. Suggest an integrated and collaborative approach to working with people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in future child protection policy and practice developments.

Significance of the Study

Research consistently speaks of the lack of evidence-based policy and practice frameworks for guiding social work with migrant and refugee populations (Cameron, Frydenberg, & Jackson, 2011; Domenech Rodriguez, Baumann, & Schwartz, 2011). Other research suggests that statutory child protection and other service providers struggle to fully appreciate the triumphs and tribulations of parenting in a new culture (Scott & Arney, 2010). Concern is also located in whether educators sufficiently understand the specific needs of refugees in educating a future workforce to navigate culturally diverse landscapes (Ayoub & Zhou, 2016, Maschi, Rees, Leibowitz, & Bryan, 2019). At all system levels, there are critiques directed at statutory child protection social work.

Richards (2016) proposed that culturally responsive, integrated approaches to statutory child protection would involve inviting representative refugee community members to be part of the knowledge brokering and policy making processes. Thus, Richards (2016) argued that this would in turn enable a significant shift away from traditional paternalistic child protection frameworks that have been detrimental to statutory child protection work with refugee populations.

Consistent with concerns arising from the literature summarised in chapter two, it appears that leaders and advocates of refugee communities have not been involved in the collaborative development of culturally informed statutory child protection policy

frameworks for guiding statutory social work practice. Additionally, rarely have families themselves been engaged in research on child protection as it pertains to people of migrant and refugee backgrounds. Dumbrill (2009) found that refugee parents wished to be involved in working with child welfare to develop child welfare policies and services as it involved their children.

A research study by Saunders et.al, (2015) recommended further research on the experiences of families from refugee backgrounds who are involved with statutory child protection, to inform more effective approaches to prevention of their families getting involved with statutory child protection and promote early intervention. This is therefore important as it seeks to contribute to statutory child protection policy and literature by centering the voices of this marginalized group of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

Research has found that families of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds involved in child welfare services wish to be included in making decisions pertaining to their children. (Dumbrill, 2009) highlighted the need for child welfare workers to understand the hopes and fears they have for their children, understand resettlement challenges, and also work with them in the development of child welfare policies and services. It is imperative that statutory child protection works closely with families of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, in order to support them to understand the mandate of child welfare.

A study by Roberts (2014) found that there was a disproportionate number of African American children in the United States who had been placed in out-of-home-care as a consequence of racial prejudice influencing placement decisions. The same study explains that certain advocates for child welfare stated that it was essential to place African American

children in out-of-home care in order to shield them from “self-destructive behaviour” which is commonly found in ‘racially segregated, impoverished communities’. Further, this study states that child welfare policies in the United States, both historically and at present mirrors and perpetuates the marginalised political position of families of colour, particularly African American families. Involving community members as part of policy making as stated by Richards (2016) above, can go a long way in abolishing power dynamics such as these. Power dynamics, institutional racism and colonial legacies are further explored in chapter 8 of this thesis.

Thesis Outline

This thesis is presented in chapters. Each chapter discusses a key area of the study. However, all the chapters are interlinked with the previous chapter forming a background for the subsequent chapter. The last chapter of the thesis presents the overall conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL POSITIONING

The aim of the review of literature was to help identify key gaps in statutory child protection literature in terms of highly vulnerable people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, and hence identify gaps in terms of what is required to create integrated and culturally sensitive policy frameworks.

According to Dalikeni (2022), migration and asylum seeking has garnered more focus in the broader realm of international human rights and social service provision practice. Situated within a liberal perspective on human rights and equality, accepting asylum seekers is seen as a way of fulfilling international humanitarian duties. Further, Dalikeni (2022) states that host countries have been faced with addressing challenging situations which arise specifically from the cultural needs of differing groups of asylum seekers, which has led to a re-evaluation of social work inventions and organisational contexts. These contexts have traditionally been rooted in European monocultural traditions and might not be universally suitable for diverse cultures.

The review outlined in this chapter focuses on statutory child protection social work with children, families and communities of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. The primary focus is policy and practice frameworks, particularly research evidence or theorising of the effectiveness of policy development and its translation to statutory child protection social work policy and practice frameworks for supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker

backgrounds. The importance of the current review is in stocktaking and consolidating the body of knowledge for working in this complex space. Before outlining the extant literature, however, the chapter first outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks adopted in this thesis.

Theoretical and Conceptual frameworks

This first section of the chapter outlines the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided the research reported in this thesis. Specifically, these are interpretive phenomenological analysis, and ecological theory.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

This study deploys Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its conceptual framework. According to Yüksel and Yildirim (2015, p. 1), “the main purposes of phenomenological research are to seek reality from individuals’ narratives of their experiences and feelings, and to produce in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon”. Further, Yüksel and Yildirim (2015) state that in a phenomenological investigation it is important for participants to possess familiarity with the phenomenon. This study understands refugee communities’ involvement with statutory child protection as a phenomenon.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was selected as a suitable lens through which the researcher would listen to the participants’ lived experiences with regard to statutory child protection and gain their perspectives on how they have navigated a system known to be complex, considering all the challenges they experienced prior to migrating to Australia.

Yüksel and Yildirim (2015) describe that phenomenological research is useful when seeking to understand the reality of participants from their descriptions of their experiences, perceptions, and feelings about a phenomenon, and from there to describe the phenomenon in-depth. IPA requires that the researcher needs to make sense and interpret the accounts provided from the perspectives of those involved in the research in order to understand their experiences and draw conclusions (Smith et.al., 2009).

As a research tool, IPA recognises that access to one's experience, which the researcher has to make sense of, is always dependent on what participants tell of their experiences. Invaluable for IPA, as highlighted by Alase (2017), is the relationship or rapport built between the researcher and the participant, which is advantageous as it gives the researcher the "best opportunity to understand the innermost deliberation of the lived experiences of research participants" (Alase 2017, p. 9). This relationship provides an atmosphere where participants feel free to express themselves without fear of prosecution.

IPA sets out a whole framework for conducting a study. Its main objective is to explore the lived experiences of the research participants, and to allow them to narrate to the researcher their lived experiences. In this study, IPA is adopted to incorporate the voices of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds as marginalized populations to develop a culturally integrated understanding of statutory child protection in South Australia. According to Alase (2017), IPA approach is "participant-oriented", allowing research participants to express themselves and their lived experience stories the way they want, and without distortion, which is why the researcher selected IPA as the conceptual framework.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Approach

According to Grant and Guerin (2014), there is little research on strategies that parents can use to parent their children in a new country after resettlement, in the face of complex challenges such as past and ongoing trauma, social isolation in a new country, and mental health. Grant and Guerin (2014, p. 1) explored “the application of ecological modelling, specifically at individual, institutional, and policy levels, within an Australian context to critique the factors that shape the development of parenting capacity within refugee families settling in a new Western country”. Grant and Guerin (2014) argue that Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bioecological model is widely recognised as one of the most prominent ecological models. From this study and having used the ecological approach as an ideal framework for their study, they found that though lifelong outcomes of children are directly influenced by a parent's ability to raise them, parent's voices were missing from the literature, from all the levels of the ecological system.

In McGregor et. al (2020) study on Practice Guidance for Culturally Sensitive Practice in Working with Children and Families Who Are Asylum Seekers: Learning from an Early Years Study in Ireland, the study utilised the ecological framework proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979). This is because, of the importance of contextualising and acknowledging the ever-changing nature of individuals is highlighted in the ecological approach. It suggests the way a person perceives and understands their life circumstances is constantly evolving, resulting in fluctuating epistemological frames and mental maps (Darling, 2007, cited by McGregor et.al., 2020).

Grant and Guerin (2014) hence recommended that it is important to engage in discussions with refugee parents in order to understand how they navigate raising their children

in a new country. By identifying challenges, supports and strengths they encounter, valuable insights can be gained that will benefit future generations of newly arrived Australian citizens.

This thesis hence adopts Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model to guide the study. Utilising the ecological approach will allow statutory child protection practitioners to gain in-depth understanding into how to create an environment that can enhance deeper understanding of the child protection system at multi levels within individuals and families from migrant and refugee communities. It will also enhance designing policies and practice frameworks that will support refugees and provide them targeted interventions that will meet their needs.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory was published in 1979 (Neal & Neal, 2013) and has been used significantly by developmental psychologists who have an interest in comprehending individuals within their surroundings. It has influenced many psychologists in terms of the manner of analysing the person and the effects of different environmental systems that they encounter. Ecological systems theory has become instrumental in grounding other theories across disciplines in social sciences as foundational theory.

According to Zhang (2018), the ecological model has been applied in various fields of study such as children's mental health, paediatric injury, social ideation and identities of mixed race college students and working with immigrant students. This model has been used in development and education, in the fields of psychology and pedagogy. However, literature has not often used this model to understand the perceptions of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in South Australia on statutory child protection social work policy and practice frameworks as meeting their specific cultural needs, or not support.

Wulczyn et. al (2010) discusses that systems are held together by common goals, and for them to be met, the interaction of the subsystems must be done well. According to Neal and

Neal (2013), systems reflect a nested structure in which children are surrounded by families or kin, which live in communities, existing within a wider societal system. As noted by Wulczyn et. al (2010), some systems function well. This occurs through the collaboration of stakeholders (children, families, communities, and service providers), and flexibility of governance structures in times of uncertainty, change, and diversity. Such are the systems that the participants in this thesis wish to collaborate with.

In the context of child protection, the common goal is to keep children safe. This provokes thoughts of addressing how people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds would interact with these systems well enough and have their goals of keeping their children safe met amidst a myriad of challenges. People from refugee and asylum seeker background firstly grapple with understanding the nested systems, experience lack of social support and language barriers, not forgetting past and ongoing traumatic experiences. Given that children present with diverse needs (and especially those from refugee backgrounds), it would be complex to find a system that targets this population group *per se*.

The figure below explains five concentric systems as defined by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979): The microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. This model puts emphasis on the quality and context of the child's surroundings.

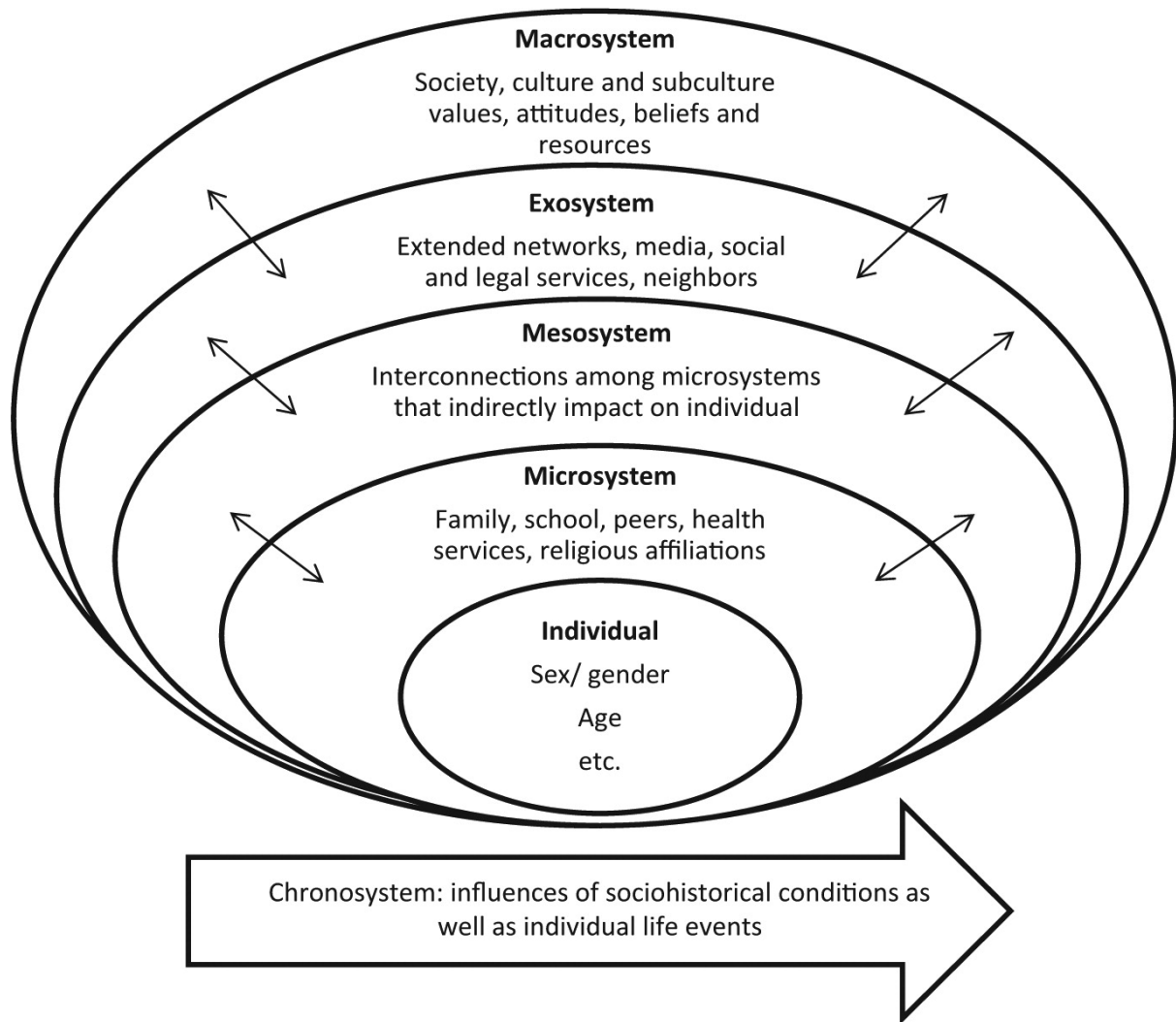


Figure 1. Depiction of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1979)

As seen in Figure 1 above, the microsystem is made up of the groups that have direct contact with the child, for example family, school, neighbourhood play area, Church groups, health services and peers. These groups have a great influence on who the child will end up becoming.

According to Grant and Guerin (2014), parents play a crucial role in shaping the perception of the world of their children. The significant impact these experiences have on a child's future cannot be underestimated. This impact includes among other things, educational,

and economic factors. It is in this microsystem that the well-being of both the physical and mental health of the refugee parent greatly influences the trajectory of the child's life. Fazel (2002) highlights that refugee children, particularly those who have undergone physical and mental traumas, violence, and displacement during crucial stages of development, are highly likely to experience increased mental health issues.

Zwi et. al. (2007) explain that refugee and asylum seeker parents are more likely to experience a higher level of poorer psychosocial health, and economic conditions compared with the general population, given that they already experience several challenges as seen in the text above. Grant and Guerin (2014) further state that Western individualistic models of understanding human behaviour lack understanding of these different lived experiences. It can correctly be concluded, then, that because refugee children are already in this microsystem, they are faced with unique challenges, which, for them to thrive, require targeted interventions.

The mesosystem as seen in Figure 1 above, is the interconnections among microsystems that have a direct impact on an individual, for example parent- teacher relationships, parent-health services relationships and parent-church relationships. Grant and Guerin (2014) view this as a system where parents develop social capital to support their children.

The exosystem as shown in Figure 1 above is explained as the interconnections among microsystems that indirectly affect an individual. These interconnections also impact the child's development and involve factors that affect a child's life. As seen above, unlike the micro and mesosystems, elements of this system do not have a direct relationship with the child. They include neighbours, extended networks, media, social and legal services. An example is, a child's parents' place of work could have an effect on the parents' well-being, which will then

have an impact on a child. Grant and Guerin (2014) view this as a system where policies and services can support development of social capital.

The macrosystem as shown in Figure 1 above contains those cultural elements (for example cultural values) that affect the child and everyone around them. As seen in Figure 1 above, examples of this system are, society, culture and sub-culture, values, attitudes, beliefs, and resources. The macrosystem influences how other systems can express themselves. Grant and Guerin (2014) explain an example of this as being: Australia being a signatory to the Refugee Convention and to the Convention on the International Rights of the Child.

The chronosystem as shown in Figure 1 above explains this system as influences of sociohistorical conditions and individual life events. Grant and Guerin (2014) view this as an acknowledgement of pre-settlement encounters of the child and family, encompassing experiences of being a minority in a new nation. Looking at statutory child protection through this model will benefit social workers who work with parents from refugee communities because it explains the elements that influence parenting abilities and the qualities parents use to handle these elements.

McGregor et. al (2020) applied Bronfenbrenner's Ecological approach as follows:

The micro-system and meso system levels comprised matters such as supports that the child encounters on a daily basis (e.g. school, family) and personal interactions. The exo-system was composed of interactions and experiences with the wider service and community. The macro-system was composed of issues with regard to dominant attitudes, knowledge cultures and ideologies of society on the one hand and structural challenges of dealing with the asylum system on the other. Interactions based on

stereotyping and racism were identified at individual and at the community level. Experience of very positive interactions between members of the asylum-seeking community and citizenries from the region were also reported. At the chronosystem, we considered how the establishment of the asylum-seeking centre in the town might have affected interactions and relationships in the community in a broader sense, and how the Direct Provision centre had become an important feature of the social fabric of the area through cultural embedding (McGregor et. al., 2020 p. 249).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological approach is applied to this study as a theoretical framework, and will be applied in the final chapter to explore how statutory child protection social work policy and practice frameworks can be shaped by individual backgrounds and environmental influences of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Further, this approach can be used to find out how factors in each subsystem of the model may impact on the experiences of this population. The findings can provide a valuable lens for statutory child protection to better understand the experiences and challenges of working with people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and how best to support them to achieve desired outcomes.

A system can be defined as a collection of components that are connected to each other for a common goal. These parts are legitimated within a normative framework of laws, policies, commitments and frameworks. Systems come in different levels and are interactive. It is important to remember the highly interactive nature between the system and its context when thinking about a systems approach to child protection (Wulczyn et. al, 2010). Ecology is about the dependency of living creatures on the ecological system, which is, their surroundings.

According to Wulczyn et. al (2010), focusing on issues in the absence of an understanding of how they relate to the overall system, can result in ineffective programming. The question of change arises from the interconnection of system components, which are linked with specific objectives in mind. System successes or failures hinge on achievement of these goals. If the systems fail to meet the expected standards, then it becomes justifiable to consider making changes to the system. This is applicable to statutory child protection as a system, as change needs to be made if the goals remain unchanged.

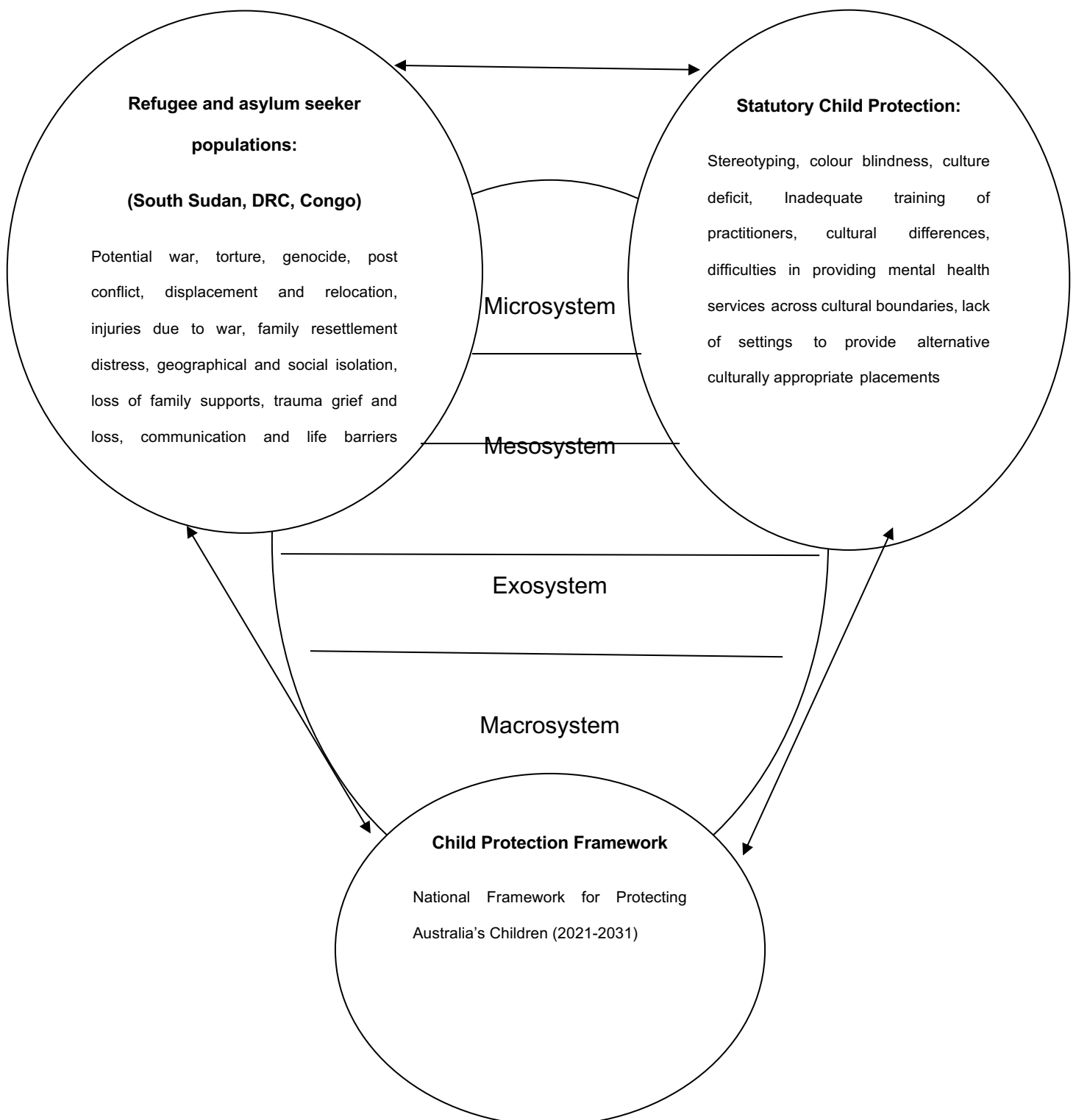
The child protection system serves children from diverse circumstances, who also present with equally diverse protection needs. It therefore needs a service continuum and set goals matched to this diversity which consider the holistic view of children, families, and communities. As noted earlier in this thesis, statutory child protection is more complex and challenging in the context of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds due to added disadvantages and vulnerabilities associated with refugees and asylum seekers arising from potential trauma histories, resettlement distress, cultural differences, discrimination, social isolation, lack of understanding of navigating systems, among others. Thus, additional complexities of working with culturally diverse individuals complicate its goals, policy relevance and make the translation of existing policies to practice for targeted intervention for this population, difficult.

The researcher has summarised the above, in Figure 2 below. The figure helps us to answer: How do parents from refugee and asylum seeker populations, with their historical and current complexities navigate each of the system levels (micro all the way to macro systems)? How does this impact on the population's views of the policies and practice frameworks of

statutory child protection in South Australia? Is it meeting their needs and if not, what part of the system or subsystem can be changed?

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework adopted from Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory

System-purpose-goal (laws policies, frameworks, commitments)-outcome for community.



Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this chapter identified that social work practitioners have been over researched when it comes to matters to do with child protection and families with refugee or migrant backgrounds, but the same is not true with regards to the communities. The voice of families and communities has traditionally not been heard in matters relating to child protection. An overview of the literature summarised in this chapter can be found in Table 1.

Studies for this review were undertaken in the United States of America, (Dettlaff et.al, 2009; Dettlaff & Fong, 2011; Bates et al, 2005; Bermudez, Williamson and Stark, 2018; Crea et al, 2018; Mc Brien, 2006), the United Kingdom (Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003; Kohli, 2005, Kohli, 2006, Kohli & Mather, 2003, Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003), Canada (Denov & Bryan, 2013), Scotland (Hopkins & Hill, 2010), Australia (Ramsay, 2017) and Ireland (Dalikeni, 2021).

Nineteen professionals participated in the studies, thirteen of who were social workers. Three studies used mixed or multi method, while two studies were review studies (Bates et. al 2005; McBrien, 2006; Bermudez, 2018). Eleven studies were qualitative and included two case studies and two ethnographic studies, one study included 10 asylum seeking parents/ guardians, and 75 closed files of the asylum seekers, one study included interviews with nine south Sudanese Australians (Ramsay, 2017; Hopkins & Hill, 2010; Denov & Bryan, 2013; Crea et al, 2018; Kohli, 2005, Losoncz, 2015; Kohli, 2006: Kohli & Mather, 2003; McGregor et.al., 2020; Dalikeni, 2021; Losoncz, 2011).

Four studies had unspecified research frameworks (Dettlaff et.al, 2009; Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003; Dettlaff & Fong, 2011; Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003). Six studies used thematic analysis, including two of them mixed, one descriptive, one numerical scoring, one critical

perspective and one used Framework Analysis (Dettlaff et.al, 2009; Bates et al, 2005; Bermudez et al 2018; Crea et al, 2018; Hopkins & Hill, 2010, Dalikeni, 2021). The rest were not clear or not stated. 339 professional voices including some foster carers participated in the research, 112 children or youth (17 adults in retrospect), one youth focus group and one parent focus group.

Eight articles focused on knowledge and training of professionals and intersections with their engagement in statutory child protection (Dettlaff et.al, 2009; Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003; Crea et al, 2018, Bermudez, Williamson & Stark, 2018, Kohli, 2005, Kohli, 2006, Kohli & Mather, 2003, Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003). Four articles examined policy barriers to effective welfare service for refugee families (Dettlaff et.al, 2009; Bermudez, Williamson and Stark, 2018; Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003; Hopkins & Hill, 2010). Four articles had a primary interest in system responses towards the needs of refugee children across the micro-meso and macro levels of practice, for example individual interventions, programs, and policy (Denov & Bryan, 2013; Crea et al, 2018; Hopkins & Hill, 2010; Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003).

Table 1: Studies included in the literature review.

Authors	Purpose	Methodology	Findings related to statutory work in child migration and/or protection, social work and system supports
Dettlaff, de Haymes, Velazquez,	Examination of the challenges of immigrant	Policy forum roundtable of professionals,	Issues identified insufficient research, workforce training, cross system collaboration, and policy barriers to

Mindell, & Bruce (2009)	families, as presented to child welfare systems in USA.	practitioners and advocates from USA and Mexico (n=70). Thematic analysis.	effective welfare service. Implications identified safety, permanency, and child wellbeing.
Dettlaff & Fong (2011)	Discusses cultural competence, issues, tools and evaluation challenges for child protection, focused on USA.	Narrative review of evaluation frameworks with relevance for use in culturally diverse communities (n=0).	Evaluations in the USA use white standard of parenting to evaluate non-white populations. Issues argued are conceptual mismatches, language barriers, differing values, poor or limited data, and ineffective evaluations.
Bates, Baird, Johnson, & Lee (2005)	Retrospective accounts of Sudanese former refugees living in foster care, of their	Mixed method. Youth survey (n=43), youth focus groups (n=5), foster parent focus	Successful foster care when relationships are supportive, and refugees felt welcomed. Most successful when carers were flexible with no preconceived expectations of

	resettlement experiences in USA	groups (n=2), individual caseworker interviews (n=5). Descriptive statistics, thematic analysis.	the youth or the relationship. Rigidity contributed to difficulties.
Bermudez, Williamson, & Stark (2018)	Research priority setting by experts in the USA, to inform policy and investment in global child protection and humanitarian action.	Multi-method. Individual interviews with experts (undefined) (n=47), thematic analysis informed online ranking survey design, completed by experts (n=41).	Identified priorities for child protection research, evaluation, and policy: e.g. rigorous evaluation of interventions in economic safety, family strengthening, para-social work models, multi-sectoral work, system strengthening, psychosocial programming, child protection in non-child protection sectors, child labour.

		Analysis by numerical scoring.	
Daliken (2021)	Focusses on the intercultural differences between mostly Black African asylum-seeking families and White social workers regarding child rearing practices in Ireland.	Qualitative narrative approach. Framework Analysis used to identify themes	A major theme to emerge from this study's findings is that of cultural awareness, and the lack of agreement on the definition of appropriate child-rearing practices, on the part of both social workers and parents/guardians. The findings seem to suggest the influence of cultural and racial politics in the daily interactions of Asylum Seeking Families (ASF) and social workers.
Cemlyn & Briskman (2003)	Critiqued policy child protection practice in Australia, and some comparisons	Scope of literature policy and statutory social work practice.	Variation in social work is influenced by diverse ideological opinions about refugee and children. Policy is inherently racist. Social workers' knowledge of policy and asylum seekers is limited. Despite knowledge

	with Britain. Discussed implications for statutory social work.	Analytical process not stated.	limitations in both countries, statutory workers don't speak out but do help individuals where they can.
Crea, Lopez, Hasson, Evans, Palleschi & Underwood (2018)	Understanding the needs of unaccompanied migrant children from Central America living in long-term foster care in the USA, and strategies to support them.	Qualitative (non-specific). Focus groups (n=22) with 79 refugee service professionals and care givers. Thematic analysis.	Identified needs for foster placements and housing, connections in the community, culture, independent living skills, education, mental health, legal issues, health, language, and safety. Discussion emphasises stability in foster care, but complicated by the children's culture, mental health, and trauma.
Denov & Bryan (2013)	Implications of language and discourse for the experiences of separated	Qualitative (non-specific). In-depth interviews (n=17), focus	Discusses how children navigate resettlement, refugee determination system (from lying to telling truths/disclosure), discrimination and exclusion and isolation (silence for

	<p>refugee children resettled in Canada, and the ways in which anti-refugee and anti-child discourses shape the terrain of resettlement.</p>	<p>group (n=1) with adults who were unaccompanied child refugees from Afghanistan and African countries. Critical analysis via lens of social navigation framework.</p>	<p>avoidance and to mitigate disbelief), and separation and loss (maintenance of religion and culture, language, education and support from family and friends).</p>
<p>Hopkins & Hill (2010)</p>	<p>Understanding the needs of unaccompanied Somalia asylum seeker children, studied in Scotland.</p>	<p>Qualitative (non-specific). Individual interviews with children (n=31) and group exercise (n=1)</p>	<p>Resettlement priorities identified as the need to support children with current needs first, future opportunity, then past experiences. Current includes recognition as children not asylum seekers, friends, education, housing, health, legal representation. Future includes friendships/inclusion, leisure,</p>

		with ten children. Service provider interviews (n>70). Thematic analysis.	religion, 'having a life', supportive relationship with the system, policy on unaccompanied minors. Past includes reconnection with family/cultural origins, trauma work and mental health counselling.
Kohli (2005) Article #1	Social work styles with unaccompanied minors and young people seeker asylum, and relationship with oral history disclosure, silence, focused in the UK.	Ethnographic. Individual interviews with social workers (n=29). Analysis not stated.	Proposed three types of social workers – practical helpers, therapeutic and companionable. Practical helpers were sceptical of the children's pre-arrival histories but worked with the broader asylum and legal story. Therapeutic located ownership of disclosure of their histories with the children, and practiced patience.
Losoncz (2015)	Building safety around children	Interviews of recently arrived	Parents felt threatened for the future of their children and youth under the

	in families from refugee backgrounds: Ensuring children's safety requires working in partnership with families and communities	South Sudanese men and women and Sudanese and non-Sudanese community and youth workers (n=41)	influence of their new cultural environment, yet they lacked parenting skills approved by the norms and laws of their new country to protect their children from high-risk behaviours (Losoncz (2015, p. 423).
Kohli, (2006)	Quality of social work services and practices encountered by unaccompanied asylum seeker children and young people, UK.	Loosely ethnographic. Individual interviews with social workers (n=29). Analysis not stated.	Emotional engagement of social workers in a given refugee child's stories was associated with giving that story in the interview with warmth, as opposed to no emotion associated with 'thin' retelling of stories. Trust being valued by both types of social workers informed the fine line between enquiry and intrusion in their relationships, distancing if needed.
Losoncz (2013)	'The unintended	Interviews of recently arrived	Sudanese families rejected the authorities' pragmatic, moral and

	consequences of government intervention in South Sudanese Australian families: Repairing the legitimacy of care and protection authorities among migrant communities.’	South Sudanese men and women and Sudanese and non-Sudanese community and youth workers (n=41)	cognitive legitimacy (Losoncz 2013, p. 15).
Kohli & Mather (2003)	Case study of young asylum seekers project run in the UK, applying resilience concepts.	Case study (n=1) Synthesises literature on resilience in refugee studies, and statutory social work with children	Discusses ‘low key’ activities, such as art, craft, food, music and drama workshops. Activities help to ameliorate distressing experiences related to loneliness and isolation, loss of home. Finds capability approaches beneficial, as opposed to welfare, through learning skills and friendships.

		<p>under guardianship.</p> <p>Applied to observations of a community activity group.</p>	
<p>McBrien (2006)</p>	<p>Evaluation research of a program to support families of refugee youth at risk of academic failure and social exclusion, conducted in USA.</p>	<p>Mixed method. Baseline survey (n=50), four-month interval follow-up survey (n=30) and vignettes (n=3) of program youth. Individual interviews with community board members and program coordinator (n=4).</p>	<p>Program activities of after school tutoring, summer camp, dance group, art club. Youth engagement in extracurricular activities increased in the areas of counselling, and work/school, and reductions in disciplinary referrals. Results were statistically significant over time, with confidence interval of 95%. Outcomes of family activity in counselling/workshops rendered insignificant results.</p>

<p>Okitikpi & Aymer (2003)</p>	<p>Examines social workers perceptions of problems, needs and service availability of refugee children, and attitudes of refugees influencing social workers. Focused on African refugees in UK.</p>	<p>Qualitative (non-specific). Surveys with front-line social worker supporting refugees (n=20), individual interviews with additional social workers (n=15). Analytical technique not stated.</p>	<p>Social workers perceived two types of refugees: guarded versus open groups, responses related to gaining information, ability to engage and building relations. Barriers include psychological, emotional, health, social, housing, educational, disconnected, financial and language.</p>
<p>Losoncz (2015)</p>	<p>“The government just stops parents parenting” – finding better ways to build</p>	<p>To examine the main causes of inter-generational family conflict among South</p>	<p>Responsibility of parents understanding the norms of child rearing in Australia and how to successfully parent and guide their children within the norms and legal requirements of their new country rests with authorities. They</p>

	safety around children in families from a refugee background	Sudanese Australian families and associated claims of Sudanese parents losing their authority due to intervention from child protection authorities.	need to sufficiently explain these norms and requirements, to engage with parents' concerns and resistance, and to elicit positive motivation for change" (Losoncz, 2015, p.16).
Ramsay (2017)	Theorising of childlessness in a critique of statutory removal of children in subjugated populations in Australia.	Case study of a Central African refugee, comparisons with fieldwork with refugee women resettled in	Critiques the way that statutory child protection systems homogenise African and culturally diverse parenting through constructs aligning dominant Australian parenting styles as good and natural. Uses the case study to highlight child protectiveness in refuge and adversity, but then the same parenting behaviours deemed unprotective in Australia.

		Australia (n=35)	
McGregor, Dalikeni, Devaney, Moran & Garrity (2020)	Practice Guidance for Culturally Sensitive Practice in Working with Children and Families Who Are Asylum Seekers: Learning from an Early Years Study in Ireland	Qualitative approach, narrative interviews with service users (parents, key informants, and staff members in both services). Drawing on the ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner and Morris	The value of using a socio-ecological model based on resilience, family support and social support to maximise the ability to engage effectively with a variety of cultures was highlighted.
Losoncz (2011)	Blocked opportunity and threatened identity: Understanding	Qualitative research method interviews with nine South	There was a “Strong sense of disrespect in the community brought about by blocked employment opportunities and a sense of threat to their cultural identity and traditions impelled by the

	experiences of disrespect in South Sudanese Australians	Sudanese Australians (n=9). Self-identity and motivational posturing theories were used.	intervention of regulating authorities” (p 118)
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The majority of the articles reported on small sample sizes, typically using qualitative research, with eight papers collecting data through individual interviews with statutory child protection social workers and experts. Two studies reported their use of a case study methodology, focused on resilience in refugee families and how protective parenting behaviours are deemed protective in adversity but as unprotective in Australia (Kohli & Mather, 2003; Ramsay, 2017). Two studies interviewed 41 participants who were from Sudan and South Sudan community and youth workers (Losoncz, 2013; Losoncz, 2015).

Two studies used a multi or mixed method (Bates et al, 2005; Bermudez, Williamson & Stark, 2018) Two studies used review studies focused on ineffective evaluations of the parenting standards of ethnic minority populations (Dettlaff & Fong, 2011; Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003). One study used self-identity and motivational posturing theories to explore why the community responded with defiance and demands for respect and respectful treatment

when their cases had family law enforcement intervening in their cases of family violence and neglect (Losoncz, 2011). Ethnographic approaches were also used to observe narrative therapy interventions (Dettlaff & Fong, 2011; Cemlyn & Briskman, 2003). Two articles, potentially deriving from the same study, focused on the different ways social workers engage with refugee families (Kohli, 2005; Kohli, 2006).

Seven studies used thematic analysis Dettlaff et.al, 2009; Bates et al, 2005; Losoncz, 2013; Bermudez, Williamson & Stark, 2018; Crea et al, 2018; Hopkins & Hill, 2010, Dalikeni, 2019). One was descriptive, one used numerical scoring, one used a critical perspective, and the rest were not clear or were not stated in terms of method. One youth focus group, one parent focus group (Bates et al, 2005) and a workplace group that was part of a program evaluation (Dettlaff & Fong, 2011) were included in the review.

Three articles applied critical perspectives informed by intersections between phenomena such as trauma, race, oppression, disadvantage and exclusion in their theorising of issues facing migrant and refugee families in their host countries (Dettlaff & Fong, 2011, Dettlaff et al 2008, Cemlyn & Briskman 2003), including how intervention needs are conceptualised by researchers of child protection services and social workers. One study used grounded theory, “a primarily inductive analytic process that leads to theorising how actions, meanings and social structures are constructed (Charmaz, 2006 cited by Losoncz 2015).

Seven studies had a specific focus on the direct work of social workers with refugee children (Hopkins and Hill 2010, Kohli 2006, Kohli & Mather 2003, Ramsay 2017, Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003, Crea et. al, 2018, Bermudez et al, 2018). Overall, the review found that 339 professional voices were heard (including some foster carers), 112 children or youth, and 17 adults. Findings and recommendations in the articles were subject to thematic analysis

involving identification of patterns across them, coding and organising into key themes (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2019; Joffe, 2012).

Articles broadly traversed two themes: 1) challenges and complexities of working with people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, and 2) culturally integrated statutory child protection policies and frameworks. These themes are now outlined below.

Theme 1: Challenges and Complexities of Working with People from Refugee and Asylum Seeker Backgrounds involved with Statutory Child Protection

Understanding the diverse histories, migration contexts, and the needs of refugees by statutory child protection social workers was identified as central to effective practice in many studies, with two studies identifying that the lack of information of these features was inhibiting (Kohli, 2006, Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003). Okitikpi and Aymer (2003) highlighted how diversity and complexity made the designing of social and child protection services to support refugees extremely difficult. In their study of service responses to African refugee children and families, they found that the diverse needs of people from refugee backgrounds made it impossible to design either universal services or targeted responses (Okitikpi & Aymer, 2003). Kohli (2006) researched unaccompanied minors and found that they perceived poor quality services from the statutory child protection social workers engaging them, because the needs of refugee children were misunderstood.

Three of the articles researched or critiqued the role of the trauma experiences of refugee children and the capacity of child protection social workers to apply trauma informed practice (Hopkins & Hill 2010, Crea et al 2018, Kohli 2006). Kohli (2006) found that children were scared to talk about their pre-migration trauma experiences, in fear of perpetrators. Crea

et. al. (2018) found that even when refugee children could share their experiences, standardised tools and assessment mechanisms had not been tested with these populations and therefore did not capture cultural and contextual nuances in measuring the children's trauma. As well, documentation about the impact of refugee children's pre-flight experiences on their mental health was frequently not recorded. Missing information was found to be a major challenge for statutory child protection social workers (Crea et. al. 2018).

The compounding nature of trauma on children's silence (Kohli, 2005), and problems with assessing and recording trauma experiences (Crea et. al. 2018), presents significant challenges for child protection social work with refugee children, families and communities. Ramsay (2017), in an Australian case study of a mother from Central Africa who had her children removed by statutory child protection as a form of discipline, called for the implementation of cultural competence training across all welfare programming and practice.

Bermudez, Williamson and Stark (2018) proposed that evaluations of child protection interventions with refugees were not rigorous, which meant that programs and intervention variables responsible for change were usually indeterminate. Conversely, Kohli and Mather (2003) found that therapeutic approaches towards refugee families helped the psychosocial wellbeing of the refugee children.

Kohli and colleagues (Kohli 2006, Kohli & Mather, 2003) noted that social workers did not have to know about the specific details of refugee children's trauma, fear and silence: that practical assistance, companionship and accompanying refugees to other services were most valued. While many of the articles reviewed critiqued the cultural inattentiveness of statutory child protection workers and agencies, others suggested it was not clear what interventions work, with whom and why, there was a consistent voice amongst them that valued the benefits

of participatory approaches and collaboration in the design and delivery of refugee interventions.

There are several factors that make social workers perform their daily tasks in certain ways. In some instances, issues like bias have been discussed in some social work practices. It raises questions when assessments are carried out according to one's personal beliefs. Given that the families also have their own beliefs, then whose beliefs are to go by? According to Dalikeni (2021), the behaviours of social workers and asylum seeking families are influenced by a combination of practice, protocol, personal beliefs, racialised cultural norms, and mutual suspicions.

Theme 2: Towards Culturally Integrated Statutory Child Protection Policies and Frameworks

Child welfare systems experience challenges when working with immigrant families due to insufficient research, workforce training and policy barriers to effective service (Dettlaff et al, 2009). Bates et. al. (2005) emphasise the need for policy to include flexibility in ways that allow for service delivery in culturally appropriate ways, in their study of the resettlement experiences of unaccompanied Sudanese refugee children placed in foster care.

Much of the reviewed literature also presented recommendations as to how to best develop policies and frameworks to provide statutory child protection social work to refugee communities. Hopkins and Hill (2010) proposed a framework that places the practical needs of refugee children first by considering the present first, future next and past last. They underscored the fact that whilst the young people still had interpersonal issues and trauma present, more practical requirements like accommodation needed to be addressed first.

Denov and Bryan (2013) explored the use of a social navigation lens as a framework to highlight creative ways in which the youth navigated their resettlement. The study found that the youth overcame challenges and ensured their survival and well-being as individuals and as groups. Through this lens, capacity rather than victimhood is emphasized. The strength of the young people in Denov and Bryan (2013) implies that statutory child protection needs to work more with the young people from these population groups in order to enrich their capacity, rather than victimise them. Cemlyn and Briskman (2003) emphasized that social workers need to operate from a human rights basis when working with people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. This is because social workers are guided in their practice by social justice, or anti-racist constructs and human rights provides a benchmark for good policy and practice. The study appraises the international conventions as a model of how asylum seeker children should be treated.

Finally, the literature reviewed indicated that involving community leaders and families from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in policy decision making in statutory child protection is vital (Dumbrill 2009). Dettlaff and Fong (2011) emphasized that meaningful community engagement and participation must be ensured, before culturally competent program development and evaluation can occur. Without collaboration and participation from the community being served there cannot be meaningful outcomes.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored literature and the body of knowledge on statutory child protection social work with children, families and communities of refugee and asylum seeker

backgrounds. Literature was reviewed not just in Australia, but also other countries such as United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, Scotland, Ireland, and others.

For analysis, the chapter has outlined Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a conceptual lens of deriving reality from the participant's narratives about their lived experiences. Additionally, the chapter has outlined Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory for understanding the environments surrounding refugee and asylum seeker population, and the impacts of the surroundings on them. The researcher has designed an original conceptual framework as a visual tool summarising the main issues that have come out of the literature review and demonstrated how these can be explained applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory.

The chapter has derived two major themes emanating from the literature review, highlighting that working with people from refugee and asylum seekers is complex and challenging and therefore, child protection frameworks must be designed in a way that makes them culturally appropriate and safe, in various ways, such as community engagement, at all levels.

CHAPTER 3

SOUTH SUDAN, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, AND SOMALIA

Introduction

Since the conclusion of the Second World War, Australia has emerged as a prominent global player in terms of its substantial contributions towards international refugee endeavours. Australia has had a track record of accommodating over 900,000 refugees and individuals in dire humanitarian circumstances and is one of the most benevolent nations in this regard (Department of Home Affairs, 2021-2022).

According to RCOA (2023), the Australian Government aimed to grant 17,875 refugee and humanitarian visas for the fiscal year 2022 – 2023, and it was envisaged that the number of refugees and humanitarian entrants was to exceed 950,000 by 2023. According to the Department of Home Affairs, (2021-2022), the countries of origin of the refugees over time is as follows: “Post World War two, Eastern and Central Europe, the Balkans and Baltic States, 1960s and 1970s Europe, Central and South America, and Lebanon, 1980s and 1990s Eastern Europe, Latin America, Middle East, Asia and Africa, and recent arrivals have been from Middle East and Afghanistan, Central Africa, Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia, and Asia (Burma, Myanmar, Bhutan)” (Department of Home Affairs, 2021-2022. p. 4).

With the above statistics in mind, this chapter will discuss Africa as a continent in a broader context, provide a background of the three countries which this research narrowed

down to (and which the participant's voices are heard and analysed in chapters 5, 6 and 7, and discussed in chapter 8), being The Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Somalia, and also go in depth in interpreting the root causes of the refugee crises in each country. The chapter also discusses how historical experiences contributed to participants' meaning making of their interaction with statutory child protection and other authorities. The chapter provides visual context to the countries' locations, a brief history of the people's way of life and culminates into war which led to them seeking granted refugee and humanitarian visas. As described in the 1951 Convention, a refugee is someone with a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR, 2002, p. 14). The 1969 African Convention states that, "The term Refugee shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part (or) the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place or habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality (Sharpe, 2019, p.273).

From these two definitions, we see that the root causes for refugee crises are complex and diverse. People leave their countries due to warfare and discord, oppressive measures against political opposition, targeted violence on others on the basis of their religious beliefs, lack of predictability in the financial systems, environmental factors (such as availability of resources), and social influences. People hence become displaced because they leave their countries to seek safety, better lives and refuge elsewhere.

In order to address the root causes of refugee crises, it is important to understand the underlying factors that lead to the crisis that leads refugees to leave their country homes. These

factors are described in this chapter and discussed country by country. It would be desirable to create environments that mitigate people to flee their countries, mitigate persecution, forced displacements and targeted unrests. Targeted solutions that can address the root causes need to be understood and developed so as to work towards lasting resolutions for refugees and their host communities such as Australia.

The Broader African Context

Abdullahi (2001) describes Africa as the second largest continent after Asia, being four times the size of the United States of America and being the cradle of human civilization. Further, Abdullahi explains that the continent has more than 50 countries, with over 700 million people and who speak over 1,000 languages.

Africa is known for having a rich culture and customs. Generally, Africans uphold their culture as important to their lives, and value religion, literature, art, cuisine, traditional dress, marriage, family, and song and dance (Abdullahi, 2001). Africa is a continent of great changes including modern changes through things like youth culture, with penetration of global media being mostly influenced by other continents. Africa, however, has experienced cases where wars have erupted, causing major atrocities on the people of Africa, which has then unfortunately resulted in forced migration for those who have managed to escape the wars.

This thesis discusses the interaction of people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds with system like child protection. Of note, it is a challenge for people who for thousands of generations have enjoyed their own distinct way of life, love and value their culture, country, food, to have to make meaning of their new situations when the situations in their countries change. They now have to leave all that and start understanding new systems

under forced migration, learn a new language, acquire new taste for unfamiliar foods and in general, just survive. These are people with no or minimal concept of child protection in their country and they find themselves in a country with a new concept of protecting their children which they are not able to comprehend. Later in the thesis, it is clear that they want to know more about child protection, which they still have limited understanding of even after having resided in Australia, and make meaning of it, hoping to reduce the gap between them and child protection, and avoid finding themselves engaging with child protection system that historically, they know very little about.

The origin of Africa's conflict started as far back as The Berlin Conference of 1884, when a group of colonialists met to divide Africa into 50 countries and came up with arbitrary boundaries as we know them today, separating over 1,000 indigenous cultures and religions. This had a significant impact in Africa. For instance, colonialists did not consider existing clans, ethnic, cultural, and even tribal boundaries when drawing up the new borders. This shaped the future of the continent in many different ways.

Secondly, the colonialists used their powers to exploit Africa's rich resources which included ivory, rubber, minerals, timber, and agricultural produce. Lastly, the borders became the source of conflicts between different ethnic groups over access to resources, land, and especially political power. Post-independence, the West has continued to interfere with the political decisions in Africa by placing puppet leaders and many countries have suffered bloody coups and assassinations. The actions have led the supporters to organise themselves into rebel groups which organise civil wars against the rival groups.

According to Alusala et. al (2024), many African nations have emerged as a result of compromised peace and power-sharing agreements, which were reached after enduring violent

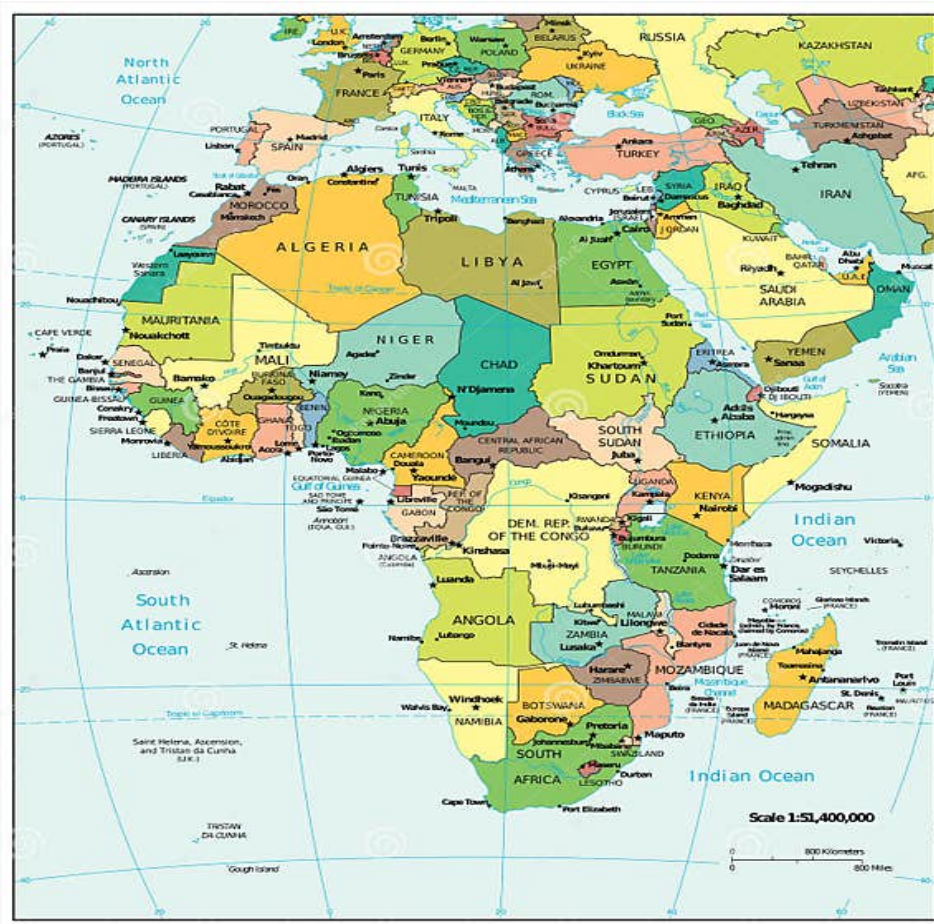
and prolonged conflicts involving colonial/occupying powers, armed groups, and nation-states. Bad governance practices have resulted in conflicts in the Horn of Africa. For example, civil wars have resulted in Somalia, due to concentration of authority, limited availability of resources, and disregard for the rights of others. Alusala et. al (2024) further explains:

In Africa, as in other parts of the colonised world, boundaries were usually imposed by the colonial masters without consulting the indigenous people. The demarcation process was influenced mainly by the balance of power between the colonisers in their scramble for territories. For instance, the British were able to secure a large territory known as Tanganyika, while Belgium got a smaller piece of territory known as Rwanda. Boundaries were often demarcated using lakes, mountains, and rivers as physical boundaries, without much consideration for cultural, linguistic, and other forms of national identities and symbols. The colonisers at the time were clearly not well informed about the significance of African cultural diversities, identities, and symbols as the basis for nation-state construction (Alusala et. al. 2024, p. 12).

The long-term effect of these historical situations are that the people encounter ethnic and tribal conflicts when they come to know (especially when one region has plenty of natural resources while another does not), that the land that once belonged to their ancestors was re-apportioned to another tribe.

The importance of understanding diverse cultures, including African cultures, particularly for those living in a multicultural country like Australia, cannot be underestimated. Abdullahi (2001) highlights that it is also important to understand the history of the diaspora, newer migrants, and the roots of the culture and customs of where they come from. This chapter

provides context for the three countries studied in this thesis which are South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia.



Map of Africa (source: Internet)

South Sudan

South Sudan is a landlocked country in East Central Africa. It is officially referred to as the Republic of South Sudan after the Darfur war that broke out between 2003-2010 that led to the secession of South Sudan from Sudan, on 9 July 2011. Juba is its Capital and largest city. As seen in the map of South Sudan below, to the East, it is bordered by Ethiopia, and to the

West, Central African Republic. To the Southwest, it is bordered by The Democratic Republic of Congo, to the North, Sudan, to the South, Uganda and to the Southeast, Kenya.

The people of South Sudan greatly uphold their traditional culture. They place great focus on one knowing their ethnic origins and language. They have a rich tradition of folk music that reflects its diverse indigenous cultures, for example, folk music is mainly practiced by Dinka people. The Azande are known for their storytelling.

South Sudan consists of several ethnic groups being: Nuer, Dinka, Kakwa, Bari, Lugbara, Keliko, Azande, Adio, or Makaraka, Muru, Baka, Madi, Avokaya, Jur Chol or Luwo, Shilluk, Kuku, Murle, Mandari, Didinga, Ndogo, Bviri, Lndi, Anuak, Bongo, Balanda, Otuho (Latuka and Lokoya people), Topossa, Lango, Dongotono and Acholi.



Map of South Sudan and neighbouring countries (source: Internet).

South Sudan is a product of many civil wars in Sudan. Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has been plagued by many internal conflicts that were precipitated by the collision of cultures, religions, and ethnicities between those of sub-Saharan Africa and those of the Arab Islamic world. This resulted in serious neglect, lack of infrastructural development, and major

destruction and displacement. There have been two major civil wars that have left more than 2.5 million people killed and it is estimated that about 5 million have been displaced and now living in foreign countries as refugees. Since 1956, when Sudan first gained independence from the United Kingdom, there have been only 11 years of peace.

Sudan was a product of colonial imagination, and similar to other African nations was established by forcefully merging various ethnic groups which in many instances, lacked significant commonalities. Sudan has diverse ethnic groups, with approximately 160 ethnic groups and languages at present. Subsequently, the nation has experienced governance under a series of unstable military and civilian administrations. Over the course of many years, the nation has found itself embroiled in multiple civil conflicts, with widespread human rights violations occurring (Alusala et. al., 2014).

According to LeRiche and Arnold (2013), the South Sudanese have experienced the longest civil war, characterised by violence, mass displacement, and famine for nearly all of Sudan's modern history. Sudan was ruled by Egypt and Britain until it gained independence in 1956. Alusala et. al. (2024) states that ever since gaining independence in 1956, Sudan has faced challenges in reconciling the colonial policies that created divisions among its population based on ethnicity. The separatist agenda persisted post-independence, causing discontent among the residents of the Southern part of Sudan, as development initiatives primarily benefited the Northern part of Sudan.

Natsios (2020) explains that the source of the first two wars was as a result of tensions between the North which predominantly had an Arabic culture, and the South which predominantly had an African culture. The North attempted to change the South to an Arabic culture so the South could become Islam, a policy which led to the skirmishes. Natsios (2020)

hence classifies the wars into three. From 1956 through to 1972 (between the Arab-dominated government in the North and rebel groups in the South) and the second war from 1983 through to 2005 (when a power-sharing agreement was signed), and then a third civil war which is ongoing between southern factions, from December 2013 to the date of the present (2020).

The result of the fighting, as explained by LeRiche and Arnold (2013), was 500,000 casualties, 180,000 refugees, and up to 1,000,000 internally displaced people, disease, and famine that was experienced in the second war. LeRiche and Arnold also highlight that the bulk of the forces that were fighting in the second war largely comprised the Dinka and the Nuer tribes. Kindersley (2017) highlights that though the civil war ended in 2005, militarised elites continued fighting, causing the renewal of civil war and internal conflict when the citizens were alienated and impoverished.

Further to this, Omer (2016) highlights that the war persisted, and that attempts from outside countries to assist in mitigating the situation were unsuccessful. Omer (2016) explains that tribalism became dangerously divisive as factions from two major tribes, (Dinka tribe) from which the then President Salva Kiir Mayardit belonged, and his assistant Riek Machar (Nuer tribe) from which Riek originated, arose in late 2013, after Kiir dismissed Machar. Omer further explains that the two leaders were reluctant to compromise to reach an agreement, as one option was reaching an agreement to share power (Omer, 2016). This situation of unwillingness to share power, was highly problematic, as evidenced in the wars that persisted, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reporting a sighting of a mass grave of over 30 people in December 2014 (Omer, 2016).

According to Bereketeab (2017), Sudan continues to grapple with regional conflicts and the outlook for Sudan appears grim, with ongoing conflicts between Sudan and South

Sudan preventing any meaningful progress towards rebuilding the state. Bereketeab (2017) further states that the prevailing state of emergency imposed to address these conflicts is shaping political practices and casting a shadow of further disintegration over the country.

Though Niyitunga and Wamaitha (2023), wonder why South Sudan is unable to end violence even though they have attained independence from Sudan, they attribute the relapse of violence and conflict to politics, ethnicity, and natural resources. Impey (2013) explains that the wars in Sudan created the world's largest crisis of human displacement and that to date, the Dinka are one of the largest displaced populations in the world.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The Democratic Republic of Congo is located in the central southern part of the African continent. It borders the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan to the north, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania to the East, Zambia and Angola to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.

There are as many as 250 ethnic groups identified and named. The most numerous people are the Kongo, Luba and Mongo. About 600,000 pygmies are the aboriginal people of DRC. The linguistic variety of the many languages spoken is bridged by widespread use of French, and the national intermediary languages, Kikongo, Tshiluba, Swahili, and Lingala. Music is a major feature of the Congolese culture, and the main religion predominantly practiced in DRC is Christianity. DRC is rich in natural resources.

The DRC was initially separated into 11 provinces. While 10 of these administrative regions had regional status, the capital city of Kinshasa was the 11th province. Considering the administrative and cultural conditions, the number of provinces established was increased to

26 according to a law adopted in 2005. Currently, The Democratic Republic of the Congo is devoted to 26 provinces.

In the early days, the countries were commonly referred to as Congo-Léopoldville and Congo-Brazzaville, with reference to their capital. Sometimes Congo-Léopoldville was referred to as The Conga and Congo-Brazzaville as just Congo. On June 1, 1966, President Mobutu Sese Seko renamed Léopoldville as Kinshasa. The country was then named The Democratic Republic of The Congo (DRC).



Map of DRC and neighbouring countries

DRC has suffered from political instability, lack of infrastructure and corruption. According to Stearns (2021), armed mobilization began before independence from Belgium in 1960 which included things like protests against colonization, and slave raiding. Following the protests, Congolese independence was achieved on June 30, 1960. Ironically, violence

increased after independence due to things like power wrangles over secession from the state or overthrowing the government, whilst, before independence, violence was less as the power wrangles were on a minimal level due to things such as ethnic differences or differences at the local colonial government.

Mathys (2017) explains that the genesis of war in The Democratic Republic of Congo began with the arrival of Rwandan Hutu refugees in Congo, after the Rwandan genocide which occurred in 1994, which spurred local conflicts. In 1996, Rwandan troops invaded Congo, attacking the refugee camps, and targeting politicians who were responsible for the genocide and who had also begun launching attacks on Rwanda whilst in Congo. The refugees in these camps also comprised innocent people who were also affected, and as well, millions of Congolese were also affected to the extent of being killed.

The so-called Second Congo War was in 1997 – 2003. Tutsi rebels invaded and captured much of the eastern part of the country. This happened while Mobutu was abroad for advanced prostate cancer medical treatment. The rebels were demanding from their capital Lubumbashi, through their foreign minister Bizima Karaha, an unconditional surrender of Zaire's military before any hostilities were called off. After 32 years with a combination of brutal repression and unbridled greed that impoverished his citizens while earning him billions of dollars, President Mobutu decided to flee his palace at Gbadolite and settled in Rabat, Morocco in exile. Mathys, 2017 explains:

In early 1997, the Rwandan government helped consolidate several Congolese groups opposed to Mobutu into one fighting organization, forming the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Zaire (AFDL), in the guise of a 'local rebellion'.

After a long march across Congo, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) – the army of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the dominant force in the post-genocide Rwandan government – and their Congolese allies overthrew Mobutu in May 1997. This episode became known as the First Congo War. A year later, partly responding to the intense hatred within Congo towards the Rwandans, Kabila tried to expel the latter, provoking a third Rwandan incursion from August 1998. This marked the beginning of the Second Congo War, at one point involving no less than nine African countries. Part of that invasion included the establishment of another ‘cover-group’, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) and, later still, the Congrès National pour la Défense des Peuples (CNDP) and the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23). While each of these groups nurtured their own local grievances, they were also armed and/or supported in different degrees by the government of Rwanda. Consequently, they were seen in Congo as proxies for Rwandan incursion – and as a cover for the extraction of mineral and other resources that followed (p. 468).

Stearns (2022) further explains that the war in DRC is a perpetual cycle of civil unrest and fighting due to power and identity, and military feuds that persist without resolution. As of 2018, around 600,000 Congolese have fled to neighbouring countries from conflicts in the centre and East of DRC. The fighting has displaced 4.5 million people from the DRC.

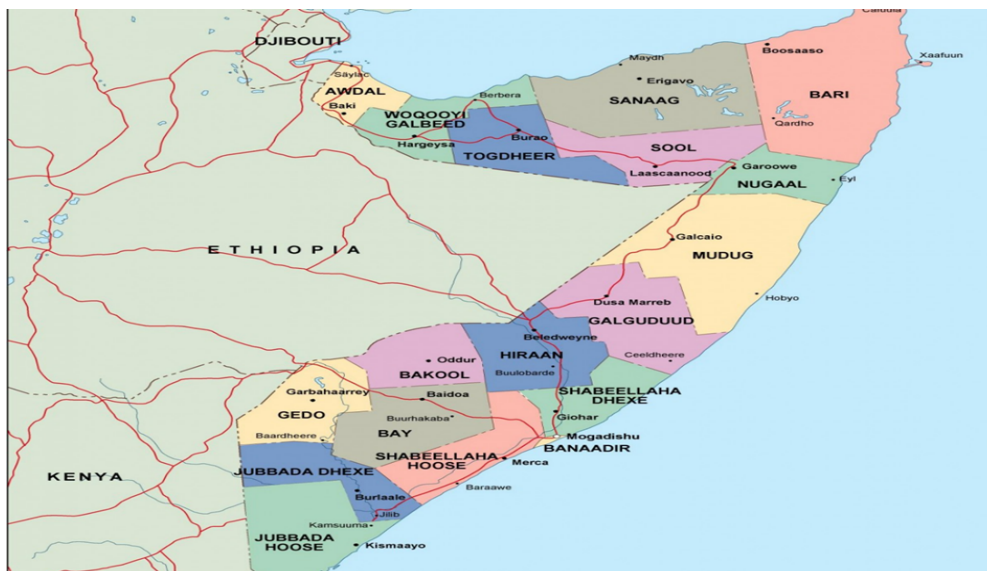
Somalia

Somalia is officially referred to as the Somali Republic. The capital city of Somalia is Mogadishu. The country is situated in the Somali Peninsula (The Horn of Africa). It is bordered

by Ethiopia to the west, Djibouti to the Northwest, Gulf of Eden to the North, Indian Ocean to the East and Kenya to the South West.

Somalia is described as Africa's most culturally homogenous country. The official languages spoken are Somali and Arabic. However, Ricardo (2014), clarifies that though Somalian society has ethnic homogeneity, it is characterized by six major clan families being the Darod, the Isaaq, the Dir, the Hawiye, the Rahanwein and the Digil and which also break down to sub-clans. Somali people are well known for their folk music and dance. Henna, which women love to wear, is a significant part of the Somali culture. Agriculture contributes the highest economic growth of the country. The main religion predominantly practiced in Somalia is Islam.

Abdullahi (2001) describes that Somalia was formed in 1960 from the former British Somaliland (the North) and the former Italian Somalia (the South) when the southern and northern parts came together and formed an independent Somali Republic under a civilian government.



Map of Somalia and neighbouring countries (source: Internet)

Civil unrest started in the early days after independence, when Somalia's president Abdirashid Ali Shermarke was gunned down by one of his bodyguards while touring the northern town of Las Anod on October 15, 1969. This was followed by a bloodless coup six days later, by the military under the umbrella of the Supreme Revolutionary Council (SRC) led by the army commander, Major General Muhammad Siad Barre. The president held a dictatorial rule over Somalia from 1969 to 1991. Over 100,000 civilians were murdered because of violence or hostilities.

Ahmed (1995) discusses that for years, Somalia enjoyed a history of Islamic Africa, as the only country in Africa whose most of the population was Muslim. With the strong belief that Somalia's ancestors hailed from Prophet Muhammad's household (Hashimite stock of the Qurayshi clan), it would make sense to believe that efforts to build a unified nation would be much easier than other African countries which are divided on religious grounds.

In 1991, there was the collapse of The Democratic Republic of Somalia because of the Somali Civil War and the lack of a functioning central government in Somalia. War in Somalia was characterized by massacres and atrocities committed by the government against its own people, including rape, and starvation to death (Ahmed, 1995). As explained by Moyi (2012), the civil war has raged since 1991 (the collapse of Siad Barre government). Ricardo (2014) explains: "The overthrow of the Siad Barre regime was marked by open civil war, particularly between 1988 and 1991. Despite the establishment of the interim government of the United Somali Congress (USC) led by Ali Mahdi Mohammed on January 29, 1991, the conflict continued..." (p.67).

On July 21, 1991, promoted by external actors (Djibouti, Kenya, and Egypt), a ceasefire agreement was signed in Djibouti between six political groups without the participation of the

Somali National Movement (SNM). The agreement recognised Ali Mahdi Mohamed, leader of the USC, as head of an interim government, but his leadership was contested within the USC, resulting in a split into his USC/Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA), which had its roots in a more sedentary lifestyle, and the USC/Somali National Alliance (SNA) headed by General Mohamed Farah Aidid, which had its roots in a nomadic lifestyle (Rutherford, 2008). The contest would lead to intense fighting for control of the capital, Mogadishu, in the last quarter of 1991 and in the south of Somalia in January 1992, which claimed more than 4,000 lives in four months (Melander & Sundberg, 2011, p. 67). Further, Yuen et.al (2022) discusses that Somalia has experienced drought and conflict-related crises, and in 2010 and 2012, an estimated 256,000 people died because of famine caused by failed rains and limited humanitarian assistance. The famine, as discussed by Maxwell et. al. (2011) was not only triggered by a global spike in food prices but also by an ongoing war. All these atrocities are significant as they involve the loss of lives of Somalia people.

As summarized by Webersik (2014), terror and violence in Somalia are now so frequent such as the terror attacks at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013. Somali Salafi jihadist groups, also known as al-Shabab have controlled parts of Southern and Central Somalia. The armed groups all claim authority over the territory they possess, while other causes of conflict include international terrorism, clannism, and poor political leadership.

Conclusions

This chapter has provided an overview of the three countries that are the focus of this thesis, paying particular attention to both the historical and contemporary factors that lead many

people to seek refuge in another country. The chapter has also provided depth in interpreting the root causes of the refugee crises.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods used to answer the research questions following the literature review. It discusses the research design, data collection process and ethical consideration, and data analysis. The strengths and limitations of the methods used are highlighted to justify their selection as suitable methods. Additionally, the section addresses ethical considerations and speculated research limitations.

Exploratory Qualitative Research Design

This doctoral study adopted an exploratory qualitative research design via the use of experiential research to gather in-depth and rich data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In a qualitative approach, the focus is on how participants frame their own issues and terms of reference, rather than the researcher pre-framing them. Approval for this research was granted by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. Ethics approval was required because the research required specific ethical consideration as it involved vulnerable people. The principal ethical consideration involved in this research was ensuring that the participant's confidentiality and anonymity were absolutely protected. The researcher enquired from the participants the cultural needs of people in their communities, and the potential disjuncture between the statutory approaches in South Australia as they see it.

Researcher Positionality

Bukamal (2022) explains that there is a significant relationship between the researcher and participants and due to this, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's background encompassing factors such as age, beliefs, national identity, gender, ethnicity, sexuality and social class. This section discusses the researcher's reflexivity and positionality as an African who once worked in the Department for Child Protection and who is researching people of refugee background from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia.

Hamdan (2009, p. 378-379), defines reflexivity as: "a metaphysical analysis of the researcher's analysis of the researcher's account, one that examines the researcher's own input into the research process. It involves the researcher observing him or herself in the act of observing, researching him or herself in the act of researching". Further, Bukamal (2022) explains that reflexivity recognises the influence a researcher's background and experiences can have on every aspect of the research process from the initial design to the subsequent analysis and interpretation of the results. Additionally, Finlay (2002) explains that the researcher's ability to engage in a meticulous, methodological and thorough self-evaluation showcases a high level of integrity.

In explaining an insider-outsider positionality, the researcher is, like the participants, also a migrant to Australia, however, that did not automatically grant the researcher an insider role when it comes to migration, as the researcher is from a non-refugee background. An outsider positionality also emerged because whilst the researcher is from East Africa, the participants were from West and North East Africa, whose language, cultures and way of life vary to a degree from the culture of the researcher.

The researcher has a background in social work. At the beginning of the research, the researcher worked with the Department for Child Protection in South Australia, depicting an insider position. However, similarly, the researcher can provide an outsider position in this context because the researcher did not work in the multicultural team that works with people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, neither is the researcher's cultural background from any of the research participant groups (South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia). Of note, the researcher had moved to work with another agency by the time the research was concluded.

No issues related to rapport building, links to the communities and recruitment were envisaged and none occurred. Actually, because the researcher built good rapport, rich information was shared by the participants who held high levels of trust in the researcher. The researcher, having lived in South Australia for ten years, had developed networks with the African Community, which was instrumental in identifying key leaders to assist in recruiting the targeted participants. The researcher expected some issues around privacy and fears of disclosure, particularly from within families because some families could not establish if the researcher works within the system (and therefore is colluding with the agency) hence could have been distrusting. However, other participants thought that because the worker worked within child protection, they now had found a voice to speak what they always wanted to tell child protection agency but never had an opportunity to.

As Bukamal (2002) explains, reflexivity has granted the researcher an opportunity to explore the insider-outsider ambivalence through reflexivity as personal introspection, where the researcher has been able to delve into their own thoughts, emotions, and experiences,

gaining valuable insights into their own perspectives and biases and engaged in a more holistic and rigorous analysis.

As a migrant, the researcher acknowledges and identifies with some of the challenges the participants experienced. Moving to a new country has its own challenges which are similar across the board. However, the researcher did not let this shape the analysis of this research because the analysis was shaped by the voices of the participants and not the experiences of the researcher. The researcher acknowledges some differences in the migration experience in that the researcher willingly planned migration to Australia and arrived on a Skilled Migrant Visa, unlike the participants who were inconvenienced by the situations in their countries as they had no plans to migrate and were forced into migration due to the dire circumstances of wars in their countries. The researcher hence was keen to listen to the voices of the participants, having never undergone the situations they found themselves in.

As a social worker and former worker of Child Protection, the researcher was aware of systemic and power imbalances migrant communities can experience when involved with statutory organisations. For example, when it comes to removal of children, the researcher identified with the participants when they mentioned that they fear even just the name Child Protection and all they know is that child protection removes children. The researcher acknowledges that these sentiment are similarly held in the researcher's community living in South Australia, and that there is more work to be done around educating the African community about child protection, improving the relations with the community and ultimately, reducing this power imbalance.

Recruitment

Qualitative research tends to use smaller samples than quantitative research (Patton, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2013). For example, as stated by Braun and Clarke (2013), sample size in experiential research may be narrow if the researcher wants a sample that has experienced a particular phenomenon. Since the current research was only interested in a sample that has experienced the phenomenon of refugee and asylum seeker background, the researcher purposively sampled this population. In this regard, Patton (2002) states that a sample size of between 15 and 30 individual interviews tends to be common in research which aims to identify patterns across data.

Purposive sampling was used for data collection, aimed at generating insight and in-depth understanding of the topic. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants on the basis that they will be able to provide information-rich data (Patton 2002 as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2013). Community leaders from three countries (South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia) assisted the researcher in recruiting 10 families each from their communities with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds (i.e., parents, whether single or couples of 10 families). They did this by only specifically handing out the flyers to their community members. The researcher approached and had separate meetings with these three community leaders to request them this, and they willingly accepted, given the topic is of concern to their communities.

The researcher had face to face conversations with the community leaders of South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia to inform them about the research and asked them if they might be willing to assist them with recruiting their community members for research. They all willingly stated that they were. The research participants

(people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds who have left South Sudan, the DRC and Somalia and live in South Australia) were hence recruited through the community leaders using passive recruitment strategies (i.e., through the distribution of flyers in hard copy by community leaders). The hard copy flyers were provided to the community leaders by the researcher (see verbal scripts below).

The researcher met with the community leaders again and reminded them not to coerce anyone from their communities into participating in the study. The researcher reminded the community leaders that participation was voluntary. Though the researcher is from an African background, she is not from any of the three communities the research was conducted.

Verbal Script for the researcher to community leaders

The researcher verbally stated this to the three community leaders: "Thank you for your continued willingness to support this study. Kindly remember that your role is only to hand out the fliers to the community members. You are not to encourage them in any way to participate".

Verbal Script for the community leaders to the community members:

"A student from Flinders University, Ms Grace Wahome is looking to speak with the parents (whether singles or couples) of 10 families from our community who are from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Please read this flyer which contains full information but in brief, this is an opportunity for you to:

- Share your perceptions on child protection in South Australia
- Share your views on the effectiveness of current policies in supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds
- Suggest strategies that may improve culturally appropriate services delivery regarding the department to support people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds
- Suggest a collaborative approach to working with people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in developing future statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks.

After reading the flyers (which had been translated into the languages of these communities- Dinka, French, Swahili, and Somali languages), interested participants then contacted the researcher via their phone number, which was provided in the flyers.

In the return phone call, the researcher advised the potential participants, that she would post out to them an information pack. The researcher explained to them that this information pack would include an information sheet consent form to taking part in an interview, a demographic questionnaire, and a self-addressed reply paid envelop. The researcher requested for and was allocated a pigeonhole for this. Participants were to post back the signed consent and demographic questionnaire, and as soon as the researcher received back the information pack from the willing participants with the signed consent form and the completed demographic questionnaire, the researcher was to contact them again via the best contact provided to arrange a time and venue for the interview.

The information sheet consent listed the potential risk of distress to the participants. The researcher envisaged that participants may have been likely to experience emotional distress for example when they were to share their experiences of past trauma. The form stated in part: 'If you experience feelings of distress as a result of participation in this study, please let the researcher know immediately. You can also contact the following services for support: Refugee Health Service: (08) 8237 3900, Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Services (STARRS): (08) 8206 8900, Beyond Blue Support Services: 1800242636 (www.beyondblue.org.au) and Lifeline: 13 11 14 (www.lifeline.org.au)'.

Data Collection

The interviews were held in participants' homes for anonymity and confidentiality, or another similar private location as per the participants' preference. Interviews were one session, face to face, for a maximum of one hour and were audio recorded. The researcher sought approval from participants for audio recording and advised them that their identifying information would

not be published anywhere. The researcher advised the participants that if they wished to have a copy of their report, it would be provided to them on completion of the thesis. Participants were advised that they did not have to participate in the research if they did not want to. They were also reassured that if they said no, their lives in Australia would not be affected in any way. They were also reassured that the researcher could attend their homes or any other private location that would be comfortable for them.

The interview discussion explored culture, trauma, policy and understandings of the people in relation to statutory child protection. Ziersch et al. (2017) explain that during the interviews, it is crucial for researchers to establish a strong connection with individuals from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. This connection, and as the current researcher also found while conducting the research, is vital for gaining access to participants and obtaining valuable insights into cultural and ethnic norms, which play a significant role in the research process. Further, it is important to enlist an advisory group, bi-cultural researcher, or research assistant from the country of origin to provide assistance during this process, although again as stated in Kabranian-Melkonian (2015), attention was paid to the nuances of relationships between different ethnic or language groups in the areas relevant to the study.

Only people above 18 years were considered to participate. Parent or parent figures (men and women) from the targeted three groups participated. The researcher engaged the use of interpreters if the families were not able to communicate in English. A field work research allowance was used to finance study expenses including interpretation and transcription services, approved and provided by Flinders University. Though the researcher anticipated issues to arise with using interpreters in small communities, particularly in relation to sensitive subject matters, no issues were experienced. The researcher in the first instance acknowledged

this and emphasized to the interpreters the importance of integrity. The interviews were only held separately if either parent (if they were a couple) was not available.

The research at all times required sensitivity in the recruitment of and interaction with study participants, since the participants were a highly vulnerable population with potential past experiences of trauma. If need be, the researcher referred the participants to seek professional help in line with ethical guidelines. The researcher hence needed to take particular care to address issues regarding participant confidentiality because these are small community groups who can be easily identifiable. The researcher also explained issues like participant freedom to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research process and emphasised the voluntary nature of participation and secure storage of data. During the meeting participants answered semi-structured open-ended questions through a discussion led by the researcher. The researcher also looked at overarching policy and frameworks available generally to the public. This aspect hence did not require ethics approval.

The researcher provided \$30 departmental store vouchers to the participants to compensate them for their time, as the researcher was asking participants to speak on a very personal and sensitive subject matter. The field work budget from Flinders University funding catered for this expense. Audio recordings were professionally transcribed, and pseudonyms allocated by the researcher.

Participants

2. Summary table of Table participants – South Sudan

Gender	Age	Household size	Marital status	Highest level of education	Occupation/Paid employment?	Visa Status	Main Language	Engaged with DCP
M	67	Alone	Divorced	University level not complete	Retired/Pensioner	Refugee	Dinka/English/Arabic	No
M	Over 50	8	Married	University degree	Yes. Interpreter		Dinka	No
M	40	6	Married	University degree	No	Citizen	Dinka	No
M	46	4	Married	University degree	Yes. Security Officer	Refugee	Arabic	No
M	47	4	Married	Bachelor's degree	No	Off-shore humanitarian	Zande/Arabic	No
M	45	8	Married	High School	No	Refugee	Arabic/English	No
F	--	4	Married	Certificate III in English and Aged Care	Running a hair salon business	Refugee	Dinka	No
F	45	8	Married	Year 12	Disability sector	Refugee	Arabic/English/Anuak	No
F	45	8	Married	Year 12	N/A	Refugee	Arabic/English/Bari	No

Table 3. Summary table of participants – The Democratic Republic of Congo

Gender	Age	Household size	Marital status	Highest level of education	Occupation/Paid employment?	Visa status	Main language	Engaged with DCP?
M	54	8	Married	MPH	Registered Nurse	Refugee	Swahili/English/ French	No
M	45	4	Married	University	Health sector	Refugee	Swahili	No
M	54	1	Separated	University	Unemployed	Refugee	Swahili	No
M	40	11	Married	Certificate in Cooking	Farm produce and	Refugee	Swahili	No

					Transport/Delivery			
F	45	4	Single	Certificate II in English as a Second Language	Centrelink	Refugee	Swahili	No
F	50	4	Single	Year 10	Aged Care Worker	Refugee	Swahili	No
F	33	10	Married	Year 12	Centrelink	Refugee	Swahili	No
F	48	5	Married	Year 12	Disability Care Worker	Refugee	Swahili	No
F	43	12	Single	Year 12	Home duties	Refugee	Swahili/French/English	No
F	51	8	Single	N/A	Centrelink	Refugee	Mache	No
F	N/A	8	Married	Certificate III in English and Aged Care	Personal care for 13 years	Refugee	Swahili and French	No

Table 4. Summary table of participants - Somalia

Gender	Age	Household size	Marital status	Highest level of Education	Occupation/Paid employment	Visa status	Main Language	Engaged with DCP?
M	31	3	Married	University	Processes worker	Refugee	Somali/Swahili	No
M	53	5	Married	High School	N/A	Refugee	Somali	No
M	52	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	Refugee	Somali	No
M	58	5	Married	High School	Self employed	Refugee	Somali	Yes
M	45	7	Married	Postgraduate	Professional	Refugee	Somali	No
F	41	7	Married	High School	N/A	Refugee	Somali	No
F	34	8	Married	Year 8	N/A. My husband working	Refugee	Somali/Swahili	No
F	28	3	Married	Certificate II	Housewife	Refugee	Somali	No
F	47	3	Family	TAFE	Centrelink	Refugee	Somali	Yes

F	40	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Somali	No
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Above are the summary tables of participants, (separated into individual countries being South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia). The researcher collected this summary as a snapshot of participants, which was derived from the demographic questionnaire (Please see Appendix K).

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis of data was used to develop key themes and patterns and then findings were presented as the patterns in participants' experiences of the phenomena. Braun and Clarke (2012) state that thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method which is increasingly gaining popularity due to its accessibility and flexibility. While IPA provided the broader theoretical orientation, thematic analysis was adopted to thematically analyse data in an organized way which will result in credible answers to the research questions and objectives.

The researcher initially coded the interviews, using A3 sized sheets which were divided into cells that reflected the interview questions. The sections were divided as per Table 5 below. The researcher then laminated the sheets and then met with the supervisor and talked through the data. Themes were then developed from the codes and are fully discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this thesis. Table 5 below provides an overview of the themes developed, which are reported in detail in the following three chapters.

Table 5. Summary of themes by country

Theme	Categories	South Sudan %	DRC %	Somalia %	Sample Quote
Perceptions of child protection in home country	No awareness/no laws	77.8	100	90	“There are no laws put in place to prevent abuse”. “Child must be protected by parents and community”.
	Some form of awareness	22.2	0	10	
Experiences when leaving home country	Trauma, war, loss	100	100	100	“Moving from your country you lose everything”. “I asked God, why have you forsaken me”.
What were resettlement experiences like	Positive, appreciated	100	100	70	“I got housing” “People came to meet and greet us”. “We had limited access in movement once we arrived. I lost my breadwinner status”.
	Difficulties	0	0	30	
Experiences of cultural differences in Australia	Very different	100	100	100	“We can’t discipline our children”.
Social workers understand their experiences and needs	No	88.9	80	100	“Never, and they’ll never understand”. “I believe they do understand our culture”.
	Yes	11.1	20	0	

Experiences with child protection in Australia	No Yes	100 0	100 0	80 20	“No, but I know someone from my community who has experienced it”. “Some were removed, and I had to do therapy for reunification, but I refused to go”.
Aware of child protection documents	No Yes	88.9 11.1	55 45	90 10	“When we arrived, we were just taught about the law”. “[Statutory body] contacted us and spoke to us about the rules”.
Better support people following resettlement	Collaborate, respect culture	100	100	100	“Translating documents so we can work together”.
Strategies to reduce child protection concerns	Dialogue, involve parents No suggestion	100 0	81.8 18.2	100 0	“We need stronger leadership to we can know how to follow the rules”.
Strategies to strengthen	Involve parents, educate	100	100	100	“When we talk to people in [statutory body] it help to calm people down”.

community re: parenting					
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Chapter Summary

The chapter has presented the methodology of the thesis. A qualitative methodology was selected to ensure that the participant’s real-life stories were heard. The research utilised an exploratory qualitative research design which allowed participants to tell their story, via the researcher’s use of open-ended questions.

The chapter has explained the process of ethics approval, sampling, recruitment, and data collection, which was mostly held in participant’s homes. The main topics explored during the interviews were trauma, culture, policy, and understandings of the participants in relation to statutory child protection.

CHAPTER 5

HOME COUNTRY AND RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

Introduction

People from refugee backgrounds are among some of the most vulnerable people in the world. They are forced to flee from their families, communities, cultures, and countries in times of conflict, persecution, or natural disasters. This can lead to critical issues of concern in their new countries. Refugee arrival figures vary from year to year, depending on factors such as global conflicts and government policies.

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA, 2019) reports that by December 2018, the global refugee population was 25.9 million, and another 3.5 million seeking asylum. The largest numbers of refugees are from Syria (6.65 million), Afghanistan (2.68 million), South Sudan (2.29 million), Myanmar (1.15 million) and Somalia (950,000). In 2018, the largest increases in refugee populations were from Syria (343,850), The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), (99,500), Afghanistan (57, 230), Central African Republic (CAR) (45, 350) and Nigeria (37, 850). The number of people seeking asylum globally grew by 412,400. Further, RCOA states that in the year 2018 alone, “Australia resettled 12,706 refugees and was ranked third overall for resettlement behind Canada and USA” (RCOA, 2019, p. 4).

Due et.al. (2020) states that as a result of various factors before and after migration such as war, torture, separation from family, compulsory migration, and resettlement in familiar surroundings, people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds who are settled in high-income countries are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health issues compared to the

general population. In addition to this trauma, upon settlement, research suggests that lack of respect is a recurring theme in the settlement of South Sudanese Australians with refugee experiences and that community leaders are repeatedly calling for greater respect for the African refugees by the wider community (Losoncz, 2011). Losoncz (2011) argues that South Sudanese feel disrespected due to limited job prospects and a perceived threat on their cultural heritage and customs by regulatory bodies.

In this chapter participant narratives help to extend this literature as they tell of their traumatic experiences. The chapter thematically analyses data collected with participants from South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The chapter explores data extracts from some of 30 participants who were interviewed in relation to their perceptions of statutory child protection in their home countries, their experiences when leaving their home countries, their resettlement experiences, as well as cultural differences. The chapter provides a voice for this population group.

Unique experiences of war and human rights violations have a direct impact, both positive and negative, in a new country. In this chapter, participants discuss their gratitude for the supports they received, but on the other hand, discuss the challenges experienced, some which led to family breakdown. The chapter explores how some participants wished they could return to their countries, but given the war back home, they chose to remain in Australia, which caused some to develop lifelong ailments like high blood pressure. Broadbent et. al. (2007) states that refugee communities have a higher risk of mental health problems due to their experiences of resettling in a new country.

A large percentage of participants stated they were unaware of informal child protection in their country, recognising that children were cared for by immediate and extended family

and community. For some, it appeared like there was some form of laws governing child protection, but they may not have been clearly aware of the roles of the concerned governing bodies. It was clear that these people found it difficult circumventing statutory child protection in Australia. Reflecting the broader literature, whilst on one hand some of the refugees were grateful for the supports they received, on the other hand, some regretted having “lost everything” in the new country.

Theme 1: Perceptions of Child Protection in Home Country

This first theme explores how participants understood child protection laws and practices in their home country. Understanding participant awareness of such laws and practices is important, given that their awareness of living in a statutory context (or not) in their home country is likely to then shape their experiences of living in a statutory context in Australia, as will be explored in the following chapter. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, very few participants across the three home countries believed that there were child protection laws in existence, though many nonetheless spoke about informal child protection practices within their communities. For those who believed that there were some form of formal structure to child protection, this was primarily a police matter, rather than a matter for a formal child protection agency.

Subtheme 1: Informal Rather than Formal Child Protection Practices

In this first sub-theme participants spoke about either having no awareness of child protection laws in their home country or knowing that there are indeed no such laws. As noted above,

however, many spoke about responsibilities within the community that constitute informal child protection practices. For example, Mark, a participant from South Sudan, notes that:

Mark: There are no laws where I come from that are put in place to protect the child from A to Z. Protection of the children is the responsibility of the parent. It is a responsibility of the community (SSUD1 - Male).

Mark is clear that there are no laws in South Sudan that regulate child protection, but this does not mean that there are no responsibilities to protect children. Another participant from South Sudan, Mel, expanded upon the idea that while there are no formal child protection systems, there are duties in relation to children held by all in the community:

Mel: We don't have child protection there. And actually in our country, as we are African, especially us we are Sudanese, we don't have something that's called the children is yours alone. The children belong to a community, to everybody. If the someone did something bad the community or the closest to you will discipline. So is the thing we are doing there (SSUD8 - Female).

For Mel, the care of children is shared by the community, meaning that if something is done to a child the community would step in and discipline the person and provide care for the child. In the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo, participants also spoke about not having a formal child protection system, but instead that it is the role of parents to protect their children:

Rowan: No, there was no defined system. Children were protected by their parents. Going to school, returning home, medical health, were all the duty of the parents. The parents worked very hard to provide for their children (DRC2 - Male).

Evident in this extract from Rowan, and many of the others included in this sub-theme, is the idea that parents or other community members must provide for and protect children. While this is a perfect idea in principle, in practice it may mean that parents who are unable to properly care for their children may continue to do so without support or intervention from others (i.e., if neglect or abuse are hidden). Other participants, however, noted that there are support services available, though again this requires a parent to access these services:

Sam: I surely never heard of that. I didn't know of child protection, but I knew of family services or protection of children through family services from the community. And us as parents, we took care of the children (DRC3 - Male).

Here again, it is the primary role of parents to care for children, meaning that while support services may be available, it is incumbent upon the parent to access them. Factors such as shame or fear may prevent parents from accessing formalised supports, and as we will see in the following chapter, upon arrival in Australia parents with no exposure to formal child protection systems may struggle to understand their role.

In the context of Somalia, participants were even more unequivocal about the lack of formalised institutional child protection systems:

Axel: Yeah. Somalia there was no institution responsible for child protection; aaah parents, every adult, schools, were all responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children (SOM5 - Male).

Max: In my country, normally the children are cared by their parents. And the government, they do not, doesn't know about the children. And it is only the parents who take cares, take to school. They do everything, whatever he needs (SOM1 - Male).

For these participants, not only is there no institutionalised child protection system by their understanding, but it is further suggested that the government is uninvolved in children's lives in general. While, for responsible parents, this hands-off approach may be welcomed and may be productive, for families where there are potential child protection concerns, it can mean that families are not adequately supported.

Subtheme 2: Child Protection as a Policing Matter

In this second sub-theme, a small number of participants spoke about formal child protection practices, however these were largely matters dealt with by policy, rather than by a child protection agency. For participants from South Sudan in particular, it was noted that violence toward children would typically be a police matter:

John: I would say there is some form of protection. But not as ... in the way it's built in Australia or maybe in the western world. But there is a form of child protection ... when there is some, you know, issues happening. Attending to a particular child. It could be a violence from the parents. You know, it could be insecurity that is created to the child. But I wouldn't say we had a ... a government established department that deals with that. But it probably, it will be a generally police case. The law will take its course there (SSD5 - Male).

Here a distinction is drawn between formalised child protection systems in countries such as Australia, and child protection being a police matter. While both are guided by laws, police intervention into child protection matters has the potential to result in a court case and potential conviction, rather than potential support and reunification, as is the case in Australia. Another participant from South Sudan provided further clarity about processes where police are involved in child protection concerns:

Di: We have child protection but it's not been put into place. They have child protection but what I mean it's not been put into place, like if you do something wrong with the child we never be charged. But there is law for child protection, even if you might never be charged with that (SSUD6 - Female).

While Di was aware that there are child protection laws in South Sudan that police might act on, in their understanding this does not occur. This gap potentially means that even if child

protection concerns are brought to the attention of the police, they may be unlikely to act, or at the least unlikely to act in ways that serve to protect children.

Theme 2: Experiences When Leaving Home Country

In this second theme, participants spoke about the factors that led to them fleeing their home country. Participants typically gave rich, detailed, and often traumatic accounts of being forcibly displaced, and the impacts this had on themselves and their children. Specifically, participants spoke about psychological trauma resulting from living in a war zone, a broad sense of having lost everything, and a specific sense of having lost their connections with loved ones. Each of these sub-themes are now explored in turn.

Subtheme 1: Psychological Trauma Caused by War

For some participants, psychological trauma was constituted through the general. Trauma was a product of generalised feelings of distress related to many factors, both those specific to themselves, and those related to the effects of war on others. For John, who was from South Sudan, trauma was a product of both his own experiences, as well as the experiences of others:

John: People would come with guns and shoot people in our homes. So, you'll find yourself ... you and the children, the adults and the children are all feeling the same insecurity. There were too many children. For example, we had the lost boys of South Sudan. They were brought, to my knowledge, to the best of my knowledge, they were brought to the camp. You know, between the age of 17 and

below. And 16,000 children unaccompanied with their parents. So, we had this big number of children. We had children who fled their countries with no parents. They came by themselves. So, there were a very huge number of children within the camp (SSUD5 - Male).

John begins by talking about the specific impact of war upon him, namely in regard to the direct threat of violence. John then moves to talk more broadly about the effect of war upon many people, here specifically the effect on children. The numbers that John cites gives weight to the gravity of trauma forced upon children in South Sudan as a result of war.

Other participants, typically women in the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo, focused more closely on specific experiences that were traumatising, and in particular in regard to their capacity to provide for their children.

Cora: We were completely traumatised. We ran with children. I ran with four children through the forest. I climbed mountains, they wanted to kill us and there was no food. You only lived on drinking water. It was very hard. I had to run yet I had just given birth to my fourth. There was no food as in cooked food, but you can imagine, in a big forest there will be fruit trees. You would find that by good luck, God would send the fruit. But otherwise, there was no food for cooking. You just sleep in the forest. There's no money.... you just lay them down– you there is no lighting, so the mother will generally not sleep, because you are watching over the children (DRC5 - Female).

Here Cora speaks about her distress about being able to care for her children, distress that compounded the trauma she was already experiencing. While Cora makes recourse to the hope that God would provide, there is nonetheless a sense of responsibility voiced by Cora to care for her children, and that the care she was able to provide was less than she would ideally have liked to provide. Nelly too talked about the challenges in providing for her family after being forcibly displaced:

Nelly: It was really hard to bring up children. Getting food was very hard. Sometimes you would stay without eating any food, and you only ate one meal, in the evening. Sometimes, we would only have porridge. You would lack food to eat. We passed through many hardships, including lacking water. You would stay for two days without water. As a parent it was very painful. We were wondering whether to go back home, but there was killing and suffering back home. So, we would cry and pray to God. We could ask God, Oh my God, where do I go to? God why have you forsaken me? If you saw where our children were sleeping, you would just shed tears. They would sleep on the floor, in a grass thatched house with a leaking roof. So, we would all wake up and cuddle in a corner (DRC8 - Female).

Here Nelly described the pain of not being able to provide for her children. She was faced with the ‘choice’ of staying where she was – and not being able to provide for her children – and returning to her home and potentially being able to provide for them but placing them all in the

direct line of fire. While Cora held faith in God to provide for her family, by contrast for Nelly there was a sense in which God had forsaken her. Even when some participants reached the relative safety of a refugee camp, the trauma did not necessarily end:

Alice: The challenges were that life was hard. It wasn't easy like, you know, the refugee camp is you been given food by the UN and if you get sick you don't get much attention like, not that much medicine. And life wasn't easy in the camp. I lost my first born in [place] because of health, yeah (SOM6 - Female).

As Alice notes, while she and her family were provided with food in the camp, the lack of other services meant that she ultimately lost her child. While it is possible to believe that traumatic experiences will end once someone has fled a war zone, unfortunately for many people trauma continues, including in terms of resettlement countries, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Subtheme 2: Losing Everything

Participants profoundly spoke about war they experienced in their countries, as well as grief and loss which was resultant of the war. They discussed in depth their lived experiences of the different traumatic losses. For many participants there was a sense in which they had not lost single individual things, but rather a sense of having cumulatively lost everything. For example, in the context of South Sudan, Mark described that he lost everything. Participants explored how this impacted on not just themselves, but also their immediate and extended families:

Mark: You lose everything. The first connection with the extended family. You are disconnected and you find yourself in a strange culture where you come and then you experience some are positive, some will be negative. And the life of being a refugee is actually a home loss and people you knew, you come in as a lost person and you find yourself in a strange land. A strange culture, a strange people. A strange - and then – and so, you lose everything. You lose everything when you are – when you leave your country for many reasons. Of course, beginning a new life as a refugee mean beginning a change. You are going to – you will change, but that change could be forever, because if you – you are going to lose a lot of things. You are going to lose your culture, you are going to lose your language, you are going to lose lifestyle, too. Yeah (SSUD1 - Male).

For Mark, forcibly losing a home, people, culture, country, language, and lifestyle constitutes a holistic loss. This loss is compounded following resettlement, due to everything being strange. Another participant from The Democratic Republic of Congo reiterates what Mark said above:

Clara: Yeah, in the refugee camp it was a bit challenging because we don't have nothing. So, from where we came from so it was the war, then we lose everything. Now when we reach the refugee camp, we don't have nothing (DRC11 - Female).

Again, as per the previous theme, even after arriving at a refugee camp the loss does not stop. For some participants, as explained by Mia below, her loss involved her children.

Mia: Yes. War broke out, and – – we fled the country. I lost my children, and ... yeah. Out of the whole war. OK, I only came with one child, and now the others were left behind (DRC6 - Female).

Similarly, to Mark above, Mia experienced multiple layers of loss by not only losing her children, but also most likely not having an opportunity to bury them, but instead fleeing with her one child. She hence would have had no chance for closure with regard to the loss of her children. Participants from Somali had quite similar experiences during the war, adding that they left not just deceased children, but also live ones. As Axel explained, below:

Axel: The war; the war was the real challenge, and the loss of all belongings, and having to walk for safety. For some leaving live or deceased kids on the way, all these challenges are what people experience while leaving Somalia (SOM 5 - Male).

As explained by Axel, the participants walked for safety, while Hope below explains that they ran. It cannot be assumed that everybody was in good health. The walking and running would have been challenging for those who would have been incapacitated in some way and may not have been able to either run or walk, adding to more traumatic experiences for them.

Hope: I lost my parents. Like they went separate ways because of the war. Yeah. That's when everyone ran (SOM 10 - Female).

The loss of everything was a consistent sub theme across most participants, where participants spoke of loss of their homes, families, people, language, lifestyle, culture, country, children, and parents. Further perceptions of loss are described in the next subtheme, specifically in terms of loss of kinship structures.

According to Losoncz (2015), culture continues to hold significant value for majority of South Sudanese Australians and remains a fundamental framework for social interactions within families and communities. This is despite the detrimental impacts of civil wars, colonisation, and migration on the transmission of culture between generations.

With this in mind, when the people have significant attachment on their culture and then it is lost, it puts them and their families in a vulnerable state already, a state which would be important as a starting point for assessments for professionals working with these families and then building on to address other layers of loss which are as weighty as this.

Subtheme 3: Loss of Traditional Kinship Structures

In this third sub-theme, participants spoke about how their traditional families thrived on connections within their family structures, and the impact of the loss of these kinship structures. For participants from South Sudan in particular, it was noted that due to loss of family connections, the current generation has unfortunately lost knowledge of the kinship structure, which is very important to their culture, as described by Andrew below:

Andrew: It's from past, it's just to know who are their immediate families, and who is their extended families, and what, and the way of life, how it is a different background with others. But here most of the children, they don't know that background. They don't

know who is their immediate family and who is their extended family. And know between the relatives, the immediate and extended and the community, to know all these things, is very important in our culture (SSUD2 - Male).

Further to this, John below reiterates what was explored in the first theme of this chapter, namely regarding care of children being shared by the community, but also talks about loss of positive experiences due to war, that the kinship structure previously provided:

John: You know, you have the grandfather, the grandmother, the sisters, the brothers, the cousins, the aunties, the uncles. They have a say. They could decide what happens with a child. But again, I'm speaking about positive decisions. You know, positive decisions. Positive decisions for the betterment and for the welfare of the child. So, they could advise the parents of what to do without actually the parent having to seek advice (SSUD5 - Male).

Here, John states that the parents likewise experience loss of family connections, particularly in terms of not receiving parenting support from their parents, in form of advice and decision making in caring for their children. When participants came to the realisation that the family connections were now lost, they expected to find some kind of structure that simulated theirs back home but were surprised that was not the case. This potentially added another layer of complexity to participant experiences of loss. In the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ezra explains:

Ezra: We found life here very different. Back in Africa, there is a solidarity, even within a local setting, so people visit each other liberally. We expected the same here, lots of visitors, but the only people that showed up were – usually would have been people from Church and the service providers, those who were giving us the support. We found it totally different, how people live here, compared to back home. For instance, you'd have a neighbour and for the longest time you'd not even know them. Even if you would know them, they would not even say hello. It was surprising to us! Where we come from, when you leave your house and your neighbour leaves their house, you greet each other” (DRC1 - Male).

With the new lifestyle, Ezra was introduced to formal support systems like service providers, rather than the informal family supports which he was familiar with back home. As Sofia describes below in the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo, losing family connections was hard for her and her family, as informal supports systems back home, in which care of children was shared within the family, were easier:

Sofia: The culture is very different, it's a major difference, because meeting new people you never knew before. And to parenting was hard. Everything is a mum and dad, rather than a grandfather or uncle. No uncle, no grandfather, is like only me and the kids. I look those children and my husband and myself as my whole family. No uncle, nowhere to visit. Yeah. There is no big opportunity to see families, because is far away, the distance. Yeah, missing home was the major issue. But now we are coping. As usual,

when you ... It is like an exercise that we did. Yeah, it was like another school, then you finish. Yeah (DRC9 - Female).

Sofia however puts a therapeutic approach to loss of family connections, by mentioning that she is coping, despite the distance. Physical proximity, as explained by Alice in the context of Somalia, was an added advantage to caring for children, as more people had an eye on the children:

Alice: Back in our country it's like, we've been living closely, not far from each other. Maybe we are neighbours with your parents, neighbours with your aunty, your uncle or maybe grandma is close to you. So the kids are being taken care of by everyone in the family. Not only you, the parent who gave birth to those kids, yeah, so they have many people to take care of them (SOM6 - Female).

A common idea that runs across this subtheme is that the participants generally preferred their kinship structure back home, where kin supported them to care for their children. What was lost, then, in being forcibly displaced, were these traditional kinship structures. The next theme talks about supports the participants received when they resettled in Australia which, whilst appreciated, resettlement was still challenging to the extent that in some instances, it sadly led to permanent family relationship breakdown.

Theme 3: What Were Resettlement Experiences Like

The third theme explores participant's resettlement experiences. Understanding what they perceived as having been helpful supports to them is important as this marks the beginning of

their fresh start in a new culture, which had an influence on their success, or not, as explored in sub-theme three of this theme. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, while a larger percentage across the three countries talked of invaluable supports and help, there was a small percentage which indicated that all was not gold. Of note, those who talked of challenges they experienced still received the same level of supports all the others received, and were not necessarily discriminated against or denied access to the supports.

Subtheme 1: Receiving Physical Supports

In this first sub-theme participants spoke about physical supports they received when they arrived in South Australia. As noted above, many spoke about how they received great help, for example from non-government organisations like Australian Refugee Association (ARA).

Elvis, a participant from South Sudan, notes that:

Elvis: Yeah. I found support, definitely, yeah. Yeah, it was – ARA, it's called ARA. Those people were supporting me a lot and, what do you call, Immigration for the refugees who used to be in the city So used to help us a lot and used to guide us and tell us the truth. And tell us the truth, how to live life and they tell us the law of Australia and how Australia is going. Yeah. They used to go to, what do you call it, to English learning and then from there I went to the TAFE. And then TAFE, yeah. That's it and then I got – I did training for some courses then I got a job. So a lot of movement, good movement in my life (SSUD4 - Male).

Elvis notes that except from physical supports on things like learning English language, he was also informed about the Australian way of life, and the law of Australia. The depth of the law they received was not explained by Elvis. Elvis mentioning learning of English indicates that, for him, communication was a key factor in his resettlement, and he was supported with this, which he appreciated as it then gave him an opportunity to finding a job.

Mark, in the second sub-theme of the second theme, spoke about holistic loss, including loss of his home. Loss cannot be replaced. However, it would have been a relief for participants to arrive in Australia and find houses, whether public housing or private rental. Anne from South Sudan notes:

Anne: Yeah. We, the time we came they already organised a house for us where we live. Yeah. And also we tried to apply for government home, and it was very hard. So we couldn't get that chance to get the government house, but we find a private. Yeah, Centrelink, the government was paying my schooling, because the time we came we were refugees, the government had to organise 500 hours to do the English. It's called a Refugees' Programme, something like that. Yeah, we, I did that, the government pay for it, and they pay again another 500 hours, and I did that. And they paid for me to do the aged care. Yeah, to do the aged care course. So we got a lot of help from government. Yeah (SSUD7 - Female).

Like Elvis above, for Anne, learning English language gave her a pathway to gain paid employment. Anne mentions help from Centrelink and summarises by stating that they

received a lot of help from the government. Of note, while Elvis above talks of help from the non-government sector, Anne talks of help from government, meaning that both government and non-government worked in collaboration to resettle the refugees. This view corroborates what Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo summarises, namely that they were looked after well:

Cora: Now, there was a white man called [name] who would come and pick up – he was a seventh-dayer. He would come and pick up the children and take them to church, but we didn't know, we just thought it was out of his good heart, but we came to find out that he was actually a social worker. So, he would give us money, he would do shopping for the whole house. Whatever we needed he provided to us. They looked after us well. I can say that we were received well upon coming to Australia, we ate well, and we even forgot the past. We were able to sleep here. At home we were not able to sleep. You were thinking, how will tomorrow be? (DRC5 - Female).

In addition to government and non-government sectors, Cora discusses the informal sector, the church, as another layer of support. As seen in theme two sub-theme one, faith was important to Cora, going by her making recourse to the hope that God would provide. Having someone connecting her to her faith would have been positive to her resettlement as to her, God would have answered her prayer. Cora's excerpt juxtaposes a situation whereby whereas she did not have anything after leaving home having holistically lost everything as seen across the board in theme two above, during resettlement she now has money, a lot of provision, food, and shelter, to the extent that she could potentially even forgot the past. In addition to Anne, Elvis

and Cora's responses above who named government, non-government and the informal sector as having provided support to them upon resettlement, Fin from Somalia provides her experience of the community providing supports:

Fin: They came in my house, they picked up – they did shopping for me because I don't know how to catch a bus, I don't know how I can use my money too. Australian money and Kenyan money are different, you know? They take me shopping. I do shopping. They return me. And when I need to – when I'm sick, maybe the community is helping me, pick up my kids to school. And also the government give me the refugee bus – you know the big bus? Everybody. My kids, that bus is pick up and drop off (SOM9 - Female).

When one is experiencing a difficult time, it is typical for people to remember what they considered of most valuable help when they needed it. To Maddy from The Democratic Republic of Congo, education, financial support, and health were of much value to her:

Maddy: School enrolment was one of the supports for the children, as well as the Family Tax Benefit and the social support, Medicare, healthcare (DRC7 - Female).

It may have been the first time in her lifetime that Fia from Somalia was not having to pay for education, as seen in her response:

Fia: We had a Medicare card because we came as refugees. Yes. We had a lot of support when we came here. First, we went to study. Second, we get Centrelink payment, we had Medicare card. Yeah, we get a lot of support at the time we arrived here. It was me and my brother. Like in our country, when we study, we have to pay. But in here, we get support from the government; like our study is paid for (SOM8 - Female).

A common idea that runs across this subtheme is that the participants generally appreciated the supports they were provided upon resettlement. The next theme talks about how participants felt cared for and loved when they resettled in Australia by being provided not only physical supports, but also emotional supports.

Subtheme 2: Being Taken Care Of

In the previous sub-theme, participants spoke about practical supports they were offered after resettling in Australia. In this sub-theme, by contrast, participants spoke about the affective dimensions of support, namely in terms of being cared for. Andrew, who was from South Sudan, perceived this care as having been “humanitarian”.

Andrew: Yeah, the support that we got is just the same, just humanitarian benefit from Centrelink. Yeah, in a time of childcare, the government used to pay some fee (SSUD2 - Male).

For Ezra from South Sudan, the care he received was provided in the context of emotional support:

Ezra: So while they were in the camp, those whose visas were out and they were to travel here, were moved to a hotel, awaiting the flight to come here. And once we reached here, we were received well through meet-and-greet caseworkers. For instance, STARRS was really key with emotional support, especially because of the trauma that people would have gone through including being jailed. People from church were a big help as well. They came home, encouraged us and gave us emotional support. So, yeah, people from church would come and show us where to go to church, or even take us to church, and show us where to buy food or attend church. We saw a lot of love because the Government received us well. (DRC1 - Male).

While some of the examples provided by Ezra could be construed as practical support, like Andrew they were instead framed as emotional support, and indeed as love. Faith from The Democratic Republic of Congo felt cared for by the warm welcome her and her children received. This was most valuable to Faith, as the warm welcome made her happy. Faith acknowledges that this care was still ongoing as at the time this research was conducted:

Faith: We were very well welcomed, we were happy, and really supported with food in the house and taking care of the children. Medication, yeah. And they are helping us till now. Education, health, and money from the government (DRC - 10 Female).

Care to Alice from Somalia, like to Faith above, was being welcomed. Alice goes further to add another concept, being settled:

Alice: OK. Yep. We were welcomed by – who was it? There's this organisation who were helping, MRC. They were called MRC. They settle you, they show you how to catch a bus and they show you how to use the items at home like, maybe, you know, how to putting on the fire and all that. Because ... They settle you, they show you how to catch a bus. They take you to appointments for nearly a week and so. And then they tell you, now you can do by yourself the rest. But we've got a good neighbour who was an African man who was helping us as well, yeah (SOM6 - Female).

Alice explains that this being settled includes various things like being shown how to navigate the Australian way of life, including how to use items that Alice had probably not experienced using back home. To Alice, this care was pertinent in settling her. To Bree, care meant people volunteering to come and support her:

Bree: Yeah. Migrant Resource Centre helped us to go to school, TAFE. And they show us how to go to doctor. And....some people from Migrant Resource Centre volunteer and they showed us how to catch the bus, how to catch the train until six months. After that they stopped when we learnt everything (SOM7 - Female).

Faith from The Democratic Republic of Congo noted that being taken care of in terms of Education, health, and money from the government was still ongoing at the time the research was conducted. Bree from Somalia noted that being cared for was evident in terms of volunteers showing them how to navigate their way around stopped when they learnt everything. While

it is possible to believe that the above mentioned immense and appreciated supports will lead to success for all in resettlement, unfortunately this is not the case, as we shall see in the next sub-theme.

Subtheme 3: Family Separation Following Resettlement

Despite various physical supports participants received upon resettlement in Australia such as Centrelink, Medicare, housing, education, and being well taken care of such as through humanitarian supports, emotional supports, and being settled by government, non-government, informal sector, community, 30 percent of participants as seen from Table 5 in Chapter 4 encountered some adverse experiences. Some of these experiences led to some families separating. This third sub-theme explores the challenges participants encountered.

Mark from South Sudan explains the misunderstandings his family encountered within two years of arriving in Australia and receiving physical supports in terms of housing, and being settled:

Mark: Yes. I got the housing. When I first arrived, I was settled in a community house in Melbourne. I lived there for a while, for two, at least one year. In July 1998 to December 1999. Yes. And then, the family fall apart in the year 2000. Yeah. We just had issues with my wife, so we separated in 2000. It (separation) would never happen (back home). It would have never happen. Yeah. Everything not taken – not every issue to be taken to court. Not every issue to calling the police. Not any quarrel. Not any misunderstanding. If there is misunderstanding, you call in your cousins, your

elders. Because why – it's not because the laws are against women. It's, because we have parent's backup. We have community backup. Yeah. But here, when two – wife and husband have a misunderstanding, police interfere. They just call the police and the police come and take you away. Separating you, separating you, it means an intervention order where the man is taken out from home, because the man is always considered as guilty and the one causing the violence. So the man is the one to be taken away from home, where you are, and then it is up to the lady to decide whether she will bring you back or not. So, if she doesn't want you to come back, that's it. It will lead into divorce. Just like in my case. Yes (SSUD1 - Male).

Mark attributes family disintegration to simple family disputes becoming a legal matter, issues which could have been easily resolved by elders and extended family back home. Unfortunately, Mark began to feel the impact of having left extended family and losing everything. Mark suggests that the legal system stigmatises men as mostly the perpetrators who then get the Intervention Orders and are at the mercy of women to choose to let them back into their lives or not. Adrian's excerpt in the context of Somalia mirrors Mark's response. Adrian faults immigration for separating his family:

Adrian: That's a challenging, of course, because if from your country to the – another country, so no limit, in your social life is limit, and youryou are limit access to go anywhere in – to go anywhere. Everything is limited. I come to Australia after – I come this city. In the beginning, we get the new home, the first home, in [suburb], at the morning, come the immigration; the problem started that morning– because the

immigration separated me – own card. And giving me warning to see you no own card to manage financial in your family, your children, and your wife. She and other children getting own home (SOM4 - Male).

Not only did Adrian have limited social networks to go visiting like he did back home, but the system did not grant him full financial decision making for his family, which he most likely had back home. Moses from South Sudan reiterates Mark's sentiments, highlighting the role of extended family in family settings:

Moses: In Africa, generally, parenting is not carried out by parent alone. It's carried out by members of extended family, but in Australia, we are facing problem of being just a parent, like mother and father taking care of the kids by themselves (SSUD3 - Male).

To Moses, sharing the parenting role leads to more harmonious relationships, and hence lifts the burden of family disagreements. Like the adage goes, a problem shared is a problem halved. Moses, like Mark above, also began to feel the impact of having been forced into leaving a culture in which there was shared care of children.

A common idea that runs across this theme is the challenges participants encountered during the process of resettlement in Australia, which they spoke about freely and without sugar coating. What was clear was that back home, issues such as those that led into family breakdowns would not have resulted into that as they would have been resolved amicably by the support of extended family and hence kept children and their families together. The next

theme explores further what respondents began to experience, adjusting to a new culture, and the impacts the new and different way of life had on their families.

No participant in this subtheme has mentioned support for parents from the authorities how to navigate things like parents seeing their children when there have been irreconcilable differences that have led to the parent's separation. The parents just do not know how to. Support could be in terms of education. It is not clear whether these participants had the information but if they had, it could have been too overwhelming to take it all in given their circumstances at the time.

According to Losoncz (2015), South Sudanese fathers lack familiarity with the notion of joint custody and parenting by non-resident parents in the event of a divorce. One youth worker reported that, "The husbands haven't been educated in how to see their children after separation." (Losoncz (2015 p. 420). From this, education is lacking, and such challenges contribute to the heightened stress for parents.

Theme 4: Experiences of Cultural Differences in Australia

This final theme explores how for many participants, despite the many positive experiences of resettlement reported in the previous theme, participants nonetheless navigated significant challenges following resettlement. These challenges primarily centered around differing cultural values between their home country and Australia. While it could be suggested that such differences are likely to be expected, they nonetheless had a significantly negative impact on many participants.

Subtheme 1: Differing Understandings of Parenting

While the final sub-theme in the previous theme introduced the topic of family impacts following resettlement, the present sub-theme explores other impacts upon parenting post-resettlement, and specifically challenge related to cultural differences. For example, one respondent said that in Australia both males and females are treated the same, something which he had not experienced back home. Moses in the context of South Sudan mentions disciplining of children as a major difference in the two cultures:

Moses: Yeah. In terms of discipline, it's very hard as a parent to discipline your child. Like for example, if child is not doing homework or the child can decide not to go to school and say that, "I don't want to study." There's nothing you can do about it because if you force that child, the system says the child has a right to say, "I don't want to do this." As a parent you can't do that. For example, back home, if the child is watching TV and you told the child to do something else, you can stop that child from watching TV as a result of that, and that's normal. But here in Australia, they take it as a serious offence against the child (SSUD3 - Male).

In Moses' view, the system considers forcing a child to stop doing something, even if it is helpful in the eyes of the parent like studying, a serious offense, something Moses has not experienced before. Moses hence faults the system as giving the child a lot of rights and freedom, thereby incapacitating him to care for his child. The children who have been raised in a culture of obedience to their parents are suddenly in a culture where they have freedom, choice, and control. Brenda from South Sudan echoes Moses' discussion on freedom,

explaining that she finds this challenging, particularly as the child enters teenage years when they are trying to find their identity, which in some circumstances led to catastrophic outcomes:

Brenda: For example, for the kids, because the young kids when they come into teenagers or something like that they behave badly, and they need to be disciplined. But here they say, “No leave them.” And they go out and they do whatever they want and sometimes they end in death or sometimes they end in jail and that sort of thing. But ours in Africa not like that. Yes, because they’re not getting out from the house before they marry, yeah, from the family. And we don’t have kids living by themselves or girls or the boys living separately from the family; and they still young doesn’t have any family; how can you can you live by yourself. Yeah, we don’t have that in Africa (SSUD9 - Female).

Brenda explains that in her culture, children listen to their parents and only move out of home when they are getting married. Brenda wonders how an underage child can have so much freedom to the extent that they can be allowed to live on their own. It is ironic to note that while respondents in theme two above generally appreciated Centrelink, Morris now, in the context of Somalia, faults the government for the very same Centrelink. Understandably, this is in the context of enabling children to live on their own.

Morris: It’s different. Different. Different. A big different. Yes, a big difference. kids were teenage, no respecting, no listen. I would ask him, kids, what’s problem – the son, what’s the problem? I’m teenage. Yes. They always say, “We are teenagers.” Yes. I can

do whatever I want”. Whatever. When you ask them, you want to leave home or you want to go out, they say, “Whatever.” Why? Because Centrelink lot of the money. The kid, when he leaves home and goes outside, they will be given more extra money because they are not living with their family, so they get.. extra incentive. That’s problem the government. The problem comes from the government. So that means if they didn’t give them, they will need the parents’ support. (SOM3 - Male).

Morris explains that by this time, the children have ‘owned’ the freedom to the extent that they can now do whatever they like irrespective of the parent’s advice. Cora in the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo echoes Moses, Brenda, and Morris’ discussion on freedom, by further explaining that back home, the mindset of leaving home at the age of 17 was non-existent.

Cora: Back home, I would sit them down and explain and tell them, this is what I would like you to do. Me as your parent, I see like this will help you in your life. But here you can’t, because first of all, there’s a language barrier. Their English is more proficient than yours. So, they know more English than you do, so you’re already at a disadvantage. You hurt, but there is nothing else to do. You just keep quiet because you really have nothing else to say, you know, to do. You don’t know what else to do. They will call the police for you if you disagree. Or they’ll leave home. What they say is, “When I turn 17, I’m going to rent out my own place” but at home they never even think that way. That’s not an option. Even if you are 40 and you’re still living at home, the parents will just take care of you. They will not make noise at you. To them, it’s –

you haven't found someone for you to get married so you are accepted at home. They encourage you and say, your day will come. But here, the children are spoilt. Some of them are involved in drugs, alcohol, bad company. Here there is too much freedom, the children don't have the zeal for education and are very different from home and that's why the children end up in wrong company, drugs. We thought that bringing our children here, they would have a better life and we would be happier, but there are a lot of moms who are complaining about their children. There are mothers who are suffering from many diseases. Some have developed high blood pressure because of the way their children have turned out. In my country, children do not take drugs (DRC5 - Female).

Cora echoes the discussion on freedom and points out the level of freedom as being too much. Cora states that because of the disappointment in the way the children have turned out and parents feeling helpless to intervene for their children in the way they know how, resultantly, parents have developed many diseases. Of note, Cora also introduces another layer of complexity, language barrier, citing that because the children became better than their parents at speaking English language, they begun to look down upon their parents. Steve, a participant from Somalia, not only speaks about freedom their children were accorded, but echoes Cora when he explains that the level of this freedom was "too much", to the level that the parents were scared of their children:

Steve: Too much talk of freedom. So being scared of your own kids. You can't touch them to discipline them. And a branch of tree, you can straighten it when it is small, but if the tree grows big, you can't straighten it if it is bending. If you try to straighten when

– it will break. No talking to kids, no forcing kids to do anything, no touching. Too much talk of that. Yes. So an attempt to straighten the branch when it is young is what disciplining kids who are young equivalent to..... It's not anything negative to kids, but it's beneficial to them (SOM2 - Male).

To Steve, disciplining the children at a young age, an age when they could listen to their parents could in no way have been negative, but in all ways, beneficial. Steve did not explain the level and type of discipline when he talked of straightening the branch. Ezra, in the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo faults the education system by pointing out that the children are given information at school, such as advising the children to call their parents when there is conflict at home. It is the first time Ezra begins to doubt his relocation to Australia:

Ezra: Now, when it came to taking our kids to school, they would come back on a Saturday and say that, 'Today we were taught that if our parents beat us or mistreat us, then we can call the police, and we were given the numbers to call.' They told us the numbers are three zeros. And this really bothered us because we were wondering, is this why you came here? We brought you here. It looked like this was – the school was conflicting us, or bringing conflict between us and our children, so at times we would get upset and tell the children, 'So, once you call the police for me, what does that mean? Are they the ones who gave birth to you, or why would you call the police on me?' There's so much I can say, but ...(DRC1 - Male).

Ezra points out that the education system played a role in bringing conflicts in their families with the information they were providing their children, something they were not used to back home.

One finding from Losoncz (2011) study “Blocked opportunity and threatened identity: Understanding experiences of disrespect in South Sudanese Australians was that all participants including young adults expressed concern about the potential negative outcomes of granting too much freedom to children and youth within their community. To them, young people had not yet acquired necessary skills to responsibly handle such autonomy. Resultantly, respondents believed that Australian child protection laws undermined parent’s parenting authority. This created challenges for families and communities in fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities.

Unfortunately, from this sub-theme, it emerges that parents begun to feel helpless in ‘caring’ for their children in the way they understood care to be. Their hands were tied such that they could not discipline children in the way they have before culturally. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, a hundred percent of respondents stated they cannot discipline their children. This resulted in a blame game of the sectors that were seen as bringing conflict into families, with the main sectors mentioned as the government, the system, Centrelink, and the education sector. The next sub-theme explores cultural values in the context of South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Sudan, and how these were not understood in Australia.

Subtheme 2: Lack of Understanding of Cultural Values

This second sub-theme discusses some cultural values as practised by the different communities, which then provides context for understanding the intersection of the cultural values and the respondent's new way of life. In the context of South Sudan, parents valued their children sleeping in their own homes, and the concept of sleep overs was not understood by Mark. This caused a conflict with his children, who would have been introduced to sleep overs most likely by their peers at school, a natural thing to do for children in Australia:

Mark: ...my children start to sleep out from the house, from their own home. They sleep in their friend house and then I'm shouting them that you are not supposed to sleep outside your home, when you are teenagers. You should be in your place. Meet with your friends, I am not against your friends, but meet with your friends, but come home. Sleep in your own house. But my children took advantage and they went and complained to their school that, my father. does not allow us to sleep out with our friends. And then the school principal rang me and said "Why do you prevent – leave the children alone to do what they want. If they want to sleep with their friends, it is their choice. It is not your choice". And I said, "What? This is absolutely interference to my family. These are my family. These are my kids and I know what is good for them. Not you. Why are the friends don't come to sleep with my – with them in their home? Why should it be my children to go and sleep in their friend house? What about their friend coming to sleep in my children house? Why do you encourage them? This is one of the thing which actually upsetted me and that did not make me happy. And this is when my children started to be – to adopt some sort of behaviours, because I

know, these kids were – they were no control. They are living that freedom, freedom which a child have here. That freedom actually damage them. It damage the children. It doesn't allow the children to listen to their parents. If you were at home – back home, my child cannot accuse me in the school that, “My dad do this to me, my dad do this to me.” No. They cannot do that, because what I'm telling them, even in the school, no one will accept that, because kids, when they are young, their blood is hot and they do things – silly things and they need to be corrected. They need to be guided. Yes. But here it's absolute freedom, lead the children astray. This, the loss. They make them lost their way of life. Yeah (SSUD1 - Male).

The simple act of Mark denying the children sleepovers led to school ringing Mark and Mark feeling disrespected on how to run his family. There was also confusion regarding understanding the purpose of physical punishment, which many participants saw as invaluable back home. In the context of South Sudan, Anne is trying to explain the reason they used physical punishment, stating that it was not to harm the children, but to make them disciplined, which constitutes child abuse in Australia:

Anne: But when we came here in Australia, there is something called Child Protection, and they say child abuse. So we become confused, as African parents, because we don't beat our children because we abuse them, we beat them because we want them to have a good discipline. So we are stuck in the middle. We can't enforce our culture here. And the Australian government said Australia is a multicultural country, but sometime we African parent, we have been pressed. They didn't give us our chance to take care of

our children the way we used to take care of them. Like now you can see a lot of African children, they are on the street, because the power has been taken away from the parents. They didn't give us our power the way we take care of our kids... So that's where we are, as African parents we are going through a lot in this environment of giving children more power than parents. Yeah (SSUD7 - Female).

Anne felt helpless and highlights that though Australia is a multicultural country, she cannot parent in a multicultural way, resulting in their children running away from home and ending up on the streets. Bree in the context of Somalia explained that the children have now turned out to be disrespectful, for example they are looking at the adults straight in the eye, which culturally is interpreted as being angry:

Bree: Yeah. If I'm talking to my son or to my daughter about something they did, they have to look at me like they wanna fight with me. Here it's OK, but back in Kenya it's not OK. You will feel like he or she is disrespecting you. But here they say if they don't look you in the eye, maybe your son or your daughter is sick (SOM7 - Female).

A notification that Bree is not taking her daughter to access medical treatment when she is sick would easily become a child protection issue. Understanding the differences in cultural values is important in helping to mitigate some of these issues that do not necessarily have to be screened in as child protection issues. Axel from Somalia continues on the issue of respect, where in the cultural context, respect is accorded to anyone who is older irrespective of who it is:

Axel: Yeah. Well, a cultural difference is there's more, more focus – there, there is more focus on respecting the elder in the context of Africa; respect the elder, even if they are not their biological parents, and be successful. Parents doing everything possible to get their kids to become successful, and then ahhhh that, the perception to success being certain professionals, someone becoming a doctor, engineer". (SOM5 - Male).

Of note, Axel correlates respect to a child having a bright future careerwise, and highlights that all parents wish for their children to succeed. Respondent Rowan in the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo blames the education system for contributing to change in the culture, by teaching subjects such as subjects about sex. It is considered culturally inappropriate to be teaching such subjects to children as young as five:

Rowan: Back home, we are raising our children well according to our culture but you find that the culture is really different at school where they change their culture a lot. For instance, in Africa, children would not know anything about sex or engage in it. They would be taught when they are about to get married. But children here abroad, just five years, and a child knows everything. They can ask you questions, and you just do not know how to respond to them because to us, it is embarrassing for us to teach our children about sex or other body private parts which God has created us with (DRC2 - Male).

Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo notes basic things like sharing and making unannounced home visits to a neighbour as not happening. Living in a close-knit community is an important aspect of life to her as in her culture, socialisation was valued:

Cora: The culture here is different from ours. I've also noticed that the culture of sharing is not – here it's not there, unless you are going to a specific, say like a community centre where they give that sort of support. You cannot just walk into your neighbours and ask maybe you don't have something food wise and ask them to share with you. But back home, it doesn't matter what tribe you are, there is that love, people live together, and they even go and ask even for something like salt. You can just go to a neighbour and ask, but here you can't just get up and go to someone's house and ask for something. So, I find that back home we are more close-knit. Here, even when you are sick, you can't just walk into someone's house (DRC5 - Female).

Cora would have spoken about this while reminiscing and missing the cohesiveness back home, for as it would be, visiting a neighbour would not just necessarily be an act of borrowing salt, but with it comes building social connections which are generally important for well-being and self-care.

In sub-theme two, participants explained various cultural values in the context of Australian culture. As explained, generally, the parents come from a position of meaning well for their children, and the purpose of physical discipline of their children is not to harm them, but to support them to build virtues which will then assist them end up with bright futures. It is noted

that while physical punishment is considered a direct child protection concern, there are some cultural values that if understood by the system as in the case of respondent Bree above, would not be screened in. The final sub-theme explores further ways participants felt that their cultural values were threatened, this time focussing on men as the sub-theme explores loss of cultural status.

Sub theme 3: Loss of Cultural Status

Most African countries are characterised by patriarchal socio-cultural systems. Arriving in Australia where masculine domination over women is not enthroned and men and women are notionally viewed as equal, would have removed that sense of patriarchal status that was deemed as culturally appropriate back home. For Elvis, men being the head of the homes was the case not just in the context of South Sudan, but probably in the whole of Africa:

Elvis: Yeah. It is different because the way they living is different than us so we are living life as South Sudanese. We are living life with respectful and, you know, when you tell something and the men, people can listen to you, we don't have like here. Women can use you, can tell you whatever to do and our life, man is the man. But here it is different, it is equal. So nobody is under, nobody is bigger. In South Sudan, a man is the head of the house or maybe the whole Africa, I don't know. But a man is the head of a house but here people is equal in the houses so whatever, work even, everyone is equal. These are the different things I found in Australia and there is no difference between a man and a woman so each one is equal. And now our kids are involved, so that situation of dressing like that without respect. And you have no right to – when you

tell the kids you have to dress like this kids will say to you, no, no, I have to dress this, you have nothing. So, yeah, those are big, big challenges we are facing here for dresses (SSUD4 - Male).

For Elvis, the fact that men become powerless in the sense that women now start to belittle them, makes them have no voice and ultimately, their children are also impacted as they then begin to disrespect the men. Fathers can then no longer guide their children on matters such as relating to dressing and others. Beau in the context of The Democratic Republic of Congo discusses role reversal. Whilst traditionally, the man was the provider of the family including financial provision, in Australia, the women receive Family Tax payments into their bank accounts, hence begun to have more money than the men, something both had not experienced back home. This then reversed the source of financial provision for the family because the women then were at a better financial standi to provide for the families, which left the men with a sense of powerlessness:

Beau: OK, yeah, so the main difference is that once we arrive here the family setup is really destabilised in the sense that the children, usually it's the woman who receives the family tax benefit on behalf of the family. And you find that the difference is that the woman now assumes, it's like the woman's role and the man's roles are reversed when we arrive here. And the woman no longer respects the man because they are receiving a little more money than the woman, than the man, and the children also don't listen. And this has brought a lot of destabilisation in the African family, as we know it from Africa, because children are empowered by receiving money and this is money

that allows them to get into things like drugs, alcohol and so they feel like they know a lot more (DRC4 - Male).

Like Elvis above, Beau reiterated, that the women begun to disrespect the men, a situation that had a flow-on effect on the children, leading to destabilised families. For Adrian from Somalia, he may have received all the supports when he relocated to Australia including no more war which he undoubtedly appreciated, but he lost the one thing that was of value to him and his culture, being the breadwinner of this family:

Adrian: In fact, yes. I have got support. I have got education, but I like...but lost breadwinner status. Got support, education, financial, food is there, but lost the male role in the family, contrary to what it was in Somali. More freedom, some move out when they became adults. And no consultation with me. If one wants to marry, just find love and marriage who they want. No bed, no support. No father figure powers. But we have security, just as good. We have peace here. Yes. We have peace only. But lost all the control (SOM4 – Male).

According to Mark, Child Protection means protecting children from danger rather than giving them freedom to engage in the danger, something fathers felt they were unable to do in Australia. Mark questions if choices made by children are knowledgeable:

Mark: What is the role of the parents here? I have to protect them before they do walk into danger, I have to say “No, don’t there”. Yes. This is the work. That’s the real child

protection. Not to make a child to choose. What does child know to choose? (SSUD1 - Male).

Of note, the researcher selected only male respondents for this sub-theme given it was them who lost their cultural status. They all unequivocally stated that they lost their cultural status and blamed it on the system, enabling the women to be providers for their families, something that was not culturally appropriate for them. The men talked of flow on effect of roles reversal, leading to disrespect of the children and their women, leading to destabilised families.

Participants in Losoncz (2015) highlighted that one source of conflicts amongst the refugee families was the changing power dynamics within families, and the subsequent risk to parental authority. It would be frightening for the fathers to have that sense of losing control of their families, when it is a societal expectation that the men are in charge of their homes. This loss of control of power and status is mentioned in this thesis as yet another added stressor and level of complexity for the refugee population group, which child protection workers need to consider in their intervention work with these families.

Conclusions

The concept of child protection is new to many people from refugee backgrounds when they come to Australia. It is either not understood at all, or understood at low levels, or misunderstood. Participants included in this chapter reported challenges in understanding the different parenting practices compared to what they had at home. Pre-migration experiences and settlement in a new country had an impact on parenting practices.

This chapter found that the participants fled from their countries due to war and genocide. Refugee families fleeing war and other human rights violations from their countries are impacted by trauma and other trauma related issues. When they settle in Australia, they expect that their lives and those of their children will change for the better. Whilst they receive supports from the government and other agencies, they blame the same for the challenges they experience, such as family breakdown.

One participant highlighted that though Australia is promoted as a multicultural country, they cannot parent in a multicultural way, resulting in adverse situations such as their children running away from home and ending up on the streets. This chapter highlights differences between refugee and Australian cultural practices, which prompts statutory intervention strategies that are unexpected by the refugee families.

Gough and Lynch (2002) note that everyone thinks their culture should be the norm, and discussions around identity are normally likely to spark controversy. It then becomes challenging to provide a middle ground between absolutist concepts of child protection and cultural concepts that promote one's identity. Likewise, it also becomes challenging to identify which cultural concepts promote one's cultural identity versus those which are retrogressive.

Daliken (2021), from their study 'Child-rearing practices: cross cultural perspectives of African asylum-seeking families and child protection social workers in Ireland' noted that the child rearing practices of asylum-seeking respondents usually clash with the expectations of social workers. Issues such as slapping children, leaving children alone in the care of other minors or neighbours, parent/child eye contact, and communal parenting instead of western-oriented parenting styles. Social workers hence may find it challenging to determine whether these practices are rooted in African culture or if they indicate pathological behaviours that

violate Irish legal standards for child protection. This is due to the child protection worker's limited understanding of the traditional child rearing practices of asylum seekers.

Earner (2005) states that permanency planning and family stability policies and services need to be developed in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner, as the number of refugee families involved in child welfare agencies continues to rise. Governments need to develop policies in consideration of diverse cultural values. Refugees, more often than not, must fit in to the new culture, which is a challenge to them.

Whilst Dalikeni (2019) notes that it is widely acknowledged that the existing laws in a country are largely influenced by its social norms and cultural values, it is also noted that numerous instances have demonstrated that western cultures often clash with the lived experiences of Black African individuals. Katz (2015) further notes that migration attracts adverse media attention, pertaining to how migrants integrate into Australian society. More research is hence needed on how laws can integrate diverse cultural context particularly of migrants from war torn countries.

CHAPTER 6

UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGING WITH CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN AUSTRALIA

Introduction

In Australia, statutory child protection is the responsibility of state and territory governments. Between the years 2021 and 2022, 178,000 children under the age of 18 years were involved in the child protection system (Australia Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023). According to the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, the desired outcomes for South Australia as a state is for each child to be safe from harm, do well at all levels of learning and have skills for life, enjoy a healthy lifestyle, and to be active citizens with a voice and influence.

This second results chapter discusses the role of child protection in Australia, experiences of participants with child protection, and knowledge about child protection documents in Australia, as understood by refugees from South Sudanese, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia.

Theme 1: The Role of Child Protection in Australia

In South Australia, the Department for Child Protection primarily handles child protection documentation. As seen in the first sub-theme of the first theme in Chapter 1, participants spoke about either having no awareness of child protection laws in their home country or knowing that there are indeed no such laws. Of note, firstly, people from refugee backgrounds are usually

not familiar with child protection elements such as mandatory reporting as in their country, communities constitute informal child protection practices. Secondly, all the parents, would want their children to succeed in a new country, having fled the atrocities of their country. According to Loconcz (2015), South Sudanese parents are deeply committed to nurturing their children to grow into accountable and accomplished individuals. The first theme below explores how participants understood the role of child protection in Australia. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, between 80% to 100% across the respondents from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia believed that social workers did not understand their experiences and needs, but 11.1% to 20% believed they do understand.

Subtheme 1: Child Protection as a Threat to Families

In this first sub-theme, participants viewed child protection as a threat to their families, and in particular that they did not even understand the concept of child protection. For example, Mark, a participant from South Sudan, describes child protection as a concept that is viewed as interfering with families and being “alien”. Mark notes:

Mark: Child protection is alien to us, to the family, to the parents. It’s a sort of an interference. Ok? They are alien. Police are alien. Whoever interfere in the child bringing up is an alien and the children are making use of this to get to do silly things. Why? They have intruded on the tranquillity of the family. I call it tranquillity because it doesn’t mean that we don’t quarrel, we don’t misunderstand ourselves, but if somebody outside, intruder come in and say, “Do this, go to court, call the police, do this.” And small things that could be resolved at the level of the family. (SSUD1 – Male).

Mark went on to share how his own family fell apart after child protection involvement. The children were left with their mother who was uneducated and could not manage expending what would be considered as routine tasks like homework with them. Mark hence blames the system for family breakdown, noting that some issues are trivial enough to be resolved within the family as it was successfully done back home, but due to interference from systems, the issues become reportable. Further to this, another participant from South Sudan, John, views child protection as a threat to his family by explaining that the social workers only have their training which is good, but lack the lived cultural experience, a situation which in turn contributes to misinformed decision making.

John: There is no one person who can just walk into a different culture with the anticipation that they understand that culture. No. It has to be a research based. I mean especially for a professional person. Let me just assume that there is an issue between me and my kids. And I have a social worker from the child protection coming into my house. Now, what they bring to my house into the discussion is what they have been trained on. But that will be absent of, you know, there will be absence of the culture where I was raised from. And how, you know, how did they actually make a decision to do what I do based on where I came from or the culture that I belong to. Or, you know, the system that I understood. And as even we talk, there will be a lot of misunderstanding happening between us. (SSUD5 – Male).

John notes the discord that exists between practice and culture, particularly with limited understanding of the root cause of the issues. Further, John notes that it is difficult for social workers to understand their challenges because they are not enlightened on their cultures, but enlightenment would facilitate consensus between the workers and the families. Similarly, Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo notes that the workers, who are mostly Caucasian, can only know as much information as they are provided, but still sometimes even when provided the information, they still do not understand the participant's cultural situations. Cora hence views child protection as a threat in that they make decisions which are not culturally sensitive. Cora states:

Cora: Our cultures are different. You see, they do not have – usually we meet with the Caucasians, not Africans. Caucasians do not have knowledge of our Culture. We are the only ones who know our culture in-depth. They can't know. It's only what they have read, but us we know. Unless you are teaching them, they wouldn't know. They cannot relate culturally. It's only what you explain to them or what they have read, but we know, ourselves, we know because we know how we do things amongst ourselves. But now, for them, even explaining, they may not quite get it. You see, the help you get would depend on – you notice that if this person knew the culture, cultural meaning or whatever, the culture behind it, they would have – they want to help but they are limited (DRC5 – Female).

Cora introduces the concept of the client as the expert by explaining that unless the participants themselves teach the workers, the (Caucasian) workers would not know the culture and way of

life of the participants. This in turn impacts negatively on the much-needed targeted interventions and supports. In the same light of understanding culture, Max from Somalia corroborates this information, noting that it is appropriate to have someone from their respective cultures working with their families. Max states:

Max: The social or the childcare workers to be included from each community. The workers, there should be a Somali worker. If there is, if they are going to Somali family, there should be a Somali worker who's going with them. And interpreting and, you know, understand their culture, you know. Someone who understands their culture must be included in that team. Whether it's Somali or South Sudan. Or any other community. Yeah (SOM1 – Male).

In addition, in viewing the lack of cultural accord as a threat, participants also shared that they felt threatened by the fact that child protection workers did not acknowledge their strengths of parenting in war and managing to keep their children safe by “running” with their children. Participants explained that this complex trauma has impacted on their mental wellbeing. Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo discusses how he has developed mental health issues as a result of a system which does not acknowledge his parenting skills back home where he had complex humanitarian challenges yet managed to keep his children alive and safe. Sam narrates:

Sam: You see, again, we came from war-torn countries and actually the war is what brought us. That's the reason we left our countries. War has had a great psychological

impact on us. In fact, we left a lot behind, including work. Because of war. By the time you are leaving home, already, you are not mentally stable. Then you come here, and you are for example, faced with other challenges like issues with children. Your brain and psychological state continues to further be impacted negatively. You know how you left home, how you took care of your children, you ran with your children. You did not abandon them. And you reached here with your children. But when you come here, you then end up with issues with them, through the system. Do you think your mental wellbeing will be okay? It cannot be! It is very easy to get mental health issues. And that is why many people here are in a state of confusion, loss of memory and mental health issues. And people are not coming out to highlight these issues. These things cause premature deaths (DRC3 – Male).

As we can see in this theme, then, there are many ways in which participants felt threatened by child protection systems. Some felt directly threatened in terms of statutory bodies inserting themselves into their lives. Other participants felt that the lack of cultural accord constituted a threat to their families. And yet other participants felt that, in not understanding the trauma they had experience, child protection workers constituted a further threat to the mental health of participants.

Subtheme 2: Child Protection Systems as Requiring Compliance

In this second sub-theme, a small number of participants spoke about having no voice in issues relating to child protection and being made to comply with the views held by child protection systems in Australia. Ezra from The Democratic Republic of Kenya stated:

Ezra: So, yes, you see, there's different cultures, and what I've found is that if the social worker is from Congo for example or is from Africa, (CALD), they are culturally aware, and linguistically diverse. That social worker will have a better understanding because, first of all, they have the experience of back home and here and secondly, they understand our parenting styles. But, if they're not from our background and they are not CALD, even if you tell them this is how we live in Africa, the advice that would be given by that social worker will be – for instance, they'll say that we should agree with what they are saying (DRC1 – Male).

From Ezra's narration, there is limited room for negotiation, and not agreeing with what is being said is constituted as non-compliance which can lead to dire consequences. According to Sofia from The Democratic Republic of Congo, they prefer to follow their religion silently rather than comply with child protection. This is again because there is little or no room for negotiation. According to Sofia, their religion provides room for disciplining a child, "Spare the rod spoil the child" however, if they tell the social worker they will be in trouble, so they chose to appear to comply rather than explain to the social workers their religious point of view. Sofia states:

Sofia: About privacy, which I want to talk about is that when we give some warning how a child behave, how a child can behave properly, it is the matter of saying, Ok, in our culture we like our children to obey us. To respect the elders. To just listen to their teacher. Like that. But a social worker – one social worker can come and say, oh, you

know, the school – a child have been fighting, and then you need to teach him at home. But for me, I can say, this child know in his mind that it is an offence to disobey the rules of the school, the rules of parent, the rules of elders. Even because for us, as people who went – Christians, Christianity, we do even follow the bible rules than the government rules. Because when a child is doing mistake, you can give at least one slap. Yeah, and then when you tell a social worker, that can be a big record which is bad. That's the privacy which I was talking about. Not do it, because now you are in front of a social worker, you need to hide (DRC9 – Female).

Sofia highlights a preference to comply with their religion but do so in hiding such that child protection workers are unaware of the discipline as described in the Bible. A participant from South Sudan, Moses, views compliance as being incapacitated from any form of making a child engage in what they do not want to engage in, as that could otherwise result into a serious situation such as conflict between the children and their parents, with the parents saying one thing and child protection providing a conflicting view to the parent's. Moses states:

Moses: If child is not doing homework or the child can decide not to go to school and say that “I don't want to study.” There's nothing you can do about it because if you force that child, the system says the child has a right to say, “I don't want to do this.” (SSD5 – Male).

Di from South Sudan brings about the concept that compliance is not just for the parents to the child protection system, but also parents complying to the children because the children have

now come to learn what they can get away with as it is viewed as being acceptable by the child protection system. Di notes:

Di: Some of the parents really, they've never been in school; they've never been in school, and their kids have been here in school. Whatever, when you talk to your kids they will say like "Oh, she doesn't know anythings." But the mums, maybe she get it right somewhere (SSUD6 – Female).

Di highlights a level of literacy discord between some parents and the children, and describes that due to that, some children start to look down upon their parents, a situation which was unheard of back at home, particularly to the fathers who in their cultures, are the heads of their homes. Further to the children looking down upon their parents, Alice from Somalia highlights another way in which parents are forced to comply with child protection. Alice notes that children sometimes lie because they want to get out of home, yet their word is considered over the word of the parents. Alice explains:

Alice: And having a kid, especially here in this country, is not easy for us. Back in our country it was easy but here it's not easy because of the ways they are being taught, kids themselves, you know. Like, our background is you can't talk back, you are supposed to do as you are told to do, don't do this, this is bad for you, please do this. The kid wants what you already stopped him from. You tell him this and he tells you this. So he tells you, "I want to do this.". OK. This is not good for you and this is going to take you to a bad place. Please don't do it. Even in religious. In our country, a

religious thing we don't use many things. But here the kids are free, they can do whatever they want. Even if you tell them no they won't listen to you. We have to do it, we have to do it. And in child protection all I've heard is that they usually come in after the investigation has gone through, and they find and then – you know the thing that makes us feel even bad is that your kids being taken away from you because of something that you have done. Even the kids, they lie because of the rights that they've already been told. They want to get out of this place. They lie but they don't know that these kids are lying. Whatever the kids say is true, whatever the parents say is a lie. You see, and that's very bad (SOM6 – Female).

Alice highlights that back home, situations of children back chatting their parents were not common, and the parents are left feeling bad about child protection preferring to listen to their children who could be lying, vis-a vis the parents who are not lying. Participant Adrian from Somalia explains compliance in that parents end up having no influence on upbringing of the developing child. Adrian notes:

Adrian: If you cannot guide a kid to regularly attend school so they can develop educationally, then what are you contributing to the country? He will be useless as an adult. You want him to be helpful to himself, to the country, to society. Disempowered parent, you have no influence on the child's development (SOM4 – Male).

The participants highlight that following compliance to the system, they have no voice to bring up their children in a culturally appropriate manner, leading to discord with their children and

worst-case scenarios where children are removed from them if they do not comply. They then have only one option, to comply (or appear to comply), just so they are not in trouble, which leads them to be devastated. This is an example of power imbalance, where families feel that they have no voice.

According to Losoncz (2013), participants who were involved in a study, for the most part, refused to acknowledge the authorities' pragmatic, moral, and cognitive legitimacy. Instead of expressing their opposition, they submitted to the authority's power without aligning themselves with the goals or objectives set by the authorities. Tyler (2008 cited by Losoncz 2013) states that the utilisation of power by institutions to establish control over individuals can be expensive, as well as ineffective. Rather, gaining their cooperation and voluntary compliance is a more efficient approach to influencing people's behaviour.

Losoncz (2015), (cited Braithwaite's 1995 study) which states that adherence to the law is more likely when there is mutual identification of shared goals and trust between clients and workers. The opposite applies. When clients oppose the objectives of the authority and perceive the worker as untrustworthy, non-compliance occurs. Hence, for co-operation and compliance to occur, effective communication and trust needs to occur, so that it can foster a shared understanding and goodwill.

The next sub theme will explore how the families have felt that the system does not care about the challenges they are facing.

Subtheme 3: Child Protection Systems as Not Caring About Families

In this third sub-theme, participants spoke about child protection systems as not being supportive of their families as seen in situations like not exploring enough options before

removing their children. Participants expressed that they were unsure what information their children were provided when they are taken by child protection and if the information was culturally appropriate. For example, Mel from South Sudan, notes that:

Mel: With our way as a parents is not work. Because we don't know what they are putting in the children's head when they took the kids from parents. And then how the parent will feel if the child protection take the child out from parents. This is number one. Number two, how the child will feel if it been taken away from parents. Why the protection people sit first with parents to find out what is wrong? Because I heard a lot child protection come and then take the children from parents. And parents, sometimes there will be – I don't know the Australian people but most of people – because maybe the child will call police and say, ooh parents been do this to me like this, this. But in us, actually we need to discipline him or her (SSUD8 – Female).

Mel has heard about children being taken away. Hearsay is an easy way to spread information in the communities, hence the importance of child protection sitting with communities and clearing any false information. Rowan from The Democratic Republic of Congo highlights the issue of living in two cultures, and that child protection system does not understand this dynamic.

Rowan: You are living two cultures of here, and home. So the children get mixed up and confused and they start to fear, if I do this at home, my father will be upset, and if I do this at school, my teacher will be upset. Sometimes, the children cry because they

do not know which culture to follow. But we pray to God and say, please God, lead us, by thy grace. If God listens to you by grace, then you are lucky. So, you see when we came here as refugees, they told us not to forget our culture, but then again, coming here, when you use your culture, it brings a problem. You find their culture is superior to our African one. So we feel like they lied to us – here, our culture is inferior to the Australian one and secondly, it is limited by the Laws of here. They should respect our culture as they learn about it slowly. That is why you see us, we are just quiet, but inside our hearts, we are really hurting (DRC2 – Male).

According to Rowan, the families are hurting because of feeling not listened to. They then turn to their religious beliefs which gives them something to look forward to. Similarly, Bree from Somalia shares Rowan's sentiments and goes further to explain how child protection is more like a job, and does not care to understand, or put into consideration the communities' religious beliefs.

Bree: No, they don't understand. Because when they get in the job, they have to sign like what they call – like they have to report everything. They don't care about the culture, if you are Christian or you are Muslim. They don't care. They have to report everything you did. Like Muslim households, like if the dad comes home and the kids they are there and they're not doing anything, and they're playing, the dad can say like “why are you playing? Why don't you read your book or your Qur'an?” And if Child Protection is there, he or she will say “oh, there's abuse in this house because the kids don't have free time to do whatever they want (SOM7 – Female).

Another participant, Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo reiterates Bree's narration above. Sam views child protection as not caring and to him, it is also only a business, which at the end of its involvement, has resulted into his children "hating" him more. Sam explains:

Sam: I can say that the child protection here is more like a business. The intention of the motive should be to help, but I find that it's just like work or a business because I don't see them helping much in that. It is as if they like children being in the system purposely, so that they can have jobs. It is not like they have it to help people. They use it for their own business. Because the aim of something should be to help. I will give you my personal experience. I had an issue with my wife. That issue did not directly involve the children. However, when we went to court, a lawyer was involved and I wondered why the lawyer had been employed because I had no problem with my children. I started to wonder what he was telling or asking them, because those are my children, and I don't have any problem with them. For the Lawyer to come to start defending my children and I don't know what questions he was asking them. Because he was going into a room to talk with them. I didn't know what he was telling my children. I have come to learn that my children now hate me more when they started talking to the lawyer. I would imagine he ask them. "Does your dad beat you here and in Congo?" And when they say no, you know, in all the discussion, you start to give them ideas of things they did not have in mind and a reason to hate me (DRC3 – Male).

For participants included in this theme, rather than statutory bodies being seen as caring and working with families to ensure the wellbeing of all, they were instead seen as uncaring, according little values to the cultural values of families.

Theme 2: Experiences With Child Protection Systems in Australia

This second theme explores participant's experiences with child protection in their new country. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, very few participants across the three home countries discussed that they had personal experiences with child protection. Guilt and shame could have been one of the reasons did not disclose that they had experienced child protection concerns, however some participants were willing to provide responses relating to what they have observed happening to their families or community members. The responses they provided were quite similar and most highlighted child protection issues as being caused by a different culture, in a new country. For those with lived experience with child protection, it was difficult for them to talk about it during the interview, with the researcher observing them to be emotional, appear bitter, and having a sense of hopelessness and regret as to why there had to flee war in their country that forced them to migrate to Australia.

Subtheme 1: Perceptions about Removal as Experienced by Themselves Or Others

Parents mostly feel guilt and shame when children are removed from them. Families experience stigma and are viewed as incapable of managing this task. In this first sub-theme, participants spoke about how their community members experienced child protection. Two participants also spoke about their own experiences. For example, Hope, a participant from Somalia, notes

that the school believed the child totally and did not accord her a hearing. Hope, via an interpreter, highlights that even after all that, the child returned home by herself:

Hope: She says before she came, she had her daughter, and her daughter was in Woodville High School and she had issues with her mum. She went to the school and she is saying something. And then rather than calling the mum and asking her if whatever she's saying is true or not, they straight away took the girl somewhere else, that the mum couldn't even know where they took her to. She said she went to the school asking – I sent my kid to school; what happened? And nobody wanted to say anything to her. So – They said she's in safe hands. The Principal there said “she's in safe hands. If you don't leave here, we're going to call the police on you”. She said she didn't know what to tell them. Because she didn't know the language. She didn't know the language and didn't know the next steps she can take. She wanted to go further with it because they took the kid and they never told her where she is. She got a heart problem because of that. She was thinking a lot that she even got sick. She said Centrelink helped her to communicate with her daughter. Centrelink very good, yeah. She said they asked the daughter how many kids that your mum has? She said six. And she said “all the other kids are with your mum. How come you're the only one saying these problems?” Let them know what I have done. Because they don't know what's going on. It's just the only thing that the girl told. They never brought her back. She came back by herself. One of the Centrelink staff was talking to the kid very nicely and explaining to her that – about her family and about the life with family. And she said she picked up some of that and she just came back by herself (SOM10 - Female).

According to Hope, an added layer of complexity was that she was not able to speak English. No one at school was willing to speak with her and she was informed the police would attend if she did not leave. This issue later resulted in health problems for her. Hope however was in luck with Centrelink who were able to connect her to speak with her daughter. Another participant Adrian from Somalia shared that his children who were left in his care have excelled academically, whilst those who were removed by child protection have had poor outcomes. Adrian stated:

Adrian: Child protection came and took my children from home. They were bright girls. They were really – they were scoring well. Their grades were good at school. They had a good future if they remained under my care. And they will have the potential to obtain PhD if they continue to access parent’s support. And I love them, but freedom – going into freedom, to party. They would help Australia if they became successful, but they were given freedom to abandon what’s best for them in terms of continued education. The government, the Centrelink, and a special or social worker call me. They interviewed me. They asked me about the girls so they understand why they want to leave home. I have to compromise on my cultural principles to avoid getting into problem with the government. I ask them two things. If you are not bringing back my kids. They never had any problem in my house. They are my kids. I love them. I’m protecting them. If you are not bringing them back, keep them, but promise me two things. Make sure they don’t stop going to school and their safety; promise me these two things. The two promise were broken ha ha!. And now the situation is so bad that

members of the community insulting me, saying we saw his daughter in a club, we saw his daughter half-naked, being doing nasty things in a nightclub, everything. So because the kids were removed to freedom to do what they want; and education and safety out of the window. But the other kids who they left at home, some are making it forward to get PhD, some finish masters, some have finished their bachelor's degree. They are better, those who remain in my care. (SOM4 - Male).

Adrian confesses that he has seen the difference between the children who were removed and those left in his care. He laughed bitterly when he spoke of the only two things he requested for from child protection when they removed his children, were not fulfilled; safety of the children and education. Beau from The Democratic Republic of Congo corroborates with Adrian stating that the children from his community who are involved in child protection turn out to be worse off. Beau narrates:

Beau: I have not been involved but when you meet children who have been taken away, but where they take the children, that is when they get spoilt. Yeah, those who are taken they only got worse. They've become useless or so to speak, some are involved, most are involved in drugs (DRC4 - Male).

Whilst Hope from Somalia stated above that she developed health problems upon removal of the children, participant Adrian from Somalia stated how he was ridiculed by the community for his children's behaviours. As explored in the previous chapter, the fathers are the heads of their homes and when a head gets ridiculed by the community, this would have great negative

impact on his self-esteem, causing him to further isolate, keeping away from the community. This is a rippling effect. Worst case scenario on the impact of removal of children by child protection is death as narrated by Alice from South Sudan:

Alice: Yeah, for example, I can't mention the name, but I can mention one of my community family, the husband and wife, they came here, and the husband had problem with the wife. And then the Child Protection came in and said they are not the good carers. They took children away. So the mother become lonely, the husband left her, and the Child Protection took away all the kids, the mother become lonely, until she involved herself drinking. She drinking very badly until she died. You see? The children are remain in Child Protection place. And the husband went and married another woman. Who is the victim now, is the woman who died. And it is because of Child Protection. They should find another way of protecting kid, and instead of taking them away from the parents (SSUD7 – Female).

Participant Mia from The Democratic Republic of Congo explained a community member's experience:

Mia: I have not had involvement with child protection. But I have some information about someone's child who was taken, the child was small, less than 6 years old. She went to school with scratches. The teachers said the child was hurt by the parents. They asked the child did your parents hurt you, she said yes. When the mother went to school to pick the child with two other children, she was told, she cannot take the child as it

appears she could not take care of her children so they took the child she had come to pick up, plus the two she had come with. She was asked if she had a relative who could take the children. They took the contact of her brother. They asked the brother to stay with the children for 1, 2 or 3 weeks and the mother of the children should not have access with them because she does not know how to take care of her children well. This really hurt the family. They took a 2 year old, 3 year old and 5 year old. But, one think I am grateful to Child Protection for is that they kept following up with the brother who took the children, about the mother's behaviour. And because they are one family and they know her well, the brother advised she loves her children so much, she takes good care of her children and has no husband. This is why I thank CP for, because they listened to the brother, and they returned all her children after 3 weeks. They told her, come take your children, it was based on wrong information, and take good care of your children (DRC6 - Female).

Mia explained that not only was the child in question taken from the mother at school pick up, but also the other biological children who had accompanied her to school pick up. Investigation was done on this case, and it was found that this was false information, and the children were returned to their mother. The impact of this would have shaken not just this family but the community at large, leaving most people fearful of child protection. Further to the issue of misleading information, Alice from Somali explains that children are listened to much more than their parents as they have a lot of rights and sometimes, they are not telling the truth. Alice narrates the situation from her community:

Alice: And in child protection all I've heard is that they usually come in after the investigation has gone through, and they find and then – you know the thing that makes us feel even bad is that your kids being taken away from you because of something that you have done. Even the kids, they lie because of the rights that they've already been told. They want to get out of this place. They lie but they don't know that these kids are lying. Whatever the kids say is true, whatever the parents say is a lie. You see, and that's very bad (SOM6 - Female).

As Alice notes, such situations where children are believed in toto and without listening to the parent's views, are “very bad” and child protection leaves the community with a bad taste.

Participant Mark from South Sudan places emphasis on the most suitable process for deciding who to foster children when they are removed. Mark narrates the situation of his community member:

Mark: Of course, what I have seen, I've seen two things: one, from a guy called X. X married from Kenya. He married from Turkana lady, and she had children with him. And what had happened, because of misunderstanding, they separated. The children were taken. The child foster, or something like that. And you know, somebody call – yes, the children were taken away from them because that lady used to drink and the man who married her was kept away and of course the children remained with the wife, with the woman, with the mother, and then mother became a drunkard and the children were taken away from her, too. And what happened, there were – child protection took them, and child protection went and gave the children to a white man. White Australian.

This white Australian, they were not here. They were living outside Adelaide. They were taken outside and then far from the community. Far from the community, which is a big mistake which should actually not happen. The man was not allowed to see his kids, Ok. Even kids they call him uncle. They don't know him, ok? Because of child protection. This is what I have seen here in South Australia. So, this what I have seen. You know, it's what I have seen. How damage was the child protection in South Australia. First of all, children should not be fostered by an alien person out of the community. It should be, if anything happened, the parents become irresponsible, they should find someone in the community where these children belong, to foster them. They should have a say. They should have a say who will – or the community would say if the parents are – if they have any reason for not to say anything, the community should have a say. On who should foster the children (SSUD1 – Male).

Mark discusses who should be foster parents of children from their communities, discussing if parents are not able to decide regarding who can foster, community should be given an opportunity to suggest where the children should go. This is an invaluable suggestion, as research has shown that children thrive when they are within safe family and community. The second subtheme below explains the impact of removal of children on the participants' cultures.

Subtheme 2: Removal as Disrespectful to Cultural Values

In this second sub-theme, participants highlighted child protection systems as not only being unhelpful, but also introducing them to situations that they have never experienced in their

own home cultures. Participants discussed some examples which they found disrespectful to their culture. For example, Bree from Somalia notes that:

Bree: No, child protection was not helpful. Like the story I was telling you about. Like if somebody can report you and Child Protection can come and try to take your kids, it's not helpful. Yeah. The neighbour stopped them and the other witnesses who know the woman, how she was dealing with her kids. But they came straight away and started asking the kids some many questions. Not helpful. Because maybe the mum, she will become stressed. She will say OK, maybe my kids are going. Why do they ask my kids so many questions? You know, you will suspect. And we are African. We didn't experience all this. Like another person cannot just come in your house and start asking your kids. It's not what I've ever seen (SOM7 – Female).

From Bree's discussion, child protection systems raise mistrust with the refugee community, and they also feel disrespected, for example when people enter their homes and start to interrogate their children. To them, they have not experienced this, and it is a strange concept which they struggle to comprehend. In the previous chapter, it was clear that the fathers are the heads of the homes and for someone to come and start interviewing the children strips them off their leadership and cultural expectations and rips them of their status and respect. It is no wonder that the children hence begin to disrespect their parents. Jonas from South Sudan discusses the issue of cultural influence on parenting which child protection systems do not understand, as it narrows intervention to particular incidents and does not consider the broader

perspective. Jonas states regarding his fellow community member whose child was removed from the parent's care:

Jonas: She couldn't speak about her culture, you know, in expressive way, like directly. But I knew all the opinions because I'm from the same culture. Everything that she was saying was actually, you know, influenced by her culture. And the other party did not understand that. So, everything that she was speaking about, if you are from her culture, you would understand exactly what she's talking about. But the other group was not. They were just so concerned about what happened for this particular child at a particular time. Yeah, but I think speaking about ... you know, child protection, it's broad. It's not just about a child, you know, facing a problem and we're solving it (SSUD5 – Male).

While Jonas highlights that the two parties are not on the same page due to cultural barriers, Mel, a participant from South Sudan, discusses that to her, the most appropriate support is for a child protection worker to attend and stay in the home, so the children continue to receive cultural guidance from the parents whilst the worker is in the home. Mel states:

Mel: And their support really, wait a minute. Even this thing, they're supporting more thing to be conflicts a lot. But if they want to solve the problem, I suppose they will talk with parents and at the same time bring somebody to look after these children at home there rather than go somewhere. Because when the child goes separate with the

parents, will be very hard when he come back, will not understand you at all because he already gets something different there (SSUD8 – Female).

Whilst child protection workers often focus on a particular incident, Mel introduces the idea of how it looks like when the children return home, discussing how they are unable to fit back into the family that has taught them their way of life, which eventually brings further discord within the home. Ezra from The Democratic Republic of Congo blames the government for being over-caring for the children and leaving the parents to deal with the repercussions. Ezra states:

Ezra: So, you see, we love our children, and the Government teaches us to take care of them, which is OK, but the problem is that the Government takes too much care of our children and hence spoils them. With us birth parents, we lead them and guide them what is wrong and what is right, but the government tells them if you are mistreated, then we will give you money, we will give you a house. The children know that if they are taken by child protection they will be given all these things. And we feel, as parents, that the power is taken away from us when a child can tell you that, 'I'll call the police for you.' And the thing is, they also give them money, so you see there is also a chance that if the child is taken away, they will be put in a central or common home. So, this makes the children not to listen to us as parents. And all these things, they are urged by their Caucasian friends. They tell them 'Annoy your parents so that they can hate you and after that, child protection will come for you'. Yeah that, you see, if a child feels that they've – decides to leave home, they would be put in a central or a common home

by child protection, whereby – so that makes the children not listen to us because they can call the police, or they know there is the backing of the child protection. And some friends actually tell our children or advise our children to try and push their boundaries at home, just so that they can be kicked out and be on their own. (DRC1 – Male).

The norm in African cultures is that one does not go against their parent's advice. Having child protection working with refugee families around this would have substantial outcomes where child protection would then plan around what it is in beliefs that has impact on child protection outcomes. Participant Elvis from South Sudan explains that they had a happy life back home and arrived in Australia as adults, hence it is difficult to learn a new culture in an instant. Elvis explains:

Elvis: Because for this situation is going like that because when we came to Australia and the life, we enjoyed some other life, we don't have it before in our life. We come here adult; we do not come here as a younger. We come here adults so it's hard for us to get someone's, cultures straightaway and to put in your life. So, you must work with our culture and to give it to them to know that our culture as well, what it is our culture! You know. To give them – because they can work with our culture as well. Those people, their culture is that, is that, is that, one, two, three, one, two, three, you know (SSUD4 – Male).

According to Elvis, it is disrespectful to their culture when the system is not willing to consider their culture or at least reach an agreement.

Subtheme 3: Positive Outcomes of Child Protection Engagement

As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, while a larger percentage across the three countries talked of the negative impact of child protection, there was a small percentage which indicated that there are some positive outcomes. Hence in this third sub-theme, participants spoke about the positive impact of child protection. For participants from The Democratic Republic of Congo in particular, it was noted that child protection could be viewed as a support for the parents when children's behaviour becomes unmanageable, as described by Clara below:

Clara: Well, I say, yeah, I heard a little bit of that, but I didn't really stay longer on that Child Protection. I, one side I can say, yes, it's helping because sometimes the children's behaviour is becoming very bad and they don't really listen to their parents anymore. They just walk around the road. They don't, because even you can see some of them smoke drugs everywhere. Then the parents they can't really control them, that way they can support when they go there, they're helping them is good, Child Protection that way is very good. But for, yeah, that way is good because they put them one place so they can look after them and they will assist them for, they keep them safe, you know? (DRC11 – Female).

Clara however appears to have mixed feelings as she describes that overall, it is better for the children to be within family and receive parental guidance. Clara also describes positive outcomes for these particular children who were prior involved in child protection, explaining that they are now adults and are working. According to Nelly from The Democratic Republic of Congo, child protection did a good thing when a community member's child was removed

from her parents as the mother was an alcoholic and therefore neglecting her child. Nelly stated:

Nelly: There are many whose children are removed from their care. There is one lady I heard of, who is originally from Burundi. That lady is alcoholic and forgets that she has a family to care for. She used to take alcohol until she would forget herself. We heard that all her children were removed from her. She was paying mortgage, but the government took all her children. But surely, the children were being poorly taken care of. Like they were in Africa. If you meet her and ask her, how are the children, she says they are well. But she still takes alcohol and she could no longer finance the mortgage, so she ended up selling the house. Her life was ruined because she loved worldly things to the extent that she forgot to care for her children. They (Social Workers) are guided by the Law to take the children away because the children were being poorly cared for at home. The home environment of the children was also poor. they had a right to take the children. Everybody saw that the children needed to be helped (DRC8 – Female).

Nelly acknowledges child protection concerns and has awareness that child abuse and neglect should not be condoned. Nelly also acknowledges that there is law in place to take care of children whose home environment is wanting. We see from Nelly's explanation that in their community, protecting children is everyone's business and so everyone could see that the children were being neglected. Similarly, Hope from Somalia acknowledges that children subject to child protection concerns are better off removed from their parents. Hope narrates:

Hope: She said all I know about child protection is that if you neglect your kids, if you don't take care of them as you're supposed to, if you beat them up – not smacking, but beating them up – and become a parent who is addicted or is an alcoholic, or you know, things like that – if you are a careless parent who doesn't care about her kids, not clean enough to hygienically clean and just all those things make them take your kids away from you (SOM10 – Female).

For participants in this sub-theme, they were able to identify the various child protection concerns that warrant address. It is interesting to note the paradigm shift, that when the participants shift focus from cultural values or religious beliefs, they begin to see the positive impact of child protection. The next theme explores how much knowledge participants had about child protection documents in Australia, and how the information was helpful or not, for their parenting.

Theme 3: Knowledge of Child Protection Documents in Australia

This third theme explores how much child protection orientation participants were provided, how much child protection information and knowledge participants had, and how they worked with that information on arrival in Australia. It is important to note that factors such as language barriers contributed to involvement in child protection. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, while a larger percentage across the three countries talked of not having been provided with awareness or information on child protection, there was a small percentage which indicated that some information was provided to them.

Subtheme 1: Fears of Removal Due to Having No Information

In this first subtheme, participants discussed how having limited information on child protection caused them fear and anxiety of their children being removed. Ezra from The Democratic Republic of Congo discussed that some people in the community are illiterate and therefore they are unable to understand information written in English and more so, information on child protection. Ezra explains that some of his community members cannot follow basic concepts on the news, and so it is unlikely that they would understand child protection concept, which makes them fearful. Ezra explains:

Ezra: Alright, and so there's a lot of lack of information for most people because not everyone is literate. Back home, most people did not attend formal education. So, a lot of refugees are actually not literate, and some will just see images on TV, for instance, even if they're watching TV, they might see someone running, and then they say, 'oh see that white person is running' that is all they can see, but they do not understand what is being said. If they see someone crying, they will say, 'oh see that white person is crying', but they don't understand the message behind it. Therefore, for our people, education and awareness, are a must. Then people will learn how others live here, otherwise we feel we are being pushed. This will also help us understand, when it's being taught gently, people are willing to listen and to learn, as opposed to when there is aggression, because that causes internal conflict. If a child expresses they want to leave home, they should not quickly receive the child. Questions should be asked, why does the child want to leave? Have there been discussions with the parent? Hold family meetings. Talk. The child may also give their own arguments as to why they want to

leave. Maybe they want to be responsible. They can say they will come back and visit the parents. And we, as the parents, too, can go and see the child. That's not a problem. This is when things have been done in the right manner, because then if it's done well, the connection is still maintained and if the child ever gets a problem, they know they can always return (DRC1 – Male).

Respondent Hope from Somalia describes that it is not just her who fears the “name” child protection, but the entire community. Hope explains that child protection causes fear to the families even when they know that they are not doing anything wrong. To Hope, child protection can come into their homes anytime and take their children. Hope explains:

Hope: We are even scared of that name. All people in our community, whenever they hear that name, they're very scared. Even though they didn't do anything (SOM10 – Female).

Further to Hope's discussion, Andrew from South Sudan suggests there is fear of removal because the community does not know the role of child protection, and that child protection only appears when things have gone bad. It is Andrew's suggestion that child protection would be helpful as proactive rather than reactive in ways such as providing supports to families that will keep them away from the system. Andrew states:

Andrew: I think nobody's aware about the Child Protection, really, unless the crisis came. Because without a crisis no one is aware about the role of Child Protection. They

come after the crisis, this is when they come. But before the crisis, you don't know who are they, what's the role of Child Protection, you just heard, there's a Child Protection. And then, if a crisis happened to that particular family, this is where they will take them. Only when, you are in crisis. So you don't understand. Why can't they act before the crisis? They should have the support, for example, what I told you, they should actually support the parent, paying some sport fee, paying some uniform, some other things for the family to do (SSUD2 – Male).

Similarly, Fin from Somalia explains that even though she only watches child protection on the television, she is still afraid of them. Fin however explained that, due to a language barrier, she does not fully understand what is discussed on the news about child protection. Fin explains:

Fin: No. I don't know. Just listen news. Listen news. Up to now, no. Nobody – I don't like them to hear about me. I'm scared, you know? If you hear it, child protection! Ah! will take my child? (SOM9 – Female).

From Fin's response, families like these have very limited information and understanding of child protection and they are unlikely to seek access to support services when they need to. They would then prefer to remain silent rather than coming out in the open and exposing themselves to needing services and landing at the feet of child protection. Respondent Di from South Sudan confirmed that except from the researcher, Di has not had child protection speak

with her to show her anything on child protection for the 16 years she has been residing in Australia. Di stated:

Di: Yeah, to be honest with you maybe you're the first lady to come out and chat with us. Normally we just heard the kids been taken away; the kids been taken away from the parents. But we did not have any workshop come our community before I got married. And I've been here for more than 16 years. So, I never heard this. Then one day even I was single or married I will go down there to listen. So we never heard that. Yeah (SSUD6 – Female).

Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo is fearful of child protection, because to him, child protection acts like “a spy”, takes away children from their families, without considering that it is them who have failed to provide information to the parents which is invaluable for keeping the children at home. Sam echoes the sentiments of Bree from Somalia regarding viewing child protection as a job rather than an organisation that cares for children. Sam explains:

Sam: They need to do more seminars within the community and hold conferences. Personally, I am a leader of the Congolese community and I have never seen workers from child protection coming to give seminars to us regarding child protection. That is their work, to identify communities, and come out to the community, it's their duty. It is not our duty to plead with them, it is their work, because they are funded by the government to do that. Not act by taking children away where they have heard that there

is a problem. That is not work! that is business. To me, I take that as a business. Work is where I come to the community and say we want to teach. We have youth. They come to the community and say we want to teach you child protection. They start with parents, and then go to children also to teach the children. But this does not happen. Them, their work is to use certain people in the community who tell them, 'This particular family has issues with their children', and they go, incite that child and remove the child immediately, the child is given education, the child leaves the family, and goes. We know that politics of theirs! We know it! We know what they are doing! And that is not good. It is like they have come to the communities as spies. That is not good! They need to change the way they work. They need to completely change and not work that way. I have never seen them come to us. I have not seen them in the two years that I have been the leader of Congolese community, I do not know where they are. For me I just hear, child protection, that is all. But whenever I hear there is a problem with a family and a child, they come and take the child and get housing that money, they start using. What kind of business is this? That is breaking families!! (DRC3 – Male).

The second sub-theme explores participants' narrations on how for some they had received information, however it was typically minimal. It was difficult for participants to make informed decisions using the minimal information provided.

Subtheme 2: Minimal Information Provision

In this second sub-theme, some participants highlighted that they had some level of information provided to them, either in Australia or back home. Participant Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo explains that the statutory body had meetings with them but goes on to state that these meetings however, should have included children. Cora narrates:

Cora: Yes, through [statutory body] they would call us for aaa...like a seminar and talk to us that this is how you – what you do and what you don't do. And if you are doing things differently back home, then you don't do them here. They would call whoever is having an issue. So, if it's the father or the mother they would call you and talk to you. I would recommend that child protection also has sessions with the children, because children are also being difficult to the parents. Including education. Because if the government is strict on the children or emphasises on the children or approaches this issue from the child perspective, then the children will behave better (DRC5 – Female).

From Cora's discussion, it appears that the statutory body would only contact them when there were concerns in the families. This corroborates the narration from participant Andrew from South Sudan in sub-theme one above, who suggests that child protection needs to be more proactive than reactive. Adrian from Somali also shared how child protection workers took away his children, yet they had only provided little information at orientation about child protection. It would be presumed that orientation would have covered a lot of things about Australian culture and way of life, without perhaps gearing it to explaining child protection in

detail. From this, we gather that Adrian had some level of information provided to him. Adrian narrates:

Adrian: No. I experience it practically, because everything related to child protection was done to me. But I – no one told me, no paperwork, never, but they practice on me. There was some aspect of the orientation that spoke about what amounts of child protection, but that's not enough (SOM4 – Male).

On the other hand, participant Maddy from The Democratic Republic of Congo describes that she was provided information, and that she understood what they were told. Maddy explained:

Maddy: Yeah, they gave us a seminar in Uganda before coming here, and also when we reached here, they gave us a seminar. Yes, I understood (DRC7 – Female).

We must wonder, however, the content and scope of information relating to child protection that the participants received and though it could be that some participants took initiative to find out more information, while others, for various factors may not have had that initiative. Because participants have mixed views around provision of information or not, it could be that during the time when the participants were in the refugee camps, some programs may have provided information on child protection to some people, but not all. Or it could be that some information was provided but some people were not able to process it. This will be explored in sub-theme three below.

Subtheme 3: Given Information but can't Process or Understand it

In this third sub-theme, participants mostly highlighted language as a barrier to them understanding the information provided to them and sometimes finding the information a bother. For example, rather than families asking what the information is all about, some families preferred to dispose of the documentation, which could be critical information that requires a response within a certain time frame. Participant Ezra from The Democratic Republic of Congo explains:

Ezra: But just to emphasise, there are some people who are not literate, so it is important to organise sessions through the community. And, because posting out information or even just giving them information, first of all, because it is in English, a language they cannot understand, these people will just throw the documents in the bin (DRC1 – Male).

Like Ezra's discussion above, John from South Sudan highlights that the community does not have information, but when information is provided to them, they do not understand it due to language barrier. John explains that he has thought to take a step and arrange for some sort of professionals to come and talk with the people on child protection matters. John explains:

John: To have something organised at a community level whereby people come. You know, have a forum to discuss and to have somebody who is an expert in that area to speak to them about it, I have never seen that. But I think it's something that's really important. I'm not sure ... who will initiate that. Whether it's the leadership of the

community or it will be some of the governmental, non-governmental organisation or the government, I guess is to be shared that. I'm not sure, but I think it's something that's really worth it. And probably now, I have an idea, I'll go to speak to the other leaders about that if we can have somebody, a professional to come and speak to our people. And I think also people have a lot of questions within the community about these laws and these practices. Aaaaah, you know, it's not that they're against it, but they don't understand it. And when you don't understand something, you know, it's just ... automatically it feels like you're against it. Or even all your opinions will be really contradictory to that thing. I think, I think it's good for people to know. And another barrier to that is the language. You know, there are people who don't ... you know, don't speak English. They don't understand English. Even if you have a certain community awareness meeting happening, they might even just capture five percent of what has been said. Or 10 percent of what has been said. Going out, 90 percent they did not know what has been discussed. We have people like that in the community (SSUD5 - Male).

Whether participants have had a forum to discuss child protection matters and did not understand, or they have had forums done in a hurry, the result is the same. Regarding forums conducted hastily, participant Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo explains:

Sam: Before we came, we were given a seminar but me personally, I did not receive that seminar. I was received it here in Australia, they organised the seminar which was done hastily like for a period of only two days or three. So prior, they teach people and

then here, they give you their history, geography, to be honest, that, they give but for us, we were not provided this before we came. I came to do my seminar here. That particular seminar is not about child protection. It is a general one where they touch on all those things but they also mention about child protection (DRC3 – Male).

Sam explains that this was a general seminar, which answers the researcher's question in sub-theme two above regarding the content and scope of information relating to child protection that the participants received. Sam is clear in stating the seminar was not related to child protection. Respondent Mark from South Sudan narrates that he was not provided any information on child protection and yet he is an influential person in the community. Mark introduces the idea of translation of documentation into various languages, which can then be easily processed by the community. Mark narrates that firstly he was not provided any documentation regarding to child protection. From Mark's response, one can deduce that even if they were provided information, for them to have been understood, the information would have needed to be in their lingo. Mark states:

Mark: No. And even when we came – I, myself, I've very informational. I would always like to know. I haven't come across that myself. Even I didn't have their own child protection- I didn't translate any issues. We need them to be translated into languages. This statutory thing document (SSUD1 – Male).

It would potentially scare people when they hear about an organisation that to their understanding is tasked with the duty of removing children, yet documentation, as one of the

communication methods can hardly be understood by the consumers. This final theme has discussed that most families have inadequate information to respond to child protection concerns. This is due to the fact that, some did not receive information either prior to arrival to Australia and most of those who received the orientation did not understand for factors such as the orientation being rushed, or, language barriers.

Conclusions

From this chapter, it has emerged that some families and individuals cannot actually understand the documents provided for them when it comes to child protection. This research recommends translation of all child protection documents into languages that can be understood by the main stakeholders, who in this context are the people from refugee and asylum seeker population group.

This chapter also explored how threats of, or actual, removal of children due to child protection concerns are perceived as undermining traditional cultural values. Participants felt that they were often torn between two sets of competing demands: to stay true to their own cultural values, and to find ways to navigate mainstream cultural values in Australia. This demand often created tensions between participants and their children, which was of great concern to many participants.

While we might want to be critical of traditional patriarchal values as reported by many of the participants, we must also be mindful that these are culturally-located values. To dismiss them runs the risk of exacerbating ideologies of assimilationism. Instead, open dialogue is important between refugee families and statutory bodies, to create productive ways forward.

CHAPTER 7

SUPPORT, STRATEGIES, AND COLLABORATION WITH CHILD

PROTECTION SYSTEMS IN AUSTRALIA

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds are usually not familiar with formal child protection systems, which may put them in situations where they are not able to respond to certain child protection strategies and interventions in their new country. It would seem from participant responses, that this population group is willing to come forward and work together with child protection staff to ensure children safely remain within their families, communities and cultures. This chapter focuses on respondents' voices in terms of how they wish to be included in child protection systems and processes to raise successful functional families that will ultimately contribute to the country's growth.

Specifically, the respondents mentioned the support they require from child protection, strategies for change so that they can feel included in decision making, and the ways in which child protection can avail opportunities for collaboration with them. This chapter will address the types of supports respondents are looking for which will assist child protection staff to work closely with them, the kind of education they are needing to help keep their families away from involvement with child protection, and how all of this will provide support to propel positive change in child protection systems with this population group.

Theme 1: Support to Help Foster Engagement

Respondents believe that there is a need for more engagement with child protection systems. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, 100% across the respondents from South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia believed that better support is needed following resettlement, for example with more collaboration and respecting their culture.

The first theme below discusses suggestions provided by participants for fostering environments that maximise engagement with child protection systems. As the participants may not have mechanisms to reach out to different arms of the government, they are asking child protection workers, who have suitable capacity, to reach out to them, so as to prevent statutory intervention. Suggestions provided range from early interventions all the way to child protection reaching out to them in their communities to provide information.

Subtheme 1: The Importance of Outreach

In this first sub-theme, participants pointed out that it would be beneficial if child protection workers reached out to them so they can discuss social issues, and in particular, that child protection staff identified the strengths and challenges involving in parenting as practiced in their culture, in a new environment. Hope, a participant from Somalia, describes that it would be beneficial if child protection staff reached out to their community and kept them abreast with all that is happening. Hope notes:

Hope: A kid says something, and nobody tells us anything. They knock on the door, and they take the kid without us knowing why. You see, they don't give us no explanation. The kid is gone because the kid said A, B, C, D. So it's better for them to

come, to explain to us A, B, C, D has been said and to investigate more, to know where the problem is coming from. Whether the kid is lying or telling the truth. (SOM10 – Female).

Hope notes that the importance of outreach by child protection staff to the community is so that staff provide explanations and facts to the parents and then together, they can work out the source of their challenges. Another participant, Claire from The Democratic Republic of Congo, notes that rather than families reaching out to law enforcers which is a fairly new concept for them, early intervention such as counselling services would be beneficial to her community in alleviating misunderstandings within the families, and also helping them tackle their issues. Claire notes:

Claire: As an African I'm very very disappointed for our community in general because of why? When we have really a small argument or little bit thing in the house, we have to call the police and the police have to come in the house and then they kick the husband outside, which is not good. But to have some counselling maybe can help us, you know. There is many problems that must have a solution. But for us it's becoming like any small thing we have to straightaway go to the police, back home we don't do that, we don't do that. (DRC11 – Female).

Families tend to respond by calling the police as they may not know of other early intervention supports. Such situations are likely to cause distress in families and involvement with child protection, and ultimately contribute to family disintegration. Participant Brenda from South

Sudan states that workshops would be invaluable in engaging their community and that it would be helpful. Brenda notes that this will be helpful not only for her community, but other communities as well. Brenda highlights the importance of notice being provided to ensure large turn outs. Brenda notes:

Brenda: If like they go to workshop or something like that would be good, yeah, to help. We have got leaders in our community who are South Sudanese. They come to you, a big umbrella, because South Sudanese is a big umbrella. They will come through it and they will come to other communities. They will say – like they come from South Sudanese and South Sudanese leaders will call leaders of their communities, and they'll come again and after that day they will tell their community that they will talk and “We need something to be done like this on this day” or something like that and they will come again and after that they will tell their community “We have this and yeah, we need to do this workshop” or something like that and everybody has to participate (SSUD9 – Female).

Participant Brenda introduces a new concept, that in order to work with the community, child protection staff need to provide sufficient notice regarding meetings with them. It could be that the community does not receive the information in time regarding meetings for various reasons, and added effort would need to be put to promote higher turn outs when they plan to meet with the community.

This subtheme highlights that there are multiple ways in which child protection staff can reach out to families. These include early intervention through services such as keeping families in the loop of whatever is bound to happen if child protection concerns are not addressed, counselling or family therapy to avert adverse situations, and lastly, preparation to meet with the communities by providing sufficient notice with the expected result of higher turnouts.

Subtheme 2: Child Protection Systems Working Alongside Parents in a Shared Language

In this second subtheme, a number of participants provided practical examples of what child protection systems working alongside parents would look like. This would necessitate more effort by child protection staff in resourcing the community in a way that they will feel the system is working with them. For example, according to Max from Somalia, if attending a particular culture, it would be appropriate that there be a worker in the team who understands exactly that particular language, to maximize understanding of their culture and minimise misinterpretation of words. Max noted:

Max: The social or the childcare workers to be included from each community. The workers, there should be a Somali worker. If there is, if they are going to Somali family, there should be a Somali worker who's going with them. And interpreting and, you know, understand their culture, you know. Someone who understands their culture must be included in that team. Whether it's Somali or South Sudan. Or any other community... I would just encourage if there's no Somali worker there ... or ... or South Sudan or Congo ... the team of the childcare protection, to include the Somali

community. To include the South Sudanese community. And any other community that's needed to be ... looked after (SOM1 – Male).

As Max suggests, though dialect may be similar, nuances can send very different messages of what is under discussion. Max highlights that bridging the language barrier is vital to working alongside parents. Notably, language can be a great barrier to both sides (child protection, and communities) achieving targeted outcomes. Further to this, another participant from Somalia, Morris, views child protection working alongside parents as, in as much as they listen to the children, they also need to similarly listen to the parents. Morris states that mediators would play a big role in accomplishing this unbiased role. Morris states:

Morris: There need to be a mediator. There should be a mediator, mediating between the children and the parent, so that they know the needs for the parent as well. They only listen to the kids. They don't listen to the parents. Whatever the kids says is true, than whatever the parent – nobody even ask the parent whatever happens (SOM3 – Male).

From Morris's narration, a mediator taking an unbiased point of view achieves more in terms of parent's input being considered. Participant Mark from South Sudan introduces the concept of translation of child protection documentation, so that parents can understand the content. Mark points out that he was a translator himself and has never been engaged in translating any statutory documentation for his community. Mark narrates:

Mark: No. And even when we came – I, myself, I’ve very informational. I would always like to know. I haven’t come across that myself. Even I didn’t have their own child protection- I didn’t translate any issues. We need them to be translated into languages. This statutory thing document. Into our languages (SSUD1 – Male).

From Mark’s input, it is clear that there are community members who are struggling to understand the documentation, which could be full of jargon unfamiliar to them, given some of them have lower literacy. According to Lucas et.al cited by Losoncz (2013), the Sudanese community exhibits a relatively low level of proficiency in spoken English, as indicated by 21.7 percent of males and 37.0 percent of females who struggle or do not speak English at all. Additionally, illiteracy is a prevalent issue within the community. Hence, due to lack of communication, the documents do not serve the purpose they are intended to serve which could have serious child protection issues with the communities.

Participants included in this theme made specific suggestions about what it means to work alongside migrant and refugee families. Key to working alongside – beyond active engagement with communities – was child protection staff having the capacity to engage with people in culturally familiar and safe ways. Emphasis here was placed on having a shared language, whether that be through a staff member from the particular culture, or at the very least having translation services available.

Subtheme 3: Understanding Cultural Values

In this third sub-theme, respondents acknowledge that their cultural values differ immensely from the cultural values in their new country. However, they would like to see child protection

systems understanding their culture so they can meet somewhere in the middle. Respondents voiced that they have hence found themselves in situations where they have had to compromise a lot of their cultural values by disbanding some of their culture in order to fit into the new culture and just avoid getting into trouble with child protection. Adrian from Somalia explains:

Adrian: I have to compromise on my cultural principles to avoid getting into problem with the government. The agency, child protection agency to understand the culture and respect the culture of each group. Rather than coming with their own plan, get input from the community itself on how best to protect a child that they consider at risk (SOM4 – Male).

Adrian argues that his culture has a lot to offer in terms of different parenting styles that still protect children, yet he has had to relinquish his cultural principles, lest he gets in trouble with child protection. This hence portrays a sense of hopelessness from the community, and something that he finds offensive on the part of child protection for ignoring his cultural lens, values, and insights.

Participant Axel from Somalia discusses that child protection systems need to learn and understand the perspectives of parenting for people from refugee backgrounds so as to be more informed. Axel discusses:

Axel: I think there's a lot of research done on CALD but little on the perspective on African families towards the Child Protection system. I hope this study will shed some

light on the perspective of the past events so the Child Protection system can learn what the perspective of parents are. And I think they are under-informed; yeah, they are not well-informed about the perspective of African culture on how best they can be supported to ensure the physical, emotional wellbeing of their children is never compromised under their care. So, how can they be supported should be the discourse. That should be what the discussion is and not fault-finding to get a reason to remove a child (SOM5 – Male).

Axel discusses a solution focussed approach for this community, rather than a problem-solving approach. Participant Maddy from The Democratic Republic of Congo corroborates Adrian's discussion above, by highlighting that child protection would need to talk with the community to find out about, and understand their parenting template, then they can start to discuss matters from there. That way, it would prompt the participants to be more receptive and feel that their culture has been valued. Maddy explains:

Maddy: Child protection should understand how our parents dealt with us, just talking to us, disciplining us from a young age, and we would listen. So, I would say that they should be aware, or they should be educated in that manner (DRC7 – Female).

Maddy explains that child protection likewise needs education on their culture, and this can be done through dialogue with them. Participant Elvis from South Sudan echoes Adrian and Maddy's comments, by reiterating that it is invaluable that child protection also learns their

culture which is deeply ingrained in them, given they have lived it all their lives and it is difficult to easily get rid of. Elvis states:

Elvis: Yeah. Because for this situation is going like that because when we came to Australia and the life, we enjoyed some other life, we don't have it before in our life. We come here adult, we do not come here as a younger. We come here adults so it's hard for us to get someone's, cultures straightaway and to put in your life. So you must work with our culture and to give it to them to know that our culture as well, what it is our culture! You know. To give them – because they can work with our culture as well. Those people, their culture is that, is that, is that, one, two, three, one, two, three, you know! (SSUD4 – Male).

Elvis introduces the concept that people from refugee background also had a good life and culture back home, and even states that they “enjoyed some other life”. Elvis hence highlights that they would like to also introduce their culture to child protection and believes that child protection can work with them. The response of participant Andrew from South Sudan backs Elvis by stating that child protection needs to study the different cultures to increase knowledge base of the different cultures which in turn will yield appropriate cultural intervention. Andrew states:

Andrew: Should help to involve the community, to study more about each culture. To study each culture, what, to know that culture before they take action. And that will involve so many cultures within their system. That will come with a modality how to

approach those people. And how you can take that child from them, and completely the child should not be taken away, out of their parents, their whole culture. They should be treated within their, should be supported by their own culture, not outside their culture (SSUD2 – Male).

Further, Andrew strongly advocates that should children be removed from their parents, they need to be cared for within their community and culture. This is so that their cultural values are conserved and passed on to future generations to minimise or completely eradicate loss of their culture.

This sub-theme has highlighted that in as much as the communities want to work with child protection, they do value their culture and cultural values, and they also wish to enlighten child protection systems on their culture, which will in turn yield more positive outcomes for the families and child protection.

According to Losoncz (2015), Sudanese parents perceived their conventional approaches to parenting and upholding traditional family dynamics as the most effective approach to nurturing accomplished individuals, particularly in the new unfamiliar and surprising environment. For this families, how then is any other way better, when as participant Elvis above states they enjoyed their lives as their families remained intact?

Theme 2: The Importance of Education

In this second theme, participants emphasised the value of education as a need for learning about parenting practices in their new country, alongside evidence of their values and priorities to keep their children safe at home and within their families. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, 100% across the respondents from South Sudan and Somalia highlighted that dialogue, and involving parents were good strategies to reduce child protection concerns. 81.8% from The Democratic Republic of Congo believed in these strategies as well, with 18.2% not having suggestions. Of note, participants also use the term education to mean information sessions, in which they can be supported to understand and get a broad overview of the systems in the new environment.

Subtheme 1: Community Engagement

In this first subtheme, participants highlight strategies of educating the community, in ways that child protection would best work with them. They speak of how meaningful engagement is to them, as it can yield positive results if done well. Participant Steve from Somalia understands community engagement to mean collaborating with the community and considering their input so that the community can feel valued at their input being considered. According to Steve, engaging community would encourage better rapport building and ultimately, better engagement of families from refugee families involved or likely to be involved with child protection. Steve reiterates the importance of involving the community by stating:

Steve: The best way I think they can is to collaborate with the community. If they hear something, be it from a child or someone else, the community are better informed. Liaise with the community, consult with the community, and seek community's input on way forward. Community leaders know about their communities. There can be collaborative solutions that can be achieved. Educational seminars is ok, but rather when they use the report of child at risk, that's the time to engage with the community (SOM2 – Male).

Steve perceives that safety and risk assessment can be better accomplished if child protection staff sought more information from the community rather than just from families alone. According to Steve, the value of consultations with community leaders cannot be underestimated. Steve explains that if children need to be removed from their families and child protection have been engaging with the community, it will result in children being placed in culturally appropriate families, and that way, the community will feel that their religion and culture has been respected. For Steve, the outcome of community engagement is in the best interest of the children because their religion and culture will not be lost and connection to their culture and community will remain. According to Steve, if all this is done, the community will not blame child protection for statutory intervention as all the procedures will have been followed. Participant Axel from Somalia echoes participant Steve's discussion on collaboration, as messages are relayed better from community leaders to the community rather than through child protection staff. Axel states:

Axel: Collaborating or seminars or forums that are held collaboratively with community leaders. Where community leaders are used to deliver some key messages because if community leaders, you meet with community leaders and give them a script of certain messages and the messages coming from the community leader it can sink into the recipients better rather than statutory Child Protection workers passing it and it can be seen as punitive disrespectful directions from institutions to families that have no regard for culture of the community. It can be misinterpreted as that. But I work in the system; I know there's no intent for disrespecting anyone's culture. Legislations are there for a goodwill, for a really good intent (SOM5 – Male).

Axel introduces the idea of the most successful channel in which these messages can be passed as being through community leaders. This will be received positively. Another participant - Adrian - from Somalia corroborates with participant Steve's discussion, by emphasizing the importance of involving community leaders in discussions involving child protection matters so that the community's voice can be heard. Adrian explains:

Adrian: Involve community leaders. Instead of just removing, involve community leaders and parents and have an open discussion that involves the community leaders, then there can be communal input into what would be the way forward (SOM4 – Male).

Further, participant Clara from The Democratic Republic of Congo voices that child protection concerns in her community can be reduced if parents from their communities were provided

information and support on navigating the social systems. This will help in supporting them to parent in a new culture. Clara states:

Clara: Yeah, I think education. If they contact them and then they show them where to go to school or they show them, if they show them where they can go or contact their leaders of the community, yeah, then they can look after them and support them to attend (DRC11 – Female).

Clara provides steps that child protection can use to reach her community. Clara explains that child protection staff organise sessions to deliver to her community and the content can include things like where the parents can go to school either to learn English or gain other knowledge that can help them in parenting in a new culture. Child protection staff to then contact community leaders so that community leaders can call people from their community, to attend the education sessions and in that way, the community will feel supported. Further to Clara's step by step explanation, Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo specifically provides a child focussed response. Cora explains that it is important to involve children in this education. Cora acknowledges that children are the main stakeholders in child protection and including children in education sessions will make the community feel better supported by child protection. Cora explains:

Cora: I would recommend that child protection also has sessions with the children, because children are also being difficult to the parents. Including education. Because if the government is strict on the children or emphasises on the children or approaches

this issue from the child perspective, then the children will behave better (DRC5 – Female).

Participant Maddy from The Democratic Republic of Congo introduces a new discussion on the importance of prevention, as being better than cure. Maddy calls this, “Preventive education” and specifies that if the children are educated early, it can avoid statutory intervention. Maddy also highlights that the motivation of child protection should be to show children the right way, such as listening to their parents when corrected. Maddy states:

Maddy: I would say that child protection should offer preventive education. Child protection should be offering preventive education whereby it's telling children or educating the children, or even the parents, on what to do, or what not to do, to avoid the situation, rather than wait for correcting when things have already happened, to tell them that – you know, not to protect them from that end, whereby it's more of corrective than preventive. So, preventive education is a good way. Child protection needs to educate the children by telling them to tell the children that if your mother or father tells you this and that, you are to listen. Not that if your parents are telling you this and that, they are abusing you. Things like that. If really they are child protection, then they should show the children good way. (DRC7 - Female).

Participant Maddy also highlights that the venue would need to be one that is suitable for the children. Similarly, participant Mark from South Sudan similarly highlights the importance of child protection engaging with the community. According to Mark, child protection

engagement is double folded where the expectation is that child protection talks to the community, and the community reciprocates. Mark states:

Mark: We need child protection to come to the communities. We need child protection officials to come to be engaged with us. Ok? We need them to come and talk to us. We talk to them, too. So that we can build a positive relationship for what the child protection should do and what we should do, too. I think this is the best way to go about how well it would work for South Australians. We need to have a dialogue. Continued dialogue (SSUD1 – Male).

Mark clarifies that the dialogue process will be effective when ongoing rather than a one off. Participants in this sub-theme repeatedly emphasised that effective community engagement is vital to ensuring best outcomes, whether that be the removal of children who are then placed within culturally appropriate foster care arrangements, or preferably where families are supported to retain custody of their children.

Subtheme 2: Teaching Practical Parenting Skills

Parents from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds have voiced a willingness to sit at a round table, corporate, and learn new ways of parenting. They have also voiced various ways in which they would participate in such as seminars, as they wish for positive end results for their families. Participant Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo reminisces the times when the statutory body would call them for seminars. Her discussion is self-explanatory in terms of

that being helpful when they had issues in their community during settlement and were seeking support. Cora explains:

Cora: Yes, through [statutory body] they would call us for aaa...like a seminar and talk to us that this is how you – what you do and what you don't do. And if you are doing things differently back home, then you don't do them here. So we had like [statutory body]. They would call whoever is having an issue. So, if it's the father or the mother they would call you and talk to you. (DRC5 – Female).

This appears to have been beneficial to families and may have gone a long way to keeping families safe together. Sofia from The Democratic Republic of Congo, like Cora states that parents need to be introduced to new ways of parenting in this new culture. Sofia states:

Sofia: Talk to the parent. Maybe he can change. Yeah, they need to contact with the parent, and teach him a new way to raise his children in good manners. Rather than taking him away forever. No. Nuh -uh (DRC9 – Female).

Similarly, participant Nelly from The Democratic Republic of Congo believes that teaching on parenting skills needs to occur so that the parents can be guided how to guide their children, in the new culture. Nelly discusses that child protection staff can do this during their formal or informal gatherings such as when they are doing activities like learning how to stitch clothes.

Nelly states:

Nelly: I believe it's whenever we gather together there should be some teaching about parenting. The young mothers should be taught how to care for their children. And the children who are now about 16 years old, we can have constant talks with them and try and understand them and advise them. As children mature, we as parents need to understand them and become gentle on them. And we should not tire of advising our children. The community members need to be given notice and book an appointment when they have time, enter the community, and see us how you can help us. Yesterday they met at Para Hills. We Congolese women were learning how to stitch clothes. You can come to use, and teach us, that would be very helpful to us. (DRC8 – Female).

Participant Nelly introduces the word “gentle” on parenting, meaning, their culture may not really have taken gentleness in parenting into account. This is an indicator of a willingness of the community to learn new ways of doing things. Participant Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo corroborates Nelly's discussion on the need for seminars being held in communities. Sam states:

Sam: They need to do more seminars within the community and hold conferences. Personally, I am a leader of the Congolese community and I have never seen workers from child protection coming to give seminars to us regarding child protection. That is their work, to identify communities, and come out to the community, it's their duty. It is not our duty to plead with them, it is their work, because they are funded by the government to do that (DRC3 – Male).

Sam highlights that since he came to Australia, he has not seen child protection workers speak with the community, a comment which Nelly from The Democratic Republic of Congo reiterates by stating that since she arrived in Australia in 2007, child protection has never had talks with them, stating this would be beneficial to the community. Nelly states:

Nelly: No (from child protection, never had such a meeting since arrival on 11/09/2007). That would be nice. You book an appointment with the women and they give you a specific time and people will go to listen. Tell them it would be very important if they could assist the parents with guiding parents on how to care for their children. That is how they can help parents (DRC8 – Female).

Nelly reiterates that child protection would be helping parents if they guided them through the trainings which they are willing to attend. Participant Moses from South Sudan echoes Nelly's comments by emphasising the importance of trainings when people from refugee backgrounds arrive their new country. Moses states:

Moses: I think for the first time the person is settling in Australia they should also be subject to some trainings about how to bring up child in Australia because that's the major problem we face before these other problems, is always the first you know, the problem of child. So, there should be actually training given to those families and also, involve communities. Especially the emerging communities, involve them. You know to nominate some members, especially contacting the leader and nominate some members to be trained, that is called liaison officers that will actually be helping the

police. nominate members. And then, number two, contact community leaders. And then number three, have some liaison officers and train them (SSUD3 – Male).

Moses discusses that trainings and more information and knowledge will serve to help the police in working with police. Participants included in this sub-theme repeatedly noted that they welcomed practical information and training about parenting. Importantly, this did not mean that they did not value their own approaches and skills in regard to parenting. Rather, they appreciated that in the Australian context different approaches were typically emphasised, and that they were willing to learn about these approaches.

Subtheme 3: Need for a Tailored Approach

A tailored approach to child protection for refugee families, as discussed in this sub-theme, is a customised approach, with targeted interventions to respond to child protection needs of these communities. It is an approach where the community will feel that this approach is specially designed for them. Participant Axel from Somalia explains that because of the different layers of complexities between his culture and child protection, it is important to design an approach where the community will feel they have been included, safely, in decision making regarding their children. Axel states:

Axel: So, there's a lot of this....it's complex; there's complexity. So, there's need for then a tailored approach for making sure there is place to make the community feel their input has been sought to decide on the way forward without compromising on

confidentiality, without putting someone who complains about their own safety issues at more risk (SOM5- Male).

Further, Axel explains the importance of an approach specifically tailored for the community, explaining to them what exactly constitutes of child abuse. This is because, the community has left the children completely free to do as they like in the fear that they may lose their children if they even gave them a consequence, as they do not know. Axel explains:

Axel: So, parents demanding “Sleep early, wake up” it’s not child abuse. So, there are a number of clarifications that need to be made in terms of messaging and what amounts to child physical, emotional abuse needs to be defined in a culturally sensitive manner. The messaging to mainstream is not same, should not be same messaging to CALD people. So, hitting a child amounts to physical abuse. So, it should be “Hitting a child.” But seizing a phone from a child and demanding a child to sleep, the child is feeling they were made to lose an opportunity to have fun with a friend in Nairobi online and getting angry, then the next morning deciding “I don’t feel like living in this house. I should be somewhere else where I can have more freedom.” That is not child abuse; it’s a child perspective of feeling controlled and wanted control. So, they need more educational approach on all fronts aimed at teenagers and aimed at parents (SOM5 – Male).

From Axel’s discussion, it is clear that his community, both the parents and children, have some misunderstandings about what constitutes child protections and whilst the parents are

living in fear, their children are becoming controlling. In the same light, participant Morris from Somalia explains that they feel that the children no longer belong to the parents, but that they belong to the government. This echoes Axel's comment above, where the parents have lost hope and feel helpless. Morris explains:

Morris: We're taking care of the kids for them. They give them the money. We keep them. We take care of them. We do everything for them, just for them – we are with the kids at home, but they are their kids, not ours anymore. If we do something wrong, then we are done. Yes, their kids. They are not our kids anymore (SOM3 – Male).

A targeted approach to educate the community on how the system works would be for their benefit. It hence makes sense when participant Axel further explains below that this community needs specific support in understanding the legislation and policies which are simplified enough for them to comprehend. Axel explains:

Axel: So, those ones need to be supported to learn about legislations and policies. The policy documents you asked about we need it. A simplified policy documentation that needs to be reached out to parents with a view of getting them to understand their obligations to make sure children's safety and wellbeing is never compromised under their care. And if that happens then legislation requires institutions responsible for child protection intervene. So, and it's not disrespect to any culture; it's simply ensuring no child under the territory of that legislation living under the territory of that legislation has their safety and wellbeing compromised, anyway, whether it's white or black or

whatever, their culture doesn't matter. So, child safety legislation's aim is clear as keeping children safe. That's what it is. So helping families understand so that actual abusive parents get the message. And the context where parents are simply meeting their obligation on getting their children to do the right thing without being physically abusive, without being emotionally abusive, but children because of their own messaging or misinterpreting messaging they get about their rights to freedom take it literally (SOM5 – Male).

Axel explains that with specific supports for the community to understand legislation, parents will understand how to care for the children without being abusive. Further discussions on specific supports for these communities were highlighted by participant Moses from South Sudan who spoke about targeted training focussing on the rights of the child and responsibilities of the parents, which will in turn minimize child protection intervention. Moses explains:

Moses: Like the training will be focusing on the right of the child here in Australia, that every child is doing this one, it's your responsibility as parents, you know, to make sure that child is not abused or is not in general rejecting the right of the child. And also, if there is any big issue, you as a parent should involve the government like police, that this child is doing this one and I don't like it instead of you taking matters at your own hand (SSUD3 – Male).

Moses's comment acts as a reminder to the community not to take matters in their own hands if there is an issue with their children but rather, involve the authorities. A tailored approach will help child protection to understand their views and be on the same page as the community, but if the issues continue to arise, then action can be taken. A tailored approach, according to participant Sofia from The Democratic Republic of Congo will provide more support than that which is usually provided to other communities. Sofia states:

Sofia: One thing is that because we are from refugee background, we need more supporters, to support us, to teach us. Tell them not to say, oh, they are not English, their English as a second language. Let them include us, like inclusiveness. To teach us things which we still don't know. Yeah, about how to raise our children, parenting. Yeah, because even as I told you, like privacy, people don't open, is like kind of being scared to talk about it. That's why you see ... That's how I can explain, yeah (DRC9 – Female).

According to Sofia, having English as a second language means more time will be spent teaching them parenting skills, than the time taken with other communities whose English is first language.

This sub-theme has highlighted that the general feeling of participants is that one size does not fit all, and the approaches used for other communities would differ from that of their community. Hence child protection systems would need to device ways that will fit these community groups, for better outcomes for the families.

Theme 3: Creating Change in Child Protection Systems

Child protection being a statutory organisation is bound in South Australia by the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. Participants acknowledge that child protection workers work under this legislation. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, 100% across the respondents from South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia, all highlighted that child protection getting involved in dialogue with parents and working together with them is a strategy to strengthen the community's parenting practices.

This third theme explores participants' wishes for their voices to be heard in the legislation, and as well, in legislative change. This will first begin by collaborating with them, listening to them, and coming to an agreement where they will feel their culture has been considered, even to some degree. Participants raise that information provided to them prior to travelling to Australia acknowledged that Australia is a multicultural country, and they discuss that they would like specifically for their voices be heard and implemented in child protection laws in South Australia.

Subtheme 1: Active Involvement in Legislative Change

When refugees are forced to flee their country of origin which had their own way of life guiding them and flee to a new country, there will be unfamiliar laws in their new country which they need to abide by. Respondents felt that their cultural values have not been considered into these laws, hence leaving them feeling despondent and helpless. Participant Mark from South Sudan states:

Mark: For these guys, this child protection are just executing the law, the law that they – they don't change, but if we are engaged, they should listen to us. They shouldn't say, Australia is a multicultural country. What is the meaning of multicultural? Multi-nation? multilingual? Multi –ethnicity. What is the meaning if we are not part of these laws? Of everything! When these laws were made, we were not here. Ok? These laws look to be made, working towards Aboriginal and they are now implemented on us too. We feel – we can't now – we have a feeling like being treated like a criminal. Yeah. (SSUD1 - Male).

For participant Mark, it is a case of trying to fit a square peg in a round hole, where laws were made and now trying to be fitted into their community, rather than the community's culture being considered and the law being changed to incorporate them. Another participant Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo wishes to see a point in the law where she can get questioned in a case where a child has been mistreated. According to Cora, that system is not in place, or if it is, it is not just. Cora says:

Cora: So, I meant that you see, for instance, if your case is taken forward, whether it's a father who was mistreating the children or myself as the mother, I'm answerable. They will sit me down and they can question me. So there's a system that questions in place (DRC5 – Female).

Participant Nelly from The Democratic Republic of Congo states that whatever rules and laws were taught to them, they have forgotten. This is understandable, considering the long journey

of fleeing the war, being in refugee camps, and resettling into a new country with the many systemic structural differences and a different culture. Nelly states:

Nelly: So, through community education, they can give reminders of rules and laws of Australia because we've heard about them, but people need to be reminded because they have forgotten. They need to once in a while gather community members and remind them about living life in Australia (DRC8).

While Nelly highlights need for a reminder of the laws and legislation, participant Axel from Somalia states that correct interpretation of legislation should be passed on to the community and it should include positive and correct messages. Axel explains:

Axel: No, no, the scary messages of "You cannot touch your kid. You cannot hit your kid. You cannot hit ..." which a teenager who heard it can misunderstand it. It's not a positive messaging in the context of giving families orientation before settling in Australia. So the messaging needs to be amended into positive messaging where the laws of where legislation and policy documentations are shared and interpreted, that is it, without picking aspects of it to give teenagers messages they can misunderstand as parents have no right to force you to go to school (laughter)... Because kids want to be awake and play until 4.00 and gaming the whole night and sleep in the morning, and parents want the kids to sleep at night and wake them up by 6.00 to prepare them for school and they go to school. So, there, there's no child abuse in that context. Yeah, ensuring setting legislation requirement is observed with the Education Act. Education

Act requires parents to make sure children attend school regularly. That's another legislation. So, meeting the requirement of that legislation, if a child thinks parents are forcing them and taking their freedom to sleep, (laughter), then that's misunderstanding; it's not child abuse. (SOM5 – Male).

Axel highlights that half-baked information is passed on which causes misunderstanding in the community. Axel discusses change in legislation to include that not going to school is also an offence and that way, children from refugee backgrounds will understand that if they do not go to school, they will be liable. This will help the children to go to school as parents are having a hard time trying to get them to school and yet they cannot discipline them. Similarly, participant Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo states that change needs to occur in the operations of child protection work with their communities if they want to solve their issues, by focussing on teaching parents and children rather than focussing on removals. Sam states:

Sam: They come to the community and say we want to teach you child protection. They start with parents, and then go to children also to teach the children. But this does not happen. Them, their work is to use certain people in the community who tell them, 'This particular family has issues with their children', and they go, incite that child and remove the child immediately, the child is given education, the child leaves the family, and goes. We know that politics of theirs! We know it! We know what they are doing! And that is not good. It is like they have come to the communities as spies. That is not good! They need to change the way they work. They need to completely change and not work that way (DRC3- Male).

When participant Sam states, “we know what they are doing”, it shows mistrust of child protection by the community. They are asking for complete change and a shift. When this occurs or begins to occur, the community’s level of trust for child protection will likely increase.

Losoncz (2015) describes, “Ian Ayres and John Braithwaite’s responsive regulation pyramid model” (Losoncz 2015, p 418). In the model, enforcement strategies are organised in a hierarchy. More collaborative strategies are placed at the bottom of the pyramid, while harsher approaches are located at the top of the pyramid. The harsher approaches are only used when the collaborative strategies are not working. This model is applicable for working with people from refugee backgrounds because it proposes that authorities which describes that enforcement should begin by assuming corporation. If individuals exhibit readiness to improved themselves, they should receive lighter enforcement measures. On the other hand, individuals who fail to make attempts to meet necessary criteria should face stricter enforcement measures.

In applying the concept of the hierarchy to refugee families, child protection staff would need to firstly work on building trust with the families, who will then be ready to work with the authorities, and that way, they will collaborate and work together hence avoid the harsher measures as they will not be necessary.

Subtheme 2: Fostering Unity and Listening

It would be the highlight of the communities if child protection responded to the requests of the community, of first listening to their side of the story, before carrying out a statutory

intervention. Participant Elvis from South Sudan discussed that there was a time when the community requested the government to let them discuss gang issues amongst themselves within the community and this was well received. This led to positive change. Elvis stated:

Elvis: We got that I reckon since 2008 I think. We got a lot of case of our kids we used to have here in Adelaide. So our kids used to stab themselves with a knife and that and that, so the head of our community wrote a letter and gave it to the government. This is we need to address by ourselves first and then – because the fighting in the city, because they feel their freedom. They feel like the freedom and that and that. They don't know that freedom, they destroy your community names and they will not lead you for tomorrow because of what you're doing today, you don't know tomorrow what is going to happen. So in that case, so I think I remember the community was having engagement with the government and dealing with some other communities as well. I think I remember they gave them a paper about what is killing us exactly. We need, what do you call it? Confidence. So, yeah, I think I remember, yeah, that was 2008, yeah (SSUD4 – Male).

Elvis highlights that this massive issue in the community was discussed confidentiality between the community and the government, and the community raised that first they needed to be provided a chance to first discuss it amongst themselves before involving the government. Participant Rowan from The Democratic Republic of Congo talks about wanting an opportunity for child protection to listen to the community. Rowan says:

Rowan: With Child protection, we are really asking for more opportunity for us to speak together, come together, maybe even once a month just to listen to our parenting and family concerns and challenges (DRC2 – Male).

Similarly, participant Elvis from South Sudan echoes participant Rowan's discussion above by speaking about child protection systems first listening to the community when there is an issue to give them a chance to explain their situations, before they can engage a statutory intervention. Elvis states:

Elvis: The child protection cannot interfere for any cases when they see the cases happen between the family, let the child protection first listen to the family or listen to the friend of the family or the leader of the community to give them advice exactly what's happened regarding that. Because the child protection people always – some of them, they understand, some of them, they're just coming straightaway to call cops straightaway to take the children away. You know, that's no gonna help us. The things will help us, talk with the parents and ask for them which one is the, your relative or family friend who can talk to them and to help you and that and that? (SSUD4 – Male).

Similarly, participant Cora from The Democratic Republic of Congo discusses that parents are requesting child protection to listen to them as they are requesting child protection to come and speak with their children, which to her, is a child focussed perspective. Cora states:

Cora: I would recommend that child protection also has sessions with the children, because children are also being difficult to the parents. Including education. Because if the government is strict on the children or emphasises on the children or approaches this issue from the child perspective, then the children will behave better (DRC5 – Female).

Similarly, participant Faith from The Democratic Republic of Congo reiterates participant Cora's sentiments above by stating if child protection would assist parents in requesting children to listen to their parents, the community will feel that unity amongst them has been fostered. Faith states:

Faith: If the child can be instructed and listen to the parent so that they are not taken away because if they are taken away then, you know, things take a turn (DRC10 – Female).

Participant Brenda from South Sudan adds onto Cora's discussion by stating that finding the root of the problem will help in resolving the issues, and in the end foster unity with the community rather than angst with child protection. Brenda states:

Brenda: Yeah, I need them to look for the roots if you have any problems and let them see first what was the problem and what is that? It's not just straight away take the kids out and separate them with their families before they know what's going on. They need to look for the root first of all and what's happened (DRC9 – Female).

This subtheme highlights that the community also needs help in terms of child protection staff coming to speak with their children to beseech them to listen to their parents. The parents are feeling like they have been left alone and do not know where to turn to for help, and so they are turning to child protection, hoping to get help from them.

Subtheme 3: Making Information Accessible

In this third subtheme communities have highlighted that they have minimal information on what child protection actually does, and they are not clear. But what is clear to them is that child protection is not proactive, but rather comes in only when there is a problem in their families, to take away their children. Participant Andrew from South Sudan highlights that for his community to understand child protection, they would need the information accessible for them. Hence, they do not even know the meaning of child protection, as they have not yet been explained to. Andrew states:

Andrew: Awareness towards the laws, what are the protection mean, and what are the disadvantage and advantages of that Child Protection? (SSUD2 – Male).

From Andrew's comment, it is clear that the basic information has not yet been accessed by this community, meaning that dealing with the complex information would be a challenge. Another participant Bree from Somalia backs up Andrew's comment by explaining her fear of child protection as she does not know what they do other than removing children from their families. Bree explains:

Bree: Like for me, if one day Child Protection knock on my door, I will be so scared because I don't know about them. I just know they will take the kids. I don't know anything else about them. They may be helpful. They may be not helpful. I don't know. But the things I know, if they knock on my door today, I will say oh, they're taking my kids. That's what I know about them (SOM7 – Female).

Another participant Alice from Somalia corroborates Bree's sentiments that more information about child protection needs to be accessed by the community, because there are many community members who only know child protection for one thing: taking children. Alice states:

Alice: I think many of us don't know more about them. All we know is they take the kids. That's all we know. That's our worst nightmare. Many of us don't know about them (SOM6 – Female).

Participant Morris from Somalia echoes Alice and Bree's comments, stating that he would like to know more about child protection and what they do. Morris states:

Morris: We want to see this child protection team, we want to know more, like what they do and what can they help. We just heard child protection, and as we know child protection, they only take kids, that's all we know anyway. We have no idea anything else. We haven't seen any papers from them. whenever they – if they come, if they

come, they come to pick the kids, that's it. That's the first day you will see them, and that's it (SOM3 – Male).

Another participant Sam from The Democratic Republic of Congo repeats Morris, Alice and Bree's comments above, stating they only hear child protection only comes to remove children whenever there is a problem. Sam states:

Sam: I have never seen them come to us. I have not seen them in the two years that I have been the leader of Congolese community, I do not know where they are. For me I just hear, child protection, that is all. But whenever I hear there is a problem with a family and a child, they come and take the child and get housing that money, they start using. What kind of business is this? That is breaking families! (DRC3 – Male).

From the above participants, it is clear that participants feel child protection has not overly disclosed to them what child protection entails, which is their nightmare. In addition to this, participant Bree below further explains that the community will feel empowered if clear child protection information specifying the rules in simple language is relayed to them. Bree states:

Bree: But Child Protection, if they come, they have to say this is the rules; if you break the rules, you will be – there will be a consequence, like this will happen and the kids will be taken (SOM7 – Female).

Axel introduces the idea of how he became proactive, stating that because he was not provided information on child protection, he could still Google it. However, this would bring about different interpretations of what the participants would actually be Googling, and also considering that different levels of literacy would also impact on interpretation. However, Axel preferred this avenue, to completely having no information at all. In the same light of having no information at all, participant Sofia from The Democratic Republic of Congo wishes to have child protection coming out and talking to them so they can have information about them. Sofia states:

Sofia: Those social worker need to come to us and tell us everything. They need to plan about what they are going to ask us. And they need to find a new strategy how we can just tell them everything. I don't know. Yeah, yeah, that's how I want to say (DRC9 – Female).

Sofia is hoping that child protection can find a new strategy that will make the community open up because as it is now, they are afraid and they do not open up.

From this sub-theme, it is clear that more needs to be done by child protection in terms of engaging the communities and divulging information, in simple language, on their mandate. Some communities have stated that the information provided to them was limited, and for those that were provided, they need refresher information. These communities are hence looking at being agents of change in child protection, with the strategies highlighted in this chapter and advocacy for them to achieve this, is vital.

Conclusions

This chapter highlights that change in child protection systems regarding involvement of the refugee community is inevitable, is the only constant, and is achievable. Participants highlight that dialogue, listening to them, involving them in the legislative change as it concerns them, and educating them by way of availing information to them is significant.

According to Williams (2012), educational programs designed for refugee parents and caregivers, with a focus on child protection, must tackle the issue of why and how parenting education should be tailored to meet the requirements of individuals in crisis situations. Parenting education plays a crucial role in such circumstances.

Participants in this population group do not feel culturally safe with child protection staff. In order to make them feel culturally safe, child protection staff need to work within a culturally safe lens. McGregor et. al. (2020) states that cultural competence is usually brought up when discussing culturally safe practice. However, culturally safe practice is multifaceted and encompasses several meanings and interpretations. It involves the capacity to enhance sensitivity and reduce insensitivity when working with culturally diverse groups. This is the position this thesis endorses. Further, McGregor et.al. (2020) states that cultural sensitivity also entails gaining a deeper insight into oneself as a practitioner in terms of how personal reactions to client differences are managed, along with a broader recognition of cultural constraints and obstacles.

Participants in this chapter have voiced that they wish to be involved in making decisions concerning them. This thesis recommends that child protection staff design strategies for more dialogue with this population group and does so in a culturally sensitive manner. This is backed by the literature, such as Losoncz (2015), who advocates for the restructure of child

protection procedures to guarantee that when dealing with refugee families, there should be thorough involvement not just with the families, but also with their designated community advocates. If this is done properly, there will be a lasting and effective transformation.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this chapter I am going to return to Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, apply it to the study findings, and look at ways in which child protection systems can target alterations across diverse ecological domains to best meet the needs of people from refugee backgrounds. This is in the hope that it will positively address the holistic needs of refugee families when it comes to supporting their safe cultural parenting practices and avoiding statutory intervention. Child protection systems will hence be understood by the refugee families as being a supportive, rather than a disruptive, system.

As seen in an earlier chapter, according to Australia Institute of Health and Welfare (2023), 178,000 children in Australia under the age of 18 years were involved in the child protection system between the years 2021 and 2022. As also mentioned in an earlier chapter, in South Australia, the Department of Child Protection is the statutory child protection tasked to enact statutes, which are laws or bills passed by the legislature, in order to ensure that children are kept safe within their families. In addition, an earlier chapter also mentioned that it is envisaged that Australia will have welcomed over 950,000 refugees by 2023, a number which is inclusive of children.

When discussing statutory child protection social work, one cannot omit talking about children and young people. This includes children and young people from families of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. This research has mentioned that some of the children from

families with a refugee background also experienced complex trauma, both physical and psychological, and worse still, some were without their parents. An example is the lost boys of South Sudan who were aged between 17 years and below, as per one research participant's discussion. Similarly, participants spoke about psychological trauma resulting from living in a war zone, a broad sense of having lost everything, and a specific sense of having lost their connections with loved ones.

This chapter discusses how these vulnerable families, most of who have experienced heinous circumstances, can be supported by statutory child protection in each ecological level (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem). As stated by Lustig et.al (2010), it is hoped that as awareness of the effects of trauma continues to grow, there will be research and commitment to advocating for the welfare of these marginalised children who were affected by war in their intricate ecological context: "They deserve no less" (Lustig et. al. p. 249).

Ecological theory and research findings

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), the founder of ecological systems theory, has provided a comprehensive framework for community psychologists to analyse the interconnections between individuals and their communities, as well as the broader society. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the theory offers a new theoretical perspective for research in human development. The theory considers the developing person, the environment, and the evolving interaction of the two. It can be argued that human development is ongoing from conception until death, and that the only constant is change.

In the context of this research, it is paramount to relate the connection between people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and their new country and link this with each systemic level in the ecological theory. As seen in an earlier chapter, Bronfenbrenner explains five concentric systems as being: Microsystem, Mesosystem, Exosystem, and Macro systems. As these systems are already discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis, this chapter will focus on their application to the themes as discussed in chapters 5 to 7.

A study by McGregor et. al. (2020), however, found that there are ongoing challenges in Ireland regarding cultural diversity, and that though significant changes have occurred over the past two decades, there is still a lack of confidence and competence in working and engaging effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. McGregor et. al. (2020) further explains that this issue is systemic, and it is from individual to organisation level. For example, at macrosystem level, legislation and policies notably lack recognition and emphasis on cultural differences. Similarly, at exosystem level, there is a lack of agency policies and procedures to address the specific needs of minority groups. The findings of the present research are backed up by this literature from McGregor et. al. (2020).

Application to home country and resettlement experiences

Life begins at conception. It is paramount that I mention this because a female participant mentioned that she fled from war in her country of origin, ran through the forest, climbing mountains for long distances with her four children, and she had just given birth to her fourth child. This takes one to a trajectory of trying to even fathom such a woman's great attempts to keep her children safe from harm.

When a child is born, the child is brought into an environment where they experience growth physically, cognitively, culturally, socially, morally, and sexually. It can be argued that it would be beneficial if the environments are stable, so that the children can grow to their full potential in all of these life domains. Unstable environments, according to Lustig (2010), constitute “chaos”, and they disrupt the growth and development of a child. Lustig (2010) further states that:

“Chaos is a term Urie Bronfenbrenner has aptly applied to the experience of American youth, noting that, America has yet to confront the reality that the growing chaos in the lives of our children, youth, and families pervades too many of the principal settings in which we live our daily lives: our homes, health care systems, child care arrangements, peer groups, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and means of transportation and communication among all of them.” (Lustig 2010, p. 239).

In the case of families from refugee backgrounds, it is unfortunate that this chaos is brought about by situations out of the participant’s spheres of control. This chapter will hence adopt the term “chaos” as used by Bronfenbrenner to describe the disruptive situation the participants were forced into.

Looking at Figure 2 of this thesis – which is my conceptual framework adopted from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory – refugee and asylum seeker home country and resettlement experiences often include war, torture, genocide, post conflict, displacement and relocation, injuries due to war, family resettlement distress, geographical and social isolation, loss of family supports, trauma grief and loss, communication, and life barriers. These were

evident as themes explored in chapter 5 of this thesis, and I now consider in detail how each relates to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory.

Microsystem

As seen in Figure 1 in this thesis, the microsystem is made up of the groups that have direct contact with the child, for example family, school, neighbourhood play area, Church groups, health services and peers. These groups have a great influence on who the child will end up becoming. Lustig (2010) explains that the upheaval and uncertainty of the refugee experience pose a fundamental threat to the microsystem. Further, Lustig (2010) explains:

At the microsystem level, the term proximal processes refers to the reciprocal transactions between the child and persons, objects, and symbols in the immediate microsystem that directly influence children's development. During the child's early years (i.e., ages 0-5), parenting is the primary proximal process. For refugee children, whose parents may be compromised in their caretaking abilities, proximal processes may be diminished in number and effectiveness (p. 240).

From the findings, participants stated that back home, children were cared for by immediate and extended family. This (immediate and extended family) constituted their microsystem. On coming to Australia, they found themselves caring for their children without the kinship support they were used to back home. This in itself proved a challenge to them upon resettlement. This, coupled with children who had experienced trauma especially at early ages, puts an additional layer of complexity. For example, while at the refugee camps, trauma was

compounded. A participant stated that getting food was difficult. One parent talked of eating only one meal per day and staying for two days without water and living in a grass thatched house with a leaking roof. Another parent spoke about the worst – death of her child due to illness which was treatable. For a child growing up in such an environment, there is negative impact on their growth and development due to the chaos experienced by the child and family as a whole.

From the research findings, upon resettlement, there were several challenges, including language barriers and in worst cases, couples separating. These couples were not able to handle the stresses and changes that came with resettlement. Participant Mark from South Sudan explained that within two years of arriving in Australia, he separated with his wife. Mark stated that that would never happen back home because there, not everything is settled in court, disagreements are settled by kin, such as cousins and elders. Mark's experience is a loss which impacted on his microsystem, given that it changed his family's dynamics. These are but some of the situations parents found themselves in, which can lead any person to desperation, anger and frustration, in turn leading to the parents constantly shouting at children, which can be interpreted by child protection as child emotional abuse.

A South Sudanese community worker in the study done by Losoncz (2013) highlights that intervention by government agencies had some negative consequences on the families, for example when the children left home voluntarily, which contributed to disintegration of the microsystem. The community worker stated:

They would ask for emergency accommodation, saying that they are not treated well and not happy there and that kind of stuff. So when they move out they refuse to go to

school and the guardian had no choice to control him or her. (Male South Sudanese community worker) (Losoncz 2013, p. 9).

Hence to this community, loss includes their own loss, loss of status, loss of parental rights, loss of control of their children, and loss of a promising future for the children particularly when they end up leaving school, and again, the parents cannot do anything about it, as they have already lost the regulatory power over their children.

Child protection systems hence can support these families more by targeting to address the root causes of the threats of the microsystems, in order to keep the microsystems safe and intact. For example, supporting families to connect with their kin back home to see how they can help to resolve their disagreements even if it means funding them to make international phone calls, supporting them to fully overcome language barrier challenges, and supporting the parents to access culturally appropriate mental wellbeing services to work on their past trauma. Getting straight to involvement with child protection, or worse still, statutory intervention, can lead to more anxiety for the parents, eventually causing poorer outcomes for the families.

Mesosystem

Kreitzer et.al (2022) conducted a study based on a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) design led by survivors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide now residing in Canada. The study found that comprehending the presence of the numerous levels and elements could assist professionals in the human services field to enhance their approach in different ways.

According to Kreitzer et.al., (2022) the mesosystem envelops the microsystem and signifies a collection of connections between two or more environments in which the growing individual actively engages. The mesosystem, as seen in Figure 1 in this thesis, is the interconnections among distinct microsystems that have a direct impact on an individual, for example parent-teacher relationships, parent-health services relationships, and parent-church relationships.

Participants in the present study stated that back home, children were cared for by not only parents, but also teachers and other adults. This shows that schools also had responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children, just like in their re-settlement. However, during war, schooling was disrupted, and parents had to flee. For refugee children who may be situated in chaos and ever-changing environments, their mesosystems can be greatly disrupted. Similarly, participants spoke of their mistrust of schools upon resettlement, citing that teachers put in notifications on their children, for things that can be addressed through conversations. Participant Ezra from DRC stated:

Ezra: Now, when it came to taking our kids to school, they would come back on a Saturday and say that, ‘Today we were taught that if our parents beat us or mistreat us, then we can call the police, and we were given the numbers to call.’ They told us the numbers are three zeros. And this really bothered us because we were wondering, is this why you came here? We brought you here. It looked like this was – the school was conflicting us, or bringing conflict between us and our children, so at times we would get upset and tell the children, ‘So, once you call the police for me, what does that

mean? Are they the ones who gave birth to you, or why would you call the police on me?' There's so much I can say, but ...(DRC1 - Male).

Where distrust for schools and other agencies occurs, especially if it is for something the people were not used to back home, the mesosystem is quickly disrupted and relationship with service providers is severed, when they can be used as a safety tool for families.

Exosystem

The exosystem as shown in Figure 1 in this thesis is explained as the interconnections among microsystems that indirectly affect an individual, but do not have a direct relationship with the child. Lewis et. al., (2021) explains that the exosystem is an extension of the mesosystem. Lustig (2010) further explains that events that take place in the exosystem can have an impact on the welfare of individuals who interact with the developing child, and they may also implement regulations or choices that affect the individual.

According to Lewis et. al., (2021), examples of the exosystem can be seen in the social structures present within a cultural community or neighbourhood, the workplace where the family's main provider works, or health care system that an individual accesses for services. While not directly connected, there are instances where an individual may indirectly influence an event that takes place within their exosystem.

Using the language barrier challenge, if parents are not able to gain employment due to language barriers, they do get frustrated, and children are likely to bear the brunt of this frustration. This is more so if they had well-paying jobs back home. Participant Mark from South Sudan narrated that when one loses a home, people, culture, country, language, and

lifestyle, that constitutes a holistic loss. Mark recounted that that change and its impact, could be “forever”.

It can be argued that social structures can be placed in communities for the people, but they may not necessarily meet the needs of people with refugee background who in the first place consider that they have lost everything. All that is put in place may hence have no meaning to them, and therefore, not a good use of resource allocation.

Lustig (2010) argues that changes in the work environment of refugee parents or the presence of specific social services in the community where the family resides can significantly influence the development of their children. Statutory child protection would address this by supporting refugee families to strengthen their connections with their microsystems, including places of work, such as how to build on Australian work ethics, or any support that would help the parents perform highly at their workplaces and in turn, their children would benefit.

Macrosystem

As seen in chapter 2 of this thesis, Grant and Guerin (2014) provide examples of the macrosystem as society, culture and sub-culture, values, attitudes, beliefs, and resources. The macrosystem influences how other systems can express themselves. Kreitzer et.al (2022) argue that the cultural and social framework for the inner circles (microsystem. Mesosystem and exosystem) serves as a guide to the broader economic, political and social landscapes that shape an individual’s experiences, encompassing the cultural values of a society and the overarching national or social ideologies. Macro-level influences can encompass individualistic perspectives on mental health, or neoliberal economic strategies.

According to Lustig (2010), the elements of the macrosystem that could impact chaos at lower levels of the environment, particularly for displaced refugee children, consist of economic instability, cultural traits, and sectarian or political turmoil, all of which are prevalent in the refugee journey as elaborated upon earlier in chapter 5 of this thesis. Similarly, Kreitzer et.al (2022) apply macrosystem in their study of environmental impacts on refugee resettlement to the beliefs and values in Canadian and Rwandan societies that have had a significant impact on various aspects of their ecosystems.

This thesis applies Williams' (2010, p. 95) category of "preservation of parenting norms under extraordinary conditions" as a macrosystem and specifies that the actions for a refugee ecological macrosystem under this macrosystem are: "immediate flight, forced departure, forced separation from family, kin and clan, loss of income and way of life, loss of identity, exposure to traumatic events, risk of losing parental agency, and displacement and transiency".

Participant John from South Sudan explained that during the war, people would shoot at their homes, and both adults and children felt insecure. Noting these extraordinary circumstances, parents who had caring duties for the children felt as insecure as the children they were to protect. Parents as these require unique intervention when child protection agencies are carrying out their assessments and intervention strategies.

As explained by the participants, few believed child protection laws existed in their country, for some, it was informal as it was done within the community and for some, it was police matters rather than the law. On coming to Australia, there was the (then Children's Protection Act -1993) Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, which enacts child protection laws. This thesis cannot conclude that the fact that there does not seem to be a Child

Protection Act in the participant's country of origin means that there was chaos in their countries, because the children had "eyes" on them, from the community, given the common adage which originated from the Nigerian Igbo culture, "it takes a village to raise a child", and also that children according to African culture, belong to the community. However, if an offense was committed on a child, it would be treated as a police case.

Application to understanding and engaging with child protection systems

Looking at Figure 2 of this thesis, which is the researcher's conceptual framework adopted from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the researcher mentions what the literature says about the experiences of people from refugee backgrounds with statutory child protection, being stereotyping, colour blindness, culture deficit, inadequate training of practitioners, cultural differences, difficulties in providing mental health services across cultural boundaries, lack of settings to provide alternative culturally appropriate placements. These came up as themes from the research participants, in chapter six of this thesis, in which participants spoke of how community members experienced child protection.

Microsystem

As mentioned above, the microsystem is made up of several groups that have direct contact with the child. This section discusses two groups, the family, and school. At the individual and family level, engaging with child protection is not an easy task for any family, let alone already vulnerable families. Whilst families from refugee backgrounds believe they have good enough

parenting practices for their family units, that may not be the case when measured against Australian parenting standards.

Daliken (2021) conducted research on the child-rearing practices perspectives of African asylum-seeking families and child protection social workers in Ireland. The study found that there is disagreement regarding the definition of suitable child-rearing methods between social workers and parents/guardians. The results of the study indicate that cultural and racial politics play a role in the daily interactions between social workers and parents. Daliken (2021) further notes that cultural politics refers to the dynamic process that occurs when two distinct groups of individuals, each influenced by and representing diverse cultural beliefs and behaviours clash with one another. A question that can be raised is, whose definition should surpass the other? And if an agreement cannot be reached, can a middle ground be agreed to?

At the individual level, English as a second language specifically serves to the detriment of a percentage of the refugee population. Hope from Somalia stated that her children were removed as a result of what her child had said at school. No one wanted to say anything to her, and she was threatened that the police would be called if she did not exit the school. Hope narrated that she didn't know "the language" and didn't know the next steps she could take. Hope also stated that she got a heart ailment as a result of this. Removal of a child from their family causes massive disintegration of the micro system.

Participants raised that English as a second language also causes rifts with their children. Participant Di from South Sudan raised that their children look down upon those of those that have low literacy skills. Di notes that because some parents have never been to school, their children say "Oh, she doesn't know anythings". Such situations that were unheard

of back home, particularly with regard to fathers who are heads of the families and powerful in not only their homes but in their communities as a whole, and who start to get frustrated when that power starts to be ripped from them by their very own children, growing in a system they view as highly protective of the children.

Naturally, parents from these communities would not be happy with the way the children are perceived to be looking down upon their parents. To support this, Scott and Arney (2010) argues that parents settling in Australia are concerned about factors like children's rights, perceived influence of schools and police in encouraging children to challenge their parent's authority.

Mesosystem

As seen above, mesosystems are interconnections among microsystems such as parent-teacher, parent-health services, and parent-church, and their interaction with child protection systems. This section will consider engagement with child protection workers.

Participants felt the connection with child protection workers is not sufficient and one of the reasons is due to worker's lack of cultural knowledge. They stated that the social workers can only know as much information as they are provided, but even if they are provided the information, they still do not understand the participant's cultural situations. Participant Cora from DRC stated:

Cora: Our cultures are different. You see, they do not have – usually we meet with the Caucasians, not Africans. Caucasians do not have knowledge of our Culture. We are the only ones who know our culture in-depth. They can't know. It's only what they

have read, but us we know. Unless you are teaching them, they wouldn't know. They cannot relate culturally. It's only what you explain to them or what they have read, but we know, ourselves, we know because we know how we do things amongst ourselves. But now, for them, even explaining, they may not quite get it. You see, the help you get would depend on – you notice that if this person knew the culture, cultural meaning or whatever, the culture behind it, they would have – they want to help but they are limited (DRC5 – Female).

The study by Dalikeni (2021) found that even basic things like non-verbal communication between the two cultures were different. Whilst a participant stated that in their culture it is considered inappropriate to look at someone in their eye, the social worker explained that they had difficulties with the parent not looking at them in the eye and considered this as big issue. In this study, the social worker stated:

Eye contact was a big issue for me. The children did not make eye contact when speaking to me. Well, you can imagine what that meant to me, basically that they were not telling the truth. (Edgar/SW). (Dalikeni 2021 p.14).

On the other hand, the parent felt under pressure to act in a manner contrary to their upbringing, and the parent could not just bring themselves to being so “rude” by looking directly into the professional's eyes. Respondent Adeola stated:

The social worker always insisted in me looking at them when I was talking to her. She would always say, ‘Look at me when you are talking’. I used to feel frightened by this because in my country you don’t look at people in authority when they are speaking to you. For the children when they are speaking to an adult they sit down or kneel and speak without looking at the adults in the eye. It is considered rude in my culture to look at the adult or stand while you are talking to them. I tried to explain this to the social worker, but she kept saying ‘it’s okay, you are in Ireland now. (Adeola/AS)” (Dalikeni 2021 p. 14).

Similarly, some participants in the present study spoke about having no voice in issues relating to child protection. It is obvious that if one party feels they have no voice, this would automatically cause a strained relationship between this micro-child protection system, resulting into poor outcomes for the children involved. Ezra from DRC in this study stated that noncompliance with workers can lead to dire consequences so it they are better keeping quiet. Ezra narrated:

Ezra: So, yes, you see, there’s different cultures, and what I’ve found is that if the social worker is from Congo for example or is from Africa, (CALD), they are culturally aware, and linguistically diverse. That social worker will have a better understanding because, first of all, they have the experience of back home and here and secondly, they understand our parenting styles. But, if they’re not from our background and they are not CALD, even if you tell them this is how we live in Africa, the advice that would be

given by that social worker will be – for instance, they’ll say that we should agree with what they are saying (DRC1 – Male).

From the above narration, it is obvious that the community feel their voice is insignificant. This thesis hence supports Stier’s (2004) argument that it is essential for there to be a dialogue and mutual learning between the two parties in this case, child protection, and parents from refugee background due to the tensions between the two regarding issues like which cultural practices are best, and which parenting styles are best.

Exosystem

As seen in Figure 1 in this thesis, the exosystem as shown is the interconnections among microsystems that indirectly affect an individual, but do not have a direct relationship with the child.

In this section, it is highlighted that the interactions of families from refugee backgrounds with child protection system has mostly had dire indirect impacts on the children. This is in consideration of their complex trauma, having fled from war torn countries. Participants felt threatened by child protection staff, particularly when child protection staff inserted themselves into their lives. Worse still, by not understanding the complex trauma they had experienced, the mental health of the participants has been hugely impacted, further resulting into more serious impacts on their children.

Participant Sam from DRC notes that these situations lead to adverse events such as deaths, but people are not coming out to highlight them. Sam stated that war caused them to migrate to Australia and some of them left work. That in itself caused them mental health

issues. On relocation to Australia, challenges relating to differences in parenting start to occur, causing further injury to their brain and psychological well-being. Sam denotes that it is only him who knows how he ran with his children and that he never abandoned them, but on arrival to Australia, the children have ended up in child protection system, causing him serious mental issues, which have had a direct impact on his children. Further, Sam states that many people from his community are experiencing psychological and wellbeing challenges characterised by confusion, memory loss and mental health issues.

Participant Morris from Somalia introduces a different concept, where he explains that “parenting” has been ripped off the parents, such that the children are at home, but they actually belong to the government. Such a situation reflects a state of hopelessness within this community as a result of power imbalance. The community feels like there is no one to run to. Morris states:

Morris: We’re taking care of the kids for them. They give them the money. We keep them. We take care of them. We do everything for them, just for them – we are with the kids at home, but they are their kids, not ours anymore. If we do something wrong, then we are done. Yes, their kids. They are not our kids anymore (SOM3 – Male).

From Morris’ narrative, the families feel like they are walking on eggshells, unsure when the children will be taken away from them. To them, it is just a matter of when, not if. Such uncertainty during parenting would work negatively for the parents and their children. Child protection needs to find a way to eradicate fear from these communities and restore trust with them, which will eventually have an indirect positive impact on the children.

This research suggests that because child protection procedures have been significantly weakened by standard and controlled interventions (mostly westernised in nature), it is very important to thoroughly assess the environmental and societal influences that may affect parenting when assessing or working with families from refugee backgrounds.

Macrosystem

This thesis applies Williams' (2010 p. 95) category of "responsibilities in parenting" as a macrosystem and specifies that the actions for a refugee ecological macrosystem under this macrosystem are, "expressing love and affection, breastfeeding, weaning replaced by other social attachments such as siblings or aunts, code of values, courtesy, and complex kinship behaviour, parenting being shared by siblings, cousins, wives, grandparents and extended kin, and discipline".

Mugadza et.al (2019) argues that child protection practitioners in Australia encounter difficulties when implementing child protection laws and policies to tackle child rearing and parenting issues among children from sub-Saharan African migrant backgrounds. As would be expected, Sub-Saharan Africans carry with them their traditional cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, practices, and migration experiences concerning childrearing and parenting. These include all of the practices mentioned in the macrosystem category of responsibilities in parenting above. Further, Mugadza et. al (2019) state that there are two common goals of parenting. One, to successfully communicate the prevailing culture through different generations, and to integrate the upcoming generation into the current cultural norms.

Participants in this research felt that separation of children from their families was not ideal, particularly for situations where more culturally appropriate steps could have been taken

as a result of robust consultations. Participant Mark from South Sudan called anyone who interferes with families as an “intruder”, as an “alien”, because some issues can be resolved at home. Similarly, participant John from South Sudan explains that social workers who work with their families do not have lived cultural experience and so lack understanding of their unique situations, which then leads to misinformed decision making and adversely, removals.

Discipline is an area families from refugee communities appear to be in constant battle with. Participants struggle to comprehend how stopping a child from “doing something” that they view as not being useful for their children, a serious offence. Participants hence fault the system for giving children lots of rights and freedom which does not work in tandem with their cultural norms. This hence impedes their very initial target, to pass on their culture to future generations. Participant Moses from South Sudan states:

Moses: Yeah. In terms of discipline, it’s very hard as a parent to discipline your child. Like for example, if child is not doing homework or the child can decide not to go to school and say that, “I don’t want to study.” There’s nothing you can do about it because if you force that child, the system says the child has a right to say, “I don’t want to do this.” As a parent you can’t do that. For example, back home, if the child is watching TV and you told the child to do something else, you can stop that child from watching TV as a result of that, and that’s normal. But here in Australia, they take it as a serious offence against the child (SSUD3 - Male).

Most people from refugee backgrounds profess Christianity as their faith, and they consider their religion and spirituality a strong part of their being and their culture. Discipline emanates

from the bible, and hence it can be argued that discipline in some ways is religiously practiced by some people, if not all, from this communities. Sofia from DRC confessed that they would rather follow bible rules silently than comply with child protection, which does not give them room to hear their side of the story. They would rather appear to comply than provided details of their religion to social workers as that will land them in trouble. Sofia narrated:

Sofia: Even because for us, as people who went – Christians, Christianity, we do even follow the bible rules than the government rules. Because when a child is doing mistake, you can give at least one slap. Yeah, and then when you tell a social worker, that can be a big record which is bad. That’s the privacy which I was talking about. Not do it, because now you are in front of a social worker, you need to hide (DRC9 – Female).

This research argues that if child protection systems were to restore trust in this population group, they would open up and speak about their religion. Problem is that they view that this will bring a lot of trouble for them so they would rather hide. Because of that mistrust, the children can end up bearing the brunt of silent physical discipline when child protection can discuss with the families different ways of discipline which can still work and are culturally appropriate.

Application to support, strategies, and collaboration

Chapter 5 of this thesis mentioned that people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds are usually not familiar with formal statutory child protection, as it did not have a big sway in their countries of origin. However, this thesis found that refugee and asylum

seeker communities are willing to come forward and listen to what child protection staff are saying. They are willing for child protection staff to come to the table to discuss with them issues concerning them and involve them in making decisions concerning them.

As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, 100% of participants are calling upon child protection staff to collaborate with them and respect their culture. 100% of the participants would like child protection staff to speak with them on various topics and in particular, parenting practices, in order to reduce child protection concerns.

However, as discussed in this chapter there generally is a resource constraint challenge across the board in child protection. Lack of resources (including workers) can often end up in various factors such as high employee turnover. This can then lead to need for more staff training, as staff who are upskilled tend to leave the organisation. The culture of the organisation is then weakened as staff become demotivated partly due to the challenging nature of the role as well as these systemic challenges. Families may then view all the above collectively as lack of collaboration, particularly if there are few staff available to attend collaborative sessions with them.

Addressing resource constraints, training needs and organizational culture are some of the things that could enhance the feasibility of proposed solutions because if these are addressed individually, collectively they will be viewed as collaboration by the service users.

Additionally, workers from a CALD background (migrant staff) tend to be overly relied upon by other workers as ‘cultural advisors’. This puts additional pressures on the migrant staff, on top of their already heavy caseloads. When staff turnover is high as discussed above, there is a lack of hand over of cultural knowledge. The Department has since put in place a tool

(Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Support Tool to be used when working with children from CALD communities however, its effectiveness is yet to be measured.

Microsystem

Losoncz (2015) argues that child and family welfare is a pressing concern for recently arrived migrant families in Australia, with humanitarian migrant families being particularly vulnerable to potential intervention by child protection authorities resulting in the removal of children from their care. As mentioned above, the microsystem is made up of several groups that have direct contact with the child. This section will discuss what respondents have said about how they would like child protection staff to support them so that their family units, which have been disrupted by the impact of colonization, civil wars, and migration, remain strong, safe, intact and thrive.

Like in other cultures, the family unit is a central feature in all South Sudanese cultures, serving as the primary focus for social cooperation and responsibility. In South Sudanese culture, the family provides social security for its members, with its functioning relying on strictly defined gender roles, respect for family hierarchy, and reverence for parents and other adults within the extended family. Any interference from external actors, such as the state or government authorities, in the family space led by the patriarch is viewed as an attack on his family, authority and identity (Losoncz, 2015). Further to this, Sawrikar (2019) states that collectivist communities (such as South Sudanese, DRC and Somalia) often adhere to traditional gender roles, characterised by overtly patriarchal social structures. In these communities, daily life is governed by clear understanding that males hold a greater degree of power in the family.

In a study by Losoncz (2015) on building safety around children in families from refugee backgrounds, the research found that the absence of cultural comprehension has impacted not just the capacity of child protection agencies to effectively interact with refugee families, but also the suitability of service interventions and the resulting outcomes of said interventions.

One of the major issues discussed in this thesis is the concept of children and young people being accorded a lot of freedom, which has turned out as detrimental to the family units. This has been discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis, particularly by respondents Moses, Brenda and Morris, all from South Sudan, and Cora from DRC, as having a negative impact on all individuals at the micro level, being the children, and their parents. For example, Cora states:

Cora: Here there is too much freedom, the children don't have the zeal for education and are very different from home and that's why the children end up in wrong company, drugs. We thought that bringing our children here, they would have a better life and we would be happier, but there are a lot of moms who are complaining about their children. There are mothers who are suffering from many diseases. Some have developed high blood pressure because of the way their children have turned out. In my country, children do not take drugs (DRC5 - Female).

According to Cora, the issue of freedom has led to their children pushing the buttons a bit further, leading to atrocities like getting involved in drugs, situations which were unheard of back home. Participant Hope from Somalia implores to child protection staff that when there is an issue with their children, rather than removal, child protection staff need to come and

speak with them so they can reach a compromise. Hope explains as seen in chapter 7 of this thesis:

Hope: A kid says something, and nobody tells us anything. They knock on the door, and they take the kid without us knowing why. You see, they don't give us no explanation. The kid is gone because the kid said A, B, C, D. So it's better for them to come, to explain to us A, B, C, D has been said and to investigate more, to know where the problem is coming from. Whether the kid is lying or telling the truth. (SOM10 – Female).

This is supported in the literature as seen in the study by Losoncz (2015), in which parents believed that cultural norms in Australia, particularly the increased freedom given to young people, were eroding the already established dynamics and harmony within their families. Further, Losoncz (2015) states that effective communication and trust foster mutual understanding and positive intentions, leading to collaboration and adherence.

This finding calls upon child protection staff to devise strategies for discussions with families, at the microsystem level. This will enhance collaboration with the families and work towards keeping children safe within their families. The participants are positive that talking with them will yield positive, rather than negative, results.

Mesosystem

In discussing the interconnections among microsystems such as parent-teacher, parent-health services, and parent-church, and support, strategies and collaboration from child protection systems, participants felt they were disadvantaged in fully engaging in services due to language

barriers. Participants felt that workers from specific languages need to be included in the work they do. It is true that though dialect can be similar, nuances can lead to different outcomes of what is under discussion. Participant Max from Somalia narrates:

Max: If there is, if they are going to Somali family, there should be a Somali worker who's going with them. And interpreting and, you know, understand their culture, you know. Someone who understands their culture must be included in that team. Whether it's Somali or South Sudan. Or any other community... I would just encourage if there's no Somali worker there ... or ... or South Sudan or Congo ... the team of the childcare protection, to include the Somali community. To include the South Sudanese community. And any other community that's needed to be ... looked after (SOM1 – Male).

As seen earlier in this thesis, in majority of African cultures, it is considered culturally inappropriate to look at professionals in their eyes and talk back. In a case scenario where the parents miss to understand even the slightest nuance and context, it can lead to dire and irreparable consequences. While there are several services that can provide translators, however, sometimes not the exact translator is found. As Max notes, there needs to be a specific person from the specific tribe in question language group. For example, earlier in this thesis, it was discussed that African languages are vast and diverse, even if from the same country. This clarifies the reason Max is requesting for specific workers who understand specific languages.

Further to this, participants urge child protection staff to translate their documents to languages they can understand. This would make engagement with them more efficient.

Participant Mark from South Sudan narrated that he is a translator himself, but child protection staff have never asked him to translate any statutory documentation for his community, yet this is something he is willing to do for positive outcomes with his community on matters concerning child protection. Mark states:

Mark: No. And even when we came – I, myself, I’ve very informational. I would always like to know. I haven’t come across that myself. Even I didn’t have their own child protection- I didn’t translate any issues. We need them to be translated into languages. This statutory thing document. Into our languages (SSUD1 – Male).

Parents strongly believe the above interactions of systems as strategies in supporting the individual refugee families.

Exosystem

This section will discuss the interconnections among the family and judiciary as the two systems whose interaction directly affects the parents but does not have a direct relationship with the child. When child protection issues are raised and parents need to appear in court, they will be served with court documentation. This, like it would for any other population group, sets them into a state of anxiety. Given that this population has experienced complex trauma of the worst atrocities including war, such a situation compounds an already complex situation. Some parents have found the system unfair, and unjust. They have felt left out and isolated by a system which is reactive rather than proactive.

This research has found that parents want child protection staff to involve them in law making so that they can ensure they are included in the law. Similarly, the literature from chapter 1 of this thesis mentioned that families from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds wish to be included in making decisions pertaining to their children. (Dumbrill, 2009).

Participant Mark from South Sudan argues that their cultural values have not been factored into the Australian laws because the laws in place are those for others. Mark explained that though the laws in place are suitable for the rest of the population, that is not so for refugee communities, and that the same laws are trying to be fitted to suit them and their culture. Mark wonders why, if Australia is really multicultural as the leaders proclaim it to be, the laws cannot be changed to include their culture. According to Mark, Australia will be fully multicultural if this can occur. For these communities, active involvement in legislative change will demonstrate to them child protection staff commitment in supporting them to make a difference in the society and support them towards positive change in their microsystem.

Another participant, Cora from DRC, feels that they are not fully involved in court processes, a situation which she finds unjust. Cora states that when there is a case, the affected parties need to be fully involved to state their case. According to Cora's understanding, there is no system in place. Cora may have also meant that the system which is in place is not sufficient, neither is it culturally appropriate. Cora explains:

Cora: So, I meant that you see, for instance, if your case is taken forward, whether it's a father who was mistreating the children or myself as the mother, I'm answerable. They will sit me down and they can question me. So there's a system that questions in place (DRC5 – Female).

The two scenarios above are clear examples of how legislation has indirect impact on children.

Macrosystem

We have seen from this study that participants want child protection staff to engage with them and collaborate with them so that they have minimal or no engagement with statutory child protection. This thesis applies Williams' (2010) category of cultural beliefs and values as a macrosystem and specifies that the actions for a refugee ecological macrosystem under this macrosystem are: "maintaining family structure and family continuity, ancestral worship, observing religious teachings or animistic teachings in filial duty and observation of traditional and religious dress code" (p. 95). Similarly, this research found that the primary role of parents is to care for children and maintain their family. However, since their preferred traditional kinship structures were lost due to forced displacement, this was devastating. A participant Andrew from Sudan stated:

Andrew: It's from past, it's just to know who are their immediate families, and who is their extended families, and what, and the way of life, how it is a different background with others. But here most of the children, they don't know that background. They don't know who is their immediate family and who is their extended family. And know between the relatives, the immediate and extended and the community, to know all these things, is very important in our culture".

Participants also spoke about engagement, and collaboration as ways in which child protection staff and the community could work together to maintain their family structures. The community wishes to see child protection's presence by way of bringing them close and teaching them topics like parenting, rather than encountering their presence through removal of their children. Participant Axel from Somalia narrated how he would like to see child protection staff working with them. Axel stated:

Axel: Collaborating or seminars or forums that are held collaboratively with community leaders. Where community leaders are used to deliver some key messages because if community leaders, you meet with community leaders and give them a script of certain messages and the messages coming from the community leader it can sink into the recipients better rather than statutory Child Protection workers passing it and it can be seen as punitive disrespectful directions from institutions to families that have no regard for culture of the community. It can be misinterpreted as that. But I work in the system; I know there's no intent for disrespecting anyone's culture. Legislations are there for a goodwill, for a really good intent (SOM5 – Male).

In addition to the numerous requests in this thesis for engagement, collaboration and seminars from child protection, participant Mark from South Sudan explains the need for dialogue. Mark is requesting for child protection staff to come talk to them, and they talk to child protection staff. As was explored in Table 5 in Chapter 4, 100% of respondents from South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia all highlighted that child

protection staff getting involved in dialogue with parents and working together with them is a strategy to strengthen the community's parenting practices.

Whilst most participants spoke about child protection providing education to parents, participant Cora from DRC highlighted that child protection staff also needs to have sessions with the children and young people as they are the main stakeholders and, in this way, they will feel supported by child protection staff in the ultimate macro goal; maintaining their culture. Cora states:

Cora: I would recommend that child protection also has sessions with the children, because children are also being difficult to the parents. Including education. Because if the government is strict on the children or emphasises on the children or approaches this issue from the child perspective, then the children will behave better (DRC5 – Female).

It is evident from this study that participants are concerned that child protection is not working with community leaders. According to Westoby (2008), creating a situation where the organisation has to begin working with community leaders can present fresh obstacles for the organisation, as it can disturb the organisation's established practices.

Furedi (2004) explains that Western societies live in a therapeutic culture, and in a culture focussed on therapy, there exists a strong belief that individuals who have experienced harm (specifically refugees in this scenario), are forever burdened with irreparable injury. They then legitimise and use their professional interventions (therapy) on the basis of this assumed vulnerability, making the people more vulnerable and powerless. For this, agency collaboration would go against their very therapy intervention models.

Westoby (2008) found that it is important to enter a dialogical relationship by engaging Southern Sudanese to make sense of their resettlement location, rather than using Western culture of intervention (such as therapy and case management), which child protection commonly utilises. However, workers still find it challenging entering into a dialogical relationship and creating dialogical platforms. This approach necessitates ongoing self-reflection, in which practitioners consider philosophical, analytical and methodological considerations.

On the other hand, the refugees also find it hard to build a trusting relationship with an organisation that does not take time to learn about different cultures and culturally sensitive work, an organisation where workers are not sure about existing resources to help them understand their culture better and provide a one size fits all service. According to Essex et.al (2022), it is crucial to build trust with refugee populations given the challenging and prolonged nature of the refugee experience. They may not trust even their own state, and may feel insecure, unsafe and uncertain. In camps they may continue to face unsafe conditions and during resettlement, may also face further challenges navigating new language and systems, leading to further distrust in the systems (including child protection).

Essex et.al (2022) found that it was important to restore and rebuild trust among refugees and asylum seekers during resettlement. In Essex's study, supportive individuals and institutions were recognised as key pillars in this endeavour. One of the ways to build trust as found in this study is via a response from participant Maddy from DRC who suggests that child protection staff need to be proactive rather than reactive which has negative impact when the children are already in the system. Maddy states that child protection needs to educate children and parents "what to do or not to do to avoid the situation". Maddy explains that currently,

child protection is more of “corrective” rather than “preventive”, and preventive is the best way.

The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children (2021-2031) and its applicability to refugee and asylum-seeking population

Looking at Figure 2 of this thesis, which is the researcher’s conceptual framework adopted from Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory, the researcher mentions what the literature says about the child protection framework, being the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children (2021-2031) (Protecting children is everyone’s business), whose vision is that children and young people reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect, and it’s goal is to make significant and sustained progress in reducing the rates of child abuse and neglect, and it’s generational impacts (p. 8). This National Framework (2021-2031) builds on the first National Framework (p. 14). The National Framework for protecting Australia’s children (p. 2) states:

The National Framework has been developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (marking a fundamental shift in the way governments are working to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are leading the decisions that impact lives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) leaders were involved in developing this framework. For the first time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will have their own specific Action Plan across all aspects of the Framework. These plans will describe the actions and outcomes needed to deliver sustained progress in reducing child abuse and neglect. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action

Plan will be developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities (p. 6).

The Framework has four priority groups, with the first group being “children and families with multiple and complex needs”, a group refugee families would well fit into. Each group has a focus area, and the focus area of this group of children and families with multiple and complex needs is “National approach to early intervention and targeted support”. Each focus area has a principle attached to it, with the principle of this group being, “Access to quality universal and targeted services designed to improve outcomes for children and young people and families, and clear responsibilities and strong monitoring, evaluation and achievements of outcomes” (p.8). It goes on to state:

Some families have multiple and complex needs. These can be due to mental health issues, alcohol and drug misuse, domestic and family violence, disability, social exclusion, poverty, housing uncertainty, unemployment and underemployment (p. 22).

This Framework fits in well with the present study because it is about protecting all of Australia’s children. This section will critique what else the researcher views as needing to be included. Of note, the framework states that protecting children is everyone’s business, which has been highlighted throughout this thesis, that people from refugee families have kinship support to help look after their families, support which is lost when they relocate to Australia.

As we have discussed earlier in this chapter, participants have voiced that they felt child protection is reactive rather than proactive. The study also highlighted that the refugee

population feel that they are not receiving culturally appropriate services in many instances. It is hoped that within the national framework, refugee families will receive proactive and targeted interventions that will adequately address their unique needs, challenges and complexities.

Williams, Soydan and Johnson (1998, cited by Dalikeni, 2019) assert that “the dominant socio-cultural group normally sets a benchmark upon which family behavioural patterns are judged, thereby bringing to the fore the issues of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism and perhaps cultural politics”. This would imply that National Framework has set the standards by which people’s culture and behaviour are marked.

Dalikeni (2019) further argues that ethnocentrism entails the belief that one’s own cultural beliefs are more desirable and superior when compared to others. Nevertheless, Korbin (2008, cited by Dalikeni, 2019) also highlights the issue of ethnocentrism when it comes to service users. In this context, the understanding of child maltreatment is shaped by what is considered ‘normal’ in the dominant culture and it can pose challenges when serving individuals from non-western backgrounds as explained by Graham (1999 as cited by Dalikeni, 2019). The challenge is that, due to practitioner’s non familiarity with black families’ cultures, it can lead to social work sometimes conflicting with the best interest of black children, which is evident in debates regarding the universal relevance of Bowlby’s attachment theory.

One highlight from this chapter was that refugees want to be involved in making laws, or decisions that affect them. This is what Korbin (2008, cited by Dalikeni, 2019) refers to as relativism, which is a notion that each culture should be considered on par with all others, and that behaviours approved by a particular culture should not be evaluated based on the norms of a different culture. The present study recommends that not only community leaders from

refugee and asylum-seeking communities be involved in consultations while developing the National Framework for protecting Australia’s children, but that it includes a specific and clear action plan concerning refugee and asylum seeker communities so that all cultures feel included in the Framework. The action plan can also include building the cultural capability of the child protection workforce so that child protection staff can feel confident working with these target group, and also strengthening culturally safe practices for refugee communities. For this to even start occurring, it would be better if refugee communities were clearly mentioned in this action plan. That way, it is not generalised, given the added layer of vulnerability of the refugees and the atrocities they have witnessed.

As noted in the framework, “The term ‘cultural safety’ can be defined as referring to an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It includes shared respect, shared meaning and shared knowledge and experience of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening. Culturally safe service provision is important across all areas of operation, including governance, workforce and relationships with communities” (p. 49). Given that a large part of the respondents from this study raised that they do not feel respected, and they are not listened to, it is hoped that with this National Framework, the topic of cultural safety will be addressed and that communities will feel supported, which will in turn impact families positively.

Systemic factors impacting service provision to refugee communities

Child protection agencies encounter a range of systemic obstacles including: excessive workloads, inadequate funding, high staff turnover, management of data, collaboration among

different agencies, barriers related to cultural and linguistic families, vicarious trauma, changes in politics and policies, excessive bureaucratic procedures, and insufficient community resources. It is important to tackle these systemic issues, most of which are mentioned in the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report (2016) so as to improve the efficiency of child protection agencies and the families they care for. This section will therefore refer to the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report (2016) and discuss at least three of the systemic barriers listed above. The Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report (2016, p.8) states:

“Child protection has been, and continues to be, a persistent challenge throughout the developed world. Numerous national and international inquiries into child protection systems many resulting from deaths of children attest to the systems’ inability to adequately meet the complex needs of the families and children involved in notifications to authorities. The systems are complicated and highly intertwined with other, equally complex service systems. It has been evident since at least the mid-1980s that child protection systems need major reform yet attempts to achieve this have generally made few inroads. Further, policy makers have found it difficult to fix problems with the system because legislation and interventions are underpinned by unsupported assumptions”.

On the systemic barrier of excessive workloads the report states:

“The organisations within which child protection workers are expected to manage the ambiguity and uncertainty of practice are often defensive and sometimes toxic. They are also likely to experience chronically high workloads and ongoing staff shortages” (Nyland, 2016, p. 60).

On this systemic barrier of high workloads, the report recommends that workloads and staffing levels should be reviewed. Recommendation 21 states, “Establish a human resources unit in the Agency that has sufficient specialist expertise and resources to develop and implement strategic workforce plans and to manage operational demands to ensure high quality child protection practice”. This can aid to address the barrier of excessive caseloads and inadequate funding:

Recommendation 170 states, “conduct a review of the needs of the population currently accessing Relationships Australia’s services to identify the specific needs of service users. This can help in the issue of collaboration with other agencies, especially when it comes to families from refugee backgrounds as they access Relationship Australia’s services a lot. Recommendation 233 states: “Undertake a qualitative review of the capacity of the Agency’s Multicultural Community Engagement Team”. This can help in working effectively and addressing the needs of people from refugee background. Recommendation 236 states, “Ensure that every child in care with a culturally and linguistically diverse background has a comprehensive cultural maintenance plan that is regularly reviewed, having regard to the child’s age and placement circumstances” (Nyland, 2016, p. 530) Proper implementation of accurate cultural maintenance plans

can go a long way in providing targeted interventions to families of refugee backgrounds. A case study was provided in the report which reads: “Taj’s birth mother identified with a diverse culture. His foster parent recognised the importance of Taj’s cultural heritage, but found it challenging to support Taj to navigate his traditional cultural background as a child in care in Australia. There was a discord between Taj not wanting to be different to other children for a nine-year-old child this meant ‘being as white as possible’ and the foster parent who saw her role as ‘helping ... him to be brave enough to identify [with his culture]’. The foster parent took subtle steps through Taj’s schooling and sporting activities to encourage connectedness to his culture. Families SA told the foster parent she had to help Taj understand his cultural background, but did not support or assist her to do so and did not provide Taj with a cultural maintenance plan or program”. (Nyland, 2016, p. 528).

Recommendation 235 in the report states:

“ Assist staff and carers who work with children in care who have a culturally and linguistically diverse background to achieve culturally informed best practice through the development of practice guides (Nyland 2016, p. 530).

These recommendations addressing children from culturally and linguistically diverse background do also address children from refugee backgrounds. As noted in the report, “Families SA’s Consents and Decisions Practice Guide for children in home-based care often refers to the need for culturally appropriate decision making, but provides little guidance on

how this is to be achieved in practice. It is unclear what expectation is placed on a caseworker with respect to cultural planning and maintenance (Nyland 2016, p. 527).

With no clear expectations of how to conduct cultural planning and maintenance, and others as seen above, on the already stretched workers, it would be difficult to work extensively with the families from these communities.

This thesis considers it invaluable to also address structural biases within child protection as this can improve intervention effectiveness. Roberts (2014) explains that child welfare should be tied to the burning issues of the time rather than responding to maltreatment by individual parents disregarding the social contexts in which families reside.

Having seen the structural barriers above, particularly the one on the case study where the agency did not provide the foster care with a cultural plan, the social context is that the child is in between the two cultures, but the issue is not resolving as the agency has not culturally appropriately supported the carer. This is an imbalance in itself which is not helpful to people from refugee backgrounds. Roberts (2014) further explains that between 1960 and 1997 in America, systems reacted to the increasing number of black customers by diminishing support for families while amplifying disciplinary roles. Rather than focussing on the families' needs and requirements, the primary objective of the child welfare agencies shifted to placement of children in alternative care settings. As seen in Nyland's recommendation 170 above, there was need to identify the specific needs of service users. This shows that there were cases where specific needs were not being taken into account.

Similarly, when cultural plans are not servicing the needs of the people, there is a risk of cultural bias on the population group, as the workers are not clear on service provision for this client group.

As seen in this thesis, refugee families are impacted by several issues including poverty, As mentioned earlier, Bennett et. al (2020) states that poverty can contribute to parent's inability to meet their children's needs. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, definitions of neglect can vary depending on child protection worker's individual interpretations, and this can yield inconsistent assessment results. It is important that child protection workers are aware of this kind of bias when working with people from refugee backgrounds.

Roberts (2014) found that in America, poor black neighbourhoods experience elevated levels of interaction with child welfare agencies and are at a heightened risk of being raised in neighbourhoods where child protection services are extensively involved. Child protection hence needs to be alert of such biases, where they directly link poverty to child protection issues without clearly understanding the situations of the people from refugee backgrounds.

Key Recommendations for Policy and Practice

This thesis has discussed that the child protection system is not working suitably for refugee families. However, there is a lot of complexities in choosing the best parenting practices. Always, and as already established in Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979), someone's choice is going to be influenced by their worldview of their understanding of the systems. Which is why best parenting practices is an intrinsically complicated issue, particularly in countries where migration is favourable, because you are bringing together various cultures to be scrutinised by set systems in an ethnic hotpot that innately clash with each other.

Why it is complex is that you cannot advocate for the world views of the refugee parents when a western view of the system is stripping them off their parenting capacity as a result of the lens in which you are looking at it from. It gets even more complex because you have a child who is growing up in two different world views (ethnic and western), and which are

clashing into one. The parents hold one worldview, the system has a different worldview, and the child has the two worldviews, combined. For example, people from ethnic groups demonstrate love to a child through provision of food and other needs, while the western system's demonstration of love is for example when the words "I love you" are said to the child, and also through the observed relationship a child seeks from a caregiver as seen in attachment theory.

A child from a refugee background (who is living in two world views) and sees other children from the western community being hugged will not feel loved, but the parents' worldview is, if they are providing for the child for example by giving them food and basic necessities, they love them. When you are parenting from only one worldview, the child will be affected negatively. Which worldview do you go with that makes sense for everybody? Who gets the moral authority over that this? Who decides?

Whilst Dalikeni (2021) in their study found that the white Irish social workers possess the powers to dictate the legitimacy of various social practices through the implementation of child protection or child welfare guidelines, Losoncz (2015) found that Sudanese parents in South Australia are reluctant to modify their traditional parenting practices in favour of alternative methods, which may stem from their lack of confidence in Western parenting approaches and also, their ability to implement them.

Even if this population group were willing to transform their parenting to conform with the new culture, language, an issue that often comes up with this population group, would act as a barrier. How then can they be expected to take on parenting practices of a culture they already do not have confidence in, because it provides less instructional approaches in managing their children when language barrier poses difficulties in comprehending and

implementing new parenting norms and values? There are two questions to be asked. One is, can parenting practices be transformed to align with the cultural requirements of a new country? The other is, can parenting practices be transformed to align with the legal requirements of a new country?

Whilst we can argue that parenting practices can be transformed to align with cultural requirements of a new country, it would most likely cause a sense of grief and loss of their parenting practices because of loss of their identity and heritage, and it would also take a long time. Of note, these are ways in which they have parented for generations. Some parents would even require counselling or mentoring on how to do this. A lot of support systems would need to be put in place for this to occur smoothly. Renzaho and Vignjevic (2011) argue that due to the new cultural environment which reflects practices that may be at odds with the traditional parenting practices of the new country, there can be varying rates of acculturation between parents and their children which can cause clashes.

Muganza et. al. (2019) argue that the assimilation of diverse sub-Saharan African cultures into Australian society presents a multifaceted obstacle in comprehending child abuse and neglect within the child protection framework. Australia, like other similar countries that accept refugees such as United Kingdom and the United States of America, is categorised as a country that prioritises individualistic cultural principles, including those relating to child rearing. On the other hand, many people from refugee backgrounds are from collectivist backgrounds and child rearing practices are communal. This is where the clash occurs.

Similarly, parenting practices be transformed to align with the legal requirements of a new country. For example from this study, we see that physical punishment is culturally acceptable as a means of reinforce discipline in the children. However, coming to Australia,

physical punishment is illegal, because children are protected under the CYPS Act. Children are also protected under Family Law, Laws relating to child safety, and education laws, of which all citizens must abide, to avoid criminal offence.

When community members do not understand the child protection system, they can misinterpret it by linking to their experiences back home. For example, in a study by Losoncz (2013), a male participant worker highlighted that some of the community members have a total misconception of child protection by rationalising it to be a corrupt government institution, with corrupt officials like what they have back in their country, as seen in the response below:

Yes, some people really believe it. Because the system of the government and the police in Africa is not like here. ...the Government in Africa is very corrupt so when they take the kid in here, they think that the government took the kid because they want to take all the black children away from their families, so that your children will not care for you. So that's what some people have in their mind. And when they see these movies about the government taking away Aboriginal children, they think that that's what the government is doing to them now. It is a sad situation. (Male South Sudanese community worker) (p. 13).

It is invaluable for child protection to understand the meaning and interpretation people from refugee communities make of child protection and then adopt a hybrid approach where they will keep a bit of the cultural values and also observe legislation. The issue of education of the population, collaboration, and engagement with the refugee families would be beneficial to them, in helping them unpack child protection, which is to them, a mystery. According to

Bergset and Ulvic (2021), enhanced awareness could encourage greater exploration of the parenting practices by the social workers for example they will actively listen and attentively attend to the parent's unique perspectives on and interpretations of the parenting methods.

Suggestions for better child protection policy and practice

This research has used Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979) to explain that people are affected by the environments they find themselves in. Therefore, there is a need for theoretically informed practice as argued by Kreitzer et. al. (2022), to resolve challenges and practical scenarios involving interventions at various levels.

At a microsystem level, it is crucial to accurately identify key details regarding the individual's background and current situation, in order to facilitate a thorough assessment intervention. As noted in this chapter, participants have witnessed atrocious situations. Their children have not been spared, with some witnessing their parents killed, or running to different directions from them, never to be seen again. Participant John from South Sudan clearly explains about the shooting and the insecurities felt by both parents and their children. This research recommends that intricate factors such as these are factored in particularly when social workers are carrying out risk and safety assessments.

The absence of "care" from child protection workers, as perceived by the participants, was disheartening on a mesosystem (poor relations between the two systems- family and child protection) and macrosystem level (where participants felt their culture is not being respected), in contradiction to the National Framework discussion above. Participant Bree from Somalia explains:

Bree: They don't care about the culture, if you are Christian or you are Muslim. They don't care. They have to report everything you did. Like Muslim households, like if the dad comes home and the kids they are there and they're not doing anything, and they're playing, the dad can say like "why are you playing? Why don't you read your book or your Qur'an?" And if Child Protection is there, he or she will say "oh, there's abuse in this house because the kids don't have free time to do whatever they want. (SOM7 – Female).

It would not be farfetched to state that all the above factors can slowly lead the already vulnerable refugee people into more anxiety. Participant Cora from DRC narrates that there are mothers who are suffering many ailments as a result of the outcomes of their children. This is backed by the literature, where Broadbent et al. (2007) states that refugee communities have a higher risk of mental health problems due to their experiences of resettling in a new country.

On the other hand, with the presence of accessible services and resources, people from refugee background were able to progress through time and find healing. Participant Elvis from South Sudan narrated how he received support and with time, he was able to attend English classes and eventually was able to find paid employment. Elvis states:

Elvis: Yeah. I found support, definitely, yeah. Yeah, it was – ARA, it's called ARA. Those people were supporting me a lot and, what do you call, Immigration for the refugees who used to be in the city So used to help us a lot and used to guide us and tell us the truth. And tell us the truth, how to live life and they tell us the law of Australia and how Australia is going. Yeah. They used to go to, what do you call it, to English

learning and then from there I went to the TAFE. And then TAFE, yeah. That's it and then I got – I did training for some courses then I got a job. So a lot of movement, good movement in my life (SSUD4 - Male).

This thesis argues that radical measures are required for refugee families to feel included in decisions involving them, their children, and their families. One such measure is that the child protection agency needs to have some level of outsourcing child protection to targeted refugee-led organisations for families from refugee backgrounds, such that they are served by these organisations, which can then be regulated by the umbrella child protection agency. These organisations will have capacity to look further and deeply through a culturally appropriate/complex trauma lens to address their unique parenting practices.

As seen in the earlier chapters, some participants discussed that they did not have child protection in their country. Some discussed that there was some form, but often it was not clear. Mugadza et.al (2019) states that in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, child protection is advanced by non-government organizations, but it often lacks the necessary political sway and legal power. Given that child protection in Australia, as discussed by Mugadza et. al. (2019), is intricate, consisting of eight distinct systems, all managed separately, one for each State and Territory, this makes a coherent approach difficult. Each system has its own approach and perspective of engaging with sub-Saharan African countries. This thesis suggests that social workers must share a common and in-depth understanding of the unique challenges and experiences of people from refugee backgrounds and their social environments and circumstances that impact on their parenting.

In addition to the challenges of refugee families mentioned in this thesis, Mugadza et. al (2019) adds that roles are gender specific within sub-Saharan families, where the man is the head of the home, the bread winner and final decision maker. When the families relocate to Australia, this is replaced with welfare which they did not experience in their country. Some participants in this thesis have clearly narrated that this was a cause of their marriage breakdown, as this is not easily understood by parents.

This research mentions that in situations where the women are tasked to keep the Centrelink bank accounts, they can start to look down upon their husbands, who having been the heads of the families back home, feel that they have lost their power. The Australian government hence needs to look into the Centrelink issue exclusively for refugee families, as they have voiced that their families are fragmenting as a result of them having the gender role changes and suddenly the woman has money, something that was unheard of back home.

This thesis confronts culturally appropriate and targeted services for refugee and asylum seeker populations. As seen in this chapter, the ATSI Action Plan in the National Framework for protecting Australian children “will be developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities” (p. 6). This thesis recommends that refugee communities, via their leaders, be included in the next action plan, so as to target this group and also for them to feel they have finally been heard by state agencies. The thesis also recommends a specific refugee policy which will work to improve the outcomes of this community, who have voiced that they are ready to come to the table and discuss issues concerning them. An example is, designing, in collaboration with community leaders, a Refugee Cultural Practice Framework.

The communities have voiced that they would like child protection staff to attend community forums to engage with them, have dialogue and teach them on various issues, particularly parenting. They would like to see their family units intact, they would like their poor health as a result of how their children have turned out, improve. They have spoken about psychological impact, mental health, blood pressure, and even death. They are regretting and saying they thought they were coming to a comfortable life, only to be disillusioned. The government needs to act and have a paradigm shift, to serve this community that they have accepted to take in in a culturally appropriate way.

If children from refugee families must be removed from their families, it is culturally appropriate to place them within their family such as kinship if safe to do so, or in geographical areas within their reach. This is backed by Article 20 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says, “Children who cannot be looked after by their own family must be looked after properly by people who respect their religion, culture and language” (p. 1).

Participant Mark from South Sudan narrates about a community member whose children were removed from their parents and were taken fostered far from their community, by a carer who did not share the same culture as the children. The children forgot their father. Mark narrates:

Mark: They were taken outside and then far from the community. Far from the community, which is a big mistake which should actually not happen. The man was not allowed to see his kids, Ok. Even kids they call him uncle. They don't know him, ok?First of all, children should not be fostered by an alien person out of the community. It should be, if anything happened, the parents become irresponsible, they should find

someone in the community where these children belong, to foster them. They should have a say. They should have a say who will – or the community would say if the parents are – if they have any reason for not to say anything, the community should have a say. On who should foster the children.

Being placed within their own community would help to preserve their culture, and it is also consistent with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle, which is stipulated in the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, (Section 12, 3a) as follows:

(a) if an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person is to be placed in care under this Act, the child or young person should, if reasonably practicable, be placed with 1 of the following persons (in order of priority): (i) (ii) (iii) a member of the child or young person's family; a member of the child or young person's community who has a relationship of responsibility for the child or young person; a member of the child or young person's community; (iv) a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultural background (as the case requires), (determined in accordance with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander traditional practice or custom); (b) if an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person is unable to be placed with a person referred to in paragraph (a), or it is not in the best interests of the child or young person to do so, the child or young person should be given the opportunity for continuing contact with their family, community or communities and culture (determined in accordance with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander traditional practice or custom); (c) before placing an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child or young person under this Act, the Chief

Executive or the Court (as the case requires) must, where reasonably practicable, consult with, and have regard to any submissions of, a recognised Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander organisation (p. 11).

Having this type of principle in place for refugee and migrant communities is vital.

Limitations

This study only focussed on three African countries, being South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. As seen in chapter 3 of this research, people from other countries like Eritrea are also increasingly accommodated into Australia on humanitarian visas.

As per the findings in this research, participants do not trust the child protection system. Sometimes it was hard to encourage participants to speak more deeply about the topic, maybe due to fear and distrust. Some participants thought the researcher was a child protection worker and were fearful. A participant discussed that they run away just on hearing the name child protection. According to Liamputtong (2007), the general level of distrust keeps many people from interacting with the researcher.

Further, Liamputtong (2007) discusses that it becomes increasingly challenging to reach potential participants when the research explores topics that are of a sensitive or threatening nature such as child protection, as these individuals have a stronger inclination to conceal their identities and participation. To this effect, not many research participants reported extensive experiences with child protection in Australia, nor disclosed any form of having experienced child protection. This could have been out of fear, guilt or shame. Some responses

were to the effect that they have not had experience with child protection, but they knew of someone who had.

The research was carried out during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sometimes an interview time had been arranged and then either the researcher, or the participants, or their family members were down with the virus. This, coupled with lockdowns, caused extensive delays in the research.

The researcher is from Kenya, which is an East African country, and migrated to Australia on a work visa. The researcher hence has different experiences from the participants who were from DRC, South Sudan and Somalia, and some who thought that the researcher had similar experiences as the researcher did not disclose their country of origin.

Overcoming the limitations

This study only had the capacity to study the three countries. The researcher recommends that upcoming researchers study other African countries which have been involved in humanitarian programs and who were not studied in this thesis.

Regarding mistrust, the researcher is skilled in building rapport with clients by virtue of the researcher's area of paid employment, a transferrable skill that is invaluable to establishing a respectful and trusting relationship with the participants at the initial visit. Whilst some participants were fearful at first, on the other hand, others were happy that someone from child protection had finally come to hear their side of the story.

As the topic was of a sensitive one involving child protection, the researcher reassured participants that their stories were personal and that they would be concealed, and pseudonyms

used throughout. This was observed before, during and after the interviews, which was helpful in completing all the 30 interviews.

During COVID-19, the researcher worked on the other parts of the thesis that did not involve research participants, such as the earlier chapters like the literature review. When it was all safe and clear, the researcher then progressed with the interviews.

By virtue of the researcher having been of African origin, there was benefit in that it potentially minimised distrust, as there was some level of trust by the participants as there are some shared similarities in most African countries.

Conclusions

Although the findings presented in this thesis represents 30 families, they nonetheless illustrate three main points. First, refugee families have high levels of resilience, having faced traumatic circumstances in their country of origin. This thesis suggests that this resilience must be acknowledged by child protection social workers and other professionals working with the families. Service providers need to acknowledge this and use it as a starting point to provide targeted intervention to the families.

Secondly, some refugee families lost everything, when they lost their families, having fallen victim to an inability to survive and thrive in a culture with a new lifestyle and new parenting practices. These families state that they have been failed by systems which are built for mainstream cultures, and some which have failed to demonstrate willpower to invest heavily in the refugee community. This is why respondents are asking and almost pleading with child protection staff to work with them, collaborate with them through such ways as visiting them in their communities to have discussions with them on issues concerning them.

Participant Elvis from South Sudan summarised by reminding child protection that the refugee community “enjoyed some other life” back home, came to Australia as adults, and so it is hard for them to get someone else’s cultures straightaway and implement it, given they enjoyed what they had before, and it is harder for them to comprehend the new culture, as adults. Elvis states that child protection must study their culture, know it, and work with their culture, because they can choose to.

Thirdly, this research believes that it is possible to combine a cultural and clinical practice when working with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, which is likely to yield strong families. If cultural practice is not supported, it can lead to broader issues such as institutional racism. Institutional racism in an organisation is a barrier to cultural safety and the following factors can begin to be displayed: power disparities, colonial legacies, systemic barriers, insufficient support services, insufficient assessment tools (as was discussed earlier in this thesis), biased decision making, insufficient cultural awareness and lack of varied workforce (for example, when most of the staff are white, there are the limits to them being truly culturally safe).

The above barriers then lead to poor outcomes for families be as there is increased risk for unnecessary removal of children, just because the worker did not understand the population’s culture, the worker was biased, the worker was biased in making a decision due to biased profiling, or, even, that there were not targeted supports and interventions to service these families. Applying a cultural lens across all clinical work will actively support and enhance cultural safety practice for refugee and asylum seeker families. There has to be cultural humility and a commitment from child protection systems and staff to do this by implementing anti-racism practices in the agency.

These findings are consistent with the body of previous research. Dumbrill (2009) found that refugee families wish for child protection staff to understand that they love their children, as demonstrated by them running with them under extraneous circumstances to escape war, their settlement challenges, and working with them to develop child welfare policies and services. Saunders et. al. (2015) explains that the National Framework demonstrates the Australian Government's fundamental dedication to improving the lifelong welfare of individuals and families across Australia. However, it is acknowledged that a uniform approach is not effective for Australia's varied communities, and that culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities require tailored and targeted strategies that consider their unique needs and situations. Rather than systems merely collaborating to ensure that children and families have enhanced access to services, refugee families' welfare needs to be hinged on establishing a conducive environment needed to boost social, economic, and civic engagement within their communities.

In general, systems need to respond to our most vulnerable children and families, and get it right. Systems need to be accessible and successful, noting that where there are vulnerable adults (in this case refugee families), there are more vulnerable children. Good enough parenting is better than removal. This can be supported by the UN Convention on the Rights of the child article 5 which says, "Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly" (p. 1).

Parental strengths need to be acknowledged and they need to be supported in all ways so they can have insights into children's needs and understanding of the child's developing experience. This research believes that having a conversation with parents and applying

strategies that have been designed using a cultural lens of this community will work more effectively towards keeping the children safe in their families, rather than simply putting through notifications to the Child Abuse Report Line. Culturally appropriate approaches and conversations with families are likely to change something for the children, and keep families safe together.

APPENDIX A: FLYER IN ENGLISH

CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

STATUTORY CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORK POLICY AND PRACTICE FRAMEWORKS FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH REFUGEE AND ASYLUM SEEKER BACKGROUNDS

As part of a research thesis, Ms Grace Wahome of Flinders University is seeking to interview 30 families with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds about their perceptions of child protection, who are from South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somali.

To participate, you will need to:

- 1) Live in South Australia,
 - 2) Be aged 18 years and over,
 - 3) Have migrated from one of the countries named above (South Sudan, DRC or Somali)
- You can be single or a couple
 - You may or may not have your own biological children
 - You may be a biological grand parent or non-biological grand parent

Participating in an interview is an opportunity to share your general thoughts about child protection in South Australia, and share your views on the effectiveness of current policies in supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds from your community. It is also an opportunity to share your voice and for you to suggest strategies that may improve culturally appropriate services delivery to support people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Further, this is an opportunity for you to also discuss a collaborative approach to working with people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in developing future statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks.

Interviews will occur at a time and place convenient to you. You will be interviewed in person. Interviews will be audio recorded, and your personal information will not appear in any reports or publications that arise from the research. Copies of reports will be provided to you on completion of the project at your request. Participants will receive a \$25 Coles voucher as a thank you for their time.

If you are interested in taking part in an interview, or would like more information about the research project, please contact Ms Grace Wahome on:

Grace Wahome
+61 8 8201 3911 (Flinders University)
waho0003@flinders.edu.au

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 2148). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

APPENDIX B: FLYER IN DINKA

THIËC TËNË KOC CË RÖT MAT KËYIÖP CÖK

LÖD Ë TIËT METH KU MÄÄC NÖDIC AAGUIËER KU LOILOI CÏ AKUTNHOM Ë BAAI GUIIR KU BÏ KE APAKÖÖK KU AGUUD BÖ CÖK Ë YÄN KÖK YIIC WÏC Ë KUÖONY.

Ms Grace Wahome akuën alonj Flinders University, yen awic bë raan 30 mëcthook ë thook thiëc thok tënë apaköök ku apaguuj (Refugees and Asylum seekers) bö cök alonj South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) ku Somalia, wic ë kuöony ku bik ye lëk kë yekë tak alonj ë tiët meth.

Na wic bë yï thiëc thok, ke yin adhil nañ kä bö ciëen:

- 1) Yin adhil cieñ South Australia,
- 2) Run ë diëtdu aa 18 letueñ,
- 3) Yin adhil ya raan tönj ë wuöt wën cë lueel nhial yiic (South Sudan, DRC tädä Somalia)
 - Week aa lëu bäk aa tik kek moc
 - Tëkdä, yin alëu ba ya mëdhiëth tënë mëth ku na tädët, ke yin acie mëdhiëth tënë keek
 - Tëkdä, ke yin ee wundit ë mëth tädä mëendit ë mëth, tädä, ke yin acie wunditden tädä mëenditden

Thiëcëthok (interview) abë yin päl kaam ku ba jam, ba kakkun ye tak yiic yinhom lueel alonj ë Tiët ë Meth (Child Protection) South Australia, ku yin abë puöl ba wëlku mat thïn alonj ë tiët e meth cë ñiec guiir töthïn emën. Aguiëer cë ñiec guiir bë apaköök ku apaguuj tö akutnhom dunic ya kuony. Yen ee kaam dä aya, bë yin puöl ba täktäkdä mat thïn ku nyuöth koc kuer kök lëu bi cieñ cökic, ku bë tē ye kuöony gam thïn tënë apaköök ku apaguuj col apuolic. Dët ba mat ee këne yic aya, ee luäär bë yin ke ya jam, ku luöikä ëtök kek koc apaköök ku apaguuj bö cök ë yän kök yiic ya kuony. Ku bë löñ ë tiët ë meth kek aguiëer ë luöoi cë guiir cök piny bi koc ke ya luui akölrjal.

Thiëcëthok abë rot looi ë kaamdun lëu yin nhom ku biäkdun ca loc. Yin abë ya thiëc thok ërot. Yin abë ya döm röl ë tthiëcëthok yic, ku wëlkun ca lueel aa cë bë la ayeer ë yän kök yiic, cëmën athör ye göt ku repuört ë yiööp (publications and research). Yin abë ya gäm thurat awarak ë thiëcëthok, tē wic yin keek aköl ci thiëcëthok thök. Koc cë röt mat ë thiëcëthok yic aa bë ya gäm \$25 Coles voucher, bë ya alëc tënë keek, ërin ci kek kaamden gam.

Na nhia ba rot mat ë thiëcëthok yic, tädä neñ käwic ba keek ñic alonj macuruöw ë yiööp, ke yin athiëc Ms Grace Wahome tö waho0003@flinders.edu.au

Aguiëer ë Yiööp wic/kor Dïec-rëer ku Athëëk, aci Flinders University gam tënë Akut Athëëk Yiööp cök. (*Nimëra Aguiëer TÄÄU NÏMÏRA AGUIËER. tën bë gäm buöoth cök*) (Project Number 2148). Na wic/kor ba kajuëc ñic biäk ë ñiec rëer cë gam ë Bëny Akut, ke yup talapun ë jök 82013116, tädä fax ë jök 82012035 tädä ke yï gët ë email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

APPENDIX C: FLYER IN SWAHILI

MWITO WA KUSHIRIKI KWA UTAFITI SHERIA ZA KULINDA WATOTO NA KAZI ZAIDI NA UKARABATI WA USALAMA WA KUSAIDIA WATU KUTOKA JAMII ZA WAKIMBIZI NA WAKIMBIZI ASILI

Kama sehemu ya nadharia ya utafiti, Ms Grace Wahome mwanafunzi wa chuo kikuu cha Flinders anatafuta watu thelathini (30) wakujitolea kutoka familia za wakimbizi na wakimbizi asili ili kutafuta maoni yao ya usalama wa watoto kutoka eneo la Sudan kusini, Democratic Republic ya Congo (DRC) na Somalia.

Kushiriki, unafaa uwe:

- 1) Unaishi Australia kusini
 - 2) Miaka kumi na minane na Zaidi
 - 3) Umehamia kutoka moja ya nchi zifuatazo - Sudan kusini, Democratic Republic ya Congo (DRC) na Somalia.
- Haijalishi kama umeolewa ama haujaolewa
 - Haijalishi kama una watoto wako ama hauna
 - Haijalishi kama una wajukuu wa damu yako ama hauna

Kushiriki kwenye mahojiano, wakati mwafaka wa kushiriki kwenye usalama wa watoto eneo la Australia kusini, na kushiriki maoni yako ya ufanisi wa sera za siasa katika kusaidia watu walio wakimbizi na wakimbizi asili wanaotafuta hifadhi kutoka kwa jamii yako.

Pia hii nafasi inakupatia fursa ya sauti yako kusikika na kupendekeza mikakati ambayo inaweza kuboresha utoaji wa huduma za kitamaduni to kusaidia na kutoa msaada kwa watu walio wakimbizi na wakimbizi asili wanaotafuta hifadhi kutoka kwa jamii yako.

Kwa kuongezea, hii ni fursa kwako kujadili pia njia ya kushirikiana na kufanya kazi na wakimbizi na wakimbizi asili katika kuunda sera za kinga za watoto.

Mahojiano yatatokea kwa wakati na mahali ambapo ni rahisi kwako. Utahojiwa kibinafsi. Mahojiano yatarekodiwa na Habari yako ya kibinafsi haitaonekana katika ripoti yoyote au machapisho yanayotokea kutoka kwa utafiti. Nakala za ripoti zitatolewa kwako ukikamilisha mradi kwa ombi lako. Washiriki watapokea hati ya \$25 kutoka duka la Coles, kama asante kwa wakati wao.

Ikiwa una nia ya kushiriki katika mahojiano, au ungependa habari zaidi juu ya mradi wa utafiti, tafadhali wasiliana na Bi Grace Wahome kwenye wahome0003@flinders.edu.au.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 2148). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

APPENDIX D: FLYER IN FRENCH

APPEL AUX PARTICIPANTS DE RECHERCHE

CADRES STATUTAIRES ET PRATIQUES SUR LA PROTECTION SOCIALE DES ENFANTS POUR AIDER LES PERSONNES ISSUES DU MILIEU DES REFUGIES ET DES DEMANDEURS D'ASILE

Dans le cadre d'une thèse de recherche, Mme Grace Wahome de l'Université de Flinders cherche à interroger 30 familles issues des milieux des réfugiés et des demandeurs d'asile originaires du Soudan du sud, de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC) et de la Somalie, sur leur perception de la protection de l'enfance.

Si vous souhaitez y participer, vous devrez:

- 4) résider en Australie du Sud,
- 5) être âgé de 18 ans et plus,
- 6) avoir migré de l'un des pays cités ci-dessus (Soudan du sud, RDC ou Somalie).

- Vous pouvez être célibataire ou un couple
- Vous pouvez avoir ou ne pas avoir d'enfants biologiques
- Vous pouvez être un grand parent biologique ou un grand parent non biologique

En participant à cet entretien, vous aurez l'occasion de nous faire part de vos réflexions générales sur la protection de l'enfance en Australie du Sud, et de partager vos opinions sur l'efficacité des politiques actuelles en matière d'appui aux personnes issues du milieu des réfugiés et des demandeurs d'asile au sein de votre communauté. En outre, vous pourrez partager votre point de vue et suggérer des stratégies susceptibles d'améliorer la prestation de services culturellement adaptés aux personnes issues du milieu des réfugiés et des demandeurs d'asile. Par ailleurs, ce sera l'occasion unique pour vous permettre de discuter des modalités de collaboration possibles avec des personnes issues du milieu des réfugiés et des demandeurs d'asile afin d'élaborer des politiques et des pratiques de protection de l'enfance à l'avenir.

Les entretiens auront lieu au moment et à l'endroit qui vous conviennent. Vous serez entendu en personne. Ces entretiens seront enregistrés au format audio et vos informations personnelles ne figureront sur aucun rapport ou publication émanant de la recherche. Des copies des rapports vous seront fournies à la fin du projet à votre demande. Les Participants recevront un bon de 25\$ de Cole en guise de remerciement pour leur temps.

Si vous souhaitez participer à un entretien ou obtenir plus d'informations sur ce projet de recherche, merci de contacter Mme Grace Wahome sur waho0003@flinders.edu.au

Ce projet de recherche est approuvé par le Conseil de la Déontologie pour la Recherche Sociale et Comportementale de l'Université de Flinders (2148). Pour obtenir plus d'informations relatives aux modalités d'approbation déontologique du projet, veuillez contacter la direction du Conseil au numéro de téléphone 8201 3116, par fax au numéro 8201 2035 ou par courrier électronique human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

APPENDIX E: FLYER IN SOMALI

WAC DIIWAANKA BAARLAMAANKA

SIYAASADAHHA SHAQAALAHHA SHAQADA IYO QAABKA XUQUUQDA SHAQADA EE KU SAABSAN DIIWAANGALINTA DIIWAANGALINTA IYO MAGANGALYADA DIIWAANKA EE MAGANGALY EE ASALKA

Iyada oo qayb ka ah baaritaanka cilmi-baarista, Ms Grace Wahome oo ka tirsan Jaamacadda Flinders waxay raadineysaa inay wareysato 30 qoys oo qaxooti ah iyo asal-doon ah oo ka soo jeeda aragtidooda ku aaddan ilaalinta carruurta, oo ka timid Koonfurta Suudaan, Jamhuuriyadda Dimuqraadiga ah ee Kongo (DRC) iyo Soomaali.

Si aad uga qeybqaadato, waxaad u baahan tahay inaad:

- 1) Waxay ku nooshahay Koonfurta Australia,
- 2) Da'diisu tahay 18 sano iyo wixii ka weyn,
- 3) Inuu ka haajiray mid ka mid ah wadamada kor ku xusan (South Sudan, DRC ama Somali)
 - Waxaad noqon kartaa hal ama labo
 - Waxaa laga yaabaa ama laga yaabaa inaad haysan carruur kuu gaar ah
 - Waxaad noqon kartaa waalid awoowe ama awoowe aan bayooloji ahayn

Kaqeybgalka wareysiga waa fursad lagu wadaago fikradahaaga guud ee ku saabsan badbaadinta carruurta South Australia, iyo inaad la wadaagto aragtidaada ku saabsan wax ku oolnimada siyaasadaha hadda jira ee lagu taageerayo dadka qaxootiga ah iyo asal-doonka asal ahaan ka soo jeeda bulshadaada. Sidoo kale waa fursad ay ku wadaagaan codkaaga iyo adiga inaad soo jeedisdo istiraatiijiyado wanaajin kara gaarsiinta adeegyo dhaqan ahaan ku habboon dhaqanka si looga caawiyo dadka qaxootiga ah iyo asal-doonka magan-galyo doonka ah. Intaa waxaa sii dheer, kani waa fursad kuu ah inaad sidoo kale ka wada hadasho qaab wada jir ah oo aad ula shaqeyso dadka qaxootiga ah iyo asal doonka asalka ah ee sameynta siyaasadaha mustaqbalka dhow ee ilaalinta caruurta iyo qaab dhismeedka waxqabadka.

Wareysiga wuxuu dhici doonaa waqti iyo goob kugu habboon. Qof ahaan ayaa lagu wareysan doonaa. Wareysiga waxaa lagu duubi doonaa maqal, iyo macluumaadkaaga shaqsiyadeed kama muuqan doonaan wax warbixinno ah ama qoraallo ka soo baxa baaritaanka. Nuqulo ka mid ah warbixinnada ayaa lagu siin doonaa markaad dhammaystirto mashruucu markii aad codsatid. Kaqeybgalayaashu waxay heli doonaan foobar lacag dhan \$ 25 Coles iyadoo mahadsanid waqtigooda.

Hadaad xiiseynayso kaqeybgalka waraysiga, ama aad jeceshahay macluumaad dheeri ah oo kusaabsan mashruuca cilmi baarista, fadlan kala xiriir Ms Grace Wahome oo ah waho0003@flinders.edu.au waho0003@flinders.edu.au

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 2148). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

APPENDIX F: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce Grace Wahome who is a PhD student in the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work at Flinders University. She will produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

Grace is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of Statutory Child Protection Social work policy and practice frameworks for supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

She would like to invite you to assist with this project by agreeing to be involved in an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. No more than 1 hour on 1 occasion would be required.

Be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. While the information gained in this study will be published, participation cannot be anonymous since you will be recruited from a small population pool. However, your personal information will not appear in any publications and individual information will remain confidential.

You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since she intends to make a tape recording of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the

thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed. The recording will not be made available to any other person. It may be necessary to make the recording available to a transcription service for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement which outlines the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to Grace at the address given above or by e-mail: waho0003@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Professor Damien Riggs
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
Flinders University
Tel: (08) 8201 3911

*This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee in South Australia (Project number 2148
For queries regarding the ethics approval of this project please contact the Executive Officer of the Committee via telephone on +61 8 8201 3116 or email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au*

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Grace Wahome

College of Education Psychology and Social Work

Sturt Road

Bedford Park SA 5042

GPO Box 2100

Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: +61 8 8201 3911

Fax: +61 8 8201 3184

Waho0003@flinders.edu.au

Web: www.flinders.edu.au

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

Interview questions

Name of Interviewee	Ms Grace Wahome
University	Flinders University, South Australia
Interview location	
Interview start time	
Interview end time	

1. Can you tell me about your family? How many children do you have? Were they born in Australia or overseas?
 - a. If overseas, what is the country of origin?
2. What were your perceptions of the child protection system in your home country?
3. Did you have any experiences that impacted upon you as a parent when leaving your home country?
 - a. If yes, please describe.
4. After leaving your home country how did you find the process of resettling in Australia in relation to parenting?
 - a. Did you receive any supports as a parent upon coming to Australia? If so, what were they?
5. Are there any cultural differences you have seen between your home country and Australia in terms of parenting?
 - a. Please describe any challenges you faced in managing these cultural differences
6. I now want to ask you about your experiences of child protection (or perceptions of child protection in South Australia if you have not experienced child protection). Please feel free to share as much or as little as you are able
 - a. Do you think child protection social workers understand your cultural needs and ways of parenting? Explain how/how not.

- b. What was your experience (or your community members' experience) of engaging with child protective services like? Was it helpful in any way? If so how?
 - c. Were you or your community members made aware of any statutory child protection documents that supported/can support people from your community with involvement with the department? If yes, please explain.
7. How could child protection agencies better support refugee and migrant people?
- a. What strategies might help reduce child protection concerns in your community?
 - b. What strategies might help strengthen your community in terms of parenting?

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee in South Australia (Project number 2148). For queries regarding the ethics approval of this project please contact the Executive Officer of the Committee via telephone on +61 8 8201 3116 or email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

APPENDIX H: INFORMATION SHEET CONSENT FORM

Participant information sheet and consent form

Title: ‘Statutory child protection social work policy and practice frameworks for supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis’

This is a Flinders University student project.

Chief Investigator

Title and full name: Grace Wahome
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
Flinders University
Tel: (08) 8201 3911

Supervisor

Title and full name: Professor Damien Riggs
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
Flinders University
Tel: (08) 8201 3911

Supervisor

Title and full name: Dr Clemence Due
School of Psychology, Faculty of Health and Medical Services
The University of Adelaide
Tel: (08) 8313 6096

Description of the study

This project will investigate the perceptions of child protection by people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds who have left South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somali and live in South Australia. The project will hear their views on the effectiveness of current policies in supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and their suggestions on a collaborative approach to working with the above named populations in developing future statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks.

This project is supported by Flinders University, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work.

Purpose of the study

This project aims to 1) investigate the capacity of current statutory child protection policy and practice frameworks in supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds and 2) to explore the perceptions of child protection of people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

Benefits of the study

The sharing of your experiences will help to improve statutory child protection social work practice, policies and practice frameworks for supporting people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

Participant involvement and potential risks

If you agree to participate in the research study, you will be asked to:

- Attend a one-on-one interview with a researcher that will be audio recorded
- Respond to questions regarding your views about statutory child protection social work in South Australia and your service needs.

The interview will take about 60 minutes and participation is entirely voluntary. You will be given an opportunity to review and edit your transcript straight after the interview.

The researcher anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study. Given the nature of the project, some participants could experience emotional discomfort.

Potential risks for participating in this research may include:

- Feeling burdened by the donation of your time
- Sharing your experience of past trauma if any
- Experiencing discomfort in detailing your perceptions of statutory child protection
- The researcher is a mandatory notifier and would have to report criminal activity concerning child abuse or neglect or such indictable offences.

If you experience feelings of distress as a result of participation in this study, please let the researcher know immediately. You can also contact the following services for support:

- Lifeline – 13 11 14, www.lifeline.org.au
- Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636, www.beyondblue.org.au
- Refugee Health Service: (08) 8237 3900
- Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Services (STARRS): (08) 8206 8900,

Withdrawal Rights

You may, without any penalty, decline to take part in this research study. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you may, without any penalty, withdraw at any time without providing an explanation. To withdraw, please contact the Chief Investigator or you may just refuse to answer any questions. Any data collected up to the point of my withdrawal will be securely destroyed.

My decision not to participate or to withdraw from this research study will not affect my relationship with Flinders University and its staff and students.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Only researchers listed on this form have access to the individual information provided by me. Privacy and confidentiality will be assured at all times. The research outcomes may be presented at conferences, written up for publication or used for other research purposes as described in this information form. However, the privacy and confidentiality of individuals will be protected at all times. I will not be named, and my individual information will not be identifiable in any research products without my explicit consent.

No data, including identifiable, non-identifiable and de-identified datasets, will be shared or used in future research projects without my explicit consent.

Data Storage

The information collected may be stored securely on a password protected computer and/or Flinders University server throughout the study. Any identifiable data will be de-identified for data storage purposes unless indicated otherwise. All data will be securely transferred to and stored at Flinders University for at least five years after publication of the results. Following the required data storage period, all data will be securely destroyed according to university protocols.

Recognition of Contribution / Time / Travel costs

If you would like to participate, in recognition of your contribution and participation time, you will be provided with a \$25.00 Coles voucher. This voucher will be provided to you face-to-face on completion of the interview.

How will I receive feedback?

On project completion, a short summary of the outcomes will be provided to all participants via email or published on Flinders University's website. If you wish to have feedback in your native language, this will be provided upon request.

Ethics Committee Approval

The project has been approved by Flinders University's Human Research Ethics Committee (project number 2148).

Queries and Concerns

Queries or concerns regarding the research can be directed to the research team. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study, you may contact the Flinders University's Research Ethics & Compliance Office team via telephone 08 8201 3116 or email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and if you accept our invitation to be involved, please sign the enclosed Consent Form.

APPENDIX I: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Consent Statement

- I have read and understood the information about the research, and I understand I am being asked to provide informed consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I can contact the research team if I have further questions about this research study.
- I am not aware of any condition that would prevent my participation, and I agree to participate in this project.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time during the study and that my withdrawal will not affect my relationship with Flinders University and its staff and students.
- I understand that I can contact Flinders University's Research Ethics & Compliance Office if I have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this study.
- I understand that my involvement is confidential, and that the information collected may be published. I understand that I will not be identified in any research products.
- I understand that the researcher is a mandatory notifier and would have to report criminal activity concerning child abuse or neglect or such indictable offences.

I further consent to:

- completing a demographic questionnaire
- participating in an interview
- having my information audio recorded
- sharing my de-identified data with other researchers
- my data and information being used in this project and other related projects for an extended period of time (no more than 10 years after publication of the data)
- being contacted about other research projects

Signed:

Name:

Date:

APPENDIX J: LETTER FROM ACCSA COMMUNITY LEADER



AFRICAN COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF SA
23 Coglein Street, Adelaide SA 5000
Phone: (08) 8410 3905
Fax (08) 8217 9558
E-mail: admin@accsainc.org.au

Flinders University
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (SBRECS)
Sturt Road, Bedford Park South Australia 5042
GPO Box 2100 Adelaide SA 5001

01st February 2020

Dear Chair,

On behalf of the African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA), I am writing to grant permission for Ms Grace Wahome, a PhD student at Flinders University, to conduct her research titled, "Statutory child protection social work policy and practice frameworks for supporting people with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis". I understand that Grace will interview a total of 30 families (10 families each) from three African communities being Sudan, Somali and Congo across South Australia, who have come to the attention of Statutory Child Protection. Grace has already spoken with the community leaders of these groups and they have all pledged their support in assisting Grace to recruit participants. We are happy to participate and promote this study and contribute to this important research.

The African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA) is the peak body representing the interests of 42 African groups and organisations in South Australia. It is funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) to deliver settlement services and assist African Refugee migrants in South Australia. It also works with both federal and state governments and non-government organisations by providing feedback on issues relating to African settlement and Multicultural policy.

Yours Sincerely,

Nkweto M Nkamba

Acting-Chairperson ACCSA

APPENDIX K: DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

The table below seeks to gather demographic data for a general background understanding of the three communities involved in the research, being South Sudan, The Democratic Republic of Congo and Somali. Information gathered will be used only for academic research reasons only.

Please fill in appropriately

Gender	
Age	
Household Size (i.e number of occupants including yourself)	
Marital Status (Single, parent family or couple)	
Highest Level of Education	
Occupation/ Main Income Source	
Country of Origin	
Visa Status	
Main language spoken other than English	

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