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A Phenomenological Study on Lived Experiences of Congolese Women Refugees Living
in Indianapolis: Voices of Women

by

Jane Nyangau Mokaya

A Dissertation Presented to the
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences of Nova Southeastern University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Nova Southeastern University
2018

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July 2018

**Nova Southeastern University
College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences**

This dissertation was submitted by Jane Nyangau Mokaya under the direction of the chair of the dissertation committee listed below. It was submitted to the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences and approved in partial fulfillment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Nova Southeastern University.

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Dedication

I dedicate my entire study to my children: Kevin, Peter, Brenda, and Michael who have seen me go through hard times, sitting long hours in the computer lab and school library to make it to the end. Without them I could not have completed my studies. They held my hand and told me to concentrate on my studies, not to worry about paying bills until I complete the program. Brenda moved to Florida to support me financially, physically, and morally. I had someone to talk to at home when I got tired from books. Her support for a mother is beyond words. I pray God's blessings to follow you, my children, always.

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Abstract

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been at war for decades. Since its self-rule in 1960, the country has been dealing with civil war, and has the largest number of refugees from Africa to the United States. Mineral wise it is the richest country in Africa, and yet it is the poorest in the standard of living. In this dissertation, I sought to research the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees settled in Indianapolis, Indiana. The purpose of this study was to explore, through their own voices, the challenges these women face as they resettle in a new country, with new people, and a new culture. These women are expected to be self-reliant within three months (90 days) with the help of resettlement agencies. A priority is that they are expected to learn a new language to enable them to move on to a life on their own. This is a challenge for these women who never had a formal education. Some of the challenges they face are the language barrier, living in a new country, new people, new environment, and the generational gap. Their challenge is to overcome these barriers. The study aims to share the women's voices firsthand. From the findings, awareness will be brought to the inefficiencies of the ninety-day period of service from the resettlement agencies. Another finding is that the women refugees were not comfortable with the idea of being resettled in the United States. An additional finding is that the research participants condemned the separation that took place in the family when some of them were resettled in the US and some were left in Africa.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo, also referred as DRC, is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa with a population of 75 million people (Flahaux & Schoumaker, 2016). Originally colonized by Belgium, DRC gained its independence in 1960 but has since been experiencing a series of political instabilities, civil conflicts, and economic hardships that have resulted in the country being one of the largest exporters of refugees and asylum seekers (Flahaux et al., 2016). Consequently, a large percentage of Congolese women refugees get resettled in the United States. Once in America, refugees face additional barriers that have negatively affected their quality of life. For instance, a majority lack proper education, are not knowledgeable about healthcare structure, do not understand the English language because DR Congo was a Belgian colony where French was spoken, and do not have experience living in a culturally diverse society (Gurnah, Khoshnood, Bradley & Yuan, 2011).

This study examines the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees who have been resettled in Indianapolis, Indiana and explores their struggles to integrate with the American culture relating to language barrier, education, employment, and everyday life. The chapter begins with outlining the conflicts after Congo's independence in 1960. Then it examines the resettlement process in the United States and the consequent daily struggles with healthcare, education, and employment. This chapter will also posit the major research questions, the need for this study, the research implications, and the phenomenological research methods used.

The State of Congo after the 1960 Independence

The Belgian Congo attained its independence on June 30th, 1960 under the name of “Republic of the Congo.” Months towards independence, the Congolese elected their leaders in the national assembly and the senate. Mr. Patrice Lumumba was elected as the Prime Minister and Mr. Joseph Kasavumbu was elected as the President. The country’s provinces also elected their leaders to represent them in both Houses of the Senate and National Assembly. Congo was granted independence without proper preparation from the Belgians, which led to poor leadership, as there were not enough properly educated people to steer the country for self-rule (Dizolele, M. P., 2010).

During the time of independence in 1960, there were indications of imminent conflict among various matters including mining, farming, ethnic leadership, and Cold War interests. Most expatriates fled the country, and the country’s young government had leaders with differing allies, with Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba leaning towards the east and Joseph Kasavumbu leaning towards west. The feuding of the leaders with different political parties caught in the east-west dichotomy did not help matters. A rebellion in the army followed. The rich provinces of Katanga and Kasai seceded, and lawlessness was experienced as looting took center stage. Western investors became concerned because they could not envision what the new laws could offer if ratified by the unpredictable and inexperienced regime of Patrice Lumumba. England, France, and the United States, while allies of Belgium, were not ready to share the immense economic resources in Congo with the new administration of Patrice Lumumba, whom they considered Pro-Soviet (Villafana, F.R., 2009).

Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba had fallen out with the west due to the United Nations' management of the Congo predicament by permitting Belgian troops to go to Congo, which was not legal per the international laws. Lumumba felt offended, seeing the UN action of sending Belgian troops as amounted to substituting UN colonialism for Belgian colonialism (Licata, L., & Klein, O., 2010). The main problem was that the UN was reluctant to get involved in what was considered as convoluted Congolese internal glitches. Patrice Lumumba refused to consent to what Belgium and the west wanted and he was seen as a Communist, which led to Belgium and the west to assassinate him so that Congo could not fall into Soviet hands. Belgium's Secret Service with the CIA had settled on eliminating Lumumba as the only way to prevent Congo from falling into the sphere of the Soviets. After Lumumba was killed, Joseph Desire Mobutu was installed as the new President (Gondola, C. D., 2002).

The new government of Mobutu had to deal with ethnic conflicts, foreign companies, commercial interests, and succession issues as they struggled to form a sustainable country between the years 1960 to 1965. Within five years of the struggle, General Joseph Mobutu had taken over the reign of the country, which he ruled for over three decades. Immediately after he took power, he changed the name of Congo to Zaire. At the end of Mobutu's rule, civil war broke out, which also involved some of the neighboring countries.

In 1990, after 23 years of single rule, President Mobutu allowed multiparty elections due to pressure from the international community, local community, and opposition political parties. Extremely organized and severe violence took place. The Mobutu government made changes, reforming the civil guard and reorganizing the

president's special division (DSP). These reforms were meant to suppress the popular movements. People disappeared without trace, some were tortured, and some were killed, including the opposition members and their families. The media and thousands of civilians were not spared either (Rousseau, Rufagari, Bagilishya & Measham, 2004). For the first time since 1965, multiparty elections were held in 2006 and the interim president Joseph Kabila was elected (Dizolele, 2010).

Meanwhile, violence in North Kivu, which had been going on for a long time, continued. Many Congolese people were displaced and became refugees in neighboring countries, while some resettled in the west, with the US taking the largest number. Most of the women refugees being researched in this study came to the US from North Kivu. The conflict in North Kivu has been mainly driven by political cleavages and local accusations in ostracized borderland regions. The political atmosphere has not helped lead people away from violence, rather the incitement from politicians has worsened the situation. Politicians keep on inciting people to fight on a tribal basis (Shepard. B., 2011). An ethnic group, Wanyamurenge, is situated along the border and its people share the same culture and speak the same language but are technically from different countries.

National Committee of the Defense of the People (CNDP) is a group which had been formed to represent local grievances and those of the neighboring countries. This initiative threatened peace on local and regional level. Though the CNDP clearly did not mark the last resolution of the conflict in the Kivu province, it definitely symbolized a significant transformation in a fundamental conflict dynamic. Assuming peripheral support does not return actual the prospect of the continuing weakness of the Congolese state, there could be need for deeper peacebuilding in the region (Shepard, B., 2011).

Women Refugees

When countries are unsuccessful to accomplish necessary requirements and when the failure has a specified discerning effect, the refugee law offers an alternative general security to the people affected (Anker D.E., 2002). This translates to when civil war break out in any country, women and children suffer the most. Women being homemakers with children around them most of the time find themselves in a situation of running to safety while shielding their children from harm. This is the reason women refugees run to the nearest safe place. Due to the conflict, which caused civil war for decades in DR Congo, there are a large number of women refugees in the neighboring countries and in those western countries who admit refugees. The United States admits a large number of refugees, with women refugees from DR Congo among them. There is a huge presence of Congolese women refugees resettled in Indianapolis, Indiana.

The consequences of conflict in DR Congo are significant in the lived experiences of women refugees within Indianapolis. Due to the conflict in DR Congo for decades, many women refugees lost their children and husbands, and as a result they ran away from their country. This changed the family unit, which has seen the change of cultural roles within it. Women from the DR Congo had to run away from the war-torn country to safety for decades. Their male counterparts are either fighting willingly or captured by the rebels and are forced to be part of their group or be killed.

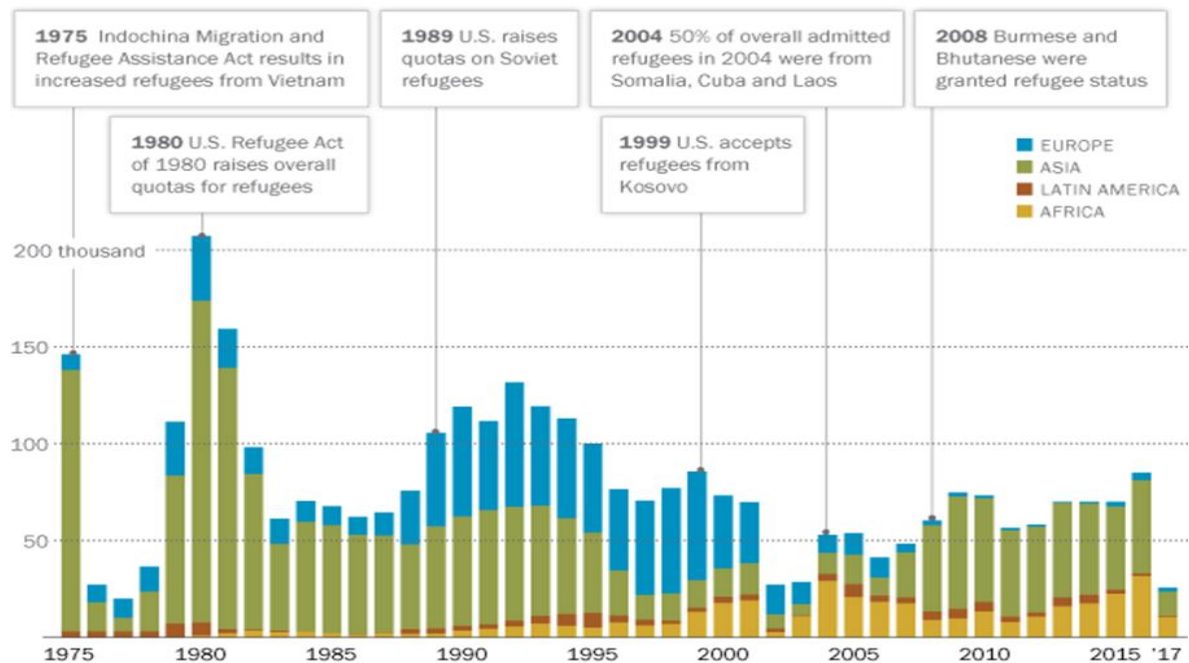
Resettlement in the United States

Resettlement of all refugees come with many challenges in the US. These challenges affect the Congolese women refugees resettled in Indianapolis. This study will be looking at the lived experiences of the Congolese women refugees resettled in

Indianapolis. Some states in the US take in refugees for many reasons. The states which take a large number of refugees usually need manpower to work in the factories, industries, and farms. Indiana is one of the states which admit refugees in large numbers for these reasons. Indianapolis is well known for resettling refugees from all over the world, with a large number of refugees from Myanmar (Burma). However, there is a big presence of African refugees from DR Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Others are from Bhutan, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and South Korea. The graph below shows the trend of refugee admission in the US since 1975 to 2017 and by region of origin.

The shifting origins of refugees to the U.S. over time

Number of refugees admitted to the U.S., by region of origin of principal applicant and fiscal year



Source: Refugee Processing Center, 1975-2016.

Note: Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Does not include refugees admitted under the Private Sector Initiative. Europe includes former Soviet Union states. Asia includes Middle Eastern and North African countries. Africa includes sub-Saharan Africa, but also Sudan and South Sudan. Latin America includes Caribbean. Data for fiscal 2017 are through Dec. 31, 2016; fiscal 2017 began Oct. 1, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Figure 1. Shifting Origins of Refugees to the U.S

Major Post Resettlement

Major challenges for new arrivals are education, lack of information of the health care structure, language barrier, and inexperience interacting with a society made up of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Gurnah et al., 2011). According to the Pew Research Center on Key Facts about Refugees to the US, “In fiscal 2016, the highest number of refugees from any nation came from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Congo accounted for 16,370 refugees followed by Syria (12,587), Burma (aka Myanmar, with 12,347), Iraq (9,880) and Somalia (9,020). Over the past decade, the largest numbers of refugees have come from Burma (159,692) and Iraq (135,643)” (Krogstad J.M. & Radford J., 2017). Coming from a country riddled with civil war for decades, these women refugees find themselves dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder after going through the effects of the war, along with loneliness from not being able to be with their communities anymore, feeling misplaced from being forced to move out of their homes, facing culture shock from finding themselves dealing with different cultures and diverse groups, language barriers, and the loss of loved ones who were killed during the war. In addition, the culture shock includes dashed hopes, reversal of customary roles, loss of status, intergenerational conflicts, work frustrations, and feelings of separation (Gurnah et al., 2011).

As a result of language barriers and new cultures, these women refugees get frustrated because they cannot communicate effectively and are not understood. This makes them feel emotionally vulnerable. To make matters worse, they are discharged from the resettlement agencies after the ninety day period per the policy of service from the federal government. They are left to fend for themselves and their children. They

work long hours at mediocre jobs, leaving their children alone at home. The women continue to feel inadequate while facing financial difficulties (Gurnah et al., 2011).

Need for Research

The need for research in this topic is high, as the current literature on refugees touches on other areas but nothing so far has been researched on the lived experiences of women refugees. The outcome of this study will be valuable to the researcher and scholars. It would form a base for more research on this topic, and it will contribute to the knowledge base on refugee resettlement in the United States. The study will also assist in revising the policies governing refugee settlement.

Prior studies on refugee resettlement in the United States have focused on institutional problems, thus undermining the contributions of the refugees themselves in constructing a holistic experience of resettlement. Researching on the lived experiences of women refugees could enable an understanding of the meaning and essence of the lives of refugees living in the US.

Research Question

Drawing from the existing state of knowledge on the topic, the following questions were considered relevant as research guides. They will help in the research study with accurate insights of the lived experiences. The questions guided the participants to express their lived experiences, as it will assist in enabling other people like scholars, researchers, and other interested parties to understand the meanings and essences of their experiences.

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees in Indiana?

This question guided the researcher to understand the lives of these women refugees and it also assisted women in expressing their feelings and lived experiences. The expressions brought out the feelings they were experiencing as women refugees living in the US.

RQ2: What meanings, structures, and essences are found in the lived experiences of the women?

This question made the women talk and express their lived experiences regarding the structures which were of assistance to them and essences as understood by the women themselves.

RQ3: How do the women construct their lived world as refugees in the United States?

This question assisted these women to understand how their lives were constructed around new cultures and systems in the world around them as refugees living in the United States.

RQ4: What are the patterns and the relationships exposed in the experiences described by the women?

This question made these women examine the relationships around them and how they managed to live towards the assimilation process as women refugees living in the US.

In order to address these questions, the researcher developed an in-depth interview tool to gather the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees in the state of Indiana.

Purpose of the Study

The tenacity of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of women refugees from DR Congo who reside in Indianapolis, and the significance that these experiences hold for them. Indianapolis is currently home to many refugees from many parts of the world, among them DR Congo. Consequently, the study will help to design systems that can assist practitioners and policy makers to include the voices of women in peacebuilding in areas of conflict. This will reduce the number of women refugees. These refugee women's voices will help practitioners be successful when designing a program for peacebuilding and conflict management so that women can remain in their home countries (Agbajobi, 2010).

The study will also be valuable to researchers and scholars because it will form a base for more research on the lived experiences of refugees. Moreover, the study significantly contributes to the knowledge base on refugee resettlement in the United States. In this regard, the phenomenological approach adopted in this study introduced a new perspective for understanding the problems of refugee resettlement in the US.

Theoretical Frameworks

This researcher reviewed theories pertinent to comprehending the problems of Congolese women refugees who are resettled in Indianapolis, Indiana. These theories are crucial, as they provide different perspectives for understanding the problems of this category of refugees in the United States. Among the theories I will use are: human needs theory, ecosystems theory, and assimilation theory of refugee resettlement.

Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (Human Needs Theory)

Maslow (1943, 1954) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and that some needs take precedence over others. Our most basic need is for physical survival, and this will be the first thing that motivates our behavior. Once that level is fulfilled the next level up is what motivates us. Based on this framework, Maslow elaborated the hierarchy of needs and asserted that human behavior and social interactions are conditioned by the struggle to achieve these needs.

Abraham Maslow's human needs as the cause of human conflicts

Abraham Maslow was an American Psychologist who came up with the human needs theory to explain the inevitability of human conflict. Maslow stated that human conflicts are the consequences of the struggle to achieve unmet human needs. Maslow further argued that these needs can be placed in a hierarchical order following their importance. Maslow's basic human needs are physiological, safety, love/belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization. All these needs are applicable to every human being and are necessary for survival. According to Maslow, the need to survive comes as a priority and moves down to self-esteem and self-actualization. For a human being to think of pursuing one need, the first need on the chain must be taken care of to the satisfaction of the individual (Willis, 2007).

John Burton (1990) embraced Maslow's theory of human needs and explained that human conflicts were not caused by a shortage of material goods or claims to territories, but rather by fundamental issues touching on personal and group security, identity and recognition, "and especially a sense of control over political processes that affected security, identity and recognition" (p. xv). The difference between Burton and

Maslow's human needs theories is the importance of the hierarchy of basic human needs. While Maslow placed great importance in the hierarchy of human needs, Burton thought human needs can be universal in their occurrence but with no hierarchical significance. Burton described human needs as ontological human needs, since these needs are inherent to our existence as human beings.

Pursuing the argument of the nonhierarchical nature of human needs, Burton argued that people chase after these needs at the same time and not step by step as Maslow suggests. Burton, however, agreed with Maslow that where these needs are not met, the result is conflict. Inadvertently, this explanation has an effect on human interaction and behavior. According to Burton, serious conflicts erupt when the social and political organs fail to address human needs, specifically security, recognition, and development (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011). Burton, in addition, stated that the values human beings have are inflexible. They do not change even when other values change. His challenge to practitioners of Conflict Resolution was that they should focus on problem solving and transfer from power bargaining, negotiation, and settlement strategies. In his opinion, if the stronger party makes room for the weaker, the conflict will be resolved (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2011).

Perusing the case of refugees, Maslow's explanation of human needs is appropriate. Specifically, we see that when refugees come out of a crisis situation, particularly a war, they have basic needs. These needs are physical and safety. This fits into Maslow's theory; the refugees are never concerned about self-esteem or self-actualization, nor do they seek to belong anywhere. They are just looking for a way to survive and at the same time be safe. That is why the country that accepts them and

places them in camps meets the basic needs Maslow describes. It is when the refugees have overcome the problem of hunger, safety, and physical survival that they begin to look out for love and belongingness. This is the next stage that Maslow describes. Most often the refugees naturally enter into this stage when they are comfortable and may have been released from the camps. It is at this stage they begin to seek and form relationships. Some join groups such as churches. What they are seeking is love and belonging, which is the next step human beings seek according to Maslow's theory.

Again, examining the lives of refugees, they will follow the next stage in Maslow's hierarchy of needs when they have received some love and felt some belonging in their adopted country. It is at this stage that the refugees seek self-esteem. They probably lost their self-esteem due to the problems they went through. Now they start to build their lives back and remember their lost dreams. Whatever dreams they had to abandon due to crisis in their lives, they can now set into motion the process to actualize their dreams. If they are fortunate to be in a prosperous country, they get jobs and plan to do whatever is needed to become what they have always wanted to become.

In *Communication and Conflict Resolution Skills*, Katz and Lawyer (1992), contend that hierarchy of needs is one skill anybody looks for to stretch to the required level. They also explain that in different cultural belief systems where satisfying basic needs is not a subject for societies, "the avoidance of physical discomfort" is essential (1992, p. 151). Considering the comprehensive nature of human needs theory in relation to the needs of the refugees, I adopted this theoretical framework for this research. The human needs theoretical framework was very relevant because it captured the lived

experiences of refugees as expressed in the interviews, as well as the needs highlighted in the description of their lived experiences.

The Ecosystems Theory of Refugee Resettlement

The ecosystems theory “was developed to arrange, integrate, and systematize knowledge about the interrelation of people with each other and with their environments” (Pillari, 2002, p.7). Developed by Morales and Sheafor (2002) the ecosystems theory of refugee resettlement combines the ecological theory and systems theory to demonstrate the critical layers of refugee lives in their host environments. The development of sociological and social work practices have long articulated the dynamic interaction suggested by systems theory between individual, families, groups, and their environments (Coughlan & Owens-Manley, 2006).

While, as observed by Morales and Sheafor (2002), the sociological and social work approach is effective in mitigating harmful social conditions and in bringing about a change for improved psychosocial functioning, the ecosystems theory combines the principles of ecology (the study of the relationship between organisms and their environments) and general systems theory (the theory that all organisms are entities with boundaries and subsystems) in working with people (Coughlan & Owens-Manley, 2006). The theory is developed on the principle that people at every given moment of their lives are affected by a combination of factors stemming from the individual, family, culture and belief systems, history, and environmental context.

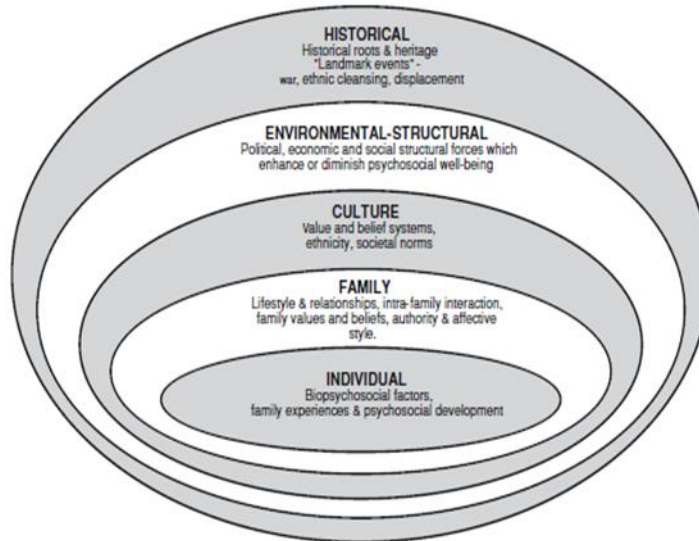


Figure 2. An ecosystems perspective for refugee population: Source: Adapted from Morales and Sheafor (2002, p.10).

Based on the ecosystems theory, refugees are influenced by a combination of factors related to their individuality, family interaction, culture and belief systems, and environmental context as they struggle to become successful. However, while this theory highlights the complexity of factors that conditions refugee resettlement, the theory fails to identify the factors that are critical for a successful resettlement scheme. The theory also does not clearly demonstrate the impact of each factor on refugee resettlement.

Assimilation Theory of Refugee Resettlement

The classical assimilation theory was developed in the 1920s by the Chicago School of Sociology (Park, Burgess & McKenzie, 1925; Waters, Van, Kasinitz & Mollenkopf, 2010). This early assimilation model set forth by Park (1928) described how immigrants adopt the culture of the native society (Scholten, 2011). This theoretical perspective conceptualized assimilation from point of view of “Americanization” (Kazal, 1995). According to this perspective, immigrants in the process of assimilation become more American by conforming to the norms of the dominant Euro-American culture.

The assimilation theory articulates the basic theoretical tenet that immigrant assimilation is a necessary condition for preserving social cohesion, thus emphasizing a one-sided, mono-directional process of immigrant enculturation leading to upward social mobility (Warner & Srole, 1945). This theoretical perspective has been criticized for failing to differentiate the process of resettlement for diverse groups of immigrants and for failing to consider interacting contextual factors (Van Tubergen, 2006).

The theory fails to differentiate refugees who are forced to emigrate from their home countries because of political and cultural circumstances beyond their control. Their resettlement in the new environment is influenced by a combination of factors. These factors are derived from the refugees themselves and their future plans to either settle permanently in the host community or return home to their country of origin. Once the circumstances that forced them out in the first place are cleared and the social and cultural context of the host environment is improved, they can return or continue living in the countries where they are resettled (Van T., 2006).

A segmented assimilation theory came to light in the 1990s as an alternative to the classical assimilation theories (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters et al., 2010). The segmented assimilation theory posits that immigrants may follow different trajectory of assimilation depending on their socioeconomic statuses and on social factors such as human capital and social structure (Xie & Greenman, 2010). This tenet of the assimilation also fails to take into account the special circumstances of refugees that forced them to emigrate from their home countries to resettle in foreign land for reasons beyond their personal control. Looking at the case of refugees and asylum-seekers, the question becomes how do their special circumstances as refugees influence their process of assimilation in the host

environments? The theory also fails to clarify whether national refugee integration programs, for example, the national refugee integration program of the United States, are designed to assimilate refugees into the host culture.

Significance of the Study

There is need for research on the lived experiences because there has not been any study focusing on the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees. This research will assist the refugee resettlement agencies and policy makers improve where there is a gap in the resettlement process. If policies are revised, this research will contribute to the understanding of refugees issues, which will then be changed to enable them assimilate faster in their new environment. The recommendations can assist policy makers to consider resettling refugees in their home continents where they are familiar with the surroundings/systems. Additionally, the study can add input to refugee studies and be a motivation for more research from scholars. The voices of these women refugees can add to the peace negotiations of the conflict in their country.

The study will provide a platform for the women to be heard in their own voices by the resettlement agencies and policymakers so they can increase the resettlement period from three months to a longer period. This is because the three month period is too short for adaption to take place. The reason is these women refugees came from a French speaking country.

Outline of the Research

This is a phenomenological (transcendental) study following Moustakas (1994). The study describes transcendental phenomenology as an approach that focuses on “the individual structural description of the experience based on the individual textual

description and imaginative variation (p.121).” The study will follow Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data. Moustakas also describes this approach as the descriptive phenomenological approach, thus using the concepts of descriptive and transcendental phenomenology interchangeably. In the context of this research the terms were used interchangeably, and the analysis of the data collected in the context of transcendental phenomenology followed the following steps:

Chapter one introduces the research problems, describes the context and background of the problem. Chapter two describes the existing literature on the problem, and identifying the weaknesses of the literature. Chapter three describes the methods and procedures used to carry out the study. Chapter four presents the analysis of the study by using Van Kaam method of analysis as follows:

I got the horizons or meanings that stood out as the invariant qualities of the experience. I then checked the invariant qualities and themes which were non repetitive, non-overlapping constituents of each lived experience which were clustered into themes. The next step was to get the individual textual description. These were integrative descriptions of the invariant textual constituents and themes of each participant involved in the research. Finally, I had to put together the composite textual description. These were integrations of all the individual textual descriptions of the 12 women who participated in this research.

Motivation to the Study

My motivation for engaging in the study was from my past experience working for Catholic Charities Refugee Program in Indianapolis as a refugee resettlement officer and benefits coordinator. This previous experience exposed me to the lives of the

Congolese women refugees in Indiana. In this capacity, I listened to many heartbreaking experiences. My passion to make a difference encouraged me to counsel and sometimes grieve with these women refugees. I often assisted in calling the family members who remained behind in refugee camps in Rwanda, Mozambique, and Kenya. Sometimes I provided emotional support, comforting them through the psychological pain of leaving their children behind in the refugee camps in Rwanda, Mozambique, and Kenya.

Since these women refugees came from a French speaking country, it became my everyday duty to assist them to communicate in Swahili language, which I understood and could translate to English. Since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sometimes resettles some members of families before others, it becomes emotionally painful for resettled refugees to leave family members behind. Similarly, the trauma of mothers leaving some of their children behind after escaping the war and being separated during the resettlement period brings further misery. All of these contributions I made while working as a refugee resettlement officer developed in me the passion, motivation, and interest to further explore the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees.

Research Problem

The research problem undertaken was: “The lived experiences of Congolese Women Refugees in Indianapolis in the voices of these women.”

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter outlines an overview of the research conducted on the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees resettled in the state of Indiana, USA. It defined the chronological context of the colonization of DR Congo by Belgium, the

overview of DR Congo after independence in 1960, the political turmoil, and the civil war for four decades. The chapter formed the foundation of the study as it presents the research problem, the research questions, and the justification for the research topic.

Three theoretical frameworks were used to analyze and understand the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees resettled in Indiana. Maslow's human needs theory focused on the need to survive as a priority and then moves down to self-esteem and self-actualization. The ecosystems theory of refugee resettlement developed on the principle that people at every given moment of their lives are affected by a combination of factors stemming from the individual, family, culture, belief systems, history, and environmental context. Assimilation theory of refugee resettlement focuses on how immigrants adopt the culture of the native society. Immigrants in the process of assimilation become more American, conforming to the norms of the dominant Euro-American culture.

Chapter 2 is the literature review of the scholarly research on the resettlement of refugees in the United States and the impact it has on lived experiences of Congolese women refugees. Chapter 3 utilizes Moustaka's (1994) phenomenology (transcendental) research methods. The study is about the lived experiences of Congolese Women resettled in Indianapolis as refugees. Chapter 4 examines the findings from the in-depth interviews of 12 Congolese women refugees living in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are 21.3 million refugees scattered across 128 countries, and Africa accounts for nearly one-fifth of the world's refugees and virtually half of the world's internally displaced people (Brad, 2017; Pena, 2017; United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2008). The three main African countries with the largest concentration of refugees include Somalia with 560,000, Sudan with 420,000 refugees, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo with 370,000 refugees (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2008). The refugee population is made up of women and young people under 18 years of age. Until recently, the United States has led the world in providing a safe haven for the refugees over the past five decades. Despite the open door policy towards refugee resettlement, very little is known about successfully integrating refugees into the community. Most researchers have focused on the structural conditions from the state, local, and organizational level surrounding refugee settlements (Aleinikoff, 1992; Boas, 2007; Khawaja et al., 2008). None have explored the daily struggles such as refugee reception, placement, and integration into the American society.

In order to understand the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees living in Indianapolis, one must first explore the context surrounding their search for a better life in America. The following chapter explores the historical context of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Next it examines the nature of the refugee situation and the United States' role in providing shelter for the displaced as well as the institutions that process the resettlement. Three theories are proposed to better contextualize the lived experiences of Congolese women: human needs theory, ecosystem theory, and assimilation theory.

Social Conflicts as Source of Refugee Problem

The Democratic Republic of Congo has committed crimes against humanity that include persecution, forced displacement, sexual violence, and war crimes over the past decades (Lindberg & Razaki, 2012). These have occurred during the civil wars that have been ongoing in DR Congo. Since the country became independent in 1960, there has been civil war due to power struggle but the main cause of the conflict is the country's natural resources. Civil war is a creation of the interested parties so as to get a way of pulling out resources. This led to create a requirement of publicly traded companies that manufacture products using 'conflict minerals' from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) or adjoining countries. The Conflict Minerals Report (CMR) has to be filed showing that the products of various companies are not from the conflict minerals (Sankara, J., Lindberg, D. L., & Razaki, K. A., 2015).

The prolonged civil war in Congo has had an unimaginable impact on the country, resulting in an outflow of refugees to different parts of the world. The countries in the west who take in refugees are USA, Canada, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. Also, many people have lost their lives as some escaped as refugees to other countries because of insecurity. Many of these refugees are in refugee camps in the neighboring countries, where they are processed to be resettled in western countries (Sankara et al., 2015).

Kisangani (2012) questions why there has been an eruption of many civil wars in the Congo. He further questions which conjectural method should be used to manage the wars, and how long they can take to be contained. The purpose of this dissertation is to find an alternative approach to conflict resolution that could have been applied to prevent these civil wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo and avoid the outflow of refugees.

Furthermore, the fight for the control of the natural resources, basic needs, and individualism has led to the many civil wars in the DRC. The political leaders do no good because they create marginalization once in power because they favor their political nemesis and relatives hence the discontent in other small groups.

The Role of the Belgium as Sources of Refugee Problems

Kisangani (2012) asserts that the Belgian initiated much of the conflicts in the Katanga Province, an area known for rich natural resources, of the Congo. The province had many investors of the European origin who were driven by basic needs, natural resources, and identity. Due to its rich natural resource, the Katanga Province attracted many foreign investors, which in effect made the province one of the richest region in the DRC. This led to the wars of secession. Kisangani further contends that as a result of the excessive greed to extract the resources for the benefit of the former colony, the province became prominent as the bedrock of conflict in DRC.

The conflict in DRC is intractable because the actors portray the image of seeking common goals when in reality they have different interests. Trefon (2011) contends that in the DRC civil war, the actors portray a picture of working together but in reality do not. The entanglements with external players and the overwhelming issues of rivalry between internal players pretending to be working together complicates the resolution of the conflict. While the parties in the conflict pretend to be pursuing a common solution, they tend to not trust each other. The author further cites the political culture of not wanting to relinquish power as the contributing factor to protracted political conflict in Africa (Trefon, 2011). Much of Congo's conflicts steam from the involvement of

multinational corporations and the control over the nation's minerals and natural resources (BSR Report, 2010; Lyall, 2017).

The Congo conflict, which has been remained unresolved for decades, seems to have defeated the United Nations (UN) agency mandated to mediate for a resolution. The conflict in Eastern Congo has made a transport system through North Kivu now controlled by child soldiers captured from villages, along with girls and women kidnapped by rebels to be used as sex slaves. Those captured as sex slaves who are lucky to escape alive end up as refugees. Some women manage to escape from the rebels and become refugees in neighboring countries before they are resettled in the western countries (Deibert, 2013).

According to Deibert (2013), the "UN Security Council adopted resolution 2021 in November 2011," which castigated the illegitimate movement of arms into Congo, its backing of procedures for distributors, producers, and traders of mineral products coming from Congo, and demanded all the militia groups to lay down their arms. He further explains that rebellion after rebellion in DR Congo breeds the same scenarios of involuntary labor, sexual violence, coercions, and kidnaps.

Eichstaedt (2011) opines that the women abuses carried out in Eastern Congo is beyond depiction and justification. He further asserts that social values are broken down completely as a result of the rampant rape phenomenon. He claims that one of the military commanders told him that his office and those of his soldiers did not know that rape is a crime. This scenario clearly confirms the kind of impunity men in DR Congo have towards their treatment of women. These kinds of incidents are the ones most

Congolese women refugees went through before they were rescued to be resettled in various countries of the west and in United States.

Eichstaedt (2011) continued to explain the effects of the family unit in DR Congo as completely broken down. He asserts that even in other neighboring countries also experiencing violence, rampant rape has been reported. Sexual violence is prevalent in conflict areas, but particularly in Africa. The courts, which should be dispensing justice for the women raped, are located far away, which becomes difficult to reach. Hence rape cases take a long time to process or to be heard. It becomes expensive for the victims to pay for the prosecution and transport to another court 60 miles away. Many women suffer silently with the trauma of rape. This explains the reason most of the refugees from DR Congo suffer from depression and other types of mental illness (Eichstaedt, 2011).

The conflicts in the DR Congo started far back in the colonial period. The Belgians who colonized the country never recognized the black Congolese as indigenous, which laid the seed of dissent. The conflict in Congo has produced refugees all over the world. Quoting from his book “Death in the Congo, Murdering Patrick Lumumba,” Kuklick (2015) describes the shocked and devastated reaction of then Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba when he learned of the condescending address by Baudouin, the colonial leader of the Congo, depicting blacks as not human beings but disposable merchandise. The colonizer’s view of DR Congo as a generator of revenue for Belgium continues until present day. This is the reason the conflict has never been resolved, hence the many refugees in the US and other countries (Kuklick, 2015).

Kuklick (2015) asserts that the Belgians never prepared Congolese for independence, as opposed to the British who prepared their colonies for independence.

The Belgians did not want to enlighten the Congolese to start resisting the harvest of their natural resources. He further explains that when the Belgians introduced French as an official language, Patrice Lumumba resisted and advised Congolese to ensure they know their mother languages of Tshiluba, Swahili, Lingala, and Kitumba. In their book *Aid and Reform in Africa*, Dollar et al. (2001) state that the rich mineral resources have made the country of DR Congo pay a substantial price. They argue that the poor preparation for independence from the Belgians created the chaotic situation which Congo continues to suffer till today.

Congolese Women and Violent Conflicts in Congo

Congolese women are most affected by the conflicts in Congo because during the war they find themselves being widowed with children to care for. This is because their husbands get killed or captured by the rebels, and force them to fight against the government of the day. Most of the time these women get raped while some get killed (Mukwege, D. M., & Nangini, C. 2009). Congolese women refugees find themselves dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, loneliness, feeling misplaced, facing culture shock, language barriers, and the loss of loved ones. In addition, the culture shock includes: dashed hopes, reversal of customary roles, loss of status, intergenerational conflicts, work frustrations, and feelings of separation (Gurnah et al., 2011).

In the publication titled the *Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the global fight for women's rights*, Woudenberg (2012) describes the plight of women raped in the DRC, which he describes as alarming. The author further states that girls from age 11 and above become sex slaves to the rebels. Woudenberg further describes the ordeal of a young girl and her friend who were captured from their home and taken hostage by rebels for

months when they were playing. The friend never made it back alive after being raped for days and eventually beaten to death because of resisting the rape. This young girl remained with her dead friend's body as it rotted next to her in a hole where they were thrown. The young girl was eventually rescued when the government soldiers patrolled the area and the rebels ran away (Woudenberg, 2012).

Such despicable scenes of inhumanity are the motivating factors for the outflow of people from the Congo as refugees. Their struggle to live and move on after the rapes without counseling is a hurdle which needs to be addressed as the refugees resettle in their host environments. Woudenberg (2012) further confirms that sexual violence is beyond redress in Congo. UN agencies estimate that at least 200,000 women and girls have been raped in the DRC since 1998. This shows that the conflict in Congo is beyond the UN, the body mandated to intervene at any level to stop the conflict and prevent the horrors of rape. Women and girls have been particularly treated as weapons of war in DRC. Like a weapon, rape has been used to intimidate, exert fear, force cooperation, or penalize people from certain tribal groups or as a form of retributive justice.

In her book *Of African Women, A Historical Panorama*, Romero (2015) described the patriarchal society practiced in Africa. She contends that unless an African woman is educated and economically empowered, she is voiceless and powerless. She further explains different scenarios of rape in the African society where "Sex is often not consensual." She gives an example of South Africa where a woman is raped every fifteen minutes in the urban areas. She also explained how powerless women are when it comes to sexuality, which has increased the spread of HIV/AIDS and the stigma it carries for the

women. This throws us back to the rapes in DR Congo, which has bred so many refugees and the suffering of men and girls during the civil war (Romero, 2015).

Congolese Refugees in America

Refugees Defined

The United States defines refugees as people who are: 1) located outside of United States, 2) are of special humanitarian concern to United States, 3) can demonstrate that they were persecuted or that they fear persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or because of their membership in a particular social group, 5) are not firmly resettled in another country, and 6) who are otherwise admissible in the United States (Pena, 2017; Martin, C. G., Cromer, L. D., DePrince, A. P., & Freyd, J. J., 2013).

The United Nations defines a refugee as a person who has been forced to flee from his country of birth because of either violence as a result of war, persecution on religious beliefs, race, political opinions or being a member of a social group. According to “Article 1 of the 1951 UN Convention, as modified by the 1967 Protocol, a refugee is defined as a person who ‘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’” (UN, 1951/67).

The Refugee Resettlement Program

The refugee resettlement program is a structured framework set by resettlement agencies set to assist those identified people of refugee status mostly in need of urgent resettlement. In the US, for example, the program admits refugees and assists them for

three months (90 days) before they are left on their own. The agencies pay their rent and bills for three months and familiarize them with the basics to enable them start life in their new country. The program is also supposed to help those refugees who do not speak English to learn the language through English as a Second Language (ESL) programs before they are left on their own.

The United States a Big Heaven for Refugees

The three most significant African refugee-hosting countries include Chad with 330,000 refugees, Tanzania with 322,000 refugees, and Kenya with 320,000 refugees; a large portion of refugees prefer to settle in the United States (Athman, 2017; Pena, 2017; Brad, 2017, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2008). This is because United States is perceived to a land of opportunity for many in the world. United States also processes the largest number of refugees because they need man power.

There have been over 2.6 million refugees who have been migrated, assisted, or have resettled in the United States between 1970 and 2007, making the United States the leader hosting refugees from other nations (Steimel, 2010; Singer & Wilson, 2007). The US Refugee Admission Program resettled close to 75,000 refugees in 2009 and 2010 (US Department of State, 2011). By 2016, the Obama administration resettled more than 85,000 refugees (Scribner, 2017; Brad, 2017). However, the United States has drastically reduced the number of new refugees entering the country to 50,000 by 2017 with the arrival of the Trump administration.

Institutional Framework for Refugee Protection in the United States

The current institutional framework for refugee resettlement is derived from the Refugee Act of 1980 (Brick et al., 2010). This important piece of legislation formally

established the Federal Refugee Resettlement System with the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. The National Refugee Resettlement Program's (2018) main mission is "to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible" (para 1). Not only is the ORR responsible for administering the National Refugee Resettlement Program, but also one of the stated aims of the ORR is to help refugees become integrated members of American society.

The federal institutional process for refugee resettlement in United States involves the following institutional activities: United Nations High Commission for Refugees, US Embassy, nonprofit organizations (NGOs), the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Services, or the Department of Homeland Security refer the potential refugee to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (Brick et al., 2010). Next, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) in the Department of State oversee the resettlement process. This occurs after the refugee arrives through the Office of Refugee Resettlement in the Department of Health and Human Services. At this level of the federal involvement, there is limited involvement of the refugees themselves besides the initial interviews by the field agents at the point of origin before the refugees are admitted into the United States.

The refugee resettlement initiatives consist of a collaborative effort between the various US states and the federal agencies. As soon as the refugee is considered admissible and screened, the federal government works with state resettlement organizations to resettle them (Pena, 2017). There are essentially three main approaches

to refugee assistance that are employed among the various states: 1) a state administered program, 2) the Wilson/Fish (WF) program, and 3) the public-private partnership model.

The first model is structured in such a way as to force the states to assume the financial cost of refugee assistance, though the states are reimbursed for the full cost of their refugee for the cash assistance and medical assistance. Most states are enrolled in the state-administered refugee resettlement program. Indiana is one of the states which participates in the refugee social services program.

The second model employed by some states is the Wilson/Fish model. This model uses voluntary agencies (VolAgs) and other nonprofit organizations to implement refugee assistance programs. There are 14 states that currently adopt this model. These states include: Alaska, Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Vermont (Pena, 2017).

The third model of refugee assistance is implemented by the other states, and it is a public-private partnership model. This model allows states to establish a refugee cash assistance program between the local resettlement agencies and the state to administer the federal funds. This model generally pays higher cash assistance amounts to refugees since the model does not include refugee medical assistance funding. The states of Maryland, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Texas apply this model of refugee assistance.

Evolution of the Public-Private Partnership Resettlement Program

The public-private partnership refugee resettlement model emerged in the United States after the end of World War II as millions of people throughout Europe were displaced (Brown, 2014). The partnership was created to address the needs of refugee resettlement. Although this model was initially operated on an ad hoc basis, it was the

framework for what would later become the United States Refugee Resettlement program (Brown, 2014; Scribner, 2017). At the center of this framework are the refugees and their needs for resettlement; the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; and the institutional mechanisms through which the refugee resettlement program would be implemented (Scribner, 2017).

While existing literature on refugee resettlement in United States provides extensive understanding on the institutional mechanisms for refugee resettlement programming, as well as the general description of the operational functioning of the program and its limitations, the United States refugee resettlement policy lacks the involvement of the refugees in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of refugee resettlement assistance programs (Athman, 2017). This lack of the involvement of the refugees in their refugee resettlement programs account for the major biases in existing literature, as Athman (p. 3) notes with regards to the State of Maryland's refugee resettlement program.

State oversight of refugee resettlement policy and programming is traditionally quantitative and lacking qualitative feedback from refugees and asylum-seekers. Refugee communities are in need of direct platforms to express their opinions to the state. Introducing community participatory evaluation requirements in the state resettlement program review process would inject refugee voices into the policy process and enable service providers and state officials to see the full impact of state-funded programs on refugees' economic security.

The absence of the refugee involvement in the current refugee resettlement programming is biased because it lacks the refugee perspective. As a result, the existing

policy of refugee resettlement is more of a “do it for them” rather than “doing it with them” approach (Felix, 2016). With this mindset driving refugee resettlement programming in United States, very little is known about the lived experiences of the refugees who struggle every day to integrate into the new culture, satisfy the need for language acquisition, secure employment, and receive proper education and healthcare (Haines, 2015; Felix, 2016). Little is also known about the meanings the refugees draw from their circumstances and their struggles and how their lived conditions shape them and their view of the world.

Refugee Resettlement in the State of Indiana

Indiana participates in the federally funded Refugee Social Services Program, and it is responsible for providing job training, childcare, and English language training (Friel, S., 2016). In practice, Indiana administers the program by providing grants of federal funds to nonprofit organizations within the state. While there have been various reports on the inadequacy of the Refugee Social Services Program in meeting the needs of the refugees settled in the state of Indiana, none of these reported have explored the lived experiences of the refugees (Newberry, 2011; Ignatieff, 2016). Such lack of refugee perspectives in the literature blurs understanding of the challenges experienced by the refugees and how they confront these challenges.

One of the biggest challenges of these women refugees in the state of Indiana is that they come from a French speaking country, hence they encounter the language barrier for a length of time, which limits the assimilation process. The state of Indiana admits refugees because they need man power in the many factories and plants. The state benefits from cheap labor rather than sourcing for cheap labor in other countries.

Recent Scholarships on the Refugee Population

The refugee resettlement efforts started after WWII as a result of an influx of refugees after the devastating conflict. Leaders in the United States created institutional frameworks at the federal, state, and local government levels in order to solve the refugee problem. Furthermore, these governmental agencies often collaborated with faith-based resettlement agencies to resettle refugees (Brown, 2014; Eby, 2011; McSpadden, 1987).

In 2003, the US State Department conducted an extensive study that examined the issues related to the identification and processing of US-bound refugees. The study found out that the temptation of fraud and distortion has become rampant in refugee programs (Martin, D. A., Hamilton, K. A., & Wilson, J., 2005).

In 2011, the National Security Staff Administrative reviewed the resettlement process to enhance the interagency coordination and integrate the refugee perspective. Funding for refugee, asylum seekers, and stateless individuals has not met the requirements (Brown, A. & Scribner, T., 2014). US asylum policy has not addressed the myriad of lawful glitches that threaten stateless individuals.

Moreover, recommendation of recent studies by private organizations, which have focused essentially on the need to commission further analysis on the institutional structures, relationships, processes, and funding of domestic resettlement program, reveals the extent to which the refugee perspective is ignored in current existing literature (Brick, 2010). Economic challenges, social objectives, dignity, support, and sense of worth from the resilience in refugee population exhibits conflicting situations. Optimism rises from an intellect of ethical and societal order exemplified in the face of basic social

beliefs: effort, reliance, family unity, service, honor, and morals. (Eggerman, M. & Panter-Brick, C., 2010).

These studies have mainly focused on issues relating to refugee reception, placement, and integration. Their points of analysis have been on the strength and weaknesses of current federal, state, local, and private sectors but no studies have examined lived experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of the refugees (Nezer, 2013; Human Rights First, 2012; IRC, 2009; Georgetown University Law Center, 2009).

Lack of the voices of the refugees in the literature implies that little is known on how the refugees navigate the socio-cultural and political context of their lived world, nor do scholars know much about how refugees negotiate the everyday power relations. The state of current knowledge on refugee resettlement in the United States fails to explore and provide understanding from the refugee perspective, including how they relate to others in their everyday struggle to integrate into the culture, cope with the demand of learning a new language to survive in the cultural context, and fulfill the basic needs of housing, food, health care, education, and childcare (Haines, 2015; Felix, 2016).

Refugee Women and Challenges of Resettling in Host Countries

Kenge (2017) conducted research study of Congolese women refugees living in South Africa. She found that Congolese women refugees in South Africa face many problems including housing accommodation, health care, food, and security. While this research study described the problems these women face, the issues mentioned above are the symptoms rather than the disease of resettlement. These are good intentions to resettlement, but what these countries forget is that the refugees have gone through traumatic experience that require a human touch, rather than being processed like

immigrants. However, the research raises fundamental issues related to basic human needs, which are inalienable to all human beings. The researcher further contended that conditions of refugees in South Africa were very difficult. This was because refugees were forced to share houses, which conflicted with their needs for privacy and hygienic care. As a result, the resettlement was counterproductive to its original goal.

Integrating the women's lived experiences will make this literature more comprehensive and representative. Martin (2011) and Yankay (2013) reported that one must be classified as a refugee or asylum seeker status in order to qualify under section 101(a) (42) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). One has to be an individual who is incapable or reluctant to go back to his/her country of nationality due to oppression because of religion, membership, race, nationality, being from a particular social group, or their political outlook (Martin, C. G., Cromer, L. D., DePrince, A. P., & Freyd, J. J., 2013).

Problems of Refugee Resettlement

Refugees have the unintended consequences of harming the local communities and surrounding societies where they become resettled and try to assimilate to the local communities. According to Steimel (2010), when there is a fast-rising manifestation of refugees and migrants, the refugees place undue harm to the surrounding neighboring populations, which could be costly for the state.

Language barrier has been cited as a major problem in the health care system since the Congolese women refugees come from a French speaking country. The resettlement agencies offer voluntary services on English as a Second Language (ESL) and learning tools to empower these refugees to assimilate to their host country faster.

The refugees take long to learn a new language due to their limited knowledge (Steimel, 2011).

These resettlement agencies typically partner with faith-based organizations to encourage spiritual enrichment and to help many refugees integrate to the new environment. Consequently, these charitable establishments play a vital role in promoting the transition of refugees to the new homes and society (Huntoon, 2001). Additionally, due to the uneducated refugee population from DR Congo, it takes a sizeable amount of time to educate refugees of the basics, hence the reason Van (2015) explains the importance of education in the society. He explains in his study that an educated society can rebuild a strong community or society more than a society without formal education. He argues that conflict areas can be resuscitated back to normalcy through small development ventures.

Judkins (2011) asserts that there are various contextual aspects that impact refugees emotionally as they migrate from one country to another. Some refugees embrace the detailed guidelines of the resettlement processes upon their arrival. However, many become bitter and ambiguous towards the end because of a lack of a proper support system after the ninety days period when the assistance is terminated (Kerwin, 2012). The 90 day period is a policy by the federal government that refugees are assisted by the resettlement agencies. There is an impact on the social welfare of states accepting refugees in that they spend a lot of money on food stamps and Medicaid, which changes the landscape of the social welfare system (Judkins, 2011). This benefits go on for many years before they get jobs to cover all their expenses because most of the time they get paid the minimum wages. In his thesis, Judkins studied the role of refugees in the

“shadow state” concept and their capability to change the administration’s policy through involvement of NGOs willing to support refugees and he found that refugees truly impact the “shadow state.”

Burnett and Peel (2001) argue that refugees and asylum seekers are not the same cluster of individuals. They have different assumptions and anticipations of medical care. Signs of mental anguish are differently experienced depending on the kind of trauma experienced, but that does certainly symbolize psychological illness.

Resettled refugees face extensive challenges, and each of their stories are unique in their own way. Emerging from diverse nations and cultures, refugees have a wide array of understandings that could affect their relocation experience. According to some authors, refugees require more medical and mental health care in comparison to voluntary immigrants (Burnett et al., 2001). Friedman (1992) explains that as a result of war and persecution, many refugees have lost family members. In addition, many suffer from severe illnesses, epidemics, and hunger. For example, most Congolese women refugees have experienced rape and sexual assaults during and after the conflicts (Friedman, 1992). Davidson and associates (2004) found that refugees also suffer from ethnic seclusion, cultural, and language variances within their new communities (Huntoon, 2001).

Agencies Role in Resettling Refugees

According to Henderson (2002), the principal objective for the resettlement agencies in the charitable sector is the scaling up of concerns to advance awareness. He further states that scaling up happens when establishments encompass their possibility and authority through connections with other establishments. In addition, Neldner (1997)

argues that in the forced domestic and global migration, capability can undermine the scaling process. Neldner further explains that non-governmental organizations have alerted the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees as a body mandating an examination of refugee needs and challenges. These non-governmental organizations have effectively conveyed refugee concerns to the attention of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Impact of Settling Refugees on the Economy

Refugee influxes can have major macro-economic impacts on the host nation's economy. Some of these impacts are connected with augmented but uncompensated communal overheads related to the maintenance and upkeep of the refugee population. In another study, the authors explain that the actual way to diminish bigotry and perception is by group interaction. (Crisp, R. J., Stathi, S., Turner, R. N., & Husnu, S., 2009).

There are various ways in which refugees and their occupations can have a positive impact on the host country. Iraqi refugees living in Jordan, for example, took their skills to use by working in hospitals, universities, and other local institutions, which thereby contributed to the knowledge of the indigenous businesses (Crisp & Turner, 2009). Also, a vital support of refugees to the indigenous economies related with entrance to the global resources delivered by other refugees to their fellow relatives in other countries, including transmittals and social systems. (Crisp, R. J., Stathi, S., Turner, R. N., & Husnu, S., 2009).

Hatoss and Huijser (2010) argue that women and children are the main victims of violent conflicts, and as a result they make a large number of refugees. They also are the most affected culturally. This is because women make up the majority of the illiterates

due to cultural norms in many countries in Africa where sending male child to school is preferable. Many countries and communities in Africa believe that women and girls should remain home and take care of domestic affairs.

Haffejee and East (2016) argue that women refugees, including those from Africa, have seven areas where their lived experiences are of interest. These areas must be studied in the US so as to understand the refugee policy and practices. These experiences include the economic, empowerment, trauma, mental health, employment expectations, self-sufficiency, and traditional assimilation.

Political Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo has been in conflict for a long time. This conflict has remained intractable due to the involvement of many internal and external stakeholders. In his study of women and peace building in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Whitman (2007) asserts that Congo has never experienced peace and democracy, and that it will be a landmark to achieve. The study verified and confirmed that it is very difficult to attain peace through negotiations. The conflict in the DRC is essentially instigated and persisted by the motivation of vital global economic resources. International companies take enormous safety risks to access these resources in the midst of the conflict areas of DRC (Whitman, S., 2012).

Campbell (2012) argues that 'genocidal intent' breeds refugees; he states that intellectuals see 'genocidal intent' when mass killings occur. For example, he submits in his study that genocidal intent forms when people do not want to relinquish political power because they have no compassion. He further concludes that the impact of civil wars like the one in DRC is the outflow of refugees. The situation of international refugee

resettlement should be of concern to the bodies mandated to oversee their resettlement process. The study by Hyndman and Giles (2016) explains the global immigrant rule and its' provisional 'philanthropic' involvements, which have become futile.

Many refugees worldwide live in 'protracted' settings that span long years without authorization to work and create a homebased setting. It is as if they suddenly become obscure to others constructed in the global north, and cease completely being mortal subjects with the right to exist politically. The study elucidates that in practice the activities of governments are minimally apprehensive about protecting refugees and more focused on safeguarding their territories from unwelcome migrants who double up as refugees as some of them transition by seeking asylum. The study reports that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) maintains that altruistic accomplishment cannot eliminate the reasons for movement, but it can alleviate the penalties (Hyndman and Giles, 2016).

In another study, Clark P. (2008) explores the way a local community forms mediation establishments on the conflict in the province of North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Congolese women refugees originate from this area. This community establishment known as the *Barza Inter-Communaire (Barza)* are community leaders from North Kivu. It comprises nine leading different tribes who are tasked with an obligation to plan a resolution at the grassroots level before the escalation of violence.

This study traced and highlighted the previous conduct of the *Barza* and will search its influence on traditional conflict in North Kivu and the reason why it was not effective. Specifically, the research highlights the failure of the *Barza* in regional and

national politics in the on-going violence during the first ever elections since independence (Clark, P., 2008). However, whether the women refugees from Congo who settled in United States continue to practice this indigenous system of conflict resolution is unknown from the existing literature. In studying the lived experiences of the Congolese women, the researcher was trying to find out if these refugees from DR Congo continue to practice the Barza system of conflict resolution. This is important because the Barza model they use will minimize the bad blood among different communities blaming each other for the conflict that led to them to become refugees.

Methodological and Ethical Issues Surrounding Refugee Studies

While past scholarships (Leaning, 2001; Jacobsen et al., 2003; Allen et al., 2004) on refugees' resettlement have been insightful, there were methodological and ethical issues. Study practices emerged that exploited the welfare of participation for participants' potential impact, increasing abilities for participants to consent, and to familiarize to the study methodology so as to improve the conditions of the lives of the refugees by improving the procedure and their commitment in the study. "Block and associates advocate for operational prudence as an ethical practice that is critical when conducting research with refugees" (Block, K., Warr, D., Gibbs, L., & Riggs, E., 2012).

In another study, Czymoniewicz-Klippel, M. T., Brijnath, B., & Crockett, B. (2010) present the difficulties researchers face in the field when conducting research on populations considered sensitive. The challenges include choosing the right sample, handling linguistic issues, dealing with issues of observational etiquette, addressing researcher-related personality issues that may influence the research process, and translating research instruments into the language spoken by the refugees. These

researchers further argue that generally accepted research strategies might not be applicable in the intricate social context of some refugee populations. The researchers conclude by stating that addressing ethical issues as the study progresses is critical good research practice (Czimoniewicz-Klippel, M. T., Brijnath, B., & Crockett, B., 2010).

Problems with Existential Phenomenological Method

Existing phenomenological studies on refugee resettlement, for example, Williams and Westemeyer in Wong, Lilian & Wong (2007), Colaizzi (1978) in Valle & King (1978) have employed existential phenomenology. The problem with this methodology is that the lived experiences of refugees is approached from a philosophical and abstract perspective. This undermines the experiences as lived by refugees and focuses more on the abstract of philosophical interpretation of these experiences. The hermeneutics phenomenology approach also presents a number of problems.

1. The approach focuses on interpretation, thus paying limited consideration to the experiences as lived and described by refugees.
2. It emphasizes the ontological meaning of the lived experiences, thus not proving a balance of understanding of the lived experience.

Based on the weaknesses of existential and hermeneutic phenomenology, I found transcendental phenomenology appropriate for this study because it provides a balance understanding of the experience as lived by the research participants and the meaning and essence of their experiences.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has presented the state of knowledge on refugee situation in the world, United States, and the state of Indiana where this research was conducted. While

existing literature of refugee resettlement has elaborately explored the institutional weaknesses of resettlement programs, the literature has failed to widen perspectives so as to integrate the lived experiences of the refugees who are at the center of resettlement programming. In this chapter I have also presented some theoretical perspectives, which provide a better understanding of the context and process factors that influence refugee resettlement programming. I have also decided to adopt the human needs as a better theoretic perspective for understanding what it means to resettle in a new environment as a refugee.

Chapter 3 Research Methods

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological procedures that were used to collect, describe, and analyze the lived experiences of the Congolese women refugees living in Indiana. This research employs Moustakas' (1994) transcendental research phenomenology method in order to collect and explicate the meaning, structure, and essences of the Congolese refugee. The goal of this study is to develop a holistic approach toward conceptualizing the experiences of these women, their voices, and their essences drawn from their lived experiences. In-depth interviews were used to gather participants' detailed descriptions of their lived experiences.

Pilot Study

A pilot study can be “a pre-testing of research instruments including questionnaires or interviews” (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, p.1, 2001). Therefore I employed a preliminary study as a pretest using a questionnaire on three women refugees to measure the effectiveness of answering questions. Since I was using a second language, not using any translators because I speak and write Swahili language fluently, I felt it important to try my instrument before I continued with the interviews. After interviewing the first three women, I discovered that I had to remove some of the questions from my questionnaire to make the women refugees get comfortable. Secondly, I saw that the questionnaire was conjuring back the lived lives in the refugee camps abroad, which was not the purpose of the study.

Some of these questions were too emotive and were taking the refugee women back to their painful lives in the refugee camps. The questions proved to provoke a very

painful remembering of their experiences in refugee camps. Since the research was about their lived experiences in Indianapolis, I had to reframe and reduce the number of questions as well as stay within the time of arrival at Indiana. Another aspect noted was the taping of the participants. All the first three refugee women refused to be taped. This was a red flag to the researcher that the rest of the participants were most probably not going to accept being taped. They exhibited fear of the unknown taping them.

Rationale for Transcendental Approach

The problems of refugees acclimating into a new society has been well documented, but very little is known about the lived experiences of Congolese women who are settled in United States as refugees. Furthermore, existing literature on the problem is rather biased as it lacks the voices of the women. Consequently, their perspective as refugees living in the United States has also been overlooked. Furthermore, no studies have examined their lived space spatiality, the lived body corporeality, the lived time temporality, lived human relations rationality/communality, and the lived spirit, meaning spirituality (Tembo, 2016; Nadarajah, 2012).

Other qualitative research methods were considered for this study. First, I considered using grounded theory, but found this method unsuitable on basis of the divergence of objectives. While grounded theory's goal is to explain an experience or situation through an identification of the basic social facts and to create theory based on findings (Baker, Wuest & Stern, 1992), transcendental phenomenology sought to capture the human experience as it is lived (Lavery, 2003). Transcendental phenomenology was better suited for this research project since my main objective was to better understand the lived experiences of Congolese women who settle in the US as refugees. I also

wanted to provide the women with the opportunity to share their lived experiences as they deconstruct the meanings and the essences from escaping unspeakable atrocities and starting a new life in a foreign land.

I also considered using the ethnographic research method, but I found it unsuitable since ethnography relies on observation (Creswell, 1998). This study is focused on presenting the lived experiences of the Congolese women who are settled in the US as refugees rather than observing them. Observation is an unsuitable methodology in this case considering that the emphasis is placed on the researcher rather than the researcher participants. The ethnographer observes the research participants and draws a conclusion based on his or her observations.

I also considered employing a case study and ultimately decided against it. A case study examined a complex phenomenon within their context with the goal of developing a theory, evaluating programs, or designing interventions (Baxter, 2008). The focus of this study was to explore the lived experiences of Congolese refugee women, with women serving as the principal narrators of their own experience. In this regard, the voices of the women were considered instrumental in the narration, and it was in their voices that a holistic hermeneutic analysis could be established into the textual meaning, interpretation, and essence. In this regard, the focus of this research study was therefore not to develop a theory, evaluate a program, or design an intervention. Considering that the focus of the study was to provide understanding from the perspective of the women themselves, the researcher found case study unsuitable as a method to provide this kind of knowledge.

Interpretive phenomenology was also considered as a method for this study, but, again, I found this method unsuitable. According to Martin Heidegger, interpretive phenomenology is essentially focused on descending the ontological meaning of the everyday experiences of the research participant (Reiners, 2012). The interpretive phenomenological approach, however, questions the *raison d'être* of epistemology as the basis for understanding the lived experiences. Based on this argument, interpretive phenomenology rejects the theory of knowledge (epistemology) and advocates for ontology as the basis for understanding human lived experiences. The problem with interpretive phenomenology is that by emphasizing interpretation, this approach fails to take into consideration the potential for the researcher to inject his or her pre-notions or preconceptions into the participant's lived experience. I found interpretive phenomenology problematic considering that interpretive phenomenology has its basis in psychology and that it places more emphasis on the central role of the researcher in making sense of the personal experiences of the research participants (Smith, 2004). The aim of this study was to understand the lived experiences of the research participant as described in their own words.

I also considered descriptive phenomenology as a potential research method for this study. Edmund Husserl defined it as a phenomenological approach that focuses on the discussion of themes emerging or being discovered in the research participant's lived experiences; unlike in interpretive phenomenology, the role of the researcher in descriptive phenomenology is rather to bear witness to the experiences described by the research participant and not to assume the central role in the interpretation of the lived experiences of the research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is important to point

out here that in Edmund Husserl's descriptive phenomenology, not only is the research participant central to the research process, but also the approach suspends all suppositions, is related to consciousness, and is based on the meaning of the individual experience. The human experience is composed of a mix of perceptions, thoughts, memory, imagination, and emotions, which constitute what Husserl describes as "intentionality" (Reiner, 2012).

According to Husserl (1977), intentionality is one's direct awareness or consciousness of an object or event. In a nutshell, descriptive phenomenological approach focuses on describing the everyday conscious experiences of the research participants while setting aside the preconceived opinions of the researcher. Referring to Giorgi (2009) and Husserl (1977), the descriptive phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study for the following reasons:

1. The descriptive phenomenological approach has its basis in epistemology, thus it is founded on viable scientific observation.
2. The descriptive phenomenological approach provides the lived-context of the participant and does so by focusing on his or her perspective without the use of deception.
3. The descriptive phenomenological approach allows the researcher to keep the voice of the participants in the research without abstracting their viewpoints through analysis.
4. The descriptive phenomenological approach is discovery-oriented rather than verification-oriented. It is not based on any hypothesis but rather on the description of the experience of the research participant.

5. The descriptive phenomenological approach is centered on the research participants, and the approach focuses on the first person meanings of the lived experiences that are of interest to the researcher.
6. The descriptive phenomenological approach recognizes human consciousness as the most fundamental life quality that co-exists with the body. In this regard, the human body is regarded as embodied consciousness. The conscious body is capable of experiencing the phenomenon and described it as perceived in the mind. In the process of experiencing the phenomenon, the human mind employs its sense of perception, thought, memory, imagination, and emotion to derive the meaning and essence of the lived experience.

The process of experiencing a phenomenon consists of conscious representation of object or events in the mind of the person experiencing the phenomenon. People have unique perspectives of every object or event they perceive in the outside world. This makes descriptive phenomenology subjective, as it is constructed around the unique perspectives of those in the lived world.

Research Questions

Drawing from the existing state of knowledge on this topic, the following questions were considered relevant as research guides:

- RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees in Indiana?
- RQ2: What meanings, structures, and essences are found in the lived experiences of the women?
- RQ3: How do the women construct their lived world as refugees in the United States?

- RQ4: What are the patterns and the relationships exposed in the experiences described by the women?

Sampling Strategies

Participants were selected based on whether they were able to answer the research questions and enhance understanding of the lived experience. In the research design phase of the study, I was particularly keen on identifying appropriate participants. The decision regarding the selection of the participants was made taking into consideration the research questions, the theoretical perspective employed in the study, and the evidence informing the study. Based on these guidelines, 12 participants were selected for the in-depth interview.

In selecting the sample population, I employed a homogenous purposive sampling and snowballing techniques. Homogenous purposive sampling strategy is a selection strategy in which participants are selected because they have a shared characteristic or set of characteristics. The women were selected because they are refugees from Congo experiencing what it is like settling in United States. In order to identify suitable research participants, the researcher used the snowballing strategy. Using this strategy, the researcher first identified a Congo Pastor who led her to the first two participants. These first two participants linked the researcher to other Congolese refugee women, who also introduced the researcher to more Congolese women refugees. 12 Congolese women refugees in total participated in the study.

Transcendental Phenomenology Research Methods

Transcendental phenomenology is a philosophical approach to qualitative research seeking to understand human experience (Moustakas, 1994). This approach is

also known as pure phenomenology, as it is developed around these assumptions, namely: 1) that the research sets aside all preconceived ideas (epoche) to see the phenomena through unclouded glasses, thus allowing the true meaning of the phenomena to naturally emerge with and within their own identity, and 2) that the researcher focuses on understanding the “noema” as the underlining goal of the research. In this regard, noema is defined as that which is “not the object but the phenomena, not the tree but the appearance of the tree, that which is perceived as such, and that which is experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 29). Noesis, on the other hand, is defined as “the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking, or act of experiencing, the subject-correlate or the act that brings into being the consciousness of something” (p. 69). In this light, noesis is “the way in which the phenomenon is experienced, that is, the experiencing, or act of experiencing, the subject-correlate” (p. 69). Noeses is defined as the process of bringing into being the consciousness of something or that experienced.

In employing in-depth interviews to gather the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees, the researcher focused on the totality of the women’s lived experiences, namely, what they experienced as Congolese women refugees trying to settle in the United States, and their description of how they experienced the phenomenon. These experiences include the sense of perception, feeling, thinking, and the experience of settling in the US.

Husserl developed the approach to better understand the human experience through analyzing the lived experiences. This approach is grounded on the methodological assumption that the researcher sets aside all preconceived ideas (epoche) in order to see the phenomenon through the unclouded glasses (Sheehan, 2014), thus

allowing the true meaning of the phenomena to emerge in their own natural identity (Moustakas, 1994).

The preceding epistemological foundation underlined the methodological framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. First, the researcher bracketed all prior preconceived ideas and approached the study participants with the intellectual curiosity to listen and understand their lived experiences as narrated in their own voices. The researcher, through the in-depth interviews, listened and recorded the study participants' narratives. The following research method follows Moustakas' (1994) systematic procedure for analyzing phenomenological data, including epoche, bracketing, reflexivity, and positionality.

Epoche

By clearing my mind through the epoche process, I recalled my own personal and professional experiences as a refugee resettlement officer and Benefits Coordinator in Indiana with the Catholic Refugee Resettlement Agency. I reflected on the stories Congolese women refugees and bracketed this prior knowledge to ensure that I kept an open mind during the research. I reflected on the personal relations I developed with some of the Congolese refugee women while resettling them, and I acknowledged and bracketed them to ensure the validity of the data collection and analysis process.

Bracketing

Drew (2004) defines bracketing as “the task of sorting out the qualities that belong to the researcher's experience of the phenomenon” (p.215). Gearing (2004) observes that bracketing “is a scientific process in which a researcher suspends and holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous

experiences to see and describe the phenomenon (p. 1430). Starks and Trinidad (2007) note that “the researcher must be honest and vigilant about her own perspective, pre-existing thoughts and beliefs ... to be able to engage in a self-reflective process of bracketing whereby she recognizes and sets aside her a priori knowledge and assumptions with the analytical goal of attending to study participants’ accounts with an open mind” (p. 1376).

In order to bracket my prior knowledge, preconceptions, and biases on the struggles of Congolese refugee women, I employed the technique of writing memos throughout data collection and analysis in order to examine and reflect on my engagement with the data (Cutcliffe, 2003). Therefore, I interviewed the women who were resettled after I had left working for the resettlement agency. This was important since I worked as a resettlement officer for the Catholic Refugee Resettlement Agency and had interaction with some of the participants. I wrote theoretical notes explicating the cognitive process of conducting a transcendental phenomenological study. I also wrote methodological notes explicating the procedural aspects of the research, and observational notes exploring my feelings about the research endeavor. I also kept a reflective journal prior to even defining the research questions. This allowed me to be cognizant of my preconceptions, opinions, and biases as I went through the research process (Ahern, 1999).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a method of replication. In this qualitative study, interviewing comprises a continuous method of reflection on the study. Reflexivity is the practice of observing the researcher and then studying the connection. I engaged in reflexivity as a

way of critically examining my role as the researcher and the relationship I had with my research. By employing reflexivity, I constantly questioned my role in the research and the process of understanding the lived experiences of my research participants. This allowed me to ensure data reliability as I bracketed my feelings, opinions, preconceptions, and prior experiences of the phenomena.

Positionality

Positionality in qualitative research is a contemplation of its inspiration and place in research. “It is perilous to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research” (Sultana, 2007, p. 380).

As someone who has never been a refugee I continuously reflected on my role as the researcher and the impact it could have on the research process. I acknowledged my positionality as an outsider recognizing the fact research represents a shared space, shaped by both the researcher and participants. In this regard, as I was going through the research process, I constantly reminded myself of my position as an outsider trying to understand the lived experiences of women who have experienced what it is like to live outside their natural setting and support systems as refugee. As I reflected on my positionality and that of my research participants, I became aware that our identities comes into play not only from the way we perceive others but also from the way we expect others to perceive us. As I acknowledged and recognized my biases, I became constantly aware of how to approach the research setting as well as my participants. I became aware, as argued within positionality theory, that “...people have multiple overlapping identities. Thus people make from various aspects of identity” (Kezar, 2002,

p. 96). This acknowledgement broadened not only my scope of understanding but also how I engaged the participants and analyzed their lived experiences.

Data Collection

In this study, I employed in-depth interviews to collect the data, which allowed for both the researcher and the research participants to explore additional points and change direction. According to Waters (2017), in-depth interviews enable the researcher to ask follow up questions, probe for additional information, and circle back to key questions. This enables the researcher to generate a richer understanding of the attitudes, perceptions, and motivations of my research participants. Another benefit is building rapport with the research participants, thus enabling freedom and flexibility to discuss issues they might have considered sensitive. The technique also provided me the opportunity to monitor changes in tone and word choices of my participants and therefore provide deeper meanings and essences of their lived experiences.

Ethical Issues and Informal Consent

Creswell (2007) argues that ethical matters, predicaments, and interchanges are critical in order to ensure that the research subjects are protected from physical, emotional, and psychological harm. In a qualitative study, ethical issues arise when the investigator resorts to human subjects as the study participants, particularly when consent is needed for data collection. Prior to the interview, participants were informed about the nature of the research and the potential harm they may experience by participating in the research. Participants were informed that this was a voluntary process and that they are free to withdraw at any time during the interview process. To ensure the

protection of research participants and guarantee maximum benefit from the research, I employed the process of informal consent, which were as follows:

1. **Autonomy:** participants were allowed the freedom to make their own informed decisions about participating in the research. The researcher explained to participants their responsibility to freely decide to participate as well as abandon the process whenever they think it necessary.
2. **Non-maleficence:** the researcher made sure the research process was not harmful to the research participant by explaining to them the potential for risk and protecting the information they freely provided to the researcher.
3. **Beneficence:** the researcher throughout the process made sure the research was beneficial to those who seek understanding the lived experiences of people who find themselves in difficult situations settling in different societies as refugees.
4. **Justice:** the researcher also made sure that all those who accepted to participate in the research were treated justly by giving them equal opportunity to freely describe their lived experiences with minimal guidance from the researcher. Strict policy was adopted from Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board to ensure that potential research participants were fully informed of the research goals and the risk they may experience by subjecting themselves to the process before consenting to participate. The goals, procedures, and interview guides were explained to the participants in Swahili language to ensure that they fully understood the research before subjecting themselves to participate. Participants were fully informed of the measures the researcher planned to use to ensure that their privacy and confidentiality was protected throughout the research

process and thereafter. The participants were informed prior to participating in the research that the data they will provide was going to be stored in a locked safe with only the researcher being able to access the data.

Research Questions

In-depth interviews enable participants to present their lived experience as interrelated stream of consciousness. Participants were able to interlace their lived experiences with what they thought and felt at the time of the experience as well as with what they draw from the experience. To guide the participants, the following research questions were asked:

1. Can you tell me about your experiences as a refugee from Congo living in United States? Prompts: What kind of problems have you experienced as a female Congolese refugee? How do you feel going through what you have just described to me? How did you interpret the reaction of your host community? Why do you think they are reacting this way to you? When these things happened, what was going on in your mind then? (thoughts/ associations)
2. What did you think would help make things better for you as a refugee at this point? Prompts: What kind of assistance do you think was most appropriate in your situation as a refugee? Why? What do you think should have been done to help you overcome your problem(s)? How do you think your condition would have changed if the government and the organization assisting you acted the way you have just described?
3. What were your first / subsequent reaction(s)? Prompts: How did you decide to go about your life as a refugee? Where did you seek help? What stopped you from

seeking help? If sought assistance: What did you think about the recommendations you received? As someone who is a refugee, what was similar or different in what you thought about your problem and how the person you were referred to assessed it?

Translation and Transcription

The interviews were conducted in Swahili language since all of the research participants and the researcher understands Swahili language. The interviews were then translated into English prior to the textual analysis. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants, the participants' real names were substituted with pseudonyms. Also, personal identifying information of the participants, such as place of employment, city, and home address were also altered for their privacy.

Some participants were exhibiting fear of giving information. The researcher reminded them that all the information they give will remain confidential. She assured them that all transcripts and communication will be under lock and key. The researcher also explained the importance of the research: by explaining their lived experiences in their own voices they could help to improve the conditions of refugee resettlement.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Van Kaam method in Moustakas (1994) systematic procedure for analyzing phenomenological data. This procedure enabled the researcher to first describe her own experience with the phenomenon (epoche), particularly what motivated her to pick up this topic. The researcher was then able to identify the significant statements from the participants' lived experiences and cluster them into meanings, units, and themes. The themes were later synthesized into a description of the

experience for each of the research participants (textual and structural descriptions). From each description the researcher then constructed a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience. The meanings and essences were then analyzed following these analytical categories: how the participants' experienced the lived space (spatiality), the lived body (corporeality), the lived time (temporality), the lived human relations (rationality), and the lived spirit (spirituality).

Member Checking

Member checking is the process in which the researcher verifies the textual transcript with the participant so that both the researcher and participant can check for accuracy, credibility, and validity of the information. They were also informed that following NSU IRB Protocol, the data they provided was going to remain securely stored and destroyed three years after the research.

Trustworthiness

One of the primary concerns of the researcher was to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process. In order to achieve this, the researcher built into the process strategies to ensure that the findings of the study were credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable. In order to ensure the credibility and validity of the research findings, the researcher built member checking and triangulation into the research process. While using member checking, the researcher brought back the textual transcripts of the participants' lived experiences for them to verify for accuracy. In applying triangulation, the researcher made use of multiple data sources, namely, in-depth interviews and some artifacts of the research participants (pictures and art works) produced while the participants struggled to settle in the US as refugees.

Transferability

While I was very aware of the non-transferability of the phenomenological research findings, I am also conscious of the need for transferability of the research protocol to similar situations of women struggling to settle as refugees in different socio-cultural contexts. In order to ensure the transferability of the research process, I rigorously followed Moustakas (1994) and used thick description of each of the participants' lived experiences to capture the phenomenon in its entirety.

Confirmability

The researcher was very concerned about the confirmability, or neutrality, of the research findings. In order to ensure confirmability, I integrated the "epoche" technique into the research process. The purpose of this technique was to ensure that the findings were based on the lived experiences of the research participants as described in their own voices and not on any potential bias or personal motivation. The researcher also provided an audit trail of the research process to highlight every step of data that was made to provide a clear rationale for the decisions made in the process.

The confirmability of the audit trails was guaranteed through the use of notes, audio tapes, transcribed interviews, email exchange with members of the dissertation committee, a notebook in which initial themes, ideas, and questions were recorded, list of horizons leading to emerging meaning clusters identified in each of the textual descriptions, and the descriptions of both the interviews and the procedure for data collection.

Dependability

Concerns about the dependability of the research process were handled by employing an inquiry audit to establish the dependability of the research protocol. I employed the assistance of other researchers while coding the transcendental phenomenology in order to ensure that the research protocol was consistent and would produce findings that can be repeated by other researchers on the same population. All these techniques built into the research process contributed to consolidating the trustworthiness of the research and the research findings.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, the methodological foundation was discussed and a thorough discussion of the research project was examined. This included a description of the procedures and protocols for accessing the participants, conducting the interviews, and analyzing participants' lived experiences.

I have also described the principles followed by the researcher to guarantee the objective and ethical nature of the study. These principles were applied scrupulously throughout the different phases of the research to ensure the neutrality, credibility, and validity of the research process.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the textual description and analysis of the participants' lived experiences. The experiences are analyzed following Moustakas' (1994) using Van Kaam's 1959, 1966 method of analysis. A full description of each participants' experience is presented listing and grouping every quote relevant to the experience as lived by the participant. The listing and grouping of the lived experience followed Van Kaam's horizontalization (listing and preliminary groupings) of the participants. After listing and conducting a preliminary group of the experience, I employed Van Kaam's strategy of reduction and elimination to identify the invariant constituents of each participant's lived experience. This tool was used as Occam's razor to eliminate verbosity, repetitive, vagueness, redundancy, and information considered irrelevant to enhancing understanding of the lived experiences of the participants.

In determining the invariant constituents of the experience, I analyzed every moment of the experience evaluating its relevance based on the following guide questions from Moustakas (1994) using Van Kaam's method of analysis: "Does it contain a moment of the experience that is necessary and sufficient for understanding it? Is it possible to abstract and label it? If yes, is it a horizon of the experience?" (p.120-121). After identifying the invariant constituents of each participant's lived experience, I clustered, thematized and labelled the invariant constituents to offer each invariant constituent a distinct thematic label reflecting the aspect of the experience it seeks to describe. These clustered themes and labels constituted the core themes of each participant's lived experience. I validated the invariant constituents and themes of each

participant's lived experience by checking the constituents and the themes against the complete record of the participant's lived experience. The invariant constituents and themes I found inexplicit and incompatible were considered irrelevant and eliminated from the participant's lived experience.

I used the relevant and invariant constituents and themes of each participant's lived experience to construct an individual textual description of the experience. Verbatim examples from the transcribed interview were used to enhance the participant's textual description. I then constructed a structural description of each participant's lived experience based on the individual textual description and my imaginative variation of the possible meaning of the textual description of the experience. I constructed a textual-structural description for each participant of the meanings and essences of the lived experience as derived through the process of imaginative variation and incorporating the invariant constituents and themes. Finally, I developed a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the nine participants of this research study.

Participant Background

The study recruited Congolese women refugees by selecting those who were 18 years of age and above, and who came as refugees to Indianapolis. They had to be Congolese nationals, and they had to be women who came from refugee camps abroad. The participants who were recruited are the ones the researcher felt met the above criteria and would give the most information the researcher in order to investigate the research topic. See Appendix 3 for research questionnaire.

Table 1

The Participant Demographics

	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children
Mutesi	35	Widowed	3 (1 deceased)
Kahindo	37	Single	3
Mahirwe	67	Widowed	9
Masika	21	Single	0
Mulisa	23	Single	0
Mutarutwa	26	Single	0
Nyiramugisha	65	Widowed	5 (3 deceased)
Karinganire	40	Married	4
Asifiwe	64	Widowed	14 (6 deceased)

Participant Profile**Horizontalization - Listing and Preliminary Groupings**

Horizontalization emanates from the idea that the researcher should be open to every statement made by the participants and treat each statement as important. Therefore, I have listed the horizons that appeared in the participant's description of her lived experience of settling in United States as a refugee. While all the lived experiences described by the participant constitute 40 different horizons, not all these horizons are relevant to the major theme of the experience described by the participant. I have therefore employed Occam's razor to eliminate the horizons that are irrelevant to understanding what it was like for the participant to settle in United States as a refugee. The extract below describes in full the participant's lived experience without redundant and irrelevant statements.

Participant No. 1 - Mutesi

Mutesi is a 35-year-old woman who came to the US as a refugee with her three children. She did not speak English but spoke two African languages. She did not

complete high school. She got married in the refugee camp in Rwanda. Her husband died in Rwanda and left her with three children. She was settled in Indianapolis with her three children. Two months after her arrival, her only daughter drowned in a swimming pool in the apartment complex where they lived. In her own voice, she explains her lived experiences as a refugee in Indianapolis:

“...I arrived America through Catholic Charities Refugee Program. I was given an apartment and all the basics to start life with. Catholic Charities paid my rent for two months. My electric power got disconnected during winter time and I took shelter in another lady’s house because it was too cold for us since we had not experienced that kind of cold before. We don’t have winter in Rwanda or DR Congo, so we don’t know it can be this cold. This was a very bad experience because I could not cook. I gave my children juice and bread.... Catholic Charities came in August and took me to Chick Fry Restaurant to work part time for 4 hours only. They gave me a bus ticket for one month then advised me to take the second ticket from my salary which was not enough even to pay rent. I was struggling with learning English language. I had to learn how to drive too. After getting a driver’s permit, I had to work two jobs to make ends meet. I feel that Catholic Charities abandoned me, though I thank them for helping me to America. My parents and my brothers and sisters still live in Rwanda refugee camps. Some live in the Kiziba refugee camp but others live outside the refugee camp but they are still refugees. They get everything from United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as refugees but they do business and pay their rent. I miss my relatives particularly my parents, and my siblings. I pray to see them one day..., .I

was still young when we moved to Rwanda with my parents, three brothers, and a sister. I started going to school started at 5th grade to grade 8th. After school got married and I had three children. My husband got sick and died. He left me three children alone. After my husband's death, I was brought to America as a refugee with my three children... I don't know the agency's rules on what they are supposed to do...I have seen other agencies help refugees up to one full year, but Catholic Charities does not. I don't know if other agencies do this on their own because other refugees who come in with other agencies like Exodus Refugee Immigration takes care of refugees until they get them jobs properly. Sometimes we refugees don't seem to understand how the system works. I miss my family and culture and the way we do things. Refugees should be served by the agencies for a longer period than the two three months' time they help. Let me say like one year. They should ensure they have driving licenses and should have known English language and get them jobs. The main problem is knowing the language, driving, and getting jobs so as to pay bills.”

Mutesi believes that if the Catholic Charities that helped in her resettlement assisted her to get a job, her daughter could not have died. According to her, being desperate to get a job so that she could feed and cater for her children caused her daughter her life. In her own voice she explains as follows:

“...I received a letter from Catholic Charities that I was on my own. I was struggling to know English with my children. The agency which brought me to US never really did much, never taught me English (ESL) they sort of abandoned me. Again after leaving me I lost my only daughter in the swimming pool of the

complex apartment I was living. I went to look for a job for the first time on my own that is when my daughter drowned. The only daughter I had. It was devastating. It is still devastating to date. When I look at her picture in the house it pains me. I wish I had not been brought to America because my daughter could have been alive today since we do not have swimming pools in Africa.”

Mutesi believes in her spirituality to the extent of calling the church her family in the US. She also asserts that church unity in Africa is so different from the one in the US. This is because they took care of her after Catholic Charities abandoned her. In her own words, she explains the following:

“The church I was attending started paying my bills (rent and electric bill) from June 2013 to August 2015. The church I worship has been of help to date. They are my family...I have my family members in Rwanda but I came with all my children. After the death of my daughter, the church I worship took care of me, and my children. The church helped me like their child together with my children. The church continued paying part of my rent until August 2015. The togetherness felt by church in Africa is so different from the one in the US. It is like a big family. Church activities in Africa are more than here. I miss church in Africa.....the singing and dancing while worshipping.”

Even with the hardship and bad experience of losing her daughter in the US, Mutesi’s spirituality has impacted her life and has given her the energy to move on. As a mother who lost her daughter, and as a widow, her only consolation is holding on to God. Mutesi experienced all these as she was transitioning into a new life far away from home.

Participant No. 2 - Kahindo

Kahindo is a 37-year-old woman who has never had any formal education. She speaks two African languages. She was brought as a refugee when her son was 7 years old, and she was three months pregnant. She has never been married but had two children. She narrates her experience in the US as a refugee woman, and a single parent. She explains her fears about the way of life in the US when she arrived as a refugee from Africa. In her own narrative she explains the following:

“...The first three months, I was fearful of the house, electricity, cooking stove and everything was new to me. I had never lived where there was electricity. I thought it was dangerous because it might burn us. The first three months were good because Catholic Charities were helping me pay my rent, electric bill, and gas bill. When I was told that I was coming to America, I was excited and somehow knew that my life will be better, but at the same time I was fearful because I was going to a new country where I didn't know anybody. I asked if I was to come with my son who was 7 years then. I was told that I will come with him. I could not imagine leaving him behind since I did not have parents to take care of him I thought that my life will be good, my son will go to school and that we will have a comfortable life. When we arrived in Indianapolis, I was still fearful because I only saw different people coming out, many white people, and wondered which language I was going to speak since I don't know English.”

Kahindo expressed her frustrations about not understanding English. Coming from a French speaking country, she found herself in a new territory, which was hard to penetrate because she had never been to school. Though she spoke two languages, she

could not use the two languages anywhere. Even her 7-year-old son could not understand a word of English. She explains that when other refugees from DR Congo were settled in the same apartment complex, she became a bit comfortable because she now had people to talk to. In her own voice she explained herself in the following:

“...When I saw many refugees from Congo coming to live in the same complex apartment I started feeling safe and happy because I had people around me whom I could talk to in my language. Some of the Congolese who came were from the same camp I came from. I left many family members behind because I only came with my son. All my relatives were left in Rwanda. I sometimes talk to them on phone. I have not seen them for the last seven years. I feel like seeing them, but I cannot since I don't have even a passport. I am waiting to see if God opens his doors for to get citizenship then get a passport and go to see them. I left my brother and sister in Rwanda, but I came with my son who was 7-years-old and I was 3 months pregnant. My brother and sister still live in the refugee camp.”

Kahindo explains how she felt abandoned after three months the agency left her to take care of her bills. She was pregnant with no job at the time. She felt abandoned by the resettlement agency because she could not comprehend how her bills were going to be paid. She had a child who was going to school and with her difficult in understanding the language, she could not support herself. In the following expressions, Kahindo said:

“...Then suddenly they wrote me a letter that I was on my own. I asked my case worker to tell me what the letter was saying. When she told me, I was shocked because I was not working and did not know how I was going to pay my bills. I started being fearful. I was pregnant, and my baby was growing in my stomach. I

had my son with me too, so I was so afraid on how I was going to live. I was not speaking or understanding English. My case worker assisted me get my rent paid by municipal council. I went there many times with my case worker. It was an extensive procedure and the process to be approved for assistance. I don't know but I was receiving \$706 per a month and food stamps of \$220 every month. I and my son lived like that until I delivered my daughter. I started getting used. I applied for the government house which was charging me a little money. I could remain with some money which I could buy clothes for myself, my son, and my daughter.”

Kahindo suggests that the three month period refugees get assistance proved to be inadequate. She laments the frustrations experienced by DR Congo women refugees as too much. She feels that more time should be accorded to the agencies to continue assisting refugees to understand the basics of life in their new country. In her own voice she says:

“...What I can suggest or recommend is that let the agencies bringing refugees into America do more by teaching refugees English, driving by helping them to learn the driving instructions in the language they understand and ensure they have a driving license and that they understand English language well. Other states give the learner's permit instructions in their languages which makes it easier to learn. Some agencies pay rent for more months than what Catholic Charities did to me. It is only the state of Indiana who do not give the driving test in other languages”

Participant No. 3 - Mahirwe

Mahirwe is a 67-year-old woman who was widowed during the war in DR Congo. She has nine children. She is grateful for the assistance they got from the agency, which helped her and her children to settle in Indianapolis. She was resettled by Exodus Refugee Immigration. She explains that she is sickly and old and could not work. She was placed on welfare to enable her survive. In her own voice she states:

“...I am thankful for the first three months the exodus immigration helped us settle down. They helped us for up to six months. I don't have a job because I am old and sick to stand for long. They told me that they will help me get money from the government for seven years, then they will check if I can continue getting it. They do a good job. I hear from those who came through Catholic Charities complain of not getting enough help. We arrived safely, we were welcomed by the Exodus immigration workers and who took us to apartments with beds, seats, and were given food that first day.”

Mahirwe explains that she did not come with all her children. She says that some of her children were grown up with families. She says that three of her children, two sons and a daughter, are in Kenya but she came with her two grand children who were processed with her for resettlement. Her first born child whose husband was killed along with her son is still in DR Congo. One of her children was still in Rwanda as a refugee. She hopes and prays that the children in Kenya and Rwanda should be resettled in the US. She states that:

“...I have three children in Kenya. My resettlement interview was done with my two grandchildren. I have one child in DR Congo and one in Rwanda. The one in

Congo is my first born. Her husband was killed by rebels, and her son who was over 20-years-old was killed by the rebels while grazing cattle. The other child in Rwanda lives outside the refugee camp but he is registered as a refugee. He is married and has a family. The ones in Nairobi, Kenya are two sons and one daughter. They are married with their families, but I came with two grandchildren from my sons (one each). I hope the ones in Nairobi will be brought here soon but the one in Congo I don't know. Two in Rwanda and one in Congo. They are all with their own families. After three months I was sent a letter that I was on my own.

Mahirwe described the assistance she got from the welfare office. She got approved with the assistance of the case worker from the resettlement agency. She narrates how her welfare benefits were stopped but got reinstated with the assistance of the case worker. She continues to live on those benefits. She also expresses her concerns about the inadequacy of the period of time that agencies assist refugees. She prays for longer period of assistance for all refugees since most of them do not speak English. In her own voice she states that:

“... My caseworker had applied for me the money I get every month and food stamps. The money had not been approved. After being left on my own, it was not easy. The food stamps were stopped once and I felt bad. I went to their office and explained to them through an interpreter that I have my grandchildren and they returned the food stamps. Then my application for financial assistance from the government was approved. The period of helping refugees should be increased to at least one year. It was like darkness came to our lives. No driving lessons, not

knowing the language is a nightmare to assist us move on. I feel they should help refugees to at least 8 months or one year to enable us get used to everything new in our lives.”

Participant No. 4 - Masika

Masika is a 21-year-old girl. She came to the US with her grandmother as a refugee. Her parents were left in Kenya because her resettlement case was processed along with her grandmother and cousin. She states that her first three months were good because she had an uncle who had been processed and resettled in Indianapolis. She acknowledges his presence which made their resettling easy. She states:

“...The first three months were good because the agency took care of us. They paid and bought food for us. They took us for medical check-ups, and doctor’s appointments. My uncle and family were here so we had a lot of help since they had to drive us around. They could take us for shopping. It was a very good experience.”

Masika explains that she had a problem when she wanted to get into high school. It was a problem due to her age. She was shocked to be told that she is over the age to join high school. She however expresses her gratitude for the alternative of joining job corps. That enabled her obtain her GED diploma and continue with her education.

Masika was waiting to join college at the time of the interview. She states that:

“...The only problem was me going to school. I was told that I was past the age of joining high school because I was 19 years. I wondered why? Kenya enrolled everybody wanting to go to school. I was told to join job corps Edinburg where they take in students to complete high school and continue with education in

college. I did not care so long as I was joined school. I attended and graduated high school. I am waiting to go to college. I thank God.”

Masika states that she misses her family, who she left behind in Rwanda. She says that leaving far from her parents is like torture. She misses them but her focus is on completing her studies.

“...I have my family members in Rwanda but I came with all my children. My parents and my brothers and sisters still live in Rwanda. They get everything from United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as refugees but they do business and pay their rent. I miss my relatives particularly my parents, and my siblings.”

Masika explained the hardship she faced after the three month period of service from the resettlement agencies. She and her cousin had to seek assistance from the uncle to pay rent. It was something they had not expected. She said that they had not been prepared well enough to start paying bills. She states that:

“...After the three months, life started becoming hard. We got late in rent payment. I did work with my cousin and started paying rent. Then later I went to school and my uncle and cousin contributed for our rent and food but we also have food stamp from my grandmother. She gets some cash money which she contributes to pay rent.”

Masika clearly states that the duration of help the refugees receive from resettlement agencies is not sufficient enough to help them survive on their own. She asserts that three months is not enough to learn a new language. Even the driving exam to enable one get a learners permit is a milestone for refugees due to the limited knowledge

of English language. Masika continues to acknowledge the uncle who had been resettled earlier and was able to drive them around and teach them in their tribal language which made life easy. She states in her own voice that:

“...I feel that three months period for agencies assistance is not enough to help refugees settle down. Three months is not enough to learn English or learn driving lessons, or even get to pass an exam to get a permit since refugees from DR Congo do not speak English. They have to learn English well enough for them to understand the driving permit exam. I was lucky I had an uncle who helped us. He came as a refugee almost 10 years ago. Because of the many refugees, I suggest to all agencies to serve refugees at least about one months or one year before they are left on their own.”

Participant No. 5 – Mulisa

Mulisa is a 23-year-old woman with no children. She says that she was happy when she learned that she was leaving for resettlement in the US. She says that the first three months was very boring because of staying at home all the time. It was winter time with snow she had never seen. She remained indoors with her siblings.

“...I was happy when I was told that we were coming to America. I was excited to leave the camp for another life. The first three months was kind of boring and good at the same time because I stayed in the house not going outside because of cold. It was winter time. I was very excited to see snow for the first time. I did not like it because it was too cold for me since I had never experienced snow in Africa.”

Mulisa found the churches in America quiet. She is used to worshipping with gospel songs and dancing in church, as well as playing instruments. She states in her own voice that:

“... I also found it boring because in the American churches it is sort of quiet. I was used to a church where people worship singing and dancing and playing instruments.”

Mulisa states that her siblings were excited to come to the US where they could go to school without paying fees. She could not comprehend that the school bus picks them from the complex apartment and returns them home after school. It was a culture shock to her. Mulisa says that she made friends from different races and cultures. She states in her own words that:

“...I was told by people that America is good. We will go to school without paying school fees. That we are picked by school buses and brought back home. I was wondering how they can do that to every student. After three months I joined job corps and received my GED which enabled me to join college. It was not boring again because I started making friends from different continents. I made friends from Asia and other African countries. The school homework here is too much. In Rwanda we used to read a lot and memorize a lot for exams. English language is hard for Congolese women refugees because of French being the official language in Congo.”

In learning English, Mulisa explains the challenges Congolese women refugees face as follows:

“... Refugees need time to learn English before they are left alone. Driving permit instructions need not only be in English language. It is the only language given.

They don't care if a refugee understands it. The agencies who bring refugees in America need to help until they know how to drive then they leave them. Going shopping is a problem. Going for doctor's appointment is hard."

Mulisa concludes that the refugee agencies should assist refugees for one year before they are left on their own. She states in her own words that:

"...I suggest that those who bring refugees to America should ensure they are ready to be on their own instead of leaving them to suffer. One full year of service can be sufficient enough to understand the basics in English language, culture and even learn driving."

Participant No. 6 - Mutarutwa

Mutarutwa is a 26-year-old woman who is single and living with her parents. She was resettled as a refugee in Indianapolis when she was 20 years old. She says that she found it relaxing the first three months in the US.

"...I found it relaxing because I was not going to school, not responsible for anything other than cooking and eating, and watching TV. We could not even go outside because it was cold from the winter. We had not seen snow it was our first time to see snow."

Mutarutwa says that she got shocked when she could not join a regular high school because of her age. She was made to join Job Corps for her GED. She is now in college pursuing social work. She says that she wants to serve other refugees as a social worker. In school, she made friends from different countries. She states that:

"...I started school and made new friends from different countries and continents. Some friends were from other African countries, Asia, Mexico, and

Americans. The first week in school was hard because of moving from class to class to attend different classes. It was so different. I was used in remaining in one class throughout the year.”

Mutarutwa says that after the three months, her parents started paying rent and bills without the resettlement agency’s assistance. Though it never affected her directly, she saw her parents struggle. They worked in the factory to raise rent, but received food stamps for food. It was not easy particularly for them, especially because they did not speak English. She states that:

“...It never affected me directly, but I saw my parents stressed about rent and electric bills. We had food stamps at least for food. I think three months is too short for getting help, to learn a language, and do things alone without any help because life in America is so different from the one refugees are used to at home.”

Mutarutwa described family unity in Africa where people in the community helped each other take care of children while others went to work. She said that the family bond in Africa is deeper than US. She said that even neighbors in the US do not know each other. She explains in her own voice that:

“...The families back Africa help each other by taking care of babies when one has something to do like going for shopping or work in the farms.”

Mutarutwa explains the importance of agencies ensuring refugees get jobs first before they are left on their own to pay their bills and rent. She recommends that ESL classes for refugees be extended and given daily. She states that:

“...The agencies need to ensure refugees get jobs which can help in paying bills before they leave them alone. Rent and electric bills are the most difficult. The

agencies should extend ESL classes to be conducted daily for a longer period like six months to one year because most of the refugees from Congo never went to school. It will take them an extended period to know the language. I suggest they teach classes from Monday to Fridays for three hours. This will help them learn faster. I also suggest that if it is possible let the agencies help refugees for at least one year at most before they leave them on their own.”

Participant N. 7 - Nyiramugisha

Nyiramugisha is a 65-year-old woman from DR Congo. She was widowed during the war in DR Congo. She had five children, three are deceased. She says that the first three months were stressful and full of fear for her because she was using electricity, and cooking by using an electric cooker. She was not used to this kind of life. She feared the house could burn any time. She did not like the fact that the toilet was inside the house. She was used to pit latrines. She also appreciated that the resettlement agency helped them pay rent and all the bills in the first three months. She states in her own voice as follows:

“...The first three months I was afraid of the house, cooking with electric stove, the toilet was in the house, everything was very new to me. The first three months were good because Catholic Charities were helping me pay my rent, electric bill, and gas bill.”

Nyiramugisha narrates that she started feeling happy when she met other Congolese refugees in the apartment complex she was assigned. She found it easy to converse with other refugees in their native languages. She expresses how the support system among themselves helped in the new community. She states that:

“...When I met many refugees from Congo living in the same complex apartment I started feeling happy because I could talk to them in our language. Some of the Congolese who came were from the same camp I came from. It made me feel at home. I started getting used to life here in America. We could share our experiences and many bad and good memories.”

Nyiramugisha explains her shock of being told by the resettlement agency that she will be on her own without any assistance from them after three months. She asked to be returned to Africa. She explains how sad she was not knowing what to do. She explains her pain of paying rent and bills. She states that:

“...After the three months, they suddenly wrote me a letter that I was on my own. I asked my case worker to tell me what the letter was saying. When she told me I became so sad and afraid of getting to pay rent. I was not working and did not know how I was going to pay my bills. I asked her how they expected me to pay my rent. I didn't know how I was going to pay my bills. I requested them to return me to the life I was used to. They told me that they will not return refugees once they are resettled. I told them to get me any job.”

Nyiramugisha recounted her dilemma of not speaking English even if they were to give her a job. She further explained the assistance she received through the municipality with the assistance of her case worker. The municipality paid her rent for three months as the case worker assisted her to get a job in a factory. She was also approved for Section 8 housing in Indiana, which helps those with low income to pay rent based on their income. In her own words she states that:

“...I was not speaking English and I was wondering how I will manage to work since I was not speaking or understanding English. My case worker assisted me get my rent paid by municipality council. It was a long line and process to be approved for assistance. They paid my rent for three months, and by then my case worker had arranged for me to start working in a factory. I applied for the government house which was charging me a little money (Section 8 housing) which one pays according to the income. It is subsidized by the government of Indiana.”

Nyiramugisha expresses her frustrations about resettling refugees by separating families who have run away from war. In her opinion, it was the worst experience. She says that she has not seen her siblings and mother for seven years. She explained that separating families after they had lost their fathers is not in the best interest of a refugee. She explains in her own words as follows:

“...What I can suggest or recommend is that let the agencies bringing refugees into America bring all the families together. We are people who have lived with war making us leave our country, so separating us from our children and other family members is not good. For example I have not lived with my children for a long time. My mother is getting old every day. I have not seen her for the last 7 years. We lost our fathers in the war and yet we get separated with our mothers. If they cannot settle families together then let them leave us alone in Africa.”

Muramugisha further expresses her frustrations with learning English. Coming from a French speaking country, it takes a long time to grasp English. She suggests

longer hours of teaching ESL classes and more help in refugees' driving lessons in a language they understand. She states in her own voice as follows:

“...English is another problem. The agencies don't take their time to make sure the refugees know how to drive. Helping them to learn the driving instructions in the language they understand and ensure they have a driving license and that they understand English language well. Other states give the learner's instructions in their languages which makes it easier to learn. Some agencies pay rent for more months than what Catholic Charities did to me. It is only the state of Indiana that does not give driving test in other languages. I suggest that the agencies should help refugees for over one year at most before they are left on their own.”

Participant No. 8 - Karinganire

Karinganire is a 40-year-old woman who was resettled in Indianapolis as a refugee from DR Congo. She is married with four children. She states that when her family was resettled in Indianapolis, they had lived in Burundi as a refugee before they moved to Rwanda. She says that Exodus Refugee Immigration, the agency which resettled them at Indianapolis paid rent and bills for five months. They were given food stamps for food, and Medicaid for their healthcare. The agency staff took them for medical checkups. After five months, her husband was assisted to get a job and he started paying all the bills. Karinganire says in her own voice that:

“...The first three months were good. We arrived and were welcomed by Exodus immigration staff. The staff helped us settle in this apartment. They paid our rent and electric bill. They bought us food. They took us to the hospital for check-up. They helped us for five months after the five months, we were left on our own.

When they left us, my husband was working and started paying rent and electric bills. We continued with life.”

Karinganire explains how her husband was injured when he fell down in the snow and broke his wrist. This changed the set-up of the family. She says that the family could not get any money for bills because the husband could not work for a year. Since they had young children, she had to look for a job to enable them survive. She states that:

“...After a while my husband fall on the snow and his hand was broken. He was out of work for a year, so I had to look for work to continue paying the rent. We suffered but some refugees who came here long time ago helped us to go to work every day until we learned how to drive.”

Karinganire said that they had problems getting a driving permit because they could not read, speak, and write English. She had problems in applying for jobs because she did not know how to use a computer. She had never used a computer. She had to work long hours to raise rent money, and pay bills for one year.

“...We had problems of getting a drivers permit. This is because we did not speak English. The language is the problem. Everything is in English, everything you use a computer. We had not used any computer in our lives. I had to work long hours so that we could pay rent and electrical bills but we had food stamps which helped a lot.”

Karinganire states that the refugees who had been resettled earlier and had been used to life in America stepped in to take her to work and back. They assisted her since they came from the same country. They had learned English and they spoke the same language. They even started making them learn English because of translating the words

directly from their native language. She feels that refugees should be assisted for one year before they are left on their own, and that driving permit should be in the language they can read and understand. In Karinganire's own words, she states that:

“... Another family from Congo who came here long time ago helped us to take us to work and back. The Congolese family helped us to learn driving until we got a license. I suggest that refugees should be helped for one year before they are left on their own. This will help us to learn English so as to get a driving permit and do a driving test .They should help refugees to test in the language they understand. America should know that not all countries speak English. It is hard to learn a language in three months. In short three months is not enough for refugees to settle down. If they can at least help for one year will be enough.”

Participant No. 9 - Asifiwe

Asifiwe is a 64-year-old woman with 14 children. She was widowed during the war when her husband was murdered by the rebels. She explains that her husband was cut into pieces. This was the time they ran away to Rwanda. She mentioned that six of her children died in Rwanda. She was left with eight children. Six of her children are resettled in the US, one in Georgia, five in Indianapolis, and two daughters are in Rwanda. Her extended family is still in Rwanda. She states in her own voice that:

“...I left two daughters and their husbands and children behind (my grandchildren). They live in Gisenyi town not a refugee camp. I left my other extended family but my children are only two and their families. My husband died. My husband was cut into pieces then we ran a way to Rwanda. My husband was killed like a wild animal. My six children died in Rwanda. I had 14 children.

Now I have eight left. Two are still in Rwanda, five are in America. One is in Georgia, four are here in Indianapolis.”

Asifiwe is full of praise for the refugee agency which assisted her to come to Indianapolis and resettled them. They gave them an apartment and bought them food. They paid her rent for five months. She believes that the extension of help she received was as a result of her advanced age and bad health. She recalls that:

“...I came here through Exodus Resettlement Agency. They brought us to this apartment, bought us food. They gave us a card we use in paying for food. They paid our rent for three months and added another two more months. They extended the help to me and my children because I am elderly and sick.”

Asifiwe cannot stand for long, hence she was placed on welfare. She was processed for cash assistance, food stamps, and Medicaid. She states that:

“...I cannot stand for long. I cannot work because I don't speak English. I was listed to get money and food stamp every month (SSI). I get food stamps for \$200 and cash of \$600. I am happy the way I live and the \$600 is really helping me. Together with the money I get from SSI helps us to pay rent and bills.”

Asifiwe explains that her daughter lives with her and supports her to pay rent and bills with what she earns from her job. Her food stamps and cash assistance help in buying food and paying other bills. She says that her son who had been resettled earlier helps them too. She decries the language problem which is difficult for her to learn at her age. She states in her own voice that:

“...Since I have food stamps. We are able to make ends meet. I had a son who was resettled here before I came who helped us too. America is good but all

refugees should be given jobs right away. The language barrier is another problem. All refugees should be taken to school first to know English completely before anything else. It will be good to extend the resettlement period to one year before they are left on their own. I live with my child and her daughter (grandchild).”

Reduction and Elimination of Participant’s Lived Experience

In the process of scrutinizing the excerpts of the participant’s lived experience to determine the relevance of each excerpt and to understand the experience of settling into the United States as a refugee, I employed Occam’s razor (Ockham 1287-1347) to eliminate all that was considered repetitive and redundant. The razor considered the following principles of phenomenological reduction: Is the excerpt important to the participant’s lived experience of the phenomenon? And, can the excerpt be reduced to its latent meaning?

To determine the invariant constituents of the participant’s lived experience, I used the excerpts and the quotes that passed through the scrutiny of phenomenological reductionism to begin to explore the latent meanings of the experience. I later grouped the excerpts and the quotes to express the experience of the participant.

Clustering and Thematizing of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

The invariant constituents of the participant’s lived experience were further grouped following the importance of every unit of experience to the overall theme of resettling in United States as a refugee, and whether the unit can possibly be reduced to its latent meaning. The groupings of the participant’s invariant constituents of the

experience formed the theme that express every aspect of the experience as lived by the participant.

Participant No. 1 - Mutesi

Core Themes

The core themes which emerged for Mutesi are: 1) Resettling in Indiana as a refugee - lived space – spatiality, 2) Lived time – temporality, 3) Emotions: feelings and regret – lived body- corporality, 4) Spirituality- lived spirit, 5) Family – lived relations- relationality, 6) Life in Africa vs life in US – lived space- spatiality.

Validation - Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

The invariant constituents and themes of the participant’s lived experience were validated by checking the themes against the complete record of the participant. The following questions were asked to determine the validity of the invariant constituents: Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcript? Are they compatible, if not explicitly expressed? If the invariant constituents and themes were not explicitly expressed or compatible, they were not relevant to the participant’s lived experience and were deleted. Following the validation of the participant’s lived experience, the following themes emerged as critical to her whole experience:

Resettlement in the US. This theme is described in terms of the type and quality of the assistance received, as well as the participant’s assessment and feelings about the quality of the assistance.

Emotions. The term of emotion is strongly expressed when the participant describes the loss of her daughter, which she links to the inadequate quality of the assistance she received from the resettlement agency. The participant expresses emotions

using words such as ‘abandon’ to describe her feelings towards Catholic Charities when they stopped providing her with the assistance she needed to resettle as a refugee in United States. The participant also uses words such as ‘devastating’ to describe the feeling of loss she experienced and continues to experience because of this loss. The participant sort of questions the whole project of coming to the US as a refugee. She squarely blames her coming to the US for the loss of her daughter, and believes that if she were in Africa her daughter would not have died, perhaps, because there no swimming pools in Africa as there are in the US.

Lived-time. This theme features in the participant’s lived experience in the way of comparing the harsh winter conditions in Indiana with her experience of living in Africa. While the winter is harsh and cold in Indiana where the participant lives, she compares that experience with her experience during the time she was in Africa. The participant compares the lack of winter conditions in Africa with the excessive cold she experienced during her first winter in United States.

Spirituality. Spirituality is another important theme of the participant’s lived experience. Besides stepping in to provide assistance where the Catholic refugee resettlement agency had failed, the participant’s church not only provided her the assistance she needed but became part of her family. This is a very important horizon of the participant’s lived experience. In the absence of her parents and relatives, who are still in Rwanda, the participant’s church not only serves her spiritual and material needs but also fills the void of her family located back in Africa. This theme is very much related to the theme of resettlement and family.

Family. Family is another important theme of the participant's lived experience. This theme is validated by its connections to the participant's lived experience. Family is what the participant misses as a refugee in the United States. The notion of family in the participant's worldview extends beyond just the nuclear family. Family is also her relatives, such as her own father and her mother. The absence of the participant's extended family is what she misses most. Family in the participant's worldview also symbolizes togetherness. In the absence of her extended family, the participant's church group serves as the family community the participant needs and provides her the sense of togetherness she misses from her extended family.

Life in Africa versus life in US. This theme is very important to the participant's entire experience of settling as a refugee in United States. It introduces the horizon whereby the participant compares her experience growing up in Africa and the experience of settling in the US as a refugee. The theme is validated by its relevance to the participant's experience of adapting to the environmental and cultural contexts of the state of Indiana in the United States. It also opens the window to understanding the participant's African background and what it was like for her growing up in Africa. The theme is very much directly related to the theme of church and spirituality in the participant's lived experience.

Individual Textural Description

This unit of analysis describes important aspects of participant's lived experience settling in the state of Indiana as a refugee. The aim of this unit of analysis is to provide a detailed textual description of the participant's lived experience in her own voice as follows:

“I arrived America through Catholic Charities Refugee Program. I was given an apartment and all the basics to start life with. Catholic Charities paid my rent for two months. My electric power got disconnected during winter time and I took shelter in another lady’s house because it was too cold for us since we had not experienced that kind of cold before. We don’t have winter in Rwanda or DR Congo, so we don’t know it can be this cold. This was a very bad experience because I could not cook. I gave my children juice and bread....Catholic Charities came in August and took me to Chick Fry Restaurant to work part time for 4 hours only. They gave me a bus ticket for one month then advised me to take the second ticket from my salary which was not enough even to pay rent. I was struggling with learning English language. I had to learn how to drive too. After getting a driver’s permit, I had to work two jobs to make ends meet. I feel that Catholic charities abandoned me though I thank them for helping me to America. My parents and my brothers and sisters still live in Rwanda refugee camps. Some live in the Kiziba refugee camp but others live outside the refugee camp but they are still refugees. They get everything from United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) as refugees but they do business and pay their rent. I miss my relatives particularly my parents, and my siblings. I pray to see them one day...I was still young when we moved to Rwanda with my parents, three brothers and a sister. I started going to school started at 5th grade to grade 8th. After school got married and I had three children. My husband got sick and died. He left me three children alone. After my husband’s death, I was brought to America as a refugee with my three children...I don’t know the agency’s rules on what they are

supposed to do...I have seen other agencies help refugees up to one full year, but Catholic Charities does not. I don't know if other agencies do this on their own because other refugees who come in with other agencies like Exodus Refugee Immigration takes care of refugees until they get them jobs properly. Sometimes we refugees don't seem to understand how the system works. I miss my family and culture and the way we do things. Refugees should be served by the agencies for a longer period than the two three months' time they help. Let me say like one year. They should ensure they have driving licenses and should have known English language and get them jobs. The main problem is knowing the language, driving and getting jobs so as to pay bills.”

Individual Structural description

The unit of analysis presents the structural description of the participant's lived experience, focusing on the logical structure or the structural themes of her lived experience. The participant's structural description is centered on the following major themes: arriving in United States and resettling as a refugee, the participant's family and culture, the participant's church group, and the participant's suggestions for improving refugee resettlement experience in United States.

Arriving in United States and Resettling as a Refugee. This structural unit is the central connecting theme around which the lived experience of the research participant is constructed. It is because of the participant coming to United States as a refugee that she is subject to assistance to resettle in the state of Indiana. Unfortunately, the experience of resettling as a refugee turns out to be difficult and unfulfilling to the participant. At the organizational level, the resettlement assistance provided by the

refugee organization that brought the participant to United States and the Catholic Charities, the agency who assumed the responsibility of resettling the participant as a refugee in the State of Indiana, proved at best inadequate in some areas, and at worst not even available during the time of need.

“...I received a letter from Catholic Charities that I was on my own. I was struggling to know English with my children. The agency which brought me to US never really did much, never thought me English (ESL) they sort of abandoned me.”

This structural theme serves as the connecting rod of all the lived experiences described by the participant. It is because of the participant coming to resettle in the US that she experiences the freezing weather conditions different from the tropical conditions she grew up in Africa.

“...I took shelter in another lady’s house because it was too cold for us because we had not experienced that kind of cold before .We don’t have winter in Africa so we don’t know it can be this cold. This was a very bad experience because I could not cook.”

It is also because of coming to settle in United States as a refugee that she is confronted with the reality of searching for a job to be able to have a source of income to provide for her housing and food needs. It is also because the participant is struggling to look for a job to survive in the US as a refugee that she loses her daughter.

“....Again after leaving me I lost my only daughter in the swimming pool of the complex apartment I was living. I went to look for a job for the first time on my own that is when my daughter drowned. The only daughter I had, it was

devastating. It is still devastating to date. When I look at her picture in house it pains me.”

The structural theme arriving in the US and resettling as a refugee is also directly related the participant’s emotional being. The loss of her daughter because of struggling to survive in the US as a refugee engenders’ in the participant the emotions of pain, sadness, and regret.

“...I feel that had not been brought to America, my daughter could have been alive today since we do not have swimming pools in Africa.”

Family and culture. Family and culture is a structural theme around which the participant constructs her lived experience. The family seems to be a very important sociological institution to the client. She talks about how she misses her family in Africa and describes her church by extension as her family in United States. The participant seems to enjoy the sense of togetherness and protection. With the absence of her family in the United States, she seems to experience a void in her life. This void, however, is filled by her church group, which she describes as her family in United States.

“...The Church I worship has been of help to date. They are my family..... I have my family members in Rwanda but I came with all my children. My parents and my brothers and sisters still live in Rwanda..... I miss my relatives particularly my parents, and my siblings. I miss my relatives particularly my parents, and my siblings. I pray to see them one day.... I miss my family and culture and the way we do things. The togetherness of the big family.”

Church group. The participant's church group is another theme that helps structure her lived experience. The church group provides the participant the sense of togetherness she misses from her extended family in Africa. Having been abandoned by the Catholic Charities and the refugee organization that brought her to United States, the participant's church group is the community organization that stepped in support of her with rental assistance and other basic needs. The church group thus not only satisfies the participant's spiritual needs but also her material needs.

"... The church continued paying part of my rent until 2015. The church I worship has been of help to date. They are my family..... I went to look for a job for the first time on my own that is when my daughter drowned. The only daughter I had, it was devastating. It is still devastating to date. When I look at her picture in house it pains me. I wish I had not been brought to America because my daughter could have been a live today since we do not have swimming pools in Africa. This is the time the church I worship really took me and my children and helped me like their child together with my children."

Suggestions for improvement. Suggestions for improving the refugee experience is an important structural unit of the participant's lived experience. The participant's suggestion for improvement stem from her own lived experience, which she described as 'very bad,' 'feeling abandoned,' and 'devastating.' Drawing from the negativity of her lived experience, the participant suggests that

"...Refugees should be served by the agencies for a longer period than the three months' time they help. Let me say like one year. They should ensure they have driving licenses and should have known English language and get them jobs..."

The main problem is knowing the language, driving and getting jobs so as to pay bills.”

The participant believes that if the resettlement agencies assist the refugees for a longer period than the two to three months period currently practiced, the refugees will experience lesser challenges resettling in their host communities.

Textural – Structural Description of the Meanings and Essences of the lived experience to the participant

The experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee means a lot of things to the participant. This experience means abandonment, loss, pain, regret, survival, church, family, and sense of community.

Abandonment. The participant draws from the way she was left on her own to struggle to survive in the community a sense of abandonment. Although she appreciates the Catholic Charities for helping bring her to United States, she feels she was abandoned by this agency when she needed their assistance most. The essence of this feeling of abandonment seems to be the feeling of abdication and forsakenness.

Loss. The meaning the participant draws from the experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee is that this experience also means a feeling of loss, especially as it relates to the loss of her daughter, because of the participant’s inability to stay home and watch her children. While the participant was out searching for jobs, her daughter drowned in a swimming pool. The participant describes this moment and her memory of the situation henceforth as “devastating.” Devastating not only because she has lost a daughter but also because she could not be available to offer her daughter the protection

of a mother to her daughter. This loss is directly related to the feeling of pain that have characterized the life of the participant since then.

Pain. Pain is the meaning the participant draws from the lived experience of resettling in United States as a refugee. Pain is a significant meaning the participant seems to draw from her lived experience. The pain is emblematic of her experience of losing a daughter in the most tragic circumstances and of the emotional feeling of her not being there for her daughter. The pain also is projected in the feeling that if she had stayed in Africa, her daughter would not have died. This is a feeling of self-culpability, which stems from her having decided to come to settle in United States.

Regret. Regret is another meaning the participant draws from the lived experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee. The regret comes from the painful emotions of having lost a daughter in the most tragic circumstances and of having come to the United States in the first place. The participant feels that if she were in Africa her daughter would not have died. This is an ambivalent feeling, considering that the very reason the participant left Africa to come to the United States as a refugee was to escape the risk of death, and yet in America, she experienced the death she was trying to escape. This is the real ambivalence of the participant experience of resettling in United States as a refugee.

Survival. Survival is another important meaning the participant draws from the lived experience of settling in the United States as a refugee. Struggling to learn the English language, secure a job, work two jobs to be able to pay her rent are all struggles emblematic of her struggles to survive as a refugee in the United States.

Church. Church has an ambivalent meaning in the participant's lived experience. Catholic Charities, the organization that brought the participant to the US, is ambivalently viewed by the participant; she views them in the positive light of having brought her to the US, but she also views them in the negative light of having abandoned her at the time she needed assistance to resettle in the United States. The participant views her church group, however, in the positive light of having come to her assistance at the time she needed assistance most. Because of the assistance the church group provided, the participant perceives the group not just as a spiritual community, but moreover as her family in the United States.

Spirituality. Spirituality is another meaning the participant seems to draw from her lived experience. The participant seems to convey this meaning when she compares church activities in Africa and in America. The participant's spirituality is also revealed when she talks about her extended family in Africa. She characterizes how much she misses them in spiritual terms by stating, "I pray to see them one day." Such characterization reveals the essence of the experience of missing someone you love most. The act of praying to see ones loved one again is synonymous to the act of praying for one lost paradise.

Participant No. 2 - Kahindo

Core Themes

The core themes which emerged on Kahindo are: 1) Fear of the unknown-lived space, lived body, and lived space, 2) Lost hope, living in shock, disbelief, and helplessness- lived body, 3) Desperation-lived body, 4) Hope and spirituality, 4) Access

resettlement assistance-lived relations, 5) Family-Lived body and lived relations, and 6) Suggestions to improve refugee resettlement assistance- lived time.

Validation - Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

The themes and the invariant constituents of the participant's lived experience were validated by examining each theme and its relevant invariant constituent against the lived experience as described by the participant. The purpose here was to make sure that the themes were representative of the participant's lived experience as described in her own voice, and that the themes help tell the participant's story and enhance understanding of what the experience meant to the participant. To validate each of the themes of the participant's lived experience, the researcher evaluated the relevance of each theme in the context of the entire experience, and in the context of aspects of the experience.

Fear of the unknown-lived space, lived body, and lived relations. Fear of the unknown is a significant theme of the participant's lived experience. This theme underlines the participant's entire lived experience. As soon as the participant is informed that she will be leaving Africa for the US to settle as a refugee, her entire view of the experience ahead is influenced by fear. Fear of moving into a new culture, having to do things differently, interacting with people from a different racial background, and using a different linguistic medium. Using her own words, the participant describes the experience as follows:

“...I was fearful of the house, electricity, cooking stove and everything was new to me, however I got used to them. I had never lived where there was electricity.... When we arrived in Indianapolis, I was still fearful because I only

saw different people coming out, many white people, and wondered which language I was going to speak since I don't know English.”

The lived body, the lived space, and the lived relations are influenced by fear of the unknown. There is unknown culture, people, and language. This seems to define not only the participant's perception of the entire experience, but also her perception that every aspect of the lived experience is influenced by fear of the unknown. Fear of the unknown is an emblematic theme of the participant's lived experience. The fear of the unknown space, people, and language dominates the participant's psychological, emotional, and sociological narrative of her lived experience as a female refugee from Congo resettling in Indianapolis.

Lost hope (living in shock, disbelief and helplessness)-lived body. This theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by the experience of receiving the news that she will now henceforth financially and materially be responsible for her resettlement. According to the participant, this news is devastating because she is unemployed, and moreover because she has bills to pay. The theme of lost hope is also significant in that it directly relates to the theme of fear of the unknown. With the news that the participant will now assume responsibility over her own resettlement, she becomes fearful as she confronts the reality of having pay her house rent and other household utilities. In her own words, the participant describes the experience as follows:

“...Then suddenly they wrote me a letter that I was on my own. I asked my case worker to tell me what the letter was saying. When she told me, I was shocked because I was not working and did not know how I was going to pay my bills. I started being fearful because I didn't know how I was going to pay my bills.”

This theme portrays a lived body overwhelmed by fear and frightened by the news that she will now take charge of her own resettlement.

Desperation-lived body. Desperation as a significant theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by its relevance to the theme of fear of the unknown and lost hope. Pregnant, unemployed, and responsible for paying her bills by herself demonstrates the significance of desperation as a theme of the participant's lived experience, and reveals the most helpless and desperate condition the participant experienced settling as a refugee in Indianapolis.

Hope and spirituality-lived spirit. Hope and spirituality as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by its relevance to her condition of struggling to resettle as a refugee in United States. Surrounded by circumstances of fear, helplessness, and desperation, the participant finds hope in the possibility of a positive future, one in which she gets US citizenship and a passport to be able to visit her family in Africa. This hope is rooted in her spirituality and the belief that God can open the door of citizenship for her.

Access to resettlement assistance-lived relations. Access to resettlement assistance is another significant theme of the participant's lived experience, validated by its relevance to conditions of fear, helplessness, desperation, and hope that underline the participant's lived experience. In this context of a desperate lived body, space, and time, the participant's lived relations open the way for her to access resettlement assistance. In the participant's own words,

“...my case worker assisted me get my rent paid by municipal council. I went there many times with my case worker. It was an extensive line and the process to

be approved for assistance. They paid my rent for three months, and by then my case worker had arranged and applied for me to get assistance from the government. I don't know but I was receiving \$706 per a month and food stamps of \$220 every month. I and my son lived like that until I delivered my daughter. I started getting used. I applied for the government house which was charging me a little money. I could remain with some money which I could buy clothes for myself, my son, and my daughter.”

Through her social worker she was able to get her rental bills paid by the municipal council for the first three months, and later through government assistance. Being able to receive resettlement assistance allowed the participant to access affordable public housing and to have some money left to buy clothing for herself, her son, and her daughter, after paying the little she had to pay for her rent.

Family-lived body and lived relations. The family is a significant theme in the participant's lived experience. The family is the object around which the participant builds her hope. Rooted in the spiritual belief that God can make it possible for her to someday obtain a US passport and visit her family in Africa, the participant remains hopeful and determined. She keeps her hope alive by talking to her family in Africa over the phone.

Suggestions to approve refugee resettlement assistance-lived time.

Suggestions for improvement is a relevant theme of the participant's lived experience. This theme is validated by the difficult and challenging conditions under which the participant experienced the process of resettling in the United States as a refugee. Having experienced fear, desperation, and helplessness, the participant thinks she can contribute

to improving the experience of resettling in the United States for refugees. The participant thinks resettlement agencies could do more by:

“... Teaching refugees English, driving by helping them to learn the driving instructions in the language they understand and ensure they have a driving license and that they understand English language well. Other states give the learner’s instructions in their languages which makes it easier to learn. Some agencies pay rent for more months than what Catholic Charities did to me. It is only the state of Indiana who do not give the driving test in other languages.”

Individual Textual Descriptions

The textual descriptions of the participant’s lived experiences draw from the participant’s verbatim description of the experience to present in her own voice and words how she lived the experience of resettling in Indianapolis, United States as a female refugee from Congo. This individual textual description presents some of the direct quotes from the participant’s lived experience:

“... The first three months, I was fearful of the house, electricity, cooking stove and everything was new to me, however I got used to them. I had never lived where there was electricity. The first three months were good because Catholic Charities were helping me pay my rent, electric bill, and gas bill. When I saw many refugees from Congo coming to live in the same complex apartment I started feeling safe and happy because I had people around me whom I could talk to in my language. Some of the Congolese who came were from the same camp I came from. I left many family members behind because I only came with my son. All my relatives were left in Rwanda. I sometimes talk to them on phone. I have

not seen them for the last seven years. I feel like seeing them, but I cannot since I don't have even a passport. I am waiting to see if God opens his doors for me to get citizenship then get a passport and go to see them. I left my brother and sister in Rwanda, but I came with my son who was 7-years-old and I was 3 months pregnant. My brother and sister still live in the refugee camp..... I did not know how to use a toilet, but I was shown by the airline staff.....”

Individual Structural Description

I employed imaginative variation in this unit of analysis to examine the emotional, social, and cultural relevance of the participant's lived experience and provide an insightful understanding of the meaning and essence of experience as lived by the participant. I interpreted the participant's narrative in the broader context of her humanity to highlight the transcendental and qualitative significance of her phenomenological experience. Based on this analysis, the following structural themes emerged as epiphenomenal to lived experience described by the participant. These themes include fear, cultural shock, helplessness, disappointment, survival education, and need-based resettlement,

Fear. Fear as an emotional expression or state of apprehension takes over the human mind, especially when we sense danger or are confronted with a situation in which we have limited or no mastery. The structural constituent of the participant's lived experience is strongly influenced by fear. This theme of analysis plays an overarching rule in the way the participant perceived every encounter of her lived experience as a refugee in United States. She is not only fearful of her going to settle in United States as a refugee, but also, she is fearful of the people who are different racial, ethnic, and

linguistic background from her. She is also fearful of the house, electricity, and cooking. Perhaps because these people and things are foreign to her or because she has never learned interacting with people from different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, or living in a house with a western architectural posture and household necessities. Whatever the underlining factors driving fear in the participant, the role of fear in the participant's structuring of her lived experience cannot be overemphasized.

Cultural shock. Cultural shock is an important structural unit that influences the participant's lived experiences. Cultural shock is expressed by the participant in the form of a comparing the experience of settling in United States as a refugee with the cultural experience of growing up in Africa. The participant reveals this cultural shock in this extract of her lived experience:

“I was fearful of the house, electricity, cooking stove and everything was new to me, however I got used to them. I had never lived where there was electricity.... When we arrived in Indianapolis, I was still fearful because I only saw different people coming out, many white people, and wondered which language I was going to speak since I don't know English.”

The cultural shock is not only because of the participant finding herself in a new cultural context, but also because of being abandoned in the wilderness by the very organizations she had believed was gone to assist her resettle as a refugee in the United States.

Helplessness. Helplessness is an important structural unit of the participant's lived experience. The participant expresses helplessness in the face of the challenge of being entirely responsible for her own resettlement. At a time that she desperately needs help to be able to resettle as a refugee in Indianapolis, she is informed that she must now

be responsible for herself. This news is delivered to the participant at the time that she is confronted by fear of the unknown. At the same time, she must brace the circumstances and strive to survive. Not only is the participant required to assume self-responsibility, she is also expected to take responsibility over her son and her unborn baby. These circumstances produce the helpless mental state revealed by the participant in the narrative of her lived experience.

Disappointment. Disappointment is a critically important structure of the participant's lived experience. The participant is disappointed by the fact that Catholic Charities will no longer continue to provide the assistance she needs after the initial three months. This news is disappointing and emblematic of how the participant describes the experience of resettling in Indianapolis as a refugee. The participant expresses this disappointment in these words:

“...then suddenly they wrote me a letter that I was on my own. I asked my case worker to tell me what the letter was saying. When she told me, I was shocked because I was not working and did not know how I was going to pay my bills. I started being fearful because I didn't know how I was going to pay my bills. I was pregnant, and my baby was growing in my stomach.”

Given these circumstances in which the participant has no control, she is left with nothing else but disappointment. She is probably disappointed that she cannot get the assistance she needs at a time when she needs it most. Pregnant and with her little son, she can only be disappointed.

Survival education. Survival education is another structural horizon with considerable influence on the participant's lived experience. Drawing from the

disappointment of her resettlement conditions, the participant believes that refugee resettlement organizations can be better and provide the refugees with at least the minimal education for survival, namely, helping refugees learn driving and how to better express themselves in English.

Need-based resettlement. Need-based resettlement emerges from the participant's description of her lived experience as the structural basis of refugee-centered resettlement. This is opposed to resettlement programming driven by timetables. The participant's horizon of the entire episode of lived experience is influenced by the belief that resettlement agencies should organize refugee resettlement efforts around the needs of the participant and not around the three months mandated duration of refugee assistance.

Textural – Structural Descriptions of the Meanings and Essence of the Lived Experience

It was important for me to look at what the experience of resettling in United States as a refugee meant to the participant. This experience meant several things to the participant. It meant separating from her family in Africa, embracing American culture and the challenges it brings, building new relations and a new community of those with whom the participant is familiar, coming from Africa as refugee. This experience also means learning new ways of living and becoming self-responsible. To the participant, this experience seems to mean struggling to integrate to the American culture in the most difficult and challenging of circumstances.

Participant No 3 - Mahirwa

Core Themes

The following core themes emerged: 1) Fear of the unknown, 2) Arrival and welcoming into United States, 3) Resettling in United States as a refugee, 4) The family, 5) Termination of resettlement assistance, and 6) Ameliorating the conditions of refugee resettlement.

Validation - Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

Fear of the unknown. Fear of the unknown was the overarching theme that featured in the participant's description of her lived experience. The researcher employed content validation and member checking to improve the accuracy and the relevance of the theme. Using content validation, the researcher assessed the theme in relation to the general topic of the research and the other themes that featured in the participant's description of her lived experience. Fear of the unknown as a theme is captured in the extract below from the participant's lived experience:

“... I was happy to board a plane. I was a bit fearful about the plane when it was taking off and when it was landing. We were given food in the plane. I did not like it much but I ate it. We changed planes twice.”

The researcher also employed member checking to validate the relevance of fear of the unknown to the participant's lived experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee. Using this technique, the participant was asked to assess the relevance of the theme vis-a-vis its accuracy and its resonance to the experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee. The participant confirmed with the researcher that fear of the

unknown was the emotional feeling she experienced while resettling in the state of Indiana as a female refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Arrival and welcoming into United States. Arrival and welcoming into United States was another theme of the participant's lived experience, validated using qualitative content validation techniques and member checking. The researcher assessed the theme of arrival and welcoming into the United States by assessing the significance of this theme to the understanding the participant's lived experience of resettling in the United States as a female refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The theme proved quintessential to understanding the participant's first experience of the United States and how this experience shaped her expectations and opinions about assistance for resettlement into the United States as a refugee. During member checking the participant also confirmed the overarching relevance of this theme to her experience of the resettling in United States as a refugee, and the formation of her opinion in relation to how she thinks refugees should be treated. This theme is captured in the following extract from the participant's lived experience:

“... We arrived safely, we were welcomed by the Exodus immigration workers and who took us to apartments with beds, seats, and were given food that first day. I was happy to be in America.”

The theme of arrival and welcoming into the United States provided the initial window into the participant early experience in United States and the beginning of her thought process about resettling in United States as a refugee.

Resettling in United States as a refugee. Resettling in United States as a theme of the participant's lived experience was validated using qualitative content validation

techniques and member checking. The experience of accessing resettlement assistance through Exodus Immigration provides content validation for the participant's experience of resettling in United States as a refugee. The researcher also validated this theme of the experience by using the technique of member checking to check with the participant to ensure that the theme captured the experience of resettling in United States as a refugee.

“... I am thankful for the first three months the Exodus immigration refugee agency helped us settle down. They helped me to get a job, and they helped us for up to six months.”

Settling in a pristine environment as a refugee requires being able to access employment, housing, and food assistance opportunities. Drawing from this theme of the participant's lived experience, she was able to access resettlement assistance through Exodus Immigration. Through this organization she was able to receive employment assistance for up to six months while resettling in United States as a refugee.

The Family. The family is an important theme of the participant's lived experience, as it offers a window into understanding the participant's life story and her close relations. The theme of family provides that framework for a humanistic understanding of the participant as a relational being. Like other themes of the participant's lived experience, the researcher used the technique of content validation and member checking to determine the relevance of the theme to the understanding of the participant's lived experience.

“... I have one child in DR Congo and one in Rwanda. The one in Congo is my first born. ...My resettlement interview was done together with my two grandchildren. Some of my siblings died, some were killed by rebels.”

The experiencing of the participant conducting her resettlement interview together with her two grandchildren exemplifies the importance of the family to the participant and clearly portrays the participant as a relational being. The theme of family also captures and validates the misfortunes that have characterized the participant's lived history. These misfortunes also influence the participant's lived experience, as they not only define her life history but also her story as a refugee.

Termination of resettlement assistance. The experience of living the termination of resettlement assistance was validated employing content validation and member checking techniques. In validating this theme, the researcher asked two critical questions: Is the theme of termination of assistance necessary to understanding the participant experience of resettling in United States as a refugee, and/or is it at least necessary to understanding some parts of the participant's lived experience? The extract below captures the relevance of the theme of termination of resettlement assistance:

“...After three months I was sent a letter that I was on my own. My caseworker had applied for me the money I get every month and food stamps. Then my application for financial assistance from the government was approved. Life became better. I live on that money and I continue getting food stamps. I feel that the agencies leave refugees stranded.

Through the theme of termination of resettlement assistance, the struggles, pains, and disappointments characterize the participant's lived experience. The theme of termination of resettlement assistance also provides a window into understanding the positive role played by the participant's social worker to link her to the resources she needed to survive at the time that her resettlement assistance was terminated.

Ameliorating the conditions of refugee resettlement. The theme of amelioration of the conditions of refugee resettlement in the United States provides a window into the participant's thinking about the best ways of assisting refugees who settle in the United States. The researcher validated the theme by assessing its relevance to understanding the entire lived experience of the participant as well as the parts of the lived experience. Member checking was used to obtain the participant's confirmation of the relevance of the theme to her story.

“...I feel that the agencies leave refugees stranded. The period of helping refugees should be increased to at least one year. It was like darkness came to our lives. No driving lessons, no language to assist us move on. I feel they should help refugees to at least 8 months or one year to enable us get used to everything new in our lives.”

The participant uses the theme of amelioration of the conditions of refugee resettlement in United States to present her perspective on how best refugees can be assisted to comfortably settle into the United States. According to the participant, helping learn the basics of driving and language would help improve the condition of refugee resettlement in the United States. The participant also believes that increasing the period of refugee assistance to at least 8 months or a year would allow enough time for the refugees to be able to survive on their own.

Individual Textual Description

The participant employs 40 units of horizons to describe her lived experience of resettling in Indiana as a refugee. What stands out of this textual description is the participant's appreciation of the assistance she received through Exodus Immigration in

her first three months as a refugee in the United States. This resettlement agency assisted her to get a job and continued to offer her assistance for up to six months after her arrival in the United States. The period after the first six months is described by the participant as characterized by struggle, pain, and disappointment, much so because it is the period that the resettlement assistance provided to the participant is terminated.

“... After three months I was sent a letter that I was on my own. My caseworker had applied for me the money I get every month and food stamps. The money had not been approved. We were waiting for the letter. After being left on our own, it was not easy. The food stamps were stopped once and I felt bad. I went to their office and explained them that I have my grandchildren and they returned the food stamps back.”

While the participant’s textual description presents the gloomy aspects of her lived experience of resettling in United States as a refugee, the textual description also portrays the positive side of the participant’s lived experience. This positive side of the textual description is influenced by the role of the participant’s case worker who during this moment of struggle, pain, and disappointment assisted the participant to apply for public financial assistance. The positive side of the participant’s lived experience is also exemplified by the approval of the participant’s application for cash and food assistance.

“... After being left on our own, it was not easy. The food stamps were stopped once and I felt bad. I went to their office and explained them that I have my grandchildren and they returned the food stamps back. Then my application for financial assistance from the government was approved.”

Another critical part of the participant's textual description is her opinion with regards to the best way of assisting refugees in the United States:

“I feel that the agencies leave refugees stranded. The period of helping refugees should be increased to at least one year. It was like darkness came to our lives. No driving lessons, no language to assist us move on. I feel they should help refugees to at least 8 months or one year to enable us get used to everything new in our lives”

This aspect of the participant's textual description offers a window into her thinking about refugee assistance in the United States.

Individual Structural Description

This unit of analysis presents the essential structure of the participant's lived experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee. The essential structure of the participant's lived experience is rooted in the following constituent elements of the participant's lived experience, namely, Exodus Immigration, letter terminating refugee assistance, case worker, public assistance, arrival in United States, family and ties to Congo and Rwanda, life story, and vision of effective refugee assistance. Although these elements constitute parts of the whole, they are as important as the whole, given that they form the building blocks of the lived experience of the participant and each in its way contribute to painting the picture of the experience as lived by the participant.

Exodus Immigration. Exodus Immigration provides the institutional link through which the participant accessed refugee assistance. It is also through this refugee agency that the participant came to the United States as a refugee. While the participant recognizes and appreciates the assistance she received through Exodus Immigration,

especially with regards to employment support, she is disappointed about the brief nature of the assistance. The participant's disappointment is not directed to Exodus Immigration but to the US refugee assistance program, which she thinks does not support the refugees long enough to be able to survive on their own.

Ties to Kenya, Congo, and Rwanda. Ties to Kenya, Congo, and Rwanda are an essential structural unit of the participant's lived experience and portrays the participant's family connectedness in space and time. Although settling as a refugee in the United States, the participant has not severed the blood ties that connect her to Kenya, Congo, and Rwanda. The participant, through this structural unit of the lived experience, presents her connection to Kenya, DR Congo, and Rwanda. The five children she has in Kenya, DR Congo, and Rwanda connect her back to Africa and portray her as a relational being defined in time and space by her connectedness to her children in Africa.

Case worker. Case worker constitutes an important essential structure of the participant's lived experience. The case worker connects the participant to the public assistance she needs to survive and helps her apply for the assistance. In the context in which the participant is new to her host environment with no driving and language of skills, the case worker is the critical link between the participant and the services she needs to survive. The case worker helps the participant navigate the system.

Public Assistance. Public assistance as an essential structural unit of the participant's lived experience is categorized into two forms of assistance. The refugee resettlement assistance through the Federal Refugee Resettlement Agency and assistance through other public institutions, such as the department of children and families. Public assistance in the participant's lived experience is perceived as a conduit to successful

resettlement. It is through public assistance that the participant received food, cash, employment, and housing assistance. The participant believes that extending refugee resettlement assistance for a period of at least eight months to one year would certainly enhance the experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee.

Coming to the United States. Coming to the United States as an essential structural unit of the participant's lived experience is validated by the relevance of the theme in understanding the journey from Africa to settle in the United States as a refugee and the warm reception the participant received upon entering the United States as a refugee. In the participant's own words, the journey was characterized by fear of the airplane and fear of not knowing what language she will use to communicate to people in the United States. The theme of coming to the United States reveals not only the uncertainties that linger in the participant's mind, but also the fears that underlines her thinking. Coming from a different linguistic and cultural background, this reveals what the participant needs to resettle in the United States as a refugee. As a non-English speaker, she needs to learn the language to be able to communicate with people in the host community, and she also needs acculturation to be able to successfully integrate with people from other social and racial backgrounds. To authenticate the theme of coming to America, the researcher performed content validation to understand the relevance of the theme to the entire lived experience of the participant and member checking to obtain the participant's validation of the theme.

Life Story. Life story as an essential structural unit of the participant's lived experience was validated using content validation and member checking techniques to determine the relevance of the theme to understanding the participant's experience of

resettling in the United States as a refugee. Employing the content validation technique, the researcher asked the question: how relevant is the theme of life story for understanding the participant's struggle to settle in the United States as a refugee? The answer to the above question is that the participant's life story is critical to understanding who she is now. The participant's life story defines her as a refugee, which qualifies her for resettlement assistance to the US. It is the fear for her life, justified by the horrors of her life story, that draw her from DR of Congo to the refugee Camp in Rwanda, and finally to the United States. Understanding her life story is important to understanding her struggles to resettle in the United States as a refugee.

Vision of an effective refugee assistance program. Vision of an effective refugee assistance program was validated using the content validation technique of internal structure assessment. Using this technique, the researcher assessed the relevance of the theme to understanding the phenomenon of resettling in the United States as a refugee. Vision of an effective refugee assistance program was found to be a very relevant structural unit of the participant's lived story, as it offered the window into understanding the participant's thinking as to ways of improving the refugee resettlement assistance program in the United States. Having experienced what it is like to resettle as a refugee in the United States, the participant recommends a new vision for refugee assistance in which the period of assistance is extended for at least eight months to a year.

Textural – Structural of the Meaning and Essence of the Lived Experience

Having analyzed the participant's lived experience, it became relevant for understanding what the experience meant to her. In other words, what was the essence of

the experience to the participant? The experience meant several things to the participant, namely, integrating into the host environment, struggling to survive in a new country with a new culture, living in faraway land away from her children in Kenya, Rwanda, and Congo, living in a safe environment away from the everyday danger of being killed in the wars of Congo, establishing new relations and connections to survive in the United States as a refugee, experiencing new challenges to survive as a refugee in the United States, and learning to access the public assistance she needs to survive.

An insightful understanding of the participant's lived experience also requires understanding of how the preceding essences shaped the participant's resettlement journey and her understanding of what it means to resettle in United States as a refugee with no background knowledge of the culture and the language needed to integrate into American society.

Participant No. 4 - Masika

Core Themes

The seven core themes emerged as follows: 1) Resettlement assistance-lived time and space, 2) Assistance from uncle-lived relations, 3) Schooling/education-lived body, 4) Family-lived relations, 5) Moment of hardship-lived time, 6) Turning point/public assistance-lived time, and 7) Reflecting on the experience.

Validation – Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experiences

The themes of the invariant constituents of the participant's lived experience were validated by checking the invariant constituents and themes against the complete record of the participant. The content validation took into consideration the following pertinent questions: Are the invariant constituents and themes expressed explicitly in the

transcripts? Are they compatible, if not explicitly expressed? The researcher also used member checking to confirm with the participant that the invariant constituents and themes captured every moment of the experience as lived.

Resettlement assistance. Refugee resettlement assistance as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated through the relevance of the thematic content to understanding the participant's struggle to settle in the United States as a refugee. As a newly arrived refugee struggling to integrate into the host community, the participant needed care, food, and medical assistance. In the participant's own voice:

“...The first three months were good because the agency took care of us. They paid and bought food for us. They took us for medical check-ups and doctor's appointments.”

This theme opens a horizon to understanding the defining context in which the participant operates and the expectations that influence her every day life as a refugee in the United States. It is these expectations of care as a refugee that make her feel disappointed that she is provided resettlement assistance for only three months. Comparing the three months assistance with her needs as a refugee, the participant feels disappointed that the resettlement assistance is not enough to get her settled and able to function independently. Besides the content validation of the theme, the researcher member checked with the participant to make sure that this was a relevant theme of her experience of resettling in into the United States as a refugee from the Congo.

Assistance from the uncle. Assistance from the uncle in the United States was validated as a significant theme of the participant's lived experience with relevance to understanding the broader theme of resettlement assistance. Assistance from the uncle as

a theme of the participant's experience opens another horizon to understanding the various sources of assistance the participant received in her struggles to resettle in the United States as a refugee. The theme also provides the horizon for understanding the experiences of the participant as a newly arrived refugee trying to resettle in the United States.

The need to have transportation to be able to move from one place to the other is trying to satisfy the very basic human need of shopping for the things one needs to survive. In the participant's own words:

“My uncle and family were here so we had a lot of help since they had to drive us around. They could take us for shopping. It was a very good experience.”

The involvement of the uncle and the family presents a unique opportunity and experience for the participant, an opportunity and experience that contrasts with that of those who must experience refugee resettlement without any outside support from family or relatives.

Schooling. Schooling as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by the need expressed by the participant to further her education. Expressed in her own voice the participant states that the problem was in solving her need to go to school. Desiring to further her education, the participant experiences obstacles as she is told she is above the age of enrolling in high school. Consequently, the participant must fulfill her dream of furthering her education by joining Job Corps in Edinburg, Indiana.

“... The only problem was me going to school. I was told that I was past the age of joining high school because I was 19 years. I wondered why? Kenya enrolled everybody wanting to go to school. I was told to join job corps Edinburg where

they take in students to complete high school and continue with education in college. I did not care so long as I joined school. I attended and graduated high school. I am waiting to go to college.”

The experience is surprising to the participant especially when she compares this with the experience of schooling in Kenya where there is no age limitation. Although surprising, the participant nonetheless enrolled in the Job Corps program in Edinburg and completed her high school education. She was waiting to enroll in college.

Family. Family as participant’s lived experience is validated by her emotional expression of missing her relatives, parents, and siblings. The theme of family reveals the relatedness of the participant as a human being. It is this relatedness that is driving the feelings of the absence of her loved ones. To understand the participant’s lived experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee, one needs to understand the emotions that influence her feelings of connectivity; one of such emotions involves her family relations, which are still in Africa. It is these family relations that the participant is missing. In her own words she describes her family situation and emotions as follows:

“ ... I thank God. I have my family members in Rwanda but I came with all my children. My parents and my brothers and sisters still live in Rwanda. I miss my relatives particularly my parents, and my siblings. I pray to see them one day.”

Although the participant misses her family relations, she is also thankful to God they are in Rwanda, thus suggesting that they are somehow safe and away from the violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The participant thus remains thankful to God that her loved ones are safe in Rwanda, although she misses them.

Moment of hardship. Moment of hardship as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by the experience of termination of refugee resettlement assistance after the first three months. In the participant's own words, this moment is characterized by her paying her rent, gas, and electric bills by herself and sometimes falling behind in payments.

“... After the three months, life started becoming hard. We got late in rent payment. I did work with my cousin and started paying rent. Then later I went to school and my uncle and cousin contribute for our rent and food.”

Moment of hardship as a theme of the participant's lived experience also provides a new horizon into understanding how the participant survived the moment, given the challenging circumstances in which she found herself during this period. It is in this context that the participant describes the experience of her and her cousin working to pay their rental bills. The participant also describes the assistance from the uncle as a contributing factor to her being able to get through this moment of hardship.

Turning point. Turning point as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by the lived experience of getting cash assistance for her grandmother. In the participant's own words, the cash assistance enabled the grandmother to be able to contribute to paying house rent.

“...but we also have food stamp from my grandmother. She gets some cash money which she contributes to pay rent.”

The turning point is also the moment of understanding the living conditions of the participant whereby she lives with her cousin and her grandmother and together they

contribute to paying the house rent. Consequently, the turning point is also the moment of teaming together to survive the hardship.

Reflecting on the experience. The theme of reflecting on the experience is validated by the participant's feelings of the experience of settling in the United States as a refugee. The participant describes the experience of receiving refugee resettlement assistance for only three months in these words:

“... Three months is not enough to learn English or learn driving lessons, or even get to pass an exam to get a permit since refugees don't speak English. They have to learn English well enough for them to understand the driving permit exam. I was lucky I had an uncle who helped us. He came as a refugee almost 10 years ago.”

In reflecting on her lived experience, the participant readily acknowledges the unique circumstances of her receiving support from her uncle as putting her in the exceptional category of those that are lucky. The acknowledgement of the uniqueness of her circumstances is unmistakable evidence of the peculiar nature of her lived experience.

Individual Textual Description

The textual description of the participant's lived experiences provides a detailed description of the experiences lived by the participant in her own voice. The aim of this unit of analysis is to present longer and more detailed textual information of the lived experiences of the phenomenon of resettling in the United States as a refugee in the participant's own voice. This allows the participant power and control over some of her own narrative.

“...The first three months were good because the agency took care of us. They paid and bought food for us. They took us for medical check-ups, and doctor’s appointments. My uncle and family were here so we had a lot of help since they had to drive us around. They could take us for shopping. It was a very good experience. The only problem was me going to school. I was told that I was past the age of joining high school because I was 19 years. I wondered why? Kenya enrolled everybody wanting to go to school. I was told to join Job Corps Edinburg where they take in students to complete high school and continue with education in college. I did not care so long as I was joined school. I attended and graduated high school. I am waiting to go to college.”

The above individual textual description of the participant’s lived experiences has also descriptively integrated the invariant textural constituents and themes that constitutes the participant’s narrative to give a coherent picture of her life story. The participant opens her story with the description of the good part of the experience where she received refugee resettlement assistance. This part of the narrative is followed by the part where she experiences pain and must struggle hard to be able to survive on her own with the termination of the refugee resettlement assistance after the first three months. In this difficult context, however, the participant considers herself fortunate with the support from the uncle and the family.

Individual Structural Description

The participant’s description of her lived experiences while settling in the United States as a refugee are rooted in important descriptive structures worth mentioning. These structures are emblematic of the participant’s entire experience and constitute the cores of

that moment of her lived world as a female refugee from DR Congo settling in the United States. These structures are interconnected, making the participant's experience complete.

Intervention from the resettlement agency. To understand the participant's lived experience of settling in the United States as a refugee, one would need to first understand the intervention of the refugee resettlement agency as captured and narrated in the participant's description of the experience of the agency taking her for medical check-ups and doctor's visits.

Intervention from uncle and family. The intervention of the uncle and the family is an important structural element of the participant's lived experience. This structural unit of the experience is directly related to the participant's experience of going out for shopping and driving around to fulfil other needs of the participant.

Enrolling school to complete high school. Enrolling to complete high school as a structural element of the participant's lived experience is directed related to the participant's needs for resettlement and upward social mobility. The structural unit of experience captures the participant's frustrations with the age constraint limiting her from enrolling in a regular high school. The participant expresses her frustration by contrasting her experience with her experience of the educational system of Kenya. Enrolling back in high school exposes not only the participant's frustration but also her ambitions and desires as human being.

Self-reliance. This structural unit of the participant's lived experience directly relates to the entire experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee and the difficulties confronted by the participant in the process of trying to resettle. In this context of self-reliance, the participant experiences the everyday struggles of paying her

own rental bills, and sometimes paying the bills later than the time scheduled for payment. In this context, the uncle and the cousin step in to assist her through the tough times.

Reflecting on the experience. In reflecting back on the experience, the participant suggests changes to the experience of the refugee experience in the United States. This changes directly relates to the participant's experience after the first three months of her struggling to resettle in the United States as a refugee.

Textural – Structural Description of the Meanings and Essences of the Lived Experience.

Drawing from the transcripts of the lived experiences described by the participant, the experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee means several things to the participant. It means experiencing a different educational system and practice, limited and insufficient support from the refugee resettlement agency, and the challenges of relying on oneself to survive in the host environment. This experience also meant applying for other sources of public assistance for the grandmother and working while going to school to be able to be able to meet the obligation of paying for her monthly rental bills. The experience also meant relying on the uncle and the family to survive as a refugee in the United States.

Participant No. 5 – Mulisa

Core Themes

The emerged core themes were as follows: 1) Boredom-lived body, 2) Chilly winter and snow -lived space and lived time, 3) Church in America-lived spirit, 3) News of relocating to America as a refugee-lived body, 4) School-lived body and lived spirit, 5)

Challenges of refugees from Congo-lived space and lived time, 6) Suggestion to refugee agencies-lived body.

Validation – Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experiences

The researcher validated the themes of the participant’s lived experience using content validation and member checking techniques. In applying content validation technique, the researcher first had to determine if the theme was explicitly mentioned in the transcripts of the interview. Secondly, the researcher assessed the relevance of the theme to understand the experience of settling in the United States as a refugee. Thirdly, if the theme was not directly related to the experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee, the researcher had to determine if it was relevant to understand other themes of the experience directly mentioned by the participant in the description of her lived experiences. Member checking was used to verify with the participant that the theme captured and translated her experience resettling in the United States as a refugee.

Boredom. Boredom as a theme of the lived experience of the participant is validated by the extract from the transcripts of the participant’s description of her lived experience in the first three months of living in the United States. Describing the experience, the participant stated:

“...The first three months was kind of boring because I was not in school, only stayed in the house not going outside because of cold snow”

The description captures and vividly expresses the state of her mind under the conditions of limited movement and activity. Under these circumstances the participant describes the lived body as kind of bored. The expression ‘kind of bored’ could suggest many things, such as the participant was bored or that she was feeling something like

boredom but not sure if she was truly bored. However, the experience of not going to school at this time and not being involved in any activity seems to suggest that the participant was engulfed by a feeling of boredom due lack of involvement in any activity. Considering that the participant was planning to enroll in school and at this time was not enrolled, the feeling of emptiness was filled by a sense of boredom. Boredom as a theme of the participant's lived experience was also crossed-checked and confirmed with the participant as the accurate description of the first three months of her presence in the United States as a refugee.

Chilly winter and snow. The theme of chilly winter and snow was validated through the content assessment of its textual and thematic relevance. The theme was found to have textual relevance to the participant's description of her lived experience as mentioned clearly the chilly winter and the snowy weather conditions as reflective of her lived experience as a refugee in the first three months in the United States. In her own voice the participant describes the experience as follows:

“...It was winter time. I was very excited to see snow for the first time. I did not like it because it was too cold for me since I had never experienced snow in Africa.”

The experience of seeing snow for the first breeds in her some feeling of ambivalence. While she is excited seeing snow for the first time in her life, she is also imbued by the feeling of dislike because of the chilly weather condition that characterized the snowy conditions. The researcher membered checked with the participant to ensure that the theme was reflective of her experience and feelings about the weather conditions.

Church in America. Church in America as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by the participant's comparative description of the religious worship in the United States and in Africa. In the participant's own voice,

“...the American churches, it is sort of quiet. I was used to a church where people worship singing and dancing and playing instruments.”

This expression of ambivalence is illustrative of how the participant processed the present and the past in the context of the lived experience of resettling in the United States as a refugee. In this context, the participant is not only experiencing the lived spirituality but is also comparing her present lived spirituality to her past lived spirituality in Africa. In her own words, “the church in America is quite and different from the church in Africa,” where their worshipping is characterized by singing, dancing, and playing of instruments. Church in America as a theme of the participant's lived experience also provided a window into understanding the theme of boredom discussed earlier. Because worshipping in America is quiet and less sensational, it indirectly contributes to the boredom experience by the participant during her first three months resettling in the United States as a refugee.

The theme of church in America also exposes the overall theme of cultural shock experienced by the participant in the process of settling in the United States as a refugee. Coming from a culturally emotional and sensational cultural context where spiritual worship and adoration are characterized by loud singing and dancing, the participant is experiencing cultural shock from having to worship in a church environment where adoration is not much characterized by loud singing and dancing.

News of relocating to America as a refugee. The theme of relocating to America as a refugee was validated by its relevance to understanding the emotions that characterized the participant's lived experience in the first three months where she experienced boredom, a chilly and snowy winter, and felt dislike for the harsh conditions. These emotions directly contrast with the excitement and the jubilation that filled the participant's heart when she was told that she will be going to the United States to settle as a refugee. It is easy to understand the feeling of dislike that engulfed the participant during this time when one analyses the feeling in the context of the excitement that engendered her experience of coming to the United States to settle as a refugee.

School. School as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by the transcripts of the participant's lived experience. In the transcripts, the participant explicitly expresses her intentionality of enrolling in school and describes her first three months in the United States as boring partly because she is not yet enrolled in school. The intentionality of enrolling in school is fulfilled after the first three months when the participant is finally enrolled in school. In her own expressions, the participant describes the theme of school in these words:

“... After three months I was in high school. It was not boring again because I started making friends from different continents. I made friends from Asia and other African countries. I found high school easier here than Rwanda. I found out that what I learned in Rwanda was what was taught here and found it a bit easy. They were doing it multiple choices in exams and homework. The school homework here is too much. In Rwanda we used to read a lot and memorize a lot for exams.”

School in the participant's lived world symbolizes high school education but also school is a venue for building friendly relationships and filling the void of boredom in the participant's life. In this regard, school is a venue in which knowledge is acquired and friendship nurtured. It is in school that the participant seeks to nurture the lived body and the lived relations. School in the participant's lived world is the venue where knowledge acquisition and friendship building meet. The researcher checked to validate the significance of school in her lived experience and the participant ascertained that school provided an escape from boredom of the home which took hold in the first three months of being in the United States as a refugee.

Challenges of refugees from Congo. The theme of challenges of refugees from the Congo is validated by the excerpt from the participant's lived experience describing her experiences about refugees from the Congo. Drawing from her experience, the participant identifies language, access to driver's licenses, shopping, and going to doctor's appointments as the major challenges encountered by Congolese refugees in the United States. In her own words, the participant stated:

“...language is hard for refugees. Refugees need time to learn English before they are left alone. Driving permit instructions need not only be in English language. It is the only language given. They don't care if a refugee understands it. The agencies who bring refugees in America need to help until they know how to drive then they leave them. Going shopping is a problem. Going for doctor's appointment is hard.”

Perhaps the reasons why shopping and going to doctor's appointments are challenging is because of the lack of access to transportation. Perhaps it could be because

of lack of mastery of the English they must use to communicate with those with whom they interact. The researcher member checked with the participant the significance of this theme to her lived experience and the participant stated that the theme captured not only her experience but also her horizon on how best things could be improved.

Suggestion to refugee agencies. Suggestions to refugee agencies as a theme of the participant's lived experience is validated by a quote from the transcripts of the participant's lived experiences in which the participant recommends in her own voice that

“... Those who bring us to America should help refugees for one full year. It will help us understand the culture and learn the language and everything.”

The participant's suggestion to refugee resettlement agencies is significant for two reasons. It expresses the participant's feelings after having experienced the challenges of the lived world of refugees and how they struggle every day to settle and integrate themselves into the host environment. The suggestion stems from her firm belief that it could be better if the agencies consider longer period of assistance.

Individual Textual Description

The participant introduces the narrative of her lived experiences with a description of the first three months in the United States. These first three months are the months she received refugee resettlement assistance through the resettlement agency. The textual description is characterized by boredom, the feeling of ambivalence characterized by the excitement of experiencing winter and snow for the first time, and dislike for the chilly winter. This textual description portrays someone who is going through cultural shock, excitement, and disenchantment because of the alienating circumstances of her lived world:

“...The first three months was kind of boring because I was not in school, only stayed in the house not going outside because of cold snow. It was winter time. I was very excited to see snow for the first time. I did not like it because it was too cold for me since I had never experienced snow in Africa. I also found it boring because in the American churches it is sort quiet. I was used to a church where people worship singing and dancing and playing instruments. It felt good when I was told that we were coming to America. I was excited to leave the camp for another life. After three months I was in high school. It was not boring again because I started making friends from different continents. I made friends from Asia and other African countries. I found high school easier here than Rwanda. I found out that what I learned in Rwanda was what was taught here and found it a bit easy. They were doing it multiple choices in exams and homework. The school homework here is too much. In Rwanda we used to read a lot and memorize a lot for exams. Language is hard for refugees. Refugees need time to learn English before they are left alone. Driving permit instructions need not only be in English language. It is the only language given. They don't care if a refugee understands it. The agencies who bring refugees in America need to help until they know how to drive then they leave them. Going shopping is a problem. Going for doctor's appointment is hard. I suggest that those who bring us to America help refugees for one full year. It will help us understand the culture and learn the language and everything.”

The second part of the textual description portrays a participant who fulfills the intentionality of enrolling in school but is struggling to meet up with the everyday

responsibilities of paying her rental bills and going for shopping and to doctor's appointments on her own without agency assistance. The textual description also reveals how the participant lives the experience of going to school, comparing to the system of instruction and examination of her high school in Indiana with the system of instruction and examination of Rwanda, the African country she first settled as a refugee before coming to the United States.

Individual Structural Description

The individual structural description of the participant's lived experiences exemplifies a deep sense of ambivalence as evidenced in the excitement and emptiness that instilled her lived body during the first three months and in the months after. The participant's structural description reflects the dichotomy of excitement and emptiness that characterizes her experience of settling in the United States as a refugee. While the participant is excited to be in the United States and to be seeing snow for the first time in her life, she is also bearing a deep sense of emptiness because her intention of enrolling in school is not being realized. The feeling of emptiness is reflected in the boredom described by the participant in her narrative.

The sense of emptiness that characterized the participant's lived experience is accentuated by reinforcing a sense of estrangement caused by the cultural shock experienced in places of worship and in the United States' educational system. We see the participant also struggling to survive after the resettlement agency ends her refugee resettlement after her first three months in the United States. In the context of emptiness and cultural shock, however, the participant is able to bring her intentionality of enrolling in school to fruition. The fulfillment of her intentionality introduces a sense of

empowerment in the structural description of her lived world as a refugee in the United States.

Textural – Structural Description of the Meanings and Essences of the Lived Experiences

The experiences of settling in the United States as a refugee meant so much to the participant. This experience meant boredom, fulfilling the dream of enrolling in school, discovering a new culture and a new expression of religiosity, discovering a unique way of organizing and delivering of education, experiencing a different climatic condition, and learning to adopt to this new condition. The experience also meant learning to survive independent of government support and believing in her ability to survive on her own. Through this experience, the participant developed the sense that life could become better for the refugees if the resettlement agencies assist refugees for at least a year. The participant also came to the realization that the experience will be different for refugees from the Congo if they are taught English and if they are taught the driving instructions in the language they understand. These realizations constitute the essence of the experience for the participant.

Participant No. 6 - Mutarutwa

Core Themes

The following core themes emerged: 1) Relaxing – lived body and lived time, 2) Snow and winter- lived time and space, 3) Education/school -lived time, 4) Moment of hardship – rent, bills, and food - lived time, and 5) Reflecting on the experience.

Validation – Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experiences

The themes of the participant's lived experience were validated using qualitative content validation technique. The phenomenological research context was used to intrinsicate the validity of the themes that emerged from the participant's lived experience. The researcher compared each of the theme with the general theme of the research, as well as with other themes revealed in the participant's description of the lived experience.

In validating the themes, two criteria were used: is the theme directly relevant to the participant's lived experience settling in the United States as a refugee? Or is the theme relevant to understanding other themes described in the participant's lived experience? After the internal validity of the themes were established, the researcher used member checking to cross check with the participant that the theme accurately reflected her lived experience and could be labelled as a descriptive category of the experience she lived.

Relaxing-Lived body and lived space and time. Relaxing as a theme of the participant's lived experience portrays the mode of the bodily experience of the participant and captures the participant's perception of the lived space and time. Relaxing as a theme of this experience was validated by its relevance to the theme of settling in the United States as a refugee. In the participant's narration of her first three months of her lived experience as a refugee in the United States, she described her everyday lived mode as relaxing. The participant is relaxing because there is not much activity she is involved in at this moment of her life.

This theme of the participant's lived experience also revealed the participant's perception of her lived space as it portrays the participant's perception of the home space where she spends the first three months of her new life in the United States relaxing. The participant's intentionality is also revealed when she describes the theme of relaxing in these words:

“...I found it relaxing because I was not going to school, not responsible for anything other than cooking and eating, and watching TV,”

Clearly the participant's intentionality influenced by the plan to enroll in school. In the first three months that the participant is not going to school, the hollowness of her intentionality is filled with the daily routine of cooking, eating, and watching TV. This routine portrays the meaning of relaxation from the participant's viewpoint.

Winter-lived time. Winter is an important theme of the lived experience described by the participant. Winter as a theme of the experience is emblematic of the lived time in which the experience described occurred. This theme was validated by its relevance to understanding how the participant experienced and adjust to the new weather conditions she would henceforth live her life as a refugee. The winter weather conditions are chilly and snowy, which contrast with the participant's prior experience coming from Africa where tropical weather conditions prevail. The experience to the participant is chilly and exciting, which demonstrates the state of the participant's lived body at this moment of her life.

The researcher validated the theme by exploring its relevance to the overall theme of settling in the United States as a refugee. Reading the textual description of the experience, the researcher posed the question, what was it like for the participant

experiencing winter for the first time in her life? The answer to this question came from the participant's description of her experience of winter: "We could not even go outside because it was cold from the winter." The participant describes the chilly and snowy weather conditions as the reasons for their staying in the house. Employing member checking, the participant validated the theme as reflective of her experience of the lived time.

Snow-lived time and space. Snow is an important theme of the participant's lived experience, validated by its relevance to her lived world as a refugee. Snow is the object of excitement to the lived body. As someone seeing snow for the first time, the experience is astonishing and impressive but at the same time shocking. In her own words the participant describes the experience in these words:

"...We had not seen snow it was our first time to see snow. I was shocked to see trees without leaves, even my siblings were shocked too. I started getting out, pick snow and run inside the house. It was shocking."

The excitement of the experience is vividly expressed in the phrase in which the participant describes how she and her siblings went out, picked the snow, and went back into the house. The experience is perhaps shocking to the participant because it is her first experience of snow. It may have also been shocking because of the chilly weather conditions that accompanied the snow. The researcher member checked with the participant and she stated that the experience was shocking because it was her first time encountering snow and because the temperature was chilly and like many others around them, they were forced to stay inside the house and not go outside.

School-lived time. School is an important theme of the participant's lived experience. School as the theme of the lived experience of the participant is validated as the content of the participant's lived intentionality. Enrolling in school not only fulfills the participant's intentionality but also enriches her lived world and helps overcome the boredom that took hold of her life in the first three months as a refugee in the United States. In her own words the participant describes the experience of enrolling in school in this way:

“...I started school and made new friends from different countries and continents. Some friends were from other African countries, Asia, Mexico, and Americans. The first week in school was hard because of moving from class to class to attend different classes. It was so different.”

School as a theme of the participant's lived experience is also a place for interactions and making friends from different countries. As the participant's lived space school is also a venue for cultivating lived relations and overcoming the boredom that took control of the participant's early days in the United States.

The researcher membered checked with the significance of school as a theme of her experience and the participant further described going to school as “a fulfillment of her dream coming to the United States.”

Rent-lived body. Rent featured as an important theme of the lived experiences described by the participant. Although the participant asserted that she was not directly responsible for paying the rental bill, she at least experienced her parent's struggles to pay these bills. Rent as a theme of the lived experience is emblematic of the participant's struggle to settle in the United States as a refugee. Fulfilling the basic human needs of the

participant and her family among which the need for shelter was a major part of the participant's lived experience. The participant's description of her parents' struggle to pay rental bills demonstrates the struggle of the lived body to live up to the responsibility of ensuring the inalienable needs of shelter and accommodation. The participant in her own words captures the experience in these words, "It never affected me directly, but I saw my parents stressed about rent and electric bills." The participant's use of the word stress suggests a struggle by her parents to pay these bills. This struggle is illustrative of the challenge of settling in a pristine environment as a newcomer, and moreover, as a refugee.

Food-lived body. Besides paying rental bills, food was another important theme of the participant's lived experience. Food as a theme of the experience was validated by its contextual relevance to the phenomenon of settling in the United States as a refugee. To fulfill the inherent human need of vitality, the lived body needs food and water. In expressing how this need was fulfilled, the participant described the food assistance she and her family received in this phrase, "We had food stamps at least for food." The use of the composite term "at least" suggests that while the participant and her family could not be approved for other forms of public assistance, they were nonetheless approved for food assistance through the food stamp program.

Refugee assistance-lived body. Refugee assistance was a theme of the participant's lived experience. The theme was validated by its significance to understanding the meaning the participant draws from her lived experiences as a refugee in the United States. Having experienced what it is like to settle in the United States as a refugee and fulfill the human needs for food, shelter, transportation, jobs, and

communication with limited public assistance, the participant feels that public assistance to refugee resettlement needs to be sustained for a longer period of time to allow the refugees to acquire the basics, the need to successfully settle and integrate into the host environment. The participant expressed the meaning she draws from this experience in own words:

“...I think three months is too short for getting help, to learn a language, and do things alone without any help because life in America is so different from the one refugees are used to at home. The agencies need to ensure refugees get jobs which can help in paying bills before they leave them alone. Rent and electric bills are the most difficult. The agencies should extend ESL classes to be conducted daily for a longer period like six months to one year because most of the refugees from Congo never went to school. It will take them an extended period to know the language. I suggest they teach classes from Monday to Fridays for three hours. This will help them learn faster. I also suggest that if it is possible let the agencies help refugees for at least one year at most before they leave them on their own.”

The participant’s horizon of the current refugee resettlement assistance program can best be described as inadequate compared to the needs of the refugees, especially Congolese refugees coming to the United States with limited knowledge of English language. The participant also believes that an intensive language training program that commits to teaching Congolese refugees English language for 3 hours every day from Monday to Friday would accelerate the acquisition of language and improve the communication abilities of the refugees.

Individual Textual Descriptions

The participant's individual textual description of her lived experiences is reflective of the needs, discoveries, anxieties, surprises, emotions, and perceptions that fused into the participant's lived experience. This textual description is also expressive of the state of the lived body, time, space, and relations in the phenomenological context of settling in the United States as a refugee. Some of her own expressions are as follows:

“...I found it relaxing because I was not going to school, not responsible for anything other than cooking and eating, and watching TV. We could not even go outside because it was cold from the winter. We had not seen snow it was our first time to see snow. I was shocked to see trees without leaves, even my siblings were shocked too. I started getting out, pick snow and run inside the house. It was shocking. I started school and made new friends from different countries and continents. Some friends were from other African countries, Asia Mexico, and Americans. The first week in school was hard because of moving from class to class to attend different classes. It was so different. I was used in remaining in one class throughout the year. It was the teacher who was looking for the class he/she teaches. I was confused. It never affected me directly, but I saw my parents stressed about rent and electric bills. We had food stamps at least for food. I think three months is too short for getting help, to learn a language, and do things alone without any help because life in America is so different from the one refugees are used to at home. The families back Africa help each other by taking care of babies to going shopping. The agencies need to ensure refugees get jobs which can help in paying bills before they leave them alone. Rent and electric bills are the most

difficult. The agencies should extend ESL classes to be conducted daily for a longer period like six months to one year because most of the refugees from Congo never went to school. It will take them an extended period to know the language. I suggest they teach classes from Monday to Fridays for three hours.

This will help them learn faster. I also suggest that if it is possible let the agencies help refugees for at least one year at most before they leave them on their own.”

The participant’s narrative of the textual description of the lived experience begins with the description of the emptiness that dominated her lived experiences in the first three months of being in the United States as a refugee. This emptiness which results from the lack of the participant’s involvement in the desired activity (going to school) is soon filled by boredom, the everyday boredom of staying home to only cook and watch television.

The coming of winter and snow in the participant’s textual description captures the anxiety and the emotions that characterize this moment. The textual description of the difficulties experienced by the participant’s parents in paying rental and electric bills epitomizes the problems the participant and her parents experienced when public refugee resettlement assistance stopped after the first three months. The textual description of the experience of going to school is revelatory of the mental state of fulfillment that characterized the participant’s lived experience in which she accomplishes the intentionality of going to school. The last paragraph of the participant’s textual description captures the meaning of the entire experience to the participant. The participant, however, expresses this meaning in terms of suggestions for bettering the Congolese refugee experience in the United States.

Individual Structural Description

The lived experiences described by the participant expose the mental structure on which the participant constructs her lived experiences. This structure is influenced by the participant's interactions with the lived space, the lived relations, the lived time, the inner interactions with the lived body, and the lived spirit. It is in the context of this mental structure that the participant experiences winter and snow, school and its socio-ethnic diversity, the psychological stress of seeing her parents struggle with paying rental and electric bills, and the meaning of being a Congolese refugee in America. How do these structural pillars connect the participant's lived experience?

Living the experience of snow and winter. Snow and winter as the structural pillars of the participant's lived experience expose the curiosity that infuses the participant's perception of her lived space. The participant is curious and excited to experience winter and snow for the first time in her life. In describing how she lived this experience, the participant stated, "I started getting out, pick snow and run inside the house. It was shocking." Picking up snow illustrates the way the participant satisfied the curiosity of experiencing snow for the first time in her life and how she made meaning of her lived space and lived time.

School and Socio-cultural Diversity. School and socio-cultural diversity illustrates how the participant experienced the reality of schooling in the United States. School and socio-cultural diversity symbolizes the participant's perception of her lived space and lived time. By making new friends in school, school in the participant's lived world is not only a conduit for educational advancement; it is also a conduit for cultivating lived relations. School in the participant's lived world is the space

in which she also experiences a unique way of delivering education. While the participant describes the experience as hard and confusing, especially during the first week of school, she also exposes her curiosity moving from one class to the other and seeing that the teachers are the ones looking for the students. School and socio-cultural diversity as structural pillars of the participant's lived experience captures the meaning the participant made of her lived space and time.

Stress of seeing parents struggle to pay rental and electric bills. This structural pillar of the participant's lived experience exposes the participant's emotional state while seeing her parents' struggle. This expression of the participant's emotional state revealed the state of the lived body in this time of hardship. The responsibilities of paying rental and electrical bills were not directly shouldered by the participant; however, seeing her parents struggle to pay the bills was something that emotionally stressed the participant. This emotional state certainly contributed to the opinion that she formed of the refugee experience in the United States.

The life of the refugee in America. The life of the refugee as one of the structural pillars of the participant's exposes how the participant contrasts the experience of being a Congolese refugee in the United States with her previous experiences in Africa. This pillar of the participant's lived experience provides the phenomenological context in which the participant describes the problems encountered by Congolese refugees in America. These problems, which essentially centered around communication and meeting the basic human need of shelter, highlight the issue of adjusting to the cultural context and learning the English language in order to be fully functional.

Drawing from these difficulties, the participant thus suggests ways of improving the refugee experience for Congolese refugees in the United States.

Textural – Structural Descriptions of the Meanings and Essences of the Lived Experience

The experience of settling in the United States as a refugee meant so many things to the participant. The experience meant discovering and adjusting to new environmental, educational, social, and economic conditions. The experiences also meant confronting life difficulties different from the ones the participant had experienced in the past while in Africa.

The essence of this experience is the meaning the participant draws from the three months of refugee assistance in the United States. In the participant's own voice, the agencies assisting refugees settle in the United States should "help refugees for at least one year at most before they leave them on their own" so that the refugees are able to learn English language and be sufficiently capable to function on their own before the refugee resettlement assistance is stopped.

Participant No. 7 - Nyiramugisha

Core Themes

The themes emerged for this participant as follows: 1) Fear of the unknown, 2) Feeling good about the refugee experience, 3) Feeling at home after meeting peers, 4) Feeling confused, sad, and frustrated of the news of being on her own, 5) State and municipal assistance, 6) Job, and 7) Reflection on the experience.

Validation – Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

The themes of the invariant constituents of the participant's lived experience were validated using content validation and member checking techniques. Applying content validation, the researcher assessed the relevance of each of the themes to enhancing understanding of the phenomenological experience or the phenomenological context of the experience. To determine the relevance of each theme, the researcher asked the question: Is the theme relevant to comprehending the phenomenon of settling in United States as a refugee? If not, is it relevant to understanding other themes of the participant's lived experience? Themes that were found to directly or indirectly relevant to the general theme of settling in United States as a refugee were validated as significant themes of the participant's lived experience. The researcher verified the validation of the themes with the participant through member checking to ensure that the theme captured the experience and how the participant felt about the feeling at that time of her life

Fear of the unknown. Fear of the unknown is a relevant theme of the participant's lived experience validated by its relevance the participant reaction to things in her lived space she is incognizant about. Through this theme the participant exposes her naiveté and the feeling of meeting things that are new to her world. The participant is afraid of the unknown things in her lived spaced such as the house, cooking with an electric stove, and the toilet in the house. Fear of the unknown as a theme of the participant's lived experience directly contrasts with the participant's previous experiences and demonstrates the significance of novelty in the participant's lived world as a refugee. As a refugee settling in a new socio-cultural context, novelty is an inherent characteristic of her lived world and how the participant experiences the unfamiliarity's

of her lived space is certainly significant. The participant's interactions with the pristine environment is influenced by fear, which explicitly triggers the process of learning to survive in the environment. The participant describes the experience in these words:

“...The first three months I was afraid of the house, cooking with electric stove, the toilet was in the house, everything was very new to me”

Fear is the underlying emotion of experiencing and processing new things, but that also triggers learning how to survive in the lived space. This experience is illustrative of the participant's struggle to survive in the host environment as a refugee. The researcher member checked with the participant to verify the relevance of the theme to her lived experience and the participant further stated, “it was a nightmare learning to use things I have never use before.”

Feeling good about the refugee experience. This theme of the experience captures the overall emotion that underlined the participant's feelings in the first three months of her experience in the United States as a refugee. The theme describes the participant's feeling about the assistance she was provided to resettle in the US as a refugee in the first three months of being in the country. The participant felt good that her needs for housing, paying of electric and gas bills were catered for by the refugee resettlement assistance she received through Catholic Charities. The feeling of getting the help one needs is generally a good feeling, especially at a critical time when one needs such help. The participant expresses her satisfaction with new life as a refugee in the United States during the first three months and exposes the expectations that drive her experience thereafter. The experience of feeling good will soon turn into frustration, confusion, and disappointment when the participant is informed of the ending of her

refugee assistance. The researcher was able to crosscheck the relevance of this theme with the research participant to confirm that feeling good was the emotion that characterized her refugee experience in the first three months of being in the United States.

Feeling at home after meeting peers- lived relations. The theme of feeling at home with peers is an important theme of the participant's lived experience. It captures the participant's emotion expression when she meets other refugees from the Congo with whom she shares life stories. The collectiveness of their shared history, exemplified by the shared background experiences, shared linguistic experience, and the collective struggle to settle in the US, enhance the participant's communicative world and provide a comforting zone in which she feels at home. The researcher validated the theme of feeling at home with peers by evaluating its relevance to the overall theme of settling into the United States as a refugee and to related themes of the experience. When the researcher member checked with the participant to validate the relevance of the theme of feeling at home with peers. The participant expressed that meeting other refugees from the Congo was an impactful experience, as it allowed them to collectively express the banality of their experiences as refugees from the Congo struggling to settle in the United States.

Feeling confused, sad, and frustrated of the news of being on her own-lived body. Feeling confused, sad, and frustrated as a theme of the participant's experience expresses the emotions that characterized the participant's reaction to the news of the end of her refugee assistance package. This theme of the experience captures the dynamics of the transformation from the glorious past to the gloomy present in lived body. This

transformation is emblematic of the internal struggle for survival occurring within the participant as she relates to the everyday experience of independently supporting her accommodation, feeding, utility bills, learning the language, and providing for other personal needs. In the participant's own words,

“...When she told me I became so sad and afraid of getting to pay rent. I was not working and did not know how I was going to pay my bills. I asked her how they expected me to pay my rent. I didn't know how I was going to pay my bills. I requested them to return me to the life I was used to. They told me that they will not return refugees once they are resettled. I told them to get me any job. I was not speaking English and I was wondering how I will manage to work since I was not speaking or understanding English.”

The theme exposes the desperation of the lived body and the lived spirit in the context whereby the participant assumes responsibility for her own survival as a refugee in the United States. Imbued with sadness and fear, the participant would prefer to return to her old life as a refugee in Africa, where she at least had some control over her lived space. In this context characterized by a gloomy phenomenological experience the participant is however able to find solace in the job she got and in the assistance she receives from the state of Indiana and her municipality.

State and municipal assistance. State and municipal assistance as a theme of the participant's lived experience symbolizes the solace that illuminates the participants lived world as she struggles to survive as a refugee. While the lived time is certainly difficult for the participant, the assistance from the state of Indiana and from the municipality of the host community is certainly a significant moment of the participant's lived

experience. The assistance helped alleviate the struggle to pay rental bills, clearly expressed in the following extracts from the participant's textual description of the experience:

“...My case worker assisted me get my rent paid by municipality council. I went there many times with my case worker. They paid my rent for three months, and by then my case worker had arranged for me to start working in a factory. I started getting used. I applied for the government house which was charging me a little money (Section 8 housing) which one pays according to the income. It is subsidized by the government of Indiana. I could remain with some money which I have been sending to my children and my mum.”

State and municipal assistance illustrates the ambivalence inherent in the participant's lived experience where moments of hardship and frustration are intertwined with moments of solace and hope. After internally validating the theme, the researcher member checked with the participant to verify the authenticity of the theme to her lived experience as a refugee in the United States. The participant confirmed that the theme translated her experience and her feeling about the phenomenon.

Job. Job as another theme of the participant's lived experience symbolizes an instance of comfort in a narrative intertwined by moments of sadness and frustration, and moments of solace and hope. The theme is verified by the participant's textual description of her lived experience. In the participant description of the lived experience, getting a job is a desire and a natural response to the shocking news of the end of the refugee resettlement assistance package. Getting a job is finally a fulfilment of the participant's intentionality to survive. With the rental assistance from the state of Indiana

and the host municipality, the participant is able to save a little money to send to her family in Africa. The participant describes the experience in the following extract from her textual description:

“...They paid my rent for three months, and by then my case worker had arranged for me to start working in a factory. I started getting used. I applied for the government house which was charging me a little money (Section 8 housing) which one pays according to the income. It is subsidized by the government of Indiana. I could remain with some money which I have been sending to my children and my mum”

While having a job is a fulfilment of the participant’s desire to make good of a tough situation, it is also part of the larger narrative of the participant’s struggle to survive in the United States as a refugee. Getting a job thus is a fulfilment of the desire of the lived body to assume responsibility of her own destiny in the lived space where depending on assistance from others is never reassuring.

Reflection on the experience. Reflection on the experience as a theme of the participant’s lived experience captures the meaning of the experience to the participant and exposes her perception of how the experience can be made better. In the participant’s lived world, reflecting on her experiences while struggling to settle in the United States as a refugee opens new horizons into thinking about ways to improve the experience.

“...What I can suggest or recommend is that let the agencies bringing refugees into America bring all the families together. We are people who have lived with war making us leave our country, so separating us from our children and other family members is not good. For example I have not lived with my children for a

long time. My mother is getting old every day. I have not seen her for the last 7 years. If they can't settle families together then let them leave us alone in Africa. English is another problem. The agencies don't take their time to make sure the refugees know how to drive. Helping them to learn the driving instructions in the language they understand and ensure they have a driving license and that they understand English language well. Other states give the learner's instructions in their languages which makes it easier to learn. Some agencies pay rent for more months than what Catholic charities did to me. It is only the state of Indiana that does not give driving test in other languages. I suggest that the agencies should help refugees for over one year at most before they are left on their own."

In this new horizon, the participant thinks the experience of settling in the United States as a refugee from Congo could be made better if reuniting families, teaching refugees how to drive in the United States in their own language, and teaching Congolese refugees the English language as is part of the resettlement program and the different ways the refugee experience can be improve for Congolese refugees in the United States.

The theme of reflection also captures the participant's conceptual meaning of the lived experiences and exposes her desire for positive change. It clearly elucidates the participant's impression that the refugee resettlement assistance received was short-lived and did not address in a sustainable manner the participant's critical needs for housing, family reunification, learning of the language, and driving instructions.

Individual textual description

The participant introduces her textual description of the lived experience with the expression of her experiences and emotions during the first three months of being in the

United States. While the textual description reveals the fear that dominates the participant's encounter and interactions with her lived space, it also exposes the feeling of comfortability that characterizes this period of the participant's resettlement in the United States. Although the participant appears to be feeling comfortable with her situation, she however expects more to come in terms of resettlement assistance to address her desires for family reunification, to master of the language, and learning how to drive.

“...The first three months I was afraid of the house, cooking with electric stove, the toilet was in the house, everything was very new to me. The first three months were good because Catholic Charities were helping me pay my rent, electric bill and gas bill. When I met many refugees from Congo living in the same complex apartment I started feeling happy because I could talk to them in our language. Some of the Congolese who came were from the same camp I came from. It made me feel at home. I started getting used to life here in America. We could share our experiences and many bad and good memories. After the three months, they suddenly wrote me a letter that I was on my own. I asked my case worker to tell me what the letter was saying. When she told me I became so sad and afraid of getting to pay rent. I was not working and did not know how I was going to pay my bills. I asked her how they expected me to pay my rent. I didn't know how I was going to pay my bills. I requested them to return me to the life I was used to. They told me that they will not return refugees once they are resettled. I told them to get me any job. I was not speaking English and I was wondering how I will manage to work since I was not speaking or understanding English...”

The preceding paragraph of participant's textual description illustrates the disillusionment, sadness and frustrations that characterize the lived body with the revelation of the news of the end of her refugee resettlement assistance package. After this moment of darkness, rays of sunlight shine on the participant's lived experience as she gets a job and at the same time also obtain assistance from state and the municipality in paying her rental bills. The textual description of the participant's lived experience illustrates the dichotomy of illusion and disillusion, hope and despair revealed in the participant's textual description.

The last paragraph of the participant's textual description illustrates the participant's reflection on the experience and the meanings she associates to them. This paragraph of the textual description captures the horizons that emerge from the participant's lived experience. These horizons signify what the participant believes will be better experience for Congolese refugees who settle in the United States.

Individual structural description

The participant's lived experience is structured around key structural themes, namely, the participant's unfamiliarity with the socio-cultural context of the host environment and the fear provoked by the lack of familiarity with the new environment, discovery of the participant's comfort zone and its impact on her state of happiness, the relief introduced by state and municipality assistance, the psychosocial impact of getting a job, and the reflection on the meaning of the experience.

Unfamiliarity and fear of the socio-cultural context. This structural theme of the experience reveals the participant's mental state as she grapples with integrating the culture and social reality. Confronted with unfamiliarity the participant displays fear as a

natural reaction to interacting with things that are foreign to one's own world. Coming from an African socio-cultural background where in-house toileting and electric cooking are still much a rarity, suddenly embracing the new reality of life whereby electric cooking and in-house toileting are general norms reveals the disconnect in the participant's lived worlds and explains the emotion of fear described by the participant.

Discovery of comfort zone and the unleashing of happiness. This structure of the participant's lived experience presents the participant in the micro-setting of fellow refugees from the Congo. In this setting, the participant displays a psychological state of mind where she feels familiar, at ease, and in control of her reality. It is consequently of no doubt that the participant describes herself as being in the emotional state of happiness as she is with her peers whom she shares much in common.

Despair. Despair is an important structural unit of the participant's lived experience. Pavlikova (2015) describes despair as a mental state in which one experiences sickness in spirit. The participant is despaired by the news that her refugee resettlement assistance has ended, and she must now survive on her own at a moment for which she is less prepared. In this moment of despair, the participant feels the better option is to be taken back to Africa. The feeling of despair that drives the participant's lived experience is well understood if one takes into consideration the participant's personal dispositions and the disconnects between her personal dispositions and her phenomenological context. The participant is expected to survive on her own with little or no skill sets for the job market and without the linguistic competences to interact in the community and the necessary drivers needed for a successful life in the United States.

The social impact of a job in the United States. The social impact of a job in the United States as a structural unit of the participant's lived experience reveals the impact of having a job beyond just the survival of the participant. The participant in the textual description describes how she uses saving from her employment to financially support her family in Africa. This is significant as it portrays the greater implication of working to survive as a refugee in the United States.

Reflection on the experience. Reflection on the experience as a structural unit of the participant's lived experience reveals the participant's personal dispositions on refugee resettlement assistance in the United States. In the participant's worldview, she holds strongly the opinion that the experience of settling in the United States as a refugee could be made better if family reunion, language learning, and driving lessons are structured into refugee resettlement programming, especially in the programs for Congolese refugee resettlement.

Textural – Structural of the Meanings and Essences of Participant's Lived Experiences

The lived experiences described by participant No 7 reveals the meanings and essences she constructs from the experience. Analyzing the entire experience, one observes that the participant sees in the experience the insufficiency of the level of assistance provided to Congolese refugees in the United States. The experience also meant separation from her family and from her African cultural background. The experience also meant learning socio-linguistic values to integrate into the society. For the participant to effectively integrate into the American society, she must learn the English language to be able to interact and communicate with others in the society. The

experience also meant learning driving skills so as to drive around and enhance her mobility.

Participant No. 8 - Karinganire

Core Themes

The following core themes emerged: 1) Resettlement assistance-lived time and space, 2) Moment of hardship-lived time, 3) Schooling/education-lived body, and 4) Reflection on the experience.

Validation - Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

The participant's invariant constituents and themes of lived experience were authenticated by examining the themes against the entire transcript of the co-researcher. The researcher further determined the legitimacy of the invariant constituents of the lived experience by assessing if the experiences described by the participant could withstand the following tests: Are they clearly expressed in the whole transcription? Are they compatible, if not openly articulated? If the invariant constituents and themes were not clearly articulated or compatible, then they were not significant to the participant's lived experience and were erased.

After the confirmation of the participant's lived experience, the resulting themes developed as critical to her entire experience: resettlement in the US- this term is labeled regarding the quality of the support received, as well as, the co-researcher's valuation and outlook on the worth of the aid. After I organized all the themes, I checked the invariant constituents beside the themes that were compatible. The transcript of the participant's interview was checked if it was similar. They were expunged if they were found not

attuned with the transcript of the participant, and if they were not considered pertinent to the participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Resettlement assistance- lived time and space. Refugee resettlement assistance emerged as a theme of the participant's lived experience. It is corroborated on the significance of the thematic content in understanding the participant's struggle. It was among the experiences of participant No. 8, which emerged in the transcript. Being a refugee struggling to assimilate into the host community, assistance was provided to the participant through the following refugee assistance programming: food and medical assistance. In the participant's own voice, this theme of the experience is expressed in the following words:

“...The first three months were good because the agency took care of us. They paid and bought food for us. They took us for medical check-ups, and doctor's appointments.”

Since they were served well for five months, she was satisfied by explaining in her own words the positive part of the resettlement:

“.... The first five months were good. We arrived and were welcomed by exodus immigration staff. The staff helped us settle in this apartment. They paid our rent and electric bill. They bought us food. They took us to the hospital for check-ups.”

Moment of hardship- lived time. It was very painful to the participant when she was left alone by the agency to take charge when she hardly knew how to go about life in a new country. This was hard for her, as witnessed from her expression and quote:

“...After the five months, we were left on our own, When they left us, my husband was working and started paying rent and electric bills. After a while my husband fall on the snow and his hand was broken, he was out of work for a year, so I had to look for work to continue paying the rent.”

The themes and invariant constituents were significant to the main transcript of the participant and experience that:

“...we suffered but some refugees who came here long time ago helped us to go to work every day until we learned how to drive... we got used.”

Schooling/education-lived body. This theme was sensitive to the participant because it touched on her ability of both communication and knowledge on technology. She explained that she was not able to express herself and that she did not know how to use a computer. This is because she did not speak English,

“... The language is the problem, everything is in English, everything you use a computer, I had not used any computer in our lives.”

Reflecting on the experience. A comparison to the main transcript suggests that the period for resettlement is not sufficient enough to learn the language and everything else. In her own words she said the following,

“... I suggest that refugees should be helped for one year before they are left on their own. This will help us to learn English so as to get a driving permit and do a driving test. They should help refugees to test in the language they understand. America should know that not all countries speak English. It is hard to learn a language in three months.”

The participant acknowledges the limitation of language as the main issue to her limited ability to getting a learner's permit and eventually a driver's license to enable them be self-reliant.

Individual Textural Description

In this phase, I constructed textural descriptions of individual experiences that comprised some of the precise illustrations from the transcript. The subsequent narrative combined my own rephrasing of the participant's experience along with quotations from the transcripts for support of what they said from their own voices. This step was repeated for all the participants. This account basically describes what transpired in the co-researcher's experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas 1994). I started with the themes that had emerged in step four. Then I transcribed expressive passages that apprehended the experiences of the participants within the theme. I went back and checked the original horizons to catch textural illustrations for descriptive support. This confirmed that my metaphors echoed the experiences of individual participants. The textural description follows from participant no.8, whose husband fall on the snow and broke his arm, confining him at home for one year and making her take over the role of the provider in the family:

“After a while my husband fall on the snow and his hand was broken, he was out of work for a year, so I had to look for work to continue paying the rent. We suffered but some refugees who came here long time ago helped us to go to work every day until we learned how to drive. We had problems of getting a drivers permit.”

This participant felt that her role was changed to be the head of the household when her husband could not work, hence depending on her. She said that if she had known English she could have been able to drive. She could not have relied on the former refugees to pick her up for work the entire year the husband was sick.

“... This is because we did not speak English, the language is the problem, everything is in English, everything you use a computer, we had not used any computer in our lives.”

Individual Structural Description

Individual structural description was created as a next step in Moustakas (1994) method. The narrative “provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience” (p. 135). Whereas the textural description defines “what” transpired, the development of structural description describes “how” the participant experienced the phenomenon. The development of the structural is accomplished through imaginative variation.” Moustakas (1994) refers to imaginative variation as the use of erratic views and structures of reference to develop structural themes. This encompasses consuming the individual textural description as a beginning theme and relating the researcher’s own imagination and awareness to look more intensely at the co-researcher’s structural experience. Structural themes developed in the process.

Participant number 8 complained about the use of technology such as computers expected to use in applying for jobs. The participant looked at the school and education as an institution which could have made her life easier if she had any formal education. School as an institution was a big factor in in the participant’s lived experience. She said that they had not seen computers until they were resettled in the US. She also complained

about not being able to speak English. She explained that not all countries speak English, yet they were expected to learn English within a short period and get to learn how to drive. She also expressed her suffering at the time her husband got injured when he fell in the snow. His injuries put him out of work for one full year, which made her to take over the role of providing for her family.

The participant felt that the resettlement agency as an institution, mandated to ensure they were comfortable, could have done more than what they did. She felt that during the husband's injury and not working for one full year, she could have had more help from the agency with bills or being assisted to go to work and back, particularly during winter time.

Textural – Structural of the Meanings and Essences of the Lived Experiences

After I analyzed the participant's lived experience, I became empathetic to what the experience meant to her. The question still is what is the essence to the experience to the participant? This experience meant a lot to the participant. For example, assimilating and struggling to live in a new country with a different culture, far away environment from her extended family and children in Rwanda, Kenya, and Congo, was traumatizing. Other experiences were feeling safe in a pristine environment away from the wars of Congo, creating new friends, facing new encounters to continue as a refugee, learning to understand and access the welfare to be able to survive in the United States as a refugee.

An intuitive understanding of the participant's lived experience also involves understanding how the prior essences molded the participant's migration expedition and her understanding of resettlement as a refugee without any formal education or knowledge to the new culture and language in the United States.

Participant No. 9 - Asifiwe

Core Themes

The following themes emerged: 1) Resettlement assistance-lived time and space, 2) Emotions: feelings and regret- lived body –corporality, 3) Turning point/public assistance- lived time, 3) Family- lived relations– relationality, and 4) Reflecting on the experience.

Validation - Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents of the Experience

The participant's invariant constituents and themes of lived experience were authenticated by scrutinizing the themes beside the complete transcription of the participant. To regulate the legitimacy of the invariant constituents, the following questions were asked: Were they openly conveyed in the whole transcript? Are they attuned, if not openly expressed? If the invariant constituents and themes were not openly expressed or attuned, then they were not important to the participant's lived experience and were omitted. After the verification of the participant's lived experience, the subsequent themes established as perilous to her complete experience of the resettlement as a refugee in the US (Moustakas, 1994).

Resettlement assistance-lived time and space. Refugee resettlement assistance was one of the themes which emerged on her lived experiences. The participant's struggle is understood by confirming the meaning of the thematic content. Among the experiences of participant No. 9, resettlement assistance emerged in the interview. Assimilation to a pristine environment and new people meant care was of utmost importance, such as providing food, medical care, and all the basics. In the participant's own narrative:

“... I came here through Exodus Resettlement Agency They welcomed us well, They brought us to this apartment, bought us food They gave us a card we use in paying for food, They paid our rent for three months and added another two more months, They extended the help to me and my children because I am elderly and sick.”

The participant acknowledged the treatment she was given by the resettlement agency when she arrived in the US a refugee. It is witnessed from her own quotes that she is appreciative where it applies.

Emotions: feelings and regret-lived body (corporality). Feelings and regrets are reflected in this participant’s life because of what she went through. After losing her father in the war as a young person growing up, her mother and siblings moved to a refugee camp in Rwanda where they lived before they were attacked again, and she now lost her husband and was left with children alone. The participant’s emotions are expressed when she explains her living in refugee camps for over twenty years. She said that:

“...I left two daughters and their husbands and children behind, (my grandchildren, They live in Gisenyi town not a refugee camp I left my other extended family but my children are only two and their families, my husband died, my husband was cut into pieces then we ran a way to Rwanda. My husband was killed like a wild animal, my six children died in Rwanda. I had 14 children. Now I have seven left, two are still in Rwanda, five are in America, one is in Georgia, and four are here in Indianapolis, one lives on her own and three lives with me.”

Turning point/public assistance-lived time. When the participant reached a turning point of the lived life, she feels helpless because she cannot work or stand for long due to her poor health and old age. She also could not go to learn English, hence relying on welfare assistance. She reflects on her initial worries of survival before she was placed on welfare. She reflects settling down when her assistance was approved by welfare and along with her daughter's help they pay bills and use the food stamps for food. She explained herself in her own words as follows:

“...I cannot stand for long, I cannot work because I don't speak English, I was listed to get money and food stamp every month (SSI), I get food stamps for \$200 and cash of \$600, I am happy the way I live and the \$600 is really helping me, After the three months my daughter who lives with me started working, Together with the money I get from SSI helps us to pay rent and bills, Since I have food stamps, we are able to make ends meet.”

Family-lived relations (relationality). The participant reflects that the loss of her husband in the war and her resettlement in the US without the whole family has broken the family unity. She has not been able to see her grandchildren and her two children for several years. She also reflects on the extended family members who could not have come at the same time. She wishes her two grown up children could have been with her with their children (grandchildren) whom she misses so much. The togetherness of a family means a lot to the participant. In her worldview, life without family is nothing as per the African culture. The participant was lucky that she had a son who had been resettled a few years ago and who became a cornerstone for their resettlement. In her own words:

“... I left two daughters and their husbands and children behind, (my grandchildren.) They live in Gisenyi town not a refugee camp. I left my other extended family but my children are only two and their families. My husband died. My husband was cut into pieces then we ran a way to Rwanda. My husband was killed like a wild animal. I have a son who was resettled here before I came who helped us too. So we did not find it hard like others.”

Reflecting on the experience. Reflecting on the experience as a theme authenticated what the participant felt and experienced while resettling as a refugee in the United States. She cited language barrier as a major issue which should be taught to refugees for a longer period so as to grasp English before being left on their own. She explained that three months is not enough to learn a new language for women who never had any formal education. She was concerned that refugees are left jobless for a long time. The participant feels that three months as a policy of resettlement is not sufficient enough in helping refugees to adapt to a pristine environment.

“...America is good but all refugees should be given jobs right away, the language barrier is another problem, all refugees should be taken to school first to know English completely before anything else, Most refugees are left for longer periods in the houses without anything to do, it will be good to extend the resettlement period to one year before they are left on their own.”

Individual Textural Description

The textural descriptions of individual experience were combined with the exact explanations from the transcripts of the subject's own voices. I also combined and rephrased all participant's experiences using her own quotations. The account describes

“what” emerged in the participant’s experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The themes which emerged in the fourth step were captured. Those with sensitive passages that held the experiences were transcribed within the themes. I then rechecked the original horizons to capture textural expressions for descriptions sustenance. This established that my metaphors reverberated the experiences of each participant.

Asifiwe’s description of losing her husband in Congo, and how as a result they became refugees in Rwanda, showed how she is entrenched in her mind that if it was not for the war she could not have perhaps lost her six children in Rwanda. In her own words,

“... My husband was cut into pieces then we ran a way to Rwanda. My husband was killed like a wild animal. My six children died in Rwanda. I had 14 children. Now I have seven left.”

This participant detests the war that delivered her as a widow and a single parent. She also felt more pain when she lost six of her children in a foreign country before they were resettled in Indianapolis. The above descriptions reveal the pain emotion that characterized the participant’s experiences resettling in the United States as a refugee from the time she lost some of her family members. Being old and sick was both favorable and unfavorable given that she could not stand for long and she benefitted through being enrolled in SSI for benefits.

“... ... I cannot stand for long, I cannot work because I don’t speak English, and I was listed to get money and food stamp every month (SSI).”

Individual Structural Description

An intense description of the fundamental undercurrents of the experience on individual structural description method was followed (Moustakas, 1994). While the

textural description describes “what” emerged, the development of structural description defines “how” the phenomenon was experienced by the participant. As per Moustaka’s (1994), “The structures are brought into the researcher’s awareness through imaginative variation, reflection and analysis, beyond the appearance and into the real meanings or essences of the experience (p.135).”

This imaginative variation is referred as the use of unpredictable interpretations and structures of allusion to develop structural themes. This incorporates overwhelming the individual textural description as a foundation theme and involving the investigator’s own resourcefulness and consciousness to look more deeply at the participant’s structural experience. Structural themes established in the process.

This participant number 9 is moved emotionally for losing her husband and six children. She feels bad that some of her children and grandchildren are still in Rwanda. She feels it unfair for the resettlement agencies of refugees resettling families piecemeal. Separating families after they were forced to leave their countries of origin is not good for family reunification after going through the trauma of war. She complains about the use of technology as another factor of misery to women refugees from DR Congo who had never been to a classroom, let alone using technology such as computers for job applications. This participant says that getting an education has many advantages to one’s life and makes life easier, something she did not know before. She also echoed the same sentiments that they had not seen computer before. She aspires to speak English, even though she is old.

Textural– Structural description of meanings and essences of the lived experiences

When I analyzed the participant's descriptions and drawing from her transcripts of lived experiences, the participant's experience as a refugee in the US has a lot of bad and good memories. It means struggling to live without her entire family, experiencing a language barrier, and being unable to work due to bad health and old age. On the other hand, it means being enrolled in the SSI program for benefits, which was very helpful to her. Getting food stamps and cash assistance for seven years will help her to settle down. The participant becomes emotional, and exhibits pain when she remembers her other family members who were left in Rwanda. Getting advanced in age makes her feel that she may not see her children and grandchildren. The question remains: what is the essence of the experience to the co- researcher?

The participant said that the experience meant a lot to her. For instance, assimilation in doing all things like the host country. Struggling with a new culture, far from her extended family and other children in Rwanda is very challenging. She expressed feeling very secure being far from the countries at war, getting new friends, learning English, learning how to access resources such as welfare she was enrolled in to continue with survival as a refugee in the United States. Instinctive understanding of the participant's lived experience also encompasses understanding how the previous essences shaped the participant's migration journey and her understanding of resettlement as a refugee in the United States.

Composite description of the meanings and essences of the individual textual and structural descriptions of the research participants

After analyzing the lived experiences of the research participants, the researcher intuitively integrated the individual textual and structural descriptions of the participants lived experiences to develop a synthesis of meanings and essences of the phenomenon of settling in Indianapolis as female refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The synthesis produced a kaleidoscopic picture of the phenomenon, which reflected the diversity inherent in the individuality of the lived experiences as well as the shared experiences as a result their shared condition as female refugees from the Congo resettling in the United States.

Participants' textual descriptions of their lived experience while settling in the United States as refugees were reflected in the use of adjectives such as struggling, painful, fearful, disappointed, regretted, abandoned, desperate, surprise, survival, frustrated, and helpless. These words were used to describe the painful emotional condition of the lived body after the first three months when they received refugee resettlement assistance were over. The words were used by the participants to either describe their emotional state at or to describe the negative emotional impact of the untimely termination of the refugee assistance program. In the mix of these words reflecting, there were also positive words that captured the positivism of the participants in the heart of darkness. Participants used words such as hope, spiritual, survival, feel good, and feel comfortable, happy to be in the United States, happy that I can go to school, to show the positivism that lighted their spirit within darkness.

The participants' personal needs were captured in words and phrases such as, three months too short for refugee assistance, at least one year refugee assistance, boring three months as one only stayed home relaxing, cooking, eating and not going out of the house because of the chilly winter, paying house rent, searching for jobs, food, family, family unity, going back to school, education, assistance with food stamps, learning the English language, learning to drive, uniting families, Medicaid, government housing (Section 8), childcare, going to shop, and learning driving permit instructions in the language familiar to the participants.

The meanings and essences of the participants lived experiences were integrated into significant themes of meanings and essences, such as struggling to survive as a refugee in the host environment, building new relations and connections to survive in the host community, accessing other forms of public assistance to compliment the three months refugee assistance, accessing assistance from other family members in the United States, discovering and adjusting to new environmental conditions in host community, discovering and adjusting to the culture of the host environment, discovering and adjusting to the new economic and social conditions, integrating into the new culture and learning new cultural competences, discovering and adjusting to the new religious culture in the host community, adjusting to the American system of education, fellowship with familiar religious groups, living in faraway lands from other family members, and living in the safe environment in the United States away from the everyday risk of being killed in the Congo wars.

Struggling to survive as a refugee in the host environment. Struggling to survive was a significant theme of the meanings and the essences of the participants lived

experiences is reflected in the experiences described by all the research participants. Struggling is the embodiment of the entire experience, as none of the participants expressed that they found it easy settling in the United States as refugees from Congo. From the participants' horizons, while the experience of coming to the United States as refugees was exciting and promising; settling in the host community in Indianapolis as refugees was a painful and disappointing experience at the individual and the collective levels, as it generally meant surviving on your own after the first three months when the refugee resettlement assistance ended. This period meant a lot of things to the refugee, for example, paying their own house rents and electric bills, providing for their personal and family upkeep by themselves, searching for jobs, learning English to integrate in the community, learning driving instructions in English, and coping with the everyday experience of accessing childcare and ensuring child safety in the American context where child care and work practices are different from the experience in Africa.

Building new relations and connections to survive in the host community.

Building new relations and connections to survive in the host community was a significant theme of the meanings and the essences of the lived experiences of the participants and embedded across the individual textual description of the phenomenological experience. Having experienced the saddened end of the refugee resettlement assistance, the participants were constrained to explore other alternatives for surviving as refugees in the host community. Participants explored different options in reaching out for assistance, including the church, the municipality, family relations, and other community humanitarian organizations. This reality thus suggests that the experience of settling in the host community as a refugee also meant building new

relations to survive in the host community, especially at the difficult moment when the refugee resettlement assistance ended. The experience for the research participants collectively led to the emergence of new relational bodies with a different sense of collective social imagination. In this new world of collective social imagination, the participants all voice out their disappointments with the three months refugee assistance program and individually expressed that they would like to see the program improved so that the period of assistance is increased to at least one year.

Accessing other forms of public assistance to compliment the three months refugee assistance. Accessing other forms of public assistance was the meaning imbued in the experience of termination of the refugee assistance program lived by the participants. With the sudden termination of the refugee resettlement program, the participants individually sought assistance from public programs such as the food stamp program, the low-income housing program, and city and municipal public assistance programs in the host community. In this regard, the hardship experienced by the participants in the process of resettling in the host community as refugees from DR Congo forced the research participants to individually explore alternative public assistance programs for people with little or no income. Thus, going through the experience of termination of the refugee assistance engendered a sense of exploration and discovery of alternative means of survival for people in desperate situations.

Accessing assistance from other family members in the United States. Accessing assistance from other family relations was another significant meaning of the lived experience during termination of refugee resettlement assistance, as individually described by the participants. Confronted with the challenge of survival in the host

communities without any form of refugee resettlement assistance, the participants who had family relations in the United States reached for some sort of assistance from the family relations to make it through this period of their resettlement journey. Evident in some of the participants' descriptive narratives, resettling in the United States as refugees was also a story about connecting with family relations and accessing family support in the form of food, transportation, and financial assistance

Discovering and adjusting to new environmental conditions in host community. Resettling in the host communities as refugees in Indianapolis also meant discovering and adjusting to new environmental conditions. Discovering snow for the first time and experience the chilly winter were environmental conditions described by the participants. Living through snow and the cold winter were the new conditions of the lived space that participants had to adjust to in order to survive in their host communities. While the experience was exciting to the participants, the chilly weather was collectively discomforting to all the participants.

Discovering and adjusting to the new economic and social conditions. the experience of settling in host community in Indianapolis as refugees from DR Congo also meant discovering and adjusting to new social conditions different from their experience in Africa. The experience of those who were mostly housewives in Africa meant taking over responsibilities of their own social and economic lives to provide for themselves and their families. Assume these new roles also meant assuming a new sense of femininity different from the role they played while in Africa.

When they were housewives, the husbands headed the families and made social and economic decisions for the wellbeing of the families. With their husbands killed in

the Congo wars and the women settling in the United States as refugees, they assumed new roles, taking over responsibilities for their economic and social well-being. The termination of the refugee resettlement assistance enhanced these new roles as the women individually had to explore employment options and apply for alternative public assistance programs. Some of these women refugees in their new roles as heads of the households assumed responsibility over important social decisions such as going back to school for further education and making vital decisions as to the safer places to keep their kids while they work. Given the very challenging phenomenological context with the sudden termination of the refugee resettlement assistance, the refugee women had to seek assistance from church groups, family relatives, from the city and the municipality to settle down and integrate into their host communities.

Integrating the new culture and learning new cultural competences: Settling as refugees in the host communities in Indianapolis, United States, also meant integrating the cultural values and developing social and cultural competencies required to survive in the United States. As individually narrated in their textual descriptions, it was a challenge learning to use the toilet, the electric cooker, and going out to interact with others in community, especially considering the language difficulties described by these women. In this challenging phenomenological context, the women refugees struggled to learn the new social and cultural values of the host community, and sometimes found comfort in fellowshiping with peers from the DRC who share the same social, cultural, and religious values as them.

Discovering and adjusting to the new religious culture in the host community. Resettling in the host communities as female refugees from the DR Congo

also meant discovering and adjusting to the religious culture of the host community. While these female refugees were surprised with the solemn and quiet nature of religious worship in the United States, this resulted in a way of adjusting to the wider cultural context by fellowshipping in church groups that share their African cultural backgrounds and that practices a mode of adoration like their African experience.

Adjusting to the American system of education. The experience of settling in the United States as female refugees from the DR Congo, for those who enrolled in school, meant experiencing a new system of education different from the system they had known in Africa. In this new phenomenological context, the women learned by adjusting to the new context while at the same comparing the new educational experience with the experience they have had in Africa. The women expressed their surprise with the pedagogic style applied in American school systems and describe the national and cultural diversity present in school settings in the United States.

Living in faraway lands from other family members. Settling in the United States as female refugees from the DR Congo also meant separation from family members in the faraway lands in Africa. In describing this new phenomenological reality, the women expressed anguish, anxiety, and disappointment that uniting families was not considered in the refugee resettlement programming in the United States. To adjust to this new reality, some of the women described how they must always call back to find out how the family members are doing and how they always must send money to support family members back home.

Living in the safe environment in the United States away from the fear of the being killed in Congo wars. Despite the frustration that underlined the participants lived

experiences while settling in the host communities in the United States as refugees, the experience also meant making the dream come true of their desires to settle in the United States. Although the women described their disappointments with the ineffective nature of the three month refugee resettlement program, they however expressed gratitude that they were living in the United States away from the fear of being killed in the Congo wars. To these women, the essence of the experience was also the fulfillment of their dreams to resettle in the United States and reliving the joy and the happiness characterized the lived body coming to settle in the United States as refugees from the Congo.

Chapter Conclusion

The analysis of the participants' phenomenological experiences presented in this chapter revealed the following about the women experiences settling in the United States as refugees from the DR Congo.

- a) That the experience was dissatisfying and disappointing, especially after the first three months when the refugee resettlement assistance terminated.
- b) That from their experience, the participants found the US refugee resettlement program ineffective and not targeted towards the needs of the refugees.
- c) That from their experience, the participants found the program separating them from their families in Africa.
- d) That from their experience, they had to struggle in finding jobs and sometimes depended on family members in the United States, church groups, and other public assistance programs to survive as refugees in the United States.

- e) That the experience meant discovering and learning to live in new environmental, social, and cultural conditions different from what they have known in Africa
- f) That the experience also meant living through the worst form of tragedy, such as losing a child to drowning in a pool and feeling regretful of ever coming to resettle in the United States.
- g) That the experience meant fulfilling the dream of settling in the United States as refugees from the DR Congo.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The research study presented in this doctorate dissertation was designed to explore the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees in the United States. In trying to understand the lived experiences of these women while settling in the United States as refugees, this researcher outlined the research questions below to guide the research project. The discussion in this chapter is focused on answering these questions based on the analyses of the lived experiences of the research participants and providing recommendations that can be useful for further research on the topic, refugee settlement and conflict resolution programming, and for United States refugee resettlement policy enhancement.

Discussion of Research Questions and Findings

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees in Indiana?

This question of the research study focused on presenting the phenomenological description of the participants experience in their quest to settle in the United States as refugees from DR Congo. The researcher conducted phenomenological interviews with nine participants using the interview technique and the interview guide as the technique and instrument for the data collection. The interviews were analyzed using Moustakas (2004) Van Kaam's transcendental phenomenological approach. The participant's individual description of their lived experiences settling in their host communities in Indiana as women refugees from the DR Congo portrayed a variegated picture of their lived space, their lived time, their lived spirit, and their lived relations.

The subjective phenomenological contexts described by each participant revealed a picture where the hopes and dreams of a peaceful life in the United States as a refugee turned into pain, and the anxieties of living better lives in the United States were transformed into despair, disappointment, and regret. Underlining this dark picture is the shared experience of termination of the refugee resettlement assistance just after the first three months of the participants' presence in the United States.

While the participants expressed shock and disappointment at the sudden termination of their refugee resettlement and integration assistance, they also individually described how they were stupefied by the environmental, social, and cultural context of the host communities and the American society in general. The cultural shock experienced by the participants while settling in their host communities as refugees illustrates the inter-subjective nature of the world of phenomenology as that which "each individual finds in his or her subjective experience that the world is also experienced by others, co-experienced in a community of norms, beliefs, and habits, i.e.; in common relational structures and shared culture" (Henriques, 2014, p. 456).

In a context of discovery and cultural shock, the participants compared their lived experiences in the host communities in the United States with previous experiences in Africa, describing how they individually struggled to adjust in the host communities constructing the subjective reality of their lived experiences from the belief that "the experience of the world is collective and normatively structured through common validities, norms, concepts, and practical social relations, but each individual's particular experience maintains its distinctiveness and describes the collective context from his or her own point of view" (Henriques, 2014, p. 456)

In such variegated phenomenological context, the participants responded in diverse ways to their lived experiences. While some explored the host community to find alternative public assistance, others found comfort in church organizations with an African worship background. As the participants constructed their lived world, they all projected basic human needs as the purpose for their struggle to settle in the host communities. The struggle to access food, pay for their own housing, become mobile, acquire education, ensure a safe life for themselves and their families, acquire the host language, and reunite with family members in Africa. Participants individually expressed these human needs as defining elements of the struggle to settle in the United States as women refugees from DR Congo in Africa.

The veracious display of human needs by these women point to the human dimension of their phenomenological experience. Driven from their homeland in Africa by the fear of being killed in the DR Congo wars and coming to the United States to seek safety, these women individually realized settling in US refugees is a continuous struggle where questions of basic human needs do not have ready solutions. The United States refugee resettlement programs do not offer such ready solutions on a sustained basis, given the three months duration of the program.

RQ2: What meanings, structures, and essences are found in the lived experiences of the women?

The researcher analyzed the participants' lived experiences and identified the meaning and the essence they constructed from these experiences. Settling in United States as female refugees from the DR Congo individually meant the everyday struggle in an environment and a culture that is fundamentally different from the background

environment and culture of the refugees in Africa. This also meant, as Henriques (2014) suggests, coming to terms with the notion that in every given phenomenological context, “each individual finds in his or her subjective experience that the world is also experienced by others, and co-experienced in a community of norms, beliefs, and habits, i.e. in common relational structures and shared culture” (Henriques, 2014, p. 456).

The everyday struggle to survive in this new phenomenological context meant learning to cope with new situations and developing new cultural and linguistic competencies to adjust into the social and cultural context of the host community. It is in this need driven context that the women refugees described their frustration with the termination of the refugee resettlement assistance just after the first three months of their struggle to settle and integrate into their host communities.

Settling in their host communities as refugees also meant building new relationships to satisfy the basic human needs of food, shelter, security for the refugee women and their children, mobility, language, and communication. As the women individually struggled to fulfill these needs, they each realized the limitation of the United States refugee resettlement program, notably, the insufficiencies of the three months assistance, and the failure of the program to take into consideration the specific linguistic and driving needs of refugees coming from backgrounds such as the DR Congo with little or limited understanding of the English language and without basic driving skills.

The experience of settling in the United States as women refugees from DR Congo also meant struggling with the everyday reality of caring for their children and working to pay their rents and provide for their families. It is in this phenomenological

context that one of the refugee women describes the painful experience of her daughter dying in a swimming pool while she was away searching for jobs, illustrating the dilemma that surrounds the experience of settling in settling in the United States as a women refugee from the DR Congo where they are expected to provide for themselves and their families and at the same time assume the responsibility of childcare. In description the experience of losing a child in the swimming pool, the participant expressed regret coming to the United States in the first place and stated, “had I stayed in Africa, my daughter would have been alive today.” Such feeling illustrates the ambivalence of hope and despair that underlined the participants’ description of their lived experiences.

The experience of settling in their host communities in the United States also meant exploring other forms of public assistance, especially in the context of the termination of the refugee resettlement assistance. The participants individually described their experience applying for food stamps assistance through the Department of Children and Families and for rental assistance through the “Section A” housing program or through city and municipality subsidized housing programs.

To some of these refugees, the experience of settling in the United States as a refugee also meant connecting with family members already located in the United States to seek assistance in satisfying some of the basic needs of themselves and their families. Some of the participants described how their family members in the United States assisted them with food needs and provided them with rides to shops, hospitals, and other places they had to go to seek assistance to satisfy their needs.

Settling in the United States as refugees for some also meant adjusting to the environmental conditions of the host communities. Some of the participants described their experience adjusting to the snowy and winter conditions. These participants described the ambivalence of the excitement of experience snow for the first time in their lives and at the same their disgust for the chilly winter conditions. In this phenomenological context, these participants would sometimes go out to play and explore the snowy conditions and sometimes they would stay in doors to protect themselves from the chilly weather conditions.

To some of the Congolese women, the experience of settling in the United States as refugees meant adjusting to the economic conditions in the US. Forced by the circumstances of their living conditions in the host communities, after the termination of the refugee resettlement assistance, some of the refugees described their lived experiences going out to search for jobs and haunted by the inability to express themselves in the English language and the lack of professional skills. Confronted by these challenges, the women had no choice than struggling to survive in the worst of circumstances.

The experience of settling in the United States as refugees to some of the female refugees from the Congo meant learning to adjust to the American culture. The lived experiences described by these participants not only illustrates the cultural shock they experienced discovering the American socio-institutional and cultural way of life, but also how they adjusted themselves into the socio-institutional and cultural context of their host communities. They individually described their alienation with the cultural, social, and religious institutions of their host communities and of the United States in general.

They expressed their remoteness to the culture by describing their experiences in schools and church settings.

However, despite the feeling of being alienated from the culture, some of the participants described their experiences integrating into the culture. They found the system of education in America and the system of religious worship in America different from the system they were used to in Africa, but had to adjust to it to survive. While some of the participants described their experiences making friends with people from other parts of the world in school environments, others simply found comfort in religious groups with African religious backgrounds. By interacting with others in the host communities, the participants quickly learned the American culture and developed the cultural competences necessary to adjust and integrate into the host community.

For many of these women, the experience of settling in the United States as refugees meant separating from their families and loved ones in Africa. The participants described living in faraway lands from their family members and loved ones. They expressed feelings of frustrations, disappointment, and loneliness missing their family members and loved ones in Africa. While some described keeping in touch with family members and loved ones by always calling back home, other expressed hope and the desire to reunite with family members sometime in Africa or in the United States. Some of the participants expressed the wish to see family reunion integrated into the US refugee policy.

The experience also meant becoming self-dependent. Some of the participants learned how to become this by assuming the responsibilities of paying their rents and utilities by themselves. They also assumed the responsibility of feeding and clothing

themselves and their children with little or no support from outside sources. In assuming these responsibilities, these refugee women turned their backs to the culture of complete dependency and started taking responsibility for their own lives without waiting for others to do things for them.

For some of the refugees, the experience of settling in the United States meant fulfilling their dreams of further education. These participants described the frustration that took hold of them with the delay to enroll in school and the joy that came with their finally enrolling in school. To these participants, enrolling in school was in some ways transforming the intentionality of further education into a reality. The fulfillment of the intentionality of enrolling in school meant making a dream come true.

Settling in the United States as refugee to these women was also fulfilling their intentionality to live in the promise land of the United States where they are guaranteed a safe and prosperous future for themselves and their children. Settling in the United States was like securing a ticket to safety away from the dangers of the Congo wars, and towards economic prosperity for themselves and their children. The women were frustrated and disappointed when things did not happen the way they expected.

The essence of settling in the United States as refugees for these women was basically living their dreams of a better life and ensuring a future where their own safety and the safety of their children is guaranteed. The essence of their experience was to live the American dream of a better life of guaranteed safety and economic prosperity.

RQ3: How do the women construct their lived world as refugees in the United States?

Having come to the United States with the dream of ensuring a better life for themselves and their children, the refugee women described their lived world in the first three months of settling in their host communities in Indiana as exciting and hopeful. These first three months were the periods they received resettlement assistance as refugees, which may account for the positive description of their lived world. However, after the first three months, with the termination of the refugee resettlement assistance, the women's construction of their lived world transformed from exciting and hopeful to daunting, disappointing, regretful, painful and less promising.

The transformation in the participants' construction of their lived world also reflects the changes that were happening in the participants' lived time, their lived space, their lived relation, and lived spirit. As recipients of resettlement assistance, the refugee women, in diverse ways, constructed a positive and hopeful image of their lived world based on the assistance they received for their housing and food needs. Although these women were positive and hopeful, they were also expecting that the assistance would cover other needs, such as learning the English language and learning driving skills in the language accessible to the women.

The refugee women expressed their disappointment and despair after the refugee resettlement assistance terminated. The gloomy picture of the lived world described by the women directly contrasts with the positive image of the glorious first three months of the women settling in their host communities in Indiana. While the lived world constructed by each of the participant was subjective based on the circumstances of their lived experiences, certain themes were shared by all the participants, such as the struggle to pay rental bills, access food, learn English, and learn driving instructions and skills.

RQ4: What are the patterns and the relationships exposed in the experiences described by the women?

As the participants described their lived experiences settling in their host communities in the United States as refugees, two major patterns emerged from their phenomenological narratives: the assistance-dependence and the self-dependence nature of the participants. All the participants involved in the research strongly believed that refugee resettlement assistance was crucial for their survival in the host communities. They became very frustrated with the termination of the resettlement assistance after three months. Some believed without the assistance they could no longer survive in the United States. The refugees who felt this way expressed their frustration by requesting they be returned to Africa if they can longer access resettlement assistance.

However, the participants also expressed the need to work and become self-dependent. While the participants realized the importance of working to survive in the host communities; they were aware of their individual limitation, such as their limited understanding of the English language, their lack of sufficient education and work-related skills, their inability to learn driving in the United States, their lack of knowledge of the cultural values of the host communities, and their lack of financial means to pay for child care services. Operating in such phenomenological context marked constraints and barriers, the participants often resulted to seeking alternative sources of assistance after the termination of the resettlement assistance. They applied for alternative public assistance programs such as the food stamp program, the public housing program (Section 8), or applying for city and municipal assistance for rental payment for the poor.

The lived experiences described by the research participants revealed the lack of overt attention to the cultural and language barriers that prevent the refugees from accessing services in the host communities. The women expressed frustration with the lack of support for their cultural and linguistic integration and the consequences of such barriers to accessing employment, health, and other services in the host communities.

Relevance of findings to conflict research

The phenomenological experiences described by the research participants revealed the current conflicts in the US refugee resettlement program. The problems identified by the research participants were emblematic of a program that is not tailored for the specific needs of the refugees it is meant to serve. The lived experiences described by the participants revealed that the implementation of the program lacks a needs-based approach to take into consideration the specific needs of the participants. The participants perceived that the US refugee resettlement program in its current state did not address their basic human needs in a sustained manner, such that resettlement assistance was often terminated at the time they needed help most.

While conflict is about perceived incompatibility in interest, this was often expressed in the participants' descriptions of lived experiences. The termination of the refugee resettlement assistance after the first three months was perceived by the participants as incompatible with their needs for food, housing, employment, education, and training. The participant often misdirected their frustration towards the responsible refugee agency. They felt the resettlement agencies were responsible for the unexpected termination of the refugee resettlement assistance.

The incompatibilities expressed by the participants in the description of their lived experiences raised the need for conflict research to focus on understanding the relevance of the United States refugee resettlement program in relation to the needs of the refugees coming into the United States. Understanding the phenomenology of conflict in the US refugee resettlement programming would provide the basis for a discussion on how to design a need-based program that focuses on providing long term solutions to the problems of specific groups of refugees.

Relevance of the finding to conflict resolution theory

The findings of this research were found to be very relevant to conflict resolution as they identify the problems in the US refugee resettlement program. The research exposed the problems related to the duration and content of the assistance provided to refugees who settled in the United States. The research revealed that the assistance is often not targeted and thus does not reflect the specific needs of the refugee population nor the enormity of the needs. The research also revealed that the implementation of the US refugee resettlement program does not take into consideration specific cultural, linguistic, social, and economic needs of the refugee populations.

The findings of the research study are critical to resolving the problems of refugee resettlement programming in the United States. Conflict resolution theory emphasizes a need-based approach to conflict resolution. Based on the findings of this research a need-based approach is required for solving the currently existing problems in the US refugee resettlement assistance program. The current institutional and power-based approach has shown its limits, as it fails to factor the needs of the refugees whom the resettlement policy is meant to assist.

A need- based approach to resettlement assistance in the United States will build on the human needs theory, which advocates programming resettlement assistance based on the specific needs of the refugee population. Such an approach would take into consideration the socio-cultural and economic factors that influence the refugee process for each specific group of refugees. Developing a case-by-case refugee resettlement program that takes into consideration the specific needs of the refugee population would seem to be the best approach to address the specific needs of refugees from the DR Congo settling in the United States.

The findings of this research are also important for conflict resolution as they help present the different horizons for addressing the problems involved in United States refugee resettlement policy. The study revealed that the current implementation of US refugee resettlement policy does not take into consideration refugee perspectives in resettlement assistance programming. The lack of refugee horizons in the programming of resettlement assistance results in the practice whereby the goals and the objectives of the program do not reflect the basic needs of the refugees the program is meant to assist. A better approach to resolving the inherent conflicts in the US refugee resettlement assistance would require the involvement of the perspectives of the refugees in the programming of resettlement.

The findings of the research provide understanding of what the Congolese women refugees feel and think about the US refugee resettlement programming. Current research on refugee resettlement assistance in the United States tends to bias towards the quantitative understanding of the number of refugees settled in the United States.

The lack of qualitative understanding exists on how the refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds feel and think about the refugee resettlement programming in the US. Integrating the qualitative perspective into US refugee resettlement assistance programming will broaden the phenomenological context and enhance understanding of the specific needs of the refugees.

The findings of the research study helped to uncover the unresolved conflicts surrounding the US refugee resettlement programming. Considering the current top-down refugee resettlement policy, the inherent conflicts of refugee resettlement programming are undermined. By giving a voice to the women refugees from the DR Congo, they have highlighted the inherent conflicts in the programming from their own perspectives. Understanding the horizons of these women opens the door for a refugee-informed approach to resettlement assistance programming.

The finding of the research reveals some of the emotions experienced by refugees who are settled in the United States. Understanding the emotions of anger, fear of the unknown, and frustration experienced by the women refugees from the DR Congo is useful in engaging these women in the reformation of the policy. Acknowledging and normalizing these emotions would enhance the development of a policy that is responsive to the needs of the refugees.

The findings of the research are also relevant to conflict resolution in the sense that they identify the desired solutions to the current US refugee resettlement assistance policy. All the participants interviewed offered suggestions as to how the current refugee resettlement assistance programming can best be improved. The participants individually

suggested increasing the duration of the assistance and including assistance in the learning of the English language, driving skills, and culture of the United States.

The findings of the research also underline the values the refugees bring to the United States and the inherent conflicts resulting from the cultural shock experienced by the refugees when they struggle to settle into the US host communities. Understanding these values and how they affect the refugee resettlement process would enhance the current implementation of the US refugee resettlement policy. A need-base refugee resettlement policy would take into consideration the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the refugees when programming resettlement assistance.

Relevance of the findings to conflict resolution practice

Conflict resolution practice provides a model for analyzing and developing responses to conflict and captures the context and process factors influencing the conflict. The findings of this research study provide the framework for designing a conflict analytic system that captures the needs of DR Congolese women refugees.

Based on the findings of the research, the US refugee resettlement programming needs to be based on a conflict resolution practice model that builds trust and confidence between the refugees who are the beneficiaries of the program, the federal government that develops the policy, the states, and the agencies who help in the implementation of the policy. As revealed in this study, the current refugee resettlement policy of the United States breeds mistrust between the beneficiaries of the policy, the states, and the non-governmental agencies implementing the policy. Building trust and confidence between these entities is pivotal to developing a refugee resettlement assistance programming that is perceived by the refugees as responsive and tailored towards their needs.

Moreover, besides tailoring the US refugee resettlement policy to needs of the refugees, it is also critical that refugee resettlement programming adopts a strength-based approach such that resettlement programs are developed from the needs and the strengths of the refugees. The findings of the study clearly revealed that although female refugees from the DR Congo had common cultural similarities, they individually displayed different strengths. While some had levels of education that enabled them to easily integrate into the US educational systems, others had little or no education.

Study Recommendations

Drawing from the findings of the study, the following recommendations are important to addressing the refugee resettlement problems identified by the women in the textual description of their lived experiences. For these women, people-based resettlement programming that focus on the needs and the strengths of the refugees would be more responsive than the current programming that is at best institutional and at worst alienating from the specific needs of the refugees. Such a program would take into consideration the needs of the refugees and the conditions under which they can best be satisfied.

Factoring the lived experiences of refugees from diverse cultural backgrounds into the US refugee crisis response solution would enhance US refugee resettlement programming, improve the experiences of the refugees, and reduce the trust deficit as described by the Congolese female refugees in their lived experiences. Resettling refugees is a humanitarian act which must be perceived by the refugees as responsive, enduring and focused on their specific needs. When a refugee resettlement program is

perceived as alienating and irresponsible, it will fail to provide adequate responses to the refugee problem it aimed to solve.

Improvement on the US refugee resettlement assistance policy should also take into consideration the need to empower the refugees. As noted by Potocky (1996), “empowerment efforts would provide refugees the opportunity to gain the assertive, decision making, participatory skills that are necessary for self-sufficiency in US society” (p. 170). This research study exposed the lack of empowerment and participation evident in the textual descriptions of participants’ lived experiences. Providing refugees the opportunity to practice assertiveness, decision making, and participatory skills would better prepare them for integrating into US society and towards becoming self-sufficient. Giving refugees the opportunity to provide feedback on the services they are receiving under the refugee resettlement assistance program is empowering and prepares them for an independent and assertive way of life.

Integrating mental health services into US refugee resettlement assistance policy would address the problems of trauma and culture shock experienced by the refugees. As Potocky (1996) notes, “traumatic sufferings and culture shock experienced by refugees cannot be underestimated. These individuals have lost much of what they valued in their lives: family, homes, sense of belonging, and social status” (p.170). This research study exposed the negative emotions that imbued the experience of settling in the host communities as refugees. Traumatic experiences such as the death of a daughter in a swimming pool as described by one of the refugees, the post-traumatic stress of having lost husbands, relatives, and family members in the Congo wars in Africa, and the culture

shock endured by the experience struggling to integrate into the American culture all deserve mental health evaluation and treatment.

Improving US refugee resettlement assistance policy to include education of employers and others in the host communities about the refugee cultures, experiences, and ways of relating to them would reduce the problems of discrimination against refugees at work places and enhance refugee integration in the host communities.

However, such improvement would only take place if refugee resettlement programming in the United States overcame its current institutionally driven outlook.

Qualitative researchers can do more to enhance understanding of the refugee resettlement experience of refugees from DR Congo who have settled in the United States. A focus group study designed on this population by other researchers would certainly provide a better understanding of the shared experiences of refugees from this part of the world and allow for a comparative understanding of the experiences of women and men from this part of the world.

Finally, from the remarks by the participants it is logical to recommend the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to consider resettling refugees in their home continents. This is because refugees are people who are already accustomed to the culture in which they have been born and raised. Forcing them to assimilate into a foreign culture to which they struggle to adapt is a long and painful process. Let refugees from Africa be resettled in Africa, refugees from Asia be resettled in Asia, and refugees from the Middle East be resettled in the Middle East. The United Nations, through its agency UNHCR, should continue to support the countries where the refugees are resettled.

Limitations of the study

There were limitations on this study in many areas. The first limitation was that all the women refugees were from the same national background (DRC) and had experienced episodes of violence and trauma. Most of them had been through the same scenarios before they were resettled in the US. Even after entering the United States they went through the same stages of settling down. Owing that the population studied came from a country which has been in turmoil for decades, these women have never had any pleasant experiences other than that of war. One of the leading limitations is that all the subjects declined to be taped, which resulted to the researcher taking down notes of the interviews. It is possible that the researcher could have missed some of the body language of the refugees as they described their lived experiences. Body language is an important data point for phenomenological study. Taking down interview notes was a shock to the researcher because of the length of time involved in writing down all the interviews conducted in the Swahili language. The researcher interviewed the women in Swahili but translated the interview to English. This contributed to lengthy interview sessions.

The women expressed fear of the unknown if they were to accept being taped, even though they were assured by the researcher of confidentiality from the beginning. The fear of the unknown dominated each and every one of the participants' thinking. Most of these refugees came from refugee camps based in Rwanda, Kenya, Mozambique, and Burundi. They may have known each other before they arrived in the US, as some of them were in the same refugee camps. Some of them were reluctant to talk about their experiences since their experiences might cause more conflict or even harm to their family members left behind. This was part of the fear of the unknown based on the family

members still waiting unification. Another limitation was the refugee self-perception that they may have known each other on personal level, which might have contributed in not opening to share their individual information for fear of being recognized through their stories. Lastly, notwithstanding my preeminent exertions to be conscious of my prejudices, it was difficult after dealing with these refugee women as a resettlement officer before, though not directly to the same participants, to be certain my analysis did not generate any bias.

Conclusion

I kept on reflecting and exploring on the themes which emerged. Whereby Mutesi experience represents most of the interviews, it helped me understand the lived experiences of the women refugees whom I interviewed.

Mutesi's interview demonstrated so many essentials of almost all women refugees' experience, comprising resettlement, emotions, loss, spirituality, family and lived times. Mutesi narrates the experience of resettlement being difficult, which was not sufficient enough to hold her together. She explains how her daughter drowned in a swimming pool as she was out looking for a job to sustain her after only two months instead of three months. Even with the three months it could not have been sufficient enough to enable her start live comfortably.

Mutesi clearly narrates her emotions after losing her only daughter due to drowning in a swimming pool. Though Mutesi's story symbolizes all these disturbing certainties, it also prompts investigation of other perilous realities that are often overlooked in our notions of refugees, such as resettlement, emotions, spirituality, family, resilience, and lived times. I found Mutesi's narrative to be exemplary of all the women

whom I interviewed who, other than experiencing great loss of her daughter, also experienced resilience in her style of dealing with the issue—“getting over” the grief to the other side of living “still alive”- using unlimited intellect of generativity to look ahead and deliver to their children and forthcoming generations

Finally, the 90 day assistance rendered to the refugees was insufficient to empower them to live successfully in the US. Even though they were informed before they came to the US about the 90 day assistance, according to the lived experiences of these refugees, it did not prepare them for the challenges they had to face outside the camp.

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Appendix A: IRB Memorandum

MEMORANDUM

To: **Jane Mokaya**

From: **Angela Yehl, Psy.D.,
Center Representative, Institutional Review Board**

Date: **January 12, 2018**

Re: **IRB #: 2018-27; Title, “Lived experiences of Congolese Women Refugees in Indianapolis. A phenomenological study of Congolese Women refugees resettled in Indianapolis, Indiana.”**

I have reviewed the above-referenced research protocol at the center level. Based on the information provided, I have determined that this study is exempt from further IRB review under **45 CFR 46.101(b) (Exempt Category 2)**. You may proceed with your study as described to the IRB. As principal investigator, you must adhere to the following requirements:

- 1) **CONSENT:** If recruitment procedures include consent forms, they must be obtained in such a manner that they are clearly understood by the subjects and the process affords subjects the opportunity to ask questions, obtain detailed answers from those directly involved in the research, and have sufficient time to consider their participation after they have been provided this information. The subjects must be given a copy of the signed consent document, and a copy must be placed in a secure file separate from de-identified participant information. Record of informed consent must be retained for a minimum of three years from the conclusion of the study.
- 2) **ADVERSE EVENTS/UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS:** The principal investigator is required to notify the IRB chair and me (954-262-5369 and Angela Yehl, Psy.D., respectively) of any adverse reactions or unanticipated events that may develop as a result of this study. Reactions or events may include, but are not limited to, injury, depression as a result of participation in the study, life-threatening situation, death, or loss of confidentiality/anonymity of subject. Approval may be withdrawn if the problem is serious.
- 3) **AMENDMENTS:** Any changes in the study (e.g., procedures, number or types of subjects, consent forms, investigators, etc.) must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Please be advised that changes in a study may require further review depending on the nature of the change. Please contact me with any questions regarding amendments or changes to your study.

The NSU IRB is in compliance with the requirements for the protection of human subjects prescribed in Part 46 of Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46) revised June 18, 1991.

Cc: **Dustin Berna, Ph.D.
Angela Yehl, Psy.D.**

Appendix B: General Informed Consent

General Informed Consent Form

NSU Consent to be in a Research Study Entitled

“Lived Experiences of Congolese Women Refugees in Indianapolis”

Who is doing this research study?

College: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies

Principal Investigator:

Jane N. Mokaya - BSW, MBA, MS (Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution) Studies

Co - Investigator - Dr. Dustin Berna Ph.D.

Site Information:

Holy Ground Fellowship Church
8455 Castlewood Dr. Suite C
Indianapolis IN 46250

Grace Tabernacle Church
5540 N. Michigan Rd
Indianapolis IN 46228
Unfunded

What is this study about?

The purpose of this study titled *“Lived experiences of Congolese Women Refugees in Indianapolis Indiana,”* is to explore the lived experiences of Congolese women refugees who were resettled in Indianapolis, Indiana. The reason the study is focused on the experiences of Congolese women settled as refugees, is to explore and know the meaning these experiences hold for them. They will apply it in addressing the study questions aimed at discovering the trials they encountered as war victims. It will also add value to investigators and scholars as a base for more research, and make numerous contributions to the information structure of refugee resettlement.

Why are you asking me to be in this research study?

I am inviting you to participate because you are a former refugee, over eighteen years of age or older from DR Congo. You are currently living in Indianapolis and willing to participate in this research. You will contribute to the challenges you and the other women refugees faced or face. It will hopefully assist in the resettlement process if any need is found and maybe on policy formulation if the study uncovers any. There will be twelve to fifteen participants.

What will I be doing if I agree to be in this research study?

You will meet the researcher after agreeing to participate and could have signed participation form. The researcher will be explaining to you before the interview and the interview process which will include taking notes, and audio recording with your permission or consent. It will be my duty to apply high level of confidentiality and responsibility throughout the process. Pseudonyms will be used instead of actual names or written documents and your name will not be mentioned in the audio tape for purposes of confidentiality. The tape will be under lock and key

when it is not in use. There will not be any groups. The interview will take 70 minutes per participant.

Could I be removed from the study early by the research team?

If during the interview the investigator absorbs that you are becoming emotionally distraught, and that makes you ineligible, M/s Mokaya will end the interview.

Are there possible risks and discomforts to me?

There may be minimal or no risk involved, but if there is an indication of any problem or danger to you as a result of your participation, the interview will be called off.

If there will be any concerns or questions you have about the process or the study will be addressed before you sign and date two copies of the consent forms you received before the interview. The interview which will last for 70 minutes or less will be held in a secured location of your choice.

You may find some questions we ask you (or some things we ask you to do) to be upsetting or stressful. My role in this study will be to check with the participants from time to time during the interview process and use continuous consent and make sure that they are willing to continue. If so, we can refer you to someone who may be able to help you with these feelings.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research study?

You have the right to leave this research study at any time or refuse to be in it. If you decide to leave or you do not want to be in the study anymore, you will not get any penalty or lose any services you have a right to get. If you choose to stop being in the study before it is over, any information about you that was collected **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the end of the study and may be used as a part of the research.

Alternatively, you have the right to leave this research study at any time, or not be in it. If you do decide to leave or you decide not to be in the study anymore, you will not get any penalty or lose any services you have a right to get. If you choose to stop being in the study, any information collected about you **before** the date you leave the study will be kept in the research records for 36 months from the conclusion of the study but you may request that it not be used.

What if there is new information learned during the study that may affect my decision to remain in the study?

If significant new information relating to the study becomes available, which may relate to whether you want to remain in this study, this information will be given to you by the investigators. You may be asked to sign a new Informed Consent Form, if the information is given to you after you have joined the study.

Are there any benefits for taking part in this research study?

There is no guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefit from this study. We hope the information learned from this research study will benefit other people with similar conditions in the future.

Will I be paid or be given compensation for being in the study?

You will not be given any payments or compensation for being in this research study.

Will it cost me anything?

There are no costs to you for being in this research study.

How will you keep my information private?

Information we learn about you in this research study will be handled in a confidential manner, within the limits of the law and will be limited to people who have a need to review this information. We will not use your real name for privacy purposes and nobody will get to know who you are. This data will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any regulatory and granting agencies (if applicable). If we publish the results of the study in a scientific journal or book, we will not identify you. All confidential data will be kept securely under lock and key. All data will be kept for 36 months and destroyed after that time by deleting or erasing the information and discarding all the handwritten materials.

Will there be any Audio or Video Recording?

This research study involves audio and/or video recording. This recording will be available to the researcher, the Institutional Review Board and other representatives of this institution, and any of the people who gave the researcher money to do the study (if applicable). The recording will be kept, stored, and destroyed as stated in the section above. Because what is in the recording could be used to find out that it is you, it is not possible to be sure that the recording will always be kept confidential. The researcher will try to keep anyone not working on the research from listening to or viewing the recording.

Whom can I contact if I have questions, concerns, comments, or complaints?

If you have questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have more questions about the research, your research rights, or have a research-related injury, please contact:

Primary contact:

Jane N. Mokaya, MBA, MS (Master of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies) can be reached 317-809-5346

If primary is not available, contact:

Dr. Dustin Berna can be reached 9543191177

Research Participants Rights

For questions/concerns regarding your research rights, please contact:

Institutional Review Board

Nova Southeastern University

(954) 262-5369 / Toll Free: 1-866-499-0790

IRB@nova.edu

You may also visit the NSU IRB website at www.nova.edu/irb/information-for-research-participants for further information regarding your rights as a research participant.

Research Consent & Authorization Signature Section

Voluntary Participation - You are not required to participate in this study. In the event you do participate, you may leave this research study at any time. If you leave this research study before it is completed, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you agree to participate in this research study, sign this section. You will be given a signed copy of this form to keep. You do not waive any of your legal rights by signing this form.

SIGN THIS FORM ONLY IF THE STATEMENTS LISTED BELOW ARE TRUE:

- You have read the above information.
- Your questions have been answered to your satisfaction about the research.

Adult Signature Section

I have voluntarily decided to take part in this research study.

Printed Name of
Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person
Obtaining Consent and
Authorization

Signature of Person Obtaining
Consent & Authorization

Date

Appendix C: Invitation to participate

Dear Madam,

RE: Invitation to participate in a research study titled “Lived Experiences of Congolese Women Refugees in Indianapolis: A phenomenological study of Congolese Women refugees resettled in Indianapolis, Indiana.”

My name is Jane N. Mokaya, I am a Doctoral Candidate of Conflict Analysis and Resolution Studies at Nova Southeastern University, Florida. I am currently completing my dissertation in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

My proposed study titled, “Lived Experiences of Congolese Women Refugees in Indianapolis: A phenomenological study of Congolese Women refugees resettled in Indianapolis Indiana.” seeks to examine the lived experiences of Congolese Women resettled as refugees in Indianapolis. The goal of the study is to give voice to the lived experiences of the Congolese refugee women. This voice has been missing in the literature and that is why I decided to conduct this study. The study is also to add value to investigators and scholars. It will form a base for more research, and make numerous contributions to the formation structure of refugee resettlement.

The result of the research might assist these women understand the essence of their lived experiences. The resettlement process and policy formulation, as well as serve as reference material for future research and interventions by resettlement agencies if there will be a gap. The study might be essential in discovering possible approaches that can be used to eradicate whatever barrier which will be identified.

I am using this method to implore for your support in contributing in this research. To participate in the study, participants are required to be women from the DR Congo who were resettled as refugees, who reside at Indianapolis, 18 years of age and older. Participants are required to complete a short questionnaire participation form which will accompany the recruitment letter. This questionnaire will be helpful in recruiting the participants who meet the criteria for the study.

The selected participants will be given consent forms and given 3 days for assessment and decide on their participation in the study or not. The interview for those willing and qualified participants will be conducted at Indianapolis at appropriate time and in secured location selected by the participant. The duration of the interview will be 70 minutes or less for each participant. The interview which will be individual will dwell on questions centering on the women's experiences. Any data or information obtained during this research will be confidential; the real names of the participants will not be used. This study has also been thoroughly reviewed, critiqued, and approved by the Nova Southeastern University Institutional Review Board, with the goal of ensuring the safety of all research participants. However, the findings from this study will be published in a dissertation.

I sincerely appreciate your contribution to this study, and look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Jane N. Mokaya
3380 Pinewalk Drive North # 1125
Margate, FL. 33062
Tel. 317-809-5346
Email: jm3813@mynsu.nova.edu

Appendix D: Recruitment Questionnaire

Recruitment Questionnaire

Thank you for completing this Participant Form. The information provided will assist determine your suitability to participate in this research. Your information will be used to understand and make meaning of lived experiences and challenges faced by Congolese Women Refugees settled in Indianapolis. It will hopefully assist in the resettlement process if any need arises, and maybe on policy formulation if the study uncovers any.

Name _____

Phone number _____

Email address _____

Country of Origin _____

City & State of Residence _____

Sex _____.

Marital Status _____

What is your age bracket? *Please circle one*

A) 18-30 B) 31-40 C) 41 and above.

Highest Level of Education _____

Did you come as a refugee. _____?

Were you born in DR Congo _____?

How long have you lived in Indiana? _____?

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E: Site Approval Letter



Grace Tabernacle

Ministries

5540 N Michigan Rd Indianapolis IN 46228

Site Approval Letter

Nova Southeastern
University
3301 College Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33314-7796

Subject: Site Approval Letter

To whom it may concern:

This letter acknowledges that I have received and reviewed a request by Jane N. Mokaya to conduct a research project entitled "Lived experiences of Congolese Women Refugee" at Grace Tabernacle Ministries, Indianapolis and I approve of this research to be conducted at our facility. When the researcher receives approval for his/her research project from the Nova Southeastern University/ s Institutional Review Board/NSU IRB, I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact the Nova Southeastern University's IRB at (954) 262-5369 or jrb@nova.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emmanuel Musinga', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rev. Emmanuel Musinga

Senior Pastor
Tel. 317-531-9451
[Email:graceministry6@gmail.com](mailto:graceministry6@gmail.com)

Appendix F: Pilot Phase Interview Questions

Question 1. Tell me about life in the refugee camp

Question No.2. How did it feel when you were leaving Africa coming to the US?

Question No. 3. Tell me about the journey to America

Question No. 4. Did you leave any of your family member or any of your children behind?

Question No. 5. Tell me about your experience during the first three months in America

Question No. 6. Tell me about your experience after the three months in America

Appendix G: Interview Questions

Interview Questions

3. Can you tell me about your experiences as a refugee from Congo living in united?
4. Tell me about your experience during the first three months in America
5. Tell me about your experience after the three months in America
6. What did you think would help make things better for you as a refugee at this point?