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Challenging Refugeeeness in Kakuma: South Sudanese Refugee  
Efforts to Contest Marginalisation and Vulnerability through  
Transnational Participation

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree. However, this thesis does incorporate data collected for my Master's degree in Applied Anthropology at San Jose State University obtained in August 2016.

Deirdre Patterson

## Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection between the socio-economic marginalisation of protracted South Sudanese refugees living in Kakuma refugee camp and their transnational relationships with family members living in the global north. In the attempt to fully understand the complexity of these 21<sup>st</sup> century transnational family networks, this thesis explores these relationships and their influence on refugee participants from two primary perspectives: 1) remittances senders living in both the UK and US, and 2) remittance recipients who have been living in Kakuma as protracted refugees.

Separated into four empirical chapters, this thesis explores the dynamics of these refugee transnational networks, the social and economic processes undergone to send/receive remittances, the ways in which refugees use remittances to combat their insecurity in the refugee camp, and finally the ways in which the participants in this study used remittances and the pursuit of education to challenge the marginalisation associated with their refugee status.

Throughout this thesis, I argue that the transnational networks developed by the participants in this study have enabled the members of the South Sudanese diaspora to develop a strong sense of community solidarity and a mutual sense of responsibility to all those they consider family. These influences have been utilised as tools for the refugee members of this diaspora to challenge their insecurity, vulnerability and socio-economic marginalisation in Kenya, a by-product of their refugee status, protracted state of exile, and dependency on the humanitarian aid system.

As explicitly stated in the conclusion, this thesis makes an original contribution to the theoretical development on the sustainability of transnational communities, the relationship between degree of integration and remittance sending patterns over time, the influence of remittances on refugee welfare, and the intersection between transnational participation and a population's "refugeeness".

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## Abbreviations

GBP	Great British Pound
HwSS	Hope with South Sudan
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
KSH	Kenyan Shilling
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
RAS	Refugee Affairs Secretariat
RCK	Refugee Consortium of Kenya
SPLA/M	Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement
SSWSD	South Sudanese Women's Skill Development
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States of America
USD	United States Dollar
WFP	World Food Programme

## Chapter 1: Introduction

With its central location to the majority of the South Sudanese community in Kakuma refugee camp in Northern Kenya, Franco's restaurant was an ideal meeting place when the heat outside was intolerable. Built, like most of the camp, out of sheets of metal and planks of wood, this forest-green painted oasis always had a reliable source of generator-fuelled electricity to operate their large TVs playing Ethiopian music videos and fans to keep the inside at a bearable temperature. It was an escape from the realities of Kakuma, both physical and mental, for refugees, aid workers, missionaries, and researchers alike.

This restaurant was where I originally sat down to talk with the majority of the community leaders that were willing to help me with my research project, always sharing a plate of injera, a traditional Ethiopian flatbread meal, and a cup of coffee. As we sat down, eating from the same source of sustenance, we discussed anything from international politics, differences in culture, relationships with family, and our aspirations for the future. My relationships with the gatekeepers of Kakuma's South Sudanese community became one of mutual interest, a desire to create change, and to give a voice to the members of their community who have been silenced for decades.

I met one man named Peter (a pseudonym) outside a Safaricom shop (Kenya's largest cell phone provider) within my first week of arrival. He immediately noticed my American accent, and as he towered over me smiling, showed me his American passport. He had recently got married in South Sudan and had been settling his new wife and extended family into Kakuma for the past several months. As much as he enjoyed spending time with his family, Kakuma was a difficult environment in which to become comfortable. Peter later told me that I reminded him that there was a world outside of the walls of the refugee camp, a reality that becomes easy to forget due to its geographical remoteness.

Peter, a former refugee who came to Kakuma when he was nine years old in 1992 and was resettled to the US in 2001 at the age of 18, strove to maintain an attachment to the refugee camp which raised him into the man he became. During the nine months that I was in Kakuma, Peter visited the camp twice, overlapping with my stay by three months. Peter's family in South Sudan had recently arranged his marriage with his new bride, and he decided to bring the majority of his family to Kakuma for their safety due to the rising insecurity in their home nation. During his second visit, he came to meet his new-born son who was born in the camp hospital and to further bond with his family. Peter was one of several participants in this study who had participated in a transnational marriage, further explored in a previous research project of mine (Patterson 2016), in which men who had been resettled to the US had partaken in arranged marriages with South Sudanese women as a means to reconnect with their traditional culture. These couples were typically separated between the US and East Africa for an average of five years due to the high cost of living in the US and the costly visa process that these men and women were required to undergo to permanently settle in the US.

Peter loved just sitting in Franco's, listening to the sound of the blaring music, and escaping from the heat outside. During the many hours that we sat in this restaurant talking about life, he would bring his nephews and niece to meet me, to talk to me about their relationships, their lives, and their dreams. Together we would try to brainstorm ideas to improve his community, to better support their needs, and to help facilitate the dreams of the young adults and children of his family to become doctors and lawyers. Peter strongly believed in the ability of this generation to make a significant change in the future of Kakuma and post-war South Sudan. He also believed that it was his duty as a family leader and the primary funder of his family's children's education, to assist these dreams and to help raise

the next generation of his family to become strong responsible leaders within the South Sudanese diaspora.

Peter was one of many active transnational participants and remittance senders represented in this study who fought to provide for their families, who fought their dependence on the refugee system almost three decades after their arrival in Kakuma refugee camp, and who fought the inadequacy associated with their family's "refugeeness." As an individual who both grew up within the refugee system and who supported family members still struggling with the same issues of marginalisation, dependency, deprivation, and insecurity, Peter understood the virtually inescapable trap that is Kakuma and the Kenyan refugee system. This system, designed to protect victims of persecution and conflict, has told tens of thousands of South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma to "just wait" until they can achieve a solution to their displacement. Decades of waiting later, the members of this population continue to live in a state of limbo in which their freedom of movement is highly restricted, they are denied legal access to employment, are incapable of voicing their political discontent, and are denied the ability to provide for their families outside of the refugee camp (Crisp 2002; Jacobsen 2016; Refugee Consortium of Kenya 2012; Turner 2010).

The legal definition of a refugee set out by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees states that a refugee is a person who flees across an international border because of a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for his or her political, social, or religious beliefs or activities" (Loescher 2001; Nyers 2006, United Nations General Assembly 1951: 1; UNHCR 1992). This definition was written in the aftermath of two World Wars in which much of the world was plagued by "mass expulsions, compulsory transfers of populations, mass exits, and arbitrary denial of return" (Loescher 2001:21). The 1951 definition is extremely broad and simplifies the quality of life and experiences of being a refugee, particularly for those living in protracted exile, contributing

to an ignorance and inability to develop effective policy solutions (Crisp 2002; Jansen 2013; Milner 2014; Zetter 1991).

In Kenya, as in much of Africa, the majority of refugees are protected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the 1951 Convention under ‘prima facie’ rather than ‘de jure’ status, i.e. there has been no formal, individual assessment of a right to asylum. The ‘prima facie’ status is used to justify encampment policies until a solution to their displacement can be found because it ensures that those living in camps are unable to benefit from the full rights enjoyed by formally recognised refugees (Hyndman and Nylund 1998). For the former South Sudanese refugees who have lived in Kakuma in the past, some have returned to South Sudan, others were able to integrate in urban centres in Kenya and Uganda, some were given university scholarships to study somewhere outside of Kakuma, some have managed to become economic migrants, and some were beneficiaries of UNHCR resettlement programmes to places like the US, Canada, or Australia (Chanoff 2005; Harris 2010; Johnson and Stoll 2008; Marlowe 2018; McKinnon 2008). These were the lucky ones, the fraction of this refugee population who were able to achieve a solution to their displacement. The majority of Kakuma’s South Sudanese community, however, continue to live inside the walls of this camp. Although some have only been inhabitants since 2013 as a result of South Sudan’s most recent civil war, many have lived in Kakuma since it was originally opened in 1992, and almost all are trapped in a protracted state of exile built on insecurity, violence, dependency, and marginalisation.

I have chosen to incorporate the concept of “refugeeness” into the title of this thesis, representing a central theme to its analysis, for one primary reason: despite the lack of an established theoretical definition, I have found this concept to be a reoccurring theme in both the experiences of the refugees represented in this thesis as well as other ethnographic studies written by the leading experts on refugee dependency and welfare.

Various experts on refugee studies have defined refugeeeness in a variety of ways beyond legal characterisations, including as an identity, a stereotype, a stigma, and a state of being, which has been imposed on protracted refugee populations in order to qualify for continued aid and protection (Harrell-Bond 1986; Jansen 2013; Malkki 1995; Mann 2012; Napier-Moore 2005; Zetter 1991).<sup>1</sup> According to these authors, refugeeeness is a by-product of the refugee system's inability to 1) find a durable solution for the millions of refugees currently living in a protracted state of exile (UNHCR 2015), and 2) a reluctance on the part of UNHCR to promote the agency and rights of refugees when their home and host nations are unwilling or incapable of doing so themselves. These authors suggest that refugeeeness is a state of helplessness and of dependency in which one is deprived of agency. Refugeeeness is, therefore, a "pathological ill[ness]" rooted in violence (Malkki 1995: 31). It is an "overwhelming sense of abjection," loss, marginalisation, and hardship (Mann 2012: 451). Finally, given the lack of agency, refugeeeness implies an inability of refugees to contribute to a solution to their displacement.

Although refugeeeness as a state of being was significant among the South Sudanese community of Kakuma, there were several resources that they did utilise in an attempt to combat their lack of agency within the Kenyan refugee system. The most significant of these resources were the social support systems provided by their family and community, both locally within the camp and transnationally elsewhere in the world. These social networks, when combined with other attachments, such as their strong faith in Christianity and the belief that education was the key to their future, facilitated a strong sense of motivation and belief that their lives and the lives of their children could be improved in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that all of these authors' assumptions made about the characteristics of being a refugee are derived from Sub-Saharan African refugee populations, the majority of whom were identified as protracted. The exception to this was Zetter (1991), who based his analysis on both refugees from Cyprus in addition to several African populations.

With this introductory background in mind, this thesis is an attempt to observe 1) the effect of Kenyan encampment policies on the welfare of Kakuma's South Sudanese community, and 2) the varied efforts that the members of this population have undertaken to transcend the social and economic limitations imposed on their lives through community solidarity and a mutual sense of responsibility on both a transnational and local scale. In order to gain an accurate depiction of the community and family influences on this population, transnational participants were specifically sought out for this research project, both remittance recipients currently living in Kakuma and remittance senders living in the US and the UK.

This thesis, therefore, examines the bonds between family and community, people who share similar histories, but who have different experiences within the refugee system and with the state of refugeeness. Many of Kakuma refugee camp's protracted South Sudanese population had been living as refugees elsewhere since the mid-1980s and arrived in Kakuma in 1992 as children having been torn away from their parents, culture, and any sense of future. Their children, many now adults, have lived their entire lives in Kakuma, a lifetime of decreasing food rations, inaccessible medical treatment, of living behind camp walls in cramped and insecure conditions; lives which have been defined by handouts by the UNHCR and aid organisations and by barriers erected by the Kenyan government. Members of this population continue to be victims of violence, starvation, and disease, and have very little choice or opportunity to pursue a more stable, independent, and secure future.

In contrast, their family members living in the US and UK, and elsewhere in the global north, represent hope and opportunity for the refugee family members that they strive to support. Many of the remittance senders represented in this study were former refugees, beneficiaries of refugee resettlement programmes, while others were economic migrants. Many of the members of this population are highly educated and have worked hard to

develop a means by which they can provide for their families in both their nation of residence as well as in their homeland of South Sudan, and in Kenya and Uganda where many of their relatives have sought refuge from a civil war. Within their transnational communities, they are leaders, mediators, and mentors. For their refugee family members currently living in camps like Kakuma, the maintenance of these relationships represents a means to hold onto the belief that they can break free from the trap of their refugeehood, and a tool that can be used to reduce and eventually eliminate their dependence on the refugee system.

In the context of these South Sudanese transnational communities, remittance senders have freedom of movement, the right to be legally employed, and the ability to make choices for the betterment of themselves and their families without being subjected to restrictive policies designed to “control and contain” (Turner 2010). These two sides of the same diaspora, made up of family members committed towards each other’s welfare, represent two extremes of a population displaced by war and turmoil for multiple generations: those who were able to move on from their traumatic past and those who continue to be victims.

The following research questions were designed to explore the nature of these refugee transnational relationships and the extent to which these social networks enable Kakuma’s South Sudanese population to combat their refugeehood:

1. Does the exchange of economic resources help separated South Sudanese family members build transnational communities?
2. What do both remittance senders and recipients hope to achieve through the transfer of transnational remittances?
3. Do remittances help refugee recipients and their surrounding community members challenge insecurity within the refugee camp?
4. How do these transnational relationships influence research participants’ perception of future opportunities?

It is important to note that these research questions have been modified since the beginning of this project in order to reflect the themes that had emerged in the data. Due to

my previous research on South Sudanese transnational communities, I knew that members of this refugee diaspora maintained a strong attachment to Kakuma, had developed strong transnational communities, and were genuinely committed to the welfare advancement of their refugee family members living in Kenya and Uganda. However, I had underestimated the restrictive impact that the refugee system had on the members of this population who continue to live inside a refugee camp. I had expected to see a significant influence of increased livelihood development for the remittance recipients of Kakuma's South Sudanese population, an assumption that did not reflect the reality experienced by the participants in this study. Instead, the men and women represented in this thesis expressed experiences of inescapable insecurity, which was marginally alleviated by the remittances sent by their family abroad who were committed to their welfare.

Since insecurity was a primary theme expressed by virtually all of my participants in Kakuma, I chose to redesign somewhat these research questions to reflect the standard of living experienced by these men and women, in addition to examining how and why they managed their transnational relationships. I found that in general, these transnational relationships and the remittances introduced into the South Sudanese population of Kakuma acted as a coping mechanism in which refugee participants were able to survive their regular states of insecurity in addition to motivating them that life could one day be better.

### 1.1 Kakuma Refugee Camp

Kakuma refugee camp lies at the heart of South Sudan's protracted refugee population and has been the epicentre from which South Sudanese refugees have been resettled all over the world, making a significant contribution to the diaspora and their

transnational activities. Kakuma is a remote camp in the arid desert of north-west Kenya, lying within 100 km of the South Sudan-Kenya border.

Figure 1.1 Map of Kenya and Location of Kakuma Refugee Camp



As of 2018, this camp was host to approximately 147,000 refugees from several East and Central African nations including South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burundi (UNHCR 2018a). Originally established in 1992 in response to the tens of thousands of southern Sudanese refugee children fleeing over the Kenyan border due to the increasing level of insecurity in their home nation of southern Sudan and the collapse of the Ethiopian state, their previous nation of refuge, in 1991 (Chanoff 2005; Jansen 2013; Verdirame 1999), Kakuma is now a bustling city-size settlement, home to a wide variety of economic markets and community organisations (Jansen 2018). The majority of the camp's population live in a protracted situation, having

been classified as refugees for over five years without the attainment of a durable solution outlined by the UNHCR.

Figure 1.2 Map of Kakuma Refugee Camp



Kakuma refugee camp has expanded significantly since its opening in 1992 and is currently divided into four sub camps, in addition to one experimental settlement called Kalobeyei, approximately 30 km north of the rest of the camp, attempting to integrate refugee communities with the local Kenyan population (Betts et al. 2018a).<sup>2</sup> With the exception of

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<sup>2</sup> Kalobeyei was originally opened in 2015 in collaboration between the UNHCR and the local government of Turkana county, where Kakuma refugee camp is located (Betts et al. 2018a). This experimental settlement was expected to promote self-reliance among refugees and economic growth in the region; however, according Betts et al. (2018a), management of this settlement continues to be reliant on emergency services due to the unanticipated influx of newly arrived South Sudanese refugees. It is important to note that unlike Kalobeyei, Kakuma refugee camp is not a legal residence of the local population, although many locals do have access to educational and medical services available in the camp.

seven participants who lived in Kakuma 4, the majority of the remittance recipients represented in this study had lived in Kakuma since the 1990s and were therefore based throughout Kakuma 1 at the time of their participation this study.

The environment of Kakuma is extreme, with temperatures regularly reaching 30 to 40 degrees Celsius year-round. Water, although provided to refugees for free by the UNHCR, must be carried in heavy jerry cans over long distances. The air is dry and prone to dust storms. Furthermore, Kakuma lies on a flood plain, which means that many neighbourhoods are under water for three or four months out of the year.<sup>3</sup> As a consequence of this environment, coupled with a lack of infrastructure for sanitation, health is a daily concern for many refugee families living in the camp. Malaria and cholera are commonplace, and although the UNHCR provides healthcare services, their resources are extremely limited. Kakuma-town, neighbouring the camp, has several clinics and pharmacies that are adequately equipped to treat all common ailments in the region; however, these services are often inaccessible to refugees due to their cost.

Owing to the presence of several charity organisations within Kakuma, refugees have access to a wide variety of education and livelihood development resources, training participants to not only think creatively, but also to acquire skills to support their families. However, in reality, due to strict policies that severely limit the rights of refugees within Kenya, the individuals benefiting from these services are unable to gain legal employment, legally own a business, or live and work outside of the camp.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence of these

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<sup>3</sup> During the height of the rainy season, much of the camp was inaccessible by motorcycle taxis, stalling the progress of this research project. For refugees, as the camp was their only legal residence, flooding just became a part of daily life in which the participants in this research study were forced to manage. During this period, it was not uncommon for mud houses to collapse from the rainfall, forcing community members to work together to rebuild what they could.

<sup>4</sup> While rights such as employment, business ownership, and freedom of movement are restricted by Kenyan refugee policies, many refugees continue to work, start businesses, and live outside the camp. This means that they are often harassed by the police, earn a fraction of what Kenyan nationals would for the same job, and risk detainment and possible deportation to their home nation.

limitations on refugee life, there is often a gap between the camp inhabitants and aid organisations' aspirations and their actual ability to significantly change the conditions of their exile (see Chapters 2, 7, and 8 for further discussion). After over twenty-five years of living in the camp at the time the data for this thesis was collected in Kakuma, often the only reliable resource a refugee might have is the bond between their family and other community members, specifically those who live in the camp, in their homeland, and elsewhere in the world.

Since 1992 the South Sudanese community has represented at least half of the refugee population of Kakuma.<sup>5</sup> The geographic region now recognised as South Sudan has been in an almost continuous state of civil war or civil unrest since the 1950s, continuing after its independence from Sudan in 2011 (see Chapter 2 section 2.1 for a full discussion). Kakuma's South Sudanese population represents two main waves of refuge. The original wave became refugees when they fled to Ethiopia in the 1980s and were forced to return home in 1991 after the collapse of the Ethiopian state under the Mengistu regime, and then fled to Kenya in 1992. The second wave of refugees began to arrive in 2013 and 2014 after civil war once more broke out in the newly independent state. The South Sudanese population within Kakuma, approximately 90,000 people as of 2018, can be separated into three distinct communities: the Dinka, the Nuer, and the Equatorians (UNHCR 2018a).<sup>6</sup> Over the past few decades each of these communities have developed community organisations, a variety of religious institutions, educational programmes, and a basic market economy.

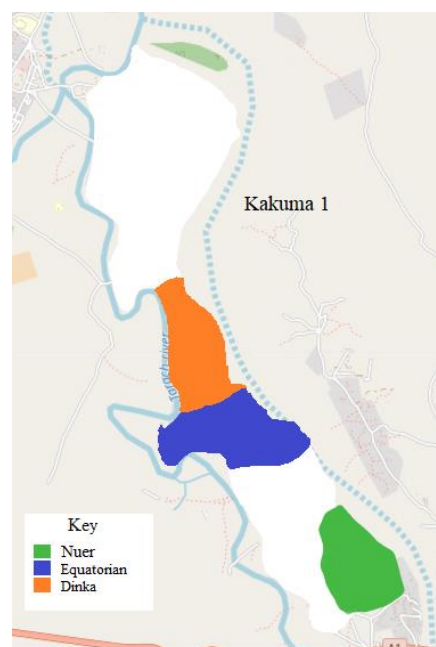
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<sup>5</sup> Other nationalities represented in the camp population during my time in Kakuma between 2017 and 2018 included Somalian, Ethiopian, Congolese, Burundians, Sudanese, Rwandans, Eritreans, and Ugandans (UNHCR 2018a).

<sup>6</sup> The Dinka and Nuer make up the majority of the population of South Sudan. The Equatorians, from Western, Central, and Eastern Equatoria in southern South Sudan, make up several small tribes but share similar cultural values and traditions when compared to the Dinka and Nuer. It is important to note that these ethnic groups are very broad generalisations; however, they were also the primary identifiers used by the UNHCR and other aid organisations to organise camp residents after their nationality.

Kakuma's most long-staying South Sudanese inhabitants primarily lived in subcamp Kakuma 1. I found that most of my participants lived in close proximity to their extended family members, those they identified as clan members, and other community members with whom they identified as being 'like family'.<sup>7</sup> These relationships of both family and 'like family' were contained within the three groups and affiliated neighbourhoods indicated in Figure 1.3. I found that there was also a distinctive effort by the UNHCR to segregate members of different tribes/region of origin, in particular between the Dinka and the Nuer. According to several of my participants, due to the war crimes being committed by both tribes in South Sudan during by time in Kakuma, it was dangerous for either a Dinka or Nuer to travel into or through the neighbourhood of the other. Figure 1.3 is a general representation (not to scale) of my participants' neighbourhoods identified based on their tribal affiliation or region from which they come in South Sudan.

Figure 1.3 Map of Kakuma 1 and its Segregated South Sudanese Neighbourhoods



<sup>7</sup> I found that for the most part only the community leaders represented in this study, otherwise referred to as gatekeepers, regularly socialised with people outside their tribe/region of origin when compared to my other participants. In these cases, these community leaders attempted to pool together resources from across the camp and through internationally established social networks in the effort to improve their community's welfare and standard of living.

## 1.2 South Sudanese Transnational Participation

A significant portion of Kakuma's South Sudanese community have family members who have been resettled as refugees to places like the US, Canada, and Australia. Many of these South Sudanese refugees from Kakuma were resettled in the early 2000s, a population that is often described in the media as the Lost Boys of South Sudan. Other members of the South Sudanese transnational community settled in these and other countries as students and economic migrants, often fortunate enough to escape the fate of refuge and civil unrest that many of their family members continue to experience. Although they might live in separate regions of the world, these family members regularly communicate and transfer financial resources recognised as remittances.

These transnational relationships are often built on mutual responsibility and dependency. Family members living in the global north are expected to financially provide for their community who live in the camp and elsewhere in East Africa. In exchange they are empowered to be active leaders in their family, to maintain a connection to their heritage, and to ensure that their family is taken care of and protected in the same way that they were as children.

As suggested by both the literature on South Sudanese transnational communities as well as my participants' insights, within South Sudanese culture, both social (in the form of emotional concern) and economic support are considered to be a duty for the fortunate members of the family and a right of the less fortunate (Grabska 2010; Johnson and Stoll 2008; Lim 2009; Shandy 2007). As long as these responsibilities are upheld to the best of the individual's ability, they are entitled to support from other family members. This system of mutual support allows the members of these transnational communities to maintain strong connections to one another despite the vast distances between them.

This community represents a unique link between those defined by their refugeeeness within the Kenyan refugee system, experienced as dependency, marginalisation, and the deprivation of agency, with family and community members who share their history and culture but who also represent freedom and future opportunities. Their relationships bridge the gap between “no solution in sight” to a potential “durable solution” to the global refugee crisis through transnational participation (Crisp 2002; Van Hear 2014). Building on Van Hear’s (2014) argument that refugee transnational diasporas could be a potential durable solution for protracted displacement, this thesis is an exploration of his theory’s practicality when applied to a refugee diaspora with a strong cultural sense of commitment and responsibility to family.

Transnational practices have a profound impact on refugee identity and agency. Remittance senders believe in and strive for the active personal development of their refugee family based on the assumption that the remittance recipients will eventually become active and responsible leaders within their families. Simultaneously, remittance recipients living in Kakuma are able to develop and maintain a sense of personal development and potential for hope and opportunity through a means which is connected to both their culture and family.

I was first introduced to members of the South Sudanese diaspora in 2015 while examining the common occurrence of transnational marriages, very similar to Peter’s described above, among resettled South Sudanese refugees living in the US. All of the men that I interviewed in California identified as members of the Lost Boys of Sudan population, a name that they acquired as children in the late 1980s and early 1990s and had become ingrained as part of their identity, their history, and the narrative of their community. During that year-long research project, I found that this community made extraordinary efforts to reconnect with their family and the culture that they lost as children, and when financially stable enough, engaged in arranged marriages with South Sudanese women living across East

Africa. These efforts to find their family and to reconnect with their history and their identity, was the foundation of these transnational communities.

During this previous research project, I learned a lot about why members of these communities send money and maintain a deep bond with their family living throughout South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda at various stages of displacement and as citizens of a nation at war with itself. However, my knowledge was limited to only a portion of these transnational communities. I found that refugee transnational communities were a commonly researched topic, specifically from the perspective of the remittance senders living in developed nations, while few studies focused on the effect that the remittances had on refugee recipients living in urban centres outside of refugee camps, and even less on actual camp residents.

Despite the awareness of remittances being sent to refugee population in camps, and the large size and protracted state of this particular refugee community, many of whom have family members living abroad, there has been very little research conducted on the effect that remittances have on the South Sudanese population living within Kakuma refugee camp. This thesis is an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature on protracted refugee populations, particularly refugees engaged in transnational communities and the transfers of economic remittances from the global north to a refugee camp.

### 1.3 Review of Chapters

This thesis explores South Sudanese cultural values, the experiences of South Sudanese refugee life, and finally the implications of refugee transnational participation. Similar to other transnational communities, these refugee social networks transcend international borders and are based on relationships of mutual respect, responsibility, and commitment. However, due to the extreme poverty in which members of these communities live, coupled with their experiences of trauma, marginalisation, and restricted migration

opportunities, I ask whether these refugee transnational communities are orientated more towards daily survival rather than economic advancement.

Chapter 2, entitled Making of a Refugee, explores the modern history of South Sudan, the UNHCR's general refugee policies and their implications in Kenya, and finally, the experiences of South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma since 1992. Since the colonial period and continuing until independence from Sudan in 2011, the people of South Sudan (formerly southern Sudan) have suffered underdevelopment, political underrepresentation, religious oppression, and persecution based on their racial and tribal allegiances (Ahmed 2010; Collins 2008; Deng 2015; Johnson, D.H. 2016; Jok 2001; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Young 2017). Unfortunately, political oppression and civil unrest still continue today, contributing to one of the world's largest protracted refugee situations. Under the protection of the UNHCR, South Sudanese refugees living in Kenya are subjected to numerous restrictions on their lives enforced by the Kenyan government. Although the UNHCR aims to achieve one of the three durable solutions (repatriation, integration, or resettlement) outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, due to a lack of resources, weak international support, and ongoing conflict, these policy solutions are becoming increasingly unattainable.

Chapter 3, Transnational Communities and Practices, examines the theory of transnational practices, the implications of remittance transfers, and finally the presence and significance of refugee transnational communities. Broadly defined, transnationalism refers to the economic, social, and political community networks that transcend international borders. Transnational relationships are most commonly formed on a kinship level, but are more importantly based on relationships of mutual trust and responsibility. As explored in-depth in Chapter 3, the transfer of financial remittances between a migrant and their community members living in poverty can facilitate the maintenance of transnational communities. Migrants often experience a sense of duty to provide for their family members

in the homeland, and consequently experience significant stress if they are unable to do so (Hammond 2011; Ikuomola 2015; Johnson and Stoll 2008, 2013; Lindley 2010; Martone et al. 2001; Trapp 2013). In refugee transnational communities, community members not only face the issues of extreme poverty but also of war, displacement, and trauma. This chapter considers how transnational community members are commonly dispersed between the homeland, several countries of first asylum, and a variety of resettlement nations and how members of these communities often deal with ongoing war, issues of family reunification, and harassment by host-nation government institutions.

Chapter 4, *Methods, Ethics, and Issues Encountered in the Field*, explores the conceptualisation of the anthropological field in fieldwork, the methods utilised for data collection and analysis, my positionality as a researcher, the demographics of the population represented in this study, and finally the issues faced during data collection. As demonstrated by this chapter, due to the complexity of South Sudanese migration patterns, and of the vulnerability experienced by the refugees presented in this study, these methods were multilateral, and often messy, a reflection of the familial relationships and social networks demonstrated throughout the rest of this thesis.

The first fieldwork-based chapter, Chapter 5, entitled *Foundations of a Transnational Community*, explores the nature of the relationships between remittance senders living in the global north and remittance recipients living as refugees in Kakuma. This includes the means by which participants communicated with family members abroad, and their notions of family and responsibility informed through a combination of cultural values and experiences of displacement/migration. In this chapter, I also discuss the common factors found in what I identified as failed or failing transnational relationships, typically those based solely on the sending of money rather than a commitment towards the welfare of other family members.

Chapter 6, *Changing Hands: Remittance Transfers and Investment in Economic and Social Capital*, investigates the role that remittances play in the facilitation and maintenance of these transnational relationships. Since the process of remittance transfers influences two distinct groups, the senders and the recipients, this chapter observes the social and emotional role of these activities from both perspectives. Remittance senders discuss how they navigate their sense of responsibility to provide for the less fortunate members of their family with the various financial limitations that they face while living in the US or the UK. Similarly, I explore the ways in which remittance recipients were expected to share their transnational resources with their friends and neighbours in Kakuma, a social expectation to combat their continuous states of insecurity, while simultaneously being responsible for managing their remittances responsibly.

Chapter 7, *Surviving Daily Crisis Situations through Transnational Resources*, explores the most common forms of insecurity experienced by Kakuma's South Sudanese community, and the ways in which the participants in this study utilised remittances sent from family abroad to combat this insecurity. This chapter focuses on the nature of the community's refugeeness, providing an ethnographic account of their social and economic marginalisation.

In Chapter 8, entitled *Challenging Refugeeness through the Pursuit of Education*, I examine the perceptions held by both remittance senders and recipients that education would contribute to the economic and social advancement of their family as a whole. At the cost of their immediate security through the deprivation of basic resources like food and medicine, members of this community went through tremendous efforts to give their children hope for a future. In this chapter, I argue that due to the young adults' relationships with their extended family living in the global north, education was perceived by the transnational participants of Kakuma to be the only solution to their status as refugees.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by summarising the arguments made in the previous empirical chapters and reflecting on the wider significance of transnational participation among protracted refugee communities currently living inside camps. This chapter also directly summarises how this thesis makes a valuable and original contribution to anthropological knowledge and theory, and makes suggestions for further research.

In this way, this thesis is designed to explore the influence of South Sudanese transnational social and financial networks within the refugee system by providing a detailed account of this refugee population's strategies to maintain their transnational family networks and how these networks are utilised as a means to cope with their protracted states of refugeeness. Throughout this thesis, I argue that the South Sudanese refugee transnational participants of Kakuma and their family members abroad have developed a strong sense of community solidarity and a mutual sense of responsibility as a method to transcend the continuous states of insecurity, vulnerability, and socio-economic marginalisation placed on their lives due to their refugee status.

## Chapter 2: Making of a Refugee

The conditions which have led to the initial and continued exile of Kakuma's South Sudanese community are complicated, arguably incorporating generations of policy interventions, government sanctioned genocidal violence, and oppression in the form of social and economic marginalisation. This chapter will provide an overview of the history of South Sudan that has resulted in the South Sudanese refugee population in Kakuma and the ongoing situation in South Sudan that prevents their return and influences the nature of their transnational communities.

Section 2.1, History of Conflict in South Sudan, is a condensed historical review of South Sudan, previously the southern part of a united Sudan, from Sudan's independence to South Sudan's current civil war. The influence that three consecutive civil wars within this region (1955-1972, 1983-2005, 2013-present) have had on the South Sudanese diaspora considered in this thesis has been tremendous. Section 2.2, Defining Refugees and Policy Solutions, examines the structure of the current refugee system and the UNHCR's policy solutions and methods of classification. More importantly, this section critically questions the treatment of refugees, particularly in protracted situations in which the UNHCR has been incapable of achieving one of its three durable solutions for at least five years. Finally, section 2.3 entitled The Lost Boys of Sudan and Kakuma, is both a historical examination of the specific population represented in this study as well as a brief overview of conditions within Kakuma refugee camp.

### 2.1 History of Conflict in South Sudan

Kakuma's South Sudanese population's history is rooted in decades of political and economic marginalisation, influenced by their ethnicity, their religious affiliation, their

geographic remoteness, as well as their attachment to their traditional culture. In the wake of Sudan becoming independent from Great Britain in 1956, the people represented in this study, and their ancestors, were presented as outsiders. They were at best ignored by their national government, and at worst portrayed as potential enemies of the state. This section provides an overview of the social and political historical context which contributed to the original displacement of the population examined in this thesis as well as their continued exile. It describes the circumstances which contributed to the creation of this refugee population and the current political circumstances in the now independent state of South Sudan which prevent repatriation for the majority of South Sudanese refugees living in Kakuma.

Between the years of 1956 (when Sudan gained independence from Great Britain) and 2011, much of Sudan's civil unrest can be traced to ethnic and religious tensions rooted in the geographical divide between those who identified as Arab and Muslim in the north, and those in the south who identified as ethnically African and non-Muslim (Ahmed 2010; Jok 2001; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Young 2017). Despite the existence of approximately 400 ethnic groups in Sudan before 2011, one-third of whom did not practice Islam, "there has always been a persistent and pervasive assumption that Sudan was an Arab nation all of whose citizens would eventually adopt Arab culture, language, and religion" (Collins 2008: 137). These differences in the perception of cultural identity have justified generations' worth of discrimination, marginalisation, and gross human rights violations (Deng 2015).

From the perspective of the southern Sudanese, Islam and Arabs are synonymous with the slave trade, a practice that was continued during the colonial period and after the independence of the Sudanese state (Jok 2001; Natsios 2012; Ryle 2011; Viorst 1995). Due to these perceived differences in culture and identity, in addition to centuries worth of

exploitation, mutual distrust and hatred have been persistent features of the relationship between the Sudanese of the north and south.

LeRiche and Arnold (2012) suggest that colonial efforts of economic development were deterred from the south due to natural geographic barriers, a policy that significantly contributed to the disproportionate underdevelopment in the south, and eventual underrepresentation of southerners in the government of an independent Sudan.<sup>8</sup> British colonialists, therefore, employed a “Southern Policy” in the south, a system of "benign neglect," aimed at isolating contact between the north and south with the goal of stopping the slave trade, isolating ethnic tensions, and containing the expansion of Islam (Natsios 2012; Willis 2011).

Several of the colonial practices established by the British and Egyptians were continued after the establishment of an independent Sudanese government, including most of the development and infrastructure investment being centred around the Arab Triangle (see Figure 2.1) and the development of an Arab elite (LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Natsios 2012; Young 2017).<sup>9</sup> Several historians have argued that while the northern population were provided with a Western education and trained to be indigenous civil servants, the southern Sudanese remained developmentally isolated and were provided with extremely limited education and health services by underfunded Christian missionaries (Deng 2015; Johnson, D.H. 2016; Willis 2011).

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<sup>8</sup> The geographic barriers surrounding southern Sudan include the Nuba Mountains to the north, arid deserts to the northwest, dense tropical forests to the west and south west, and the foothills of Abyssinia to the east (LeRiche and Arnold 2012).

<sup>9</sup> The Arab Triangle is a region in northern Sudan centered on the national capital Khartoum and is marked by Port Sudan, Dongola, and Sennar.

Figure 2.1 The Arab Triangle



This figure is a geographical representation of the Arab Triangle, which several authors (LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Natsios 2012; Young 2017) argue was the centre of Sudan's development, both under the colonial rule of the British and Egyptians as well as after the independence of Sudan (1956-2011).

On the eve of independence, the leaders of southern Sudan urged the delay of state independence and continued colonial guidance until they were given a comparative level of education and economic development fearing that they would be unrepresented in the newly formed government (Jok 2001). These fears were proved justified as the first national administration established in 1956 contained 800 northerners and only eight southerners (Natsios 2012). The under-representation of the southern Sudanese people, in addition to their systematic ethnic and religious marginalisation, was the core causation of the two civil wars (1955-1972 and 1983-2005) fought between the north and south.

From 1955 to 1972 a series of revolts and uprisings occurred throughout the southern region, a conflict known as the Anyanya revolts.<sup>10</sup> Angered by the lack of equal representation in what many perceived as a biased national administration, southerners called for secession (Jok 2001). Due to the lack of basic resources, military training, or clear leadership, these uprisings had little success against the Sudanese national army (Johnson, D.H. 2016). By 1964, although these civilian militias totalled approximately 5000 troops and succeeded in causing increasing insecurity in the south and in harassing northern representatives stationed in the region, they posed little threat to the national government (Natsios 2012). Finally, a peace treaty, known as the Addis Ababa Agreement, was signed in 1972 between Sudanese President Ja'afar Numayri and southern Sudanese representatives.<sup>11</sup> This peace agreement declared a unilateral cease-fire and dictated that the army in the southern command would be represented equally by northerners and southerners (Collins 2008; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Natsios 2012). One of the causes for the second civil war (1983-2005) and the formation of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) was the failure of the parties representing the northern and southern regions of Sudan to follow this treaty.

By 1978, Numayri enacted "Republican Order Number One" which was designed to further limit the powers and abilities of the southern administrative representatives (Natsios 2012). In June of 1983, the Addis Ababa Agreement was completely abandoned when the President divided the south into three distinct regions with independent capitals as a means to undermine southern unity (LeRiche and Arnold 2012). The marginalisation of the southern non-Arab and primarily Christian population was intensified when Numayri declared Shari'a (Islamic) law nationwide and positioned himself as both the political and religious leader of

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<sup>10</sup> Anyanya comes from the Madi term "inya nya," which translates to "snake poison" and the Moru term "manya nya" translating to "solider ant" (Natsios 2012: 44).

<sup>11</sup> Also spelled Nimeiri.

Sudan (Johnson, D.H. 2016). These policies were based on the perception that “Arabism has a superior rank to Africanism ... and Islam is not just a religious faith, but also a vehicle for their racial promotion” (Jok 2001: 77). Between 1986 and 1988, in response to the escalating insecurity in southern Sudan, the government under the authority of Sudanese Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi began attacking Dinka civilian communities (Chanoff 2005; Hutchinson 2001; LeRiche and Arnold 2012). According to Natsios (2012:176),

they would attack a Dinka village at dawn, kill all the adult males who could not escape, rape the women, and enslave the children. The village would be burned, wells stuffed with dead Dinka males, schools and clinics destroyed, and the huge herds of cattle rounded up as loot.

John Garang, a native Dinka and former officer in the Sudanese national army, led the second civil war through the creation and leadership of the SPLA/M, both a militia and political party, founded in 1983 on the aspirations of a “new Sudan of inclusivity” (LeRiche and Arnold 2012: 17). Unlike the Anyanya revolts, the SPLA was organised under a central leadership, which contributed significantly to its success. Garang fought for the belief that “Sudan could only exist as a multi-ethnic, secular state and not as an Arab Islamist state given its multi-ethnic, racial, and religious composition” (Natsios 2012: 67). The SPLM focused many of its resources on tackling the underdevelopment of the southern region of Sudan, establishing a progressive movement that aimed to provide jobs, build the economy, and develop a fair legal and political system (Johnson, D.H. 2016). Due to their guerrilla tactics, the SPLA was labeled as a terrorist group, which halted all peace talks until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 2005 that was organised and led by the UK, the US, and Norway.

In 1991 the SPLA/M had begun to split into factions due to significant differences in political ideologies between the leaders of the party. Young (2003) argues that under Garang’s leadership the party’s objectives did not reflect the desires and needs of the general population of southern Sudan or other leaders of the party. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1991, army

commanders Riek Machar, Lam Akol, and Gordon Kong launched a coup against Garang in the form of the “Naiser Declaration” arguing that the party was Dinka-dominated and that Garang was a megalomaniac (Akol 1991; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Young 2003). The leaders argued that “there can be no way for fundamental changes and democratisation of the movement as long as Garang retains leadership” (Akol 1991: 3). This divide between the leaders and followers of the SPLA/M led to an internal war between the Dinka and Nuer, contributing to roughly 300,000 deaths (Hutchinson 2001; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Young 2003). Between 1991 and 2005, a period which Garang referred to as the “Dark Years,” fighting within the SPLA/M and against the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continued until all sides reached a virtual stalemate and negotiations under the CPA began.

The CPA was essentially a renegotiation of the failed Addis Ababa Agreement and called for a complete ceasefire and equal representation of the south in the national government as a unified Sudan, in addition to stipulating a vote for independence after six years, a clause known as the Southern Referendum (Johnson, D.H. 2016; LeRiche and Arnold 2012). In July of 2005, only seven months after signing the peace agreement ending a 22-year war and three weeks after he was elected into office as the first southern Vice President of Sudan, Garang was killed in a helicopter crash by causes that were never determined (Johnson, H. 2016; Natsios 2012). After the death of their leader, riots began to take place in the streets of Sudan’s capital city of Khartoum led by angry southerners, setting the tone between the SPLM and the National Congress Party (NCP) representing the Arab north as many abandoned Garang’s vision of a New Sudan (Grawert 2010; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Young 2005). The entire interim period of the CPA (2005-2011) was focused on undermining the SPLM’s policies and leadership by the NCP, and achieving true southern self-determination with a Southern Referendum by the SPLM.

After Garang's death in 2005, Salva Kiir, Garang's second-in-command and a veteran of the second civil war, became the interim leader of the SPLA/M and was later elected president of South Sudan (Rolandsen 2015). His objective was to create and maintain a functioning government in the south, and ensure that the guidelines of the CPA were met. Several disagreements between the government in Khartoum and the SPLM prevented the enactment of these guidelines, including but not limited to disputed border regions, the property rights to several oil fields, equal representation of the south, the disbandment of all militias, and the establishment of Joint Integrated Units (Johnson, D.H. 2016; Johnson, H. 2016). Several authors (Deng 2015; Johnson, D.H. 2016; Johnson, H. 2016; Natsios 2012) have attributed the failure to implement the primary guidelines of the CPA to both the SPLM and the Sudanese government in Khartoum led by the NCP. It has been suggested that many members of the SPLM never wanted a unified Sudan, that the national government never intended to adhere to the CPA, and that the history of conflict and oppression in Sudan was too significant to establish peace between the north and the south within a single state.

However, between 2005 and 2011 in preparation for an independent government of South Sudan, leaders of the SPLM did manage to establish several national institutions aiding in the development of an independent nation. These institutions included the formation of government ministries and anti-corruption measures in the administration (Deng 2015). They also invested in the stability of the region by mediating a peace treaty between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government. In January 2011 and in adherence to the Southern Referendum of the CPA, 98.8 percent of the population of southern Sudan voted for secession and independence from Sudan (Johnson, H. 2016). Salva Kiir, who continued to be the leader of the SPLA/M, became the first president of South Sudan.

Although the process of independence was aided by the United Nations (UN), the UK, the US, and Norway, the constitution of the new state of South Sudan centred political

power on the executive branch giving significant authority to the president (Rolandsen 2015). According to LeRiche and Arnold (2012), the president of South Sudan has the power to appoint any chairperson of the national commission, to remove ministers without the consent of a national assembly, and to appoint new members of the National Legislative Assembly and the Council of States.<sup>12</sup> This imbalance of power within the South Sudanese national government was publicly criticised by the leaders of the government in opposition to Kiir.

Between 2011 and 2013, presidential candidates Riek Machar, the Vice President at the time, and Rebecca Nyandeng, Garang's widow, engaged in public debates criticising corruption within SPLA/M and the 'Dinka-Dominance' in the national government, and began to call for constitutional reform (Johnson, D.H. 2016; Rolandsen 2015: 170). In July of 2013, President Kiir, a Dinka, began to dissolve his cabinet and replace its members with people who were ethnically Dinka and supported his ideology (Johnson, H. 2016; De Waal 2014). These dismissals included Riek Machar, Kiir's primary opponent in the next election scheduled to take place in 2015. According to Douglas H. Johnson (2016: 184), after the dismantling of his cabinet and dismissal of several senior party leaders, "public debate on political issues was suppressed by the security service harassing journalists and confiscating newspapers." The same evening of these dismissals there was a "shoot-out" between the Dinka and Nuer members of the presidential guard, identified by Kiir as an attempted coup by Machar and fringe members of the SPLA.

By December of 2013, South Sudan had entered its third civil war in the last century; this time fought between factions of the SPLM, drawn along ethnic lines between the Dinka led by Kiir and the Nuer led by Machar (De Waal 2014; Rolandsen 2015; Zifcak 2015). This conflict is argued to be "produced by the convergence of parallel conflicts" that had

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<sup>12</sup> Alex De Waal (2014: 348) argues that the government of South Sudan was developed to be a kleptocracy in which the "national leaders use every opportunity to steal national funds" using militarised threat of force as an "instrument of bargaining."

developed through various factions in the government and the national army since the early 1990s (Johnson, D.H. 2016: 183; LeRiche and Arnold 2012). According to Douglas H. Johnson (2016), Garang was the architect of the “New Sudan platform,” which had won the hearts of the people and inspired them to dream that the southern region of Sudan could one day be free from political oppression. Without Garang’s leadership, his dream of a reformed and reconstructed nation free from ethnic tensions had collapsed. The SPLM under the leadership of Kiir began to deteriorate due to “his lack of political skills...his failure to create accountability within either the party or the army, his inability to curb corruption or to manage the factions of the government” (Johnson, D.H. 2016: 183).

The failure of the independent state of South Sudan has been the result of several political errors, the deep division within the nation based on tribal affiliation, and the failure of the international community to stop genocidal violence. Zifcak (2015) suggests that both sides of the conflict are responsible for crimes against humanity contributing to the displacement of millions of people and the death of countless more. The current civil war in South Sudan is a fallout between the members of the nation’s leading political party amplified by the lack of cohesion in the national army and contributed to by a “weak patrimonial state, a wartime mentality, and a lack of peaceful mechanisms for political contestation and transition” (Rolandsen 2015: 164-165). As a result of the division of South Sudan based on tribal lines and political affiliation, hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese refugees have fled to or have continued to live in refugee camps like Kakuma.

The history of the southern region of the original Sudan and present South Sudan is one that is filled with violence, oppression, and bloodshed. Virtually every generation since “independence” in 1956 has witnessed some conflict, and hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese continue to live in exile due to escalating insecurity in their homeland. The primary hurdle that the nation as a whole must overcome is a culture of warfare in which members of

different ethnic communities are perceived as enemies, in which all military-aged men are potential insurgents, and in which political power is used as a means to oppress the masses. As South Sudan continues its internal war, refugees like the inhabitants of Kakuma remain in a protracted state of exile, citizens of no nation, and unable to obtain a solution to their displacement.

## 2.2 Defining Refugees and Policy Solutions

Accompanying their cultural and national identity, the South Sudanese refugees considered in this thesis are also defined, at least within the refugee and humanitarian aid system, by their refugee status and the social, economic, and political assumptions that are attached to it. Particularly in the context of protracted refugees who have been forced to live for decades inside of an enclosed camp, with limited civil, political, and economic rights, their lived experiences are influenced by policies designed to control and contain these populations until a solution to their displacement can be achieved. Refugee policies, designed to provide refugees with the basic resources for survival, also have profound limitations on the quality of life for the people represented in this study. This section is an overview of the UNHCR, its durable solutions for all refugee situations, as well as the primary criticisms on the refugee system highlighting its limitations.

The original Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees was developed in 1921 by the League of Nations in reaction to the inconsistent international response to the “mass expulsions, compulsory transfers of populations, mass exits, and arbitrary denial of return” that plagued most of Europe after the First World War (Loescher 2001: 21). In the aftermath of the Second World War, the UN created the UNHCR as an institution whose purpose was to uphold the internationally recognised laws established in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The Convention defines a refugee as someone

who flees across an international border because of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for his or her political, social, or religious beliefs and activities” (Loescher 2001; United Nations General Assembly 1951: 1; UNHCR 1992). It ensures that refugees can cross international borders and that they are provided with food, medical care, protection, and shelter, until the point at which they can be repatriated, integrated into their host country, or offered third-country resettlement.

Refugees who claim asylum in Africa are entitled to refugee status under both the UN 1951 Convention definition and the Organisation of African Unity’s (OAU) Convention of 1969 written in response to African refugees displaced by “racism, colonialism, and apartheid” (Edwards 2006: 209). It has been suggested that the 1951 Convention is eurocentric and its definition of a refugee “neither reflect[s] the African experience nor adequately encompasses the range of refugees to whom African governments wish to extend protection” (Edwards 2006: 209; Napier-Moore 2005). The OAU drafted the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa of 1969 in response to what many political leaders in the OAU argued were insufficient guidelines to the 1951 Convention regarding what defines a refugee because the latter Convention was written in response to specific conditions in Europe following the Second World War (Edwards 2006; Hyndman and Nylund 1998). The 1969 OAU Convention, therefore, extends the UN definition of a refugee to include those fleeing “external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order” (OAU 1969: 2).

Despite the protection promised by these instruments, their content and implementation have been the subject of academic criticism. Michael Dillion (1999) and Peter Nyers (2006: 46) suggest that the concept of the refugee is a paradoxical social construction in which people who are labeled as “refugees” are in a liminal state in which they are “included within the realm of humanity by virtue of their exclusion.” While their

humanity is acknowledged, because they lack the protection of a nation-state and the rights associated with citizenship, they are also simultaneously denied the basic principles of humanity such as legal protection and the alleviation of suffering.

As briefly discussed in Chapter 1, various authors have attempted to define what it means to be a refugee beyond their legal classification, commonly referred to as their “refugeeness”, and its effect on their social identity and mental health. Nyers (2006) argues that the primary issue within the refugee system and the treatment of refugees lies in the UNHCR’s definition of who qualifies for refugee status. By being defined by their “fear” of persecution, refugees are also subjected to social practices that label them as “social outcasts, lacking full reasoning capacity, and incapable of presenting an autonomous, self-governing form of personal subjectivity” (Nyers 2006: 45-46). Nyers (2006: 46) suggests that the characterisation of the refugee as a “fearful human” is a categorisation which can be used to “exclude, to produce difference, and to reinforce social and political hierarchies.”

By belonging outside of the traditional nation state, outside of the realm of belonging, refugees are both represented and treated as if they are continuous outsiders, incapable of contributing to the society which they are forced to inhabit, to be defined by both their refugee status and their otherness. Nyers (2006:45) argues that being an “authentic refugee” involves an expectation by the refugee system, the refugee population’s host society, and the international community to display certain qualities, such as speechlessness, placelessness, invisibility and victim status, in order to justify continued refugee status and the protection associated with it.

In her book Transnational Nomads, Cindy Horst (2006) argues that Kenyan refugee camps, Dadaab in particular, do not naturally provide refugees with economic and physical security, but rather facilitate what she identifies as a “refugee dependency syndrome” due to refugees’ physical confinement and institutionalised need for humanitarian aid. In this

context, dependency syndrome is characterised by the “acceptance of handouts without taking any initiative to attain self-sufficiency, accompanied by symptoms of excessive and unreasonable demands, frequent complaints, passivity, and lethargy” (Horst 2006: 92).

Refugees in this context lose the skills to adapt to a restrictive environment, including coping mechanisms, organisational and technical skills, further contributing to their lack of agency, ability to contribute to a solution to their displacement, and socio-economic marginalisation in their host society.

A refugee’s identity and experiences are significantly influenced by the refugee system which theoretically grants them temporary protection, security, food, healthcare, and shelter until they can achieve a solution to their displacement. The refugee system operates as a pseudo-government, and consists of aid organisations, government agencies, and standardised procedures for resource distribution (Jansen 2013). According to Roger Zetter (1991: 44), the refugee system is organised by operations of labelling that conceive people as "objects of policy [that] are defined in convenient images.” Since the establishment of the UNHCR and the 1951 Convention, identification of any exiled population’s “refugeeness” has become standardised and stereotyped, arguably as a method to aid in the development of policy through the simplification of needs, experiences, and identities in the face of complex social crises.

However, the over-simplification of the refugee experience has contributed to inadequacies in establishing effective policy. This system of labelling, often portraying refugees as perpetually dependent, is more stigmatising and alienating than helping to design effective policy solutions (Harrell-Bond 1986; Jansen 2013; Kaiser 2006; Zetter 1991). As a consequence of labelling refugees as "objects" in need of manipulation for policy development, the individuals within these populations lose their humanity and are

continuously defined by their liminal status rather than their potential contribution to their communities.

Primarily because their situation is viewed as temporary, the restriction of refugee rights and abilities is justified when both the host government and the UNHCR lack the resources and infrastructure to accommodate large refugee populations. Simon Turner (2010: 3) argues that humanitarian agencies represent refugees as “apolitical victims” in order to justify continued reliance on the refugee system.

The UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies needed to produce refugees in manageable categories in order to be able to help them. The refugees were ‘framed’ by the camp that set limits as to how they could act, and they were framed by international relief agencies as innocent victims and without political identities.

If a person in exile is represented as a powerless victim of violence with no political agenda, then the institutions that represent and guarantee the welfare of refugees can justify continued dependency. Turner (2010), however, suggests that the humanitarian system’s policy of “control and contain” designed to keep refugees alive until a solution to their displacement can be found has a deep impact on the identities of the refugees themselves. Not only do these strategies of victimisation foster a continued sense of dependency and personal inadequacy, but a lack of political agency also ensures that refugees who advocate for their rights run the risk of being portrayed as someone who does not qualify for refugee status.

Despite these negative consequences, the 1951 Convention remains the standard legal instrument in international law when dealing with refugee situations. It outlines “three durable solutions” which the UNHCR strives to achieve. In order of desirability according to the policies of the UNHCR, these solutions are: 1) voluntary repatriation, 2) integration into the host-country of first asylum, and 3) third-country resettlement (Harrell-Bond 1986; Napier-Moore 2005; Stein 1986: 268). The UNHCR argues that by definition the attainment of one of these three solutions “removes the objective need for refugee status by allowing the

refugee to acquire or reacquire the full protection of a state” (UNHCR 2015:12). Due to the limited availability of resettlement options, repatriation and integration have often been treated as the only realistic solutions for the vast majority of refugees (Harrell-Bond 1986; Stein 1986). However, in many cases, due to strict refugee policies limiting freedom of movement and participation in their host society, as well as continued violence and political instability in their homeland, many refugees find themselves in protracted situations without a durable solution for decades (Burton Wagacha and Guiney 2008; Loescher and Milner 2008).

If repatriation does become a possibility, it can often be much more complicated than just returning home and hoping to reinstate a community and livelihood that had existed before a refugee went into exile. For example, two case studies, one on South Sudanese refugees in Kenya and the other on Liberian refugees in Ghana, examined the UNHCR's role in repatriation and the influence that these actions had on refugees (Eidelson and Horn 2008; Omata 2014).<sup>13</sup> In both of these cases, a recent “peace” agreement had been signed in the original country of conflict, and since integration into their country of asylum and third-country resettlement were unobtainable for the majority of the camp inhabitants for more than a decade, repatriation was portrayed by the UNHCR as a simple solution to their displacement (Omata 2014). Both studies, however, indicated that many of the refugees represented were fearful of returning to their home nation because they anticipated ongoing persecution, and had no opportunities for employment, food, or shelter when they got there.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eidelson and Horn's (2008) study on South Sudanese refugees in Kenyan utilised Likert scale surveys on 235 refugees in an attempt to assess the population's feelings of vulnerability, injustice, distrust, superiority, and helplessness when discussing potential repatriation. Omata's (2014) study was conducted with 100 interviews with Liberian refugees and examined the influence of refugee policy implementation from the perspective of the refugee, and the justifications made to repatriate or integrate refugees by the UNHCR.

<sup>14</sup> In the case of the Liberian refugees in Ghana, the UNHCR had completely closed the camp, incentivised repatriation, and failed to present a reasonable alternative for refugees who perceived this solution as impractical (Omata 2014). Of the 11,000 Liberian refugees in Ghana, approximately 7,000

In these cases, repatriation was no more of an accessible solution than integration into their current host nation, contributing significantly to the continued protracted displacement of these refugee populations.<sup>15</sup>

From the perspective of the UNHCR, integration into the host society is viewed as the most attainable of the three proposed solutions, particularly for refugees who are victims of increasingly complex conflict situations in their home nation (Nakashiba 2013; UNHCR 2015). Integration, whether it be in a refugee's host society of first asylum or resettlement, or even reintegration in their homeland after repatriation, is a central argument in the rights of refugees. If refugees are, as Dillon (1999) and Nyers (2006) suggest, outside the realm of humanity and in a liminal state of citizenship, integration into any society beyond the identification of their "refugeeness" is essential to bridge the boundary between being a refugee and not being a refugee.

Beverluis et al. (2016) argue that integration can be measured by a person's access to education, vocational training, healthcare services, and social networking opportunities. While many of these services are provided to refugees inside camps like Kakuma, recipients of these services are restricted from using these skills outside of designated camp boundaries (Burton Wagacha and Guiney 2008). Integration can only be achieved if a refugee population can contribute to a host community with their "refugee resources" by economically, socially, and politically participating in their host society (Jacobsen 2002). The current refugee

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opted to stay in Ghana, either as illegal immigrants or as temporary economic migrants. According to the UNHCR Handbook on Refugees (1992:20), "if the refugee does not act voluntarily, he will not cease to be a refugee. If he is instructed by an authority, e.g. of his country of residence, to perform against his will an act that could be interpreted as a re-availment of the protection of the country of his nationality, he will not cease to be a refugee merely because he obeys such an instruction." By the Refugee Convention's definition of "voluntary repatriation," the closing of the Ghanaian camp was a violation of their internationally established policies.

<sup>15</sup> Omata (2014) focuses solely on the perspective of the refugees and failed to acknowledge the justifications made by the host government or the UNHCR. In this study, considering that there was a clear violation of UNHCR policies concerning repatriation, more effort should have been made to understand the efforts made by the UNHCR, and to explore why these efforts were not fully understood or accessible to the refugees being forced to leave the camp.

policies that many nations have in place, including Kenya, restrict freedom of movement prevent integration from ever being achieved. Policies that physically and conceptually isolate refugees from their host society ensure, whether intentionally or not, that they remain in a liminal state of continuous dependency (Harrell-Bond 1986; Napier-Moore 2005). One of the primary impediments to the integration of a refugee population into their host nation is that they are often portrayed as victims who are incapable of supporting themselves, and are defined by their fear of persecution and experiences of violence.

The final of the three durable solutions, resettlement, is often perceived by refugees in Kenya as the only realistic solution; however, it is only given to less than one percent of all refugees worldwide (Elliot 2012; Jansen 2008). Resettlement opportunities are entirely dependent on the willingness of third states to host refugee communities.<sup>16</sup> This option is expensive and is “only employed in situations of special need or protection ...or [in] the absence of possibilities for repatriation and local integration in the foreseeable future” (Jansen 2008: 571). The process is also notoriously long and drawn out due to extensive security checks, cultural adjustment training, and interview documents that regularly get “lost” (Elliot 2012; Jansen 2008).

When the UNHCR is unable to achieve one of the three durable solutions outlined above for five or more years for any given refugee population of at least 25,000 people they are declared to be in a protracted state of exile. As of 2005, there were “33 protracted refugee situations, totalling 5,691,000 refugees” (Loescher and Milner 2008: 21). The UNHCR’s more recent statistics suggest that by the end of 2015 there were 32 protracted situations worldwide, totalling 6.7 million people (UNHCR 2015). The average length of time globally

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<sup>16</sup> The nations that have resettlement programmes out of Kenya are the US, Canada, Sweden, Australia, Netherlands, Norway, and New Zealand (Elliot 2012).

that refugee populations have remained in a protracted state of exile has increased from nine years in 1993 to over 20 years in 2017 (Betts et al. 2012; Devictor and Do 2017).

It is important to note that protracted refugee situations are not static, and typically experience “chronic or reoccurring” periods of violence (Loescher and Milner 2008: 21). South Sudan is a perfect example of shifting political and social instability influencing the welfare of a refugee population. Many of the South Sudanese refugees considered in this study fled to Ethiopia in the 1980s, were pushed back after Ethiopia’s state collapsed in the early 1990s, and then again fled to Uganda and Kenya (discussed further in section 2.3 of this chapter). Between 1983 and 2011, many of these refugees were targeted by multiple armed groups including Sudanese troops, the SPLA, and the LRA of northern Uganda. After the establishment of an independent South Sudan in 2011, many refugees returned home only to be displaced again in 2013 due to another civil war (Loescher and Milner 2008; Natsios 2012). The nature of their exile is extremely complex, further contributing to their protracted exile and the inability of the UNHCR to achieve a solution to their displacement.

Protracted refugee populations are characterised by an inability to adequately develop social, economic, and political networks independent from the humanitarian aid system and typically find themselves in a “long-lasting and intractable state of limbo” (Abdi 2005; Crisp 2002; Kaiser 1997; Loescher and Milner 2008: 21). Due to the UNHCR’s inability to achieve a durable solution for the majority of protracted refugee situations, the organisation has been criticised as having “no solution” in the twenty-first century (Abdi 2005; Crisp 2002).

In the last three decades, it has become a common occurrence for refugees in Africa to live in a refugee camp, typically an enclosed space (Loescher and Milner 2005). While encampment policies protect refugees in accordance with the 1951 Convention, they also restrict their rights and isolate them from the host population (Crisp 2002; Milner and

Loescher 2005; Napier-Moore 2005).<sup>17</sup> Inside these camps, refugees face limited physical security, a restriction of their freedom of movement, limited civil, political, and legal rights, and very little freedom of choice (Crisp 2002: 9). Various key characteristics of refugee camps give refugees a “sense of dependency” in which they maintain a “liminal status” suffering from the loss of identity, agency, and mobility that is meant to be “ameliorated by time, language improvement, retraining programmes, hard work, and determination” (Crisp 2002; Stein 1981: 324). However, despite the presence of education and training facilities inside of refugee camps provided by the UNHCR and various NGOs, these services are futile beyond the walls of the camp for refugees living in protracted states of exile due to restrictive policies enforced by their host government (Loescher and Milner 2008, Stein 1981: 325-326; UNHCR 2015).<sup>18</sup>

This has not always been the case. Before the early 1990s, the Kenyan government allowed refugees to integrate into the local community and maintained legal access to employment, education, and freedom of movement (Milner 2009). However, as a result of regional conflicts in neighbouring nations during this period, particularly in Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, there was a huge influx of refugee communities fleeing over the Kenyan border (Verdirame 1999). Even with the resources provided by the UNHCR, “the high number of refugees strained social services, creating competition and conflict between refugees and the local population over food, housing, healthcare, and security” (Burton Wagacha and Guiney 2008: 92; Milner and Loescher 2005). In response to their growing commitments and dwindling international aid, in 1991 the Kenyan government established a policy of

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<sup>17</sup> Although not mandated by the UNHCR, it is typically the policy of the host nation (for example, Kenya and Uganda) to isolate refugee populations from the majority of the local population to reduce the likeliness of integration and dependence on the host state (Burton Wagacha and Guiney 2008; Kaiser 2008).

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that many refugees are self-settled, that is living outside of refugee camps, often illegally when their nation of residence has a refugee encampment policy. While the specific populations being studied in this research project are either camp inhabitants or resettled refugees, there are many transnational networks of refugees that represent neither of those classifications.

“abdication of responsibility for refugees to the UNHCR and the containment of refugee populations [to] the periphery of the state” (Kagwanja 2002; Milner 2009: 88; Verdirame 1999). The adaptation of a containment policy required that the vast majority of refugees in Kenya must live inside of a refugee camp to qualify for aid and those who lived outside of these camps without permission were labeled as illegal aliens, subject to potential deportation.

In Kenya, legal recognition of refugees is typically given under what is recognised in refugee policy as “prima facie” status. This occurs when a refugee population is of significant size and the host government and UNHCR have limited resources to process claims to asylum on an individual basis, so that an entire population in a region is given refugee status (Kagan 2007; Kenyan National Council for Law Reporting 2006).<sup>19</sup> However, claims of limited resources enable host governments to restrict the rights of prima facie refugee populations under the argument that these conditions are temporary pending the acquisition of resources to adequately integrate these populations or until their repatriation to their home nation. It has been argued that prima facie refugee recognition, which has become common in Africa, is “legally insufficient” as it enables host governments to isolate refugees at the margins of their society and restrict their access to employment until one of the three durable solutions can be achieved (Hyndman and Nylund 1998: 22).

These restrictions reflect the Kenyan government’s desire to maintain a separation of refugee and local communities to prevent local integration (Kaiser 2008; Napier-Moore 2005). As a consequence of the remoteness in which these camps are located in addition to

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<sup>19</sup> In 2016, the Kenyan Government released a document entitled “The Refugee Bill” (The Republic of Kenya 2016). This new bill, in contrast to past Kenyan refugee policies, encourages integration, freedom of movement, and employment for any refugee legally residing within the nation. However, this bill is not clear if these new policies include prima facie refugees (who make up the vast majority of refugee populations in Kenya). While this bill makes considerable advancements for the treatment of refugee populations in theory, it is still too soon to determine whether better practices for the treatment of refugees will follow.

the restrictions placed on their lives, most refugees are forced to maintain a state of dependency on the UNHCR pending their voluntary repatriation or third-country resettlement (Crisp 2002). In 2006, the Kenyan government approved the Refugee Act which established the Department of Refugee Affairs tasked to handle all administrative affairs and coordinate programmes for refugees (Milner 2009). Although the Kenyan government revoked its policy of “abdication” of responsibility for refugees to the UNHCR (see above), the government continues to maintain a policy of encampment. Like many African nations, the Kenyan government argues that refugee populations are too large and would cause too much stress on the environment, the economy, and the public services if they were allowed to live outside of these camps.

The current circumstances in which the South Sudanese population of Kakuma finds itself is a by-product of both the Kenyan government’s unwillingness to integrate refugees as well as the the UNHCR’s inability to design effective policy solutions for protracted refugee populations while facilitating the limitations of refugee rights in their host nation. Although all refugees have the right to asylum and protection, this right is based on the premise of “complying with restrictive conditions” that reduce their human rights (Crisp 2002; Hyndman 2000; Hyndman and Nylund 1998; Jamal 2000: 7). For example, in camps like Kakuma, refugees are confined to live within its walls and are denied the ability to seek legal employment outside of its boundaries. These restrictions are justified by both the Kenyan government and the UNHCR for two primary reasons: 1) the inhabitants claiming asylum are at least protected and their lives are being preserved, and 2) the situation is perceived as being only temporary and necessary until a durable solution can be achieved. Several authors have suggested that the UNHCR argues that their insistence on the freedom of movement of refugees would be “counterproductive,” likely antagonising the host government and

increasing the difficulty of accurately assessing the size of caseloads of a given refugee population (Harrell-Bond 1986; Jamal 2000; Napier-Moore 2005).

Newhouse (2015) argues that the Kenyan refugee system, in Kakuma specifically, is developed on a system of violence, a by-product of the macro-scale refugee encampment policies which have become standard since the early 1990s. The author defines violence as brutal acts against people in either physical, symbolic, cultural, or emotional forms. Newhouse suggests that the encampment policies present in Kakuma provoke violent efforts by all actors (humanitarian organisations, the Kenyan police, the local population, and refugees themselves) by actively producing exclusionary practices over space and material, environmental, and symbolic resources. The restrictions which are institutionally enforced on refugees force them to pursue often illicit activities, such as the selling of food rations, to combat their “persistent precarity,” and further risking their insecurity (Newhouse 2015: 2293). Finally, Newhouse suggests that the rules of governing space and resources through violence have become normalised in Kakuma, a system in which humanitarian aid is both vital for survival but is also never enough to meet the basic needs of refugees (see Chapter 7).

The policy of encampment has been criticised as facilitating “wasted human capacity and [the] deprivation of human dignity” (Abdi 2005: 7; Kumssa et al. 2014: 146). In her study of Somali refugees living in Dadaab refugee camp, Kenya, Awa Abdi (2005) argues that, while refugees were initially grateful for the protection under the refugee system, over time their reliance on hand-to-mouth donations eventually led to a sense of complete dependency on international donations. Abdi reports that many of her participants expressed low self-worth as a result of their inability to better their conditions after over a decade of living in exile. Likewise, Jeff Crisp (2002:11), in his review of African protracted refugee populations, suggests that protracted refugees have been shown to be very poor, and often become steadily poorer. He argues that this is typically a result of the lack of development

and investment in refugee populated regions, in addition to the various rights that are denied to them. These authors argue that such poverty and issues of dependency in protracted situations are not due to a lack of personal initiative, but due to the lack of opportunities and alternative resources to develop their livelihoods.

Several authors have suggested that the solution to protracted situations would be through the promotion of self-reliance (Aleinikoff 2015; Crisp 2002; Jacobsen and Fratzke 2016). These authors argue that livelihood development programmes that promote the self-reliance of refugees stimulate the economy, attract foreign investors, and generate benefits for the host population. Crisp (2002: 22), for example, suggests that promoting the self-reliance of refugees has the potential to benefit all stakeholders involved, enabling refugees to achieve a sense of purpose, allowing the UNHCR to reduce investment on costly “care and maintenance” programmes, and contributing to a sustainable economy in the remote regions of the host country where refugees are often forced to live.

The lack of civil, legal, and political rights, of freedom of mobility, and of social inclusion prevents refugees from achieving a sense of belonging and contributing to their host society. The refugee camp creates a physical space of social liminality in which the rights of the citizen are suspended until a viable solution to their exile can be achieved, and they can successfully integrate into a society that will legally recognise them as citizens. Given that the three durable solutions outlined by the UNHCR have substantial limitations that are perpetuated in protracted situations by ongoing conflict, restrictive policies, and the lack of alternative solutions, it could be argued that there is a need to develop social and economic networks that empower refugees to cultivate livelihoods.

## 2.3 The Lost Boys of Sudan and Kakuma

Kakuma is home to several protracted refugee populations originating from all over East and Central Africa. As of 2018, the South Sudanese represent approximately half of Kakuma's entire population and have been the longest occupants since the establishment of the camp in 1992 (Jansen 2013; UNHCR 2018a; Verdirame 1999). Due to the camp's connection with the refugee population known as the "Lost Boys of Sudan," some of whom have been resettled to western nations like the US but also many of whom continue to live inside Kakuma, it can be argued that this camp is the hub of South Sudanese refugee transnational activity. This section aims to explore the specific history of this particular refugee population as well as looking beyond the UNHCR policies outlined in the previous section by examining the conditions of life as a refugee in Kakuma.

The wave of South Sudanese refugees that are most recognisable today was originally displaced to Ethiopia during the second civil war that began in 1983. According to Scott-Villiers et al. (1993), before 1991, there were three refugee camps in Ethiopia dedicated to the victims of the war in southern Sudan, totalling approximately 271,000 people. In 1991 the Ethiopian Mengistu regime, which supported the efforts of the SPLA/M, collapsed, resulting in the forcible expulsion of these refugees back to Sudan (Chanoff 2005; Jansen 2013; Verdirame 1999). During this time the media and the SPLM focused their message on the suffering of thousands of unaccompanied refugee minors ranging in age from 10 to 17 (Scott-Villiers et al. 1993; Verdirame 1999).<sup>20</sup> Scott-Villiers et al. (1993: 209) argue that:

The SPLM, encouraged by the international community and the press, directed the focus of relief on to the severely malnourished unaccompanied minors

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<sup>20</sup> Authors cite numbers ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 displaced children (Chanoff 2005; Horn 2010; Ossome 2013; Sanghi et al. 2016; Scott-Villiers et al. 1993; Verdirame 1999). These numbers could have been inflated by the SPLA/M in order to receive more aid. It is also well known that on their journey from Ethiopia to Sudan and then finally to Kenya, many of these children died of starvation, exposure, dehydration, and attacks by the local wildlife. There is no accurate documentation of how many children died during this period.

while ignoring the fitter majority... A fair proportion of the special food distributed to the unaccompanied minors never reached their mouths, but instead went to feed other more powerful individuals.

Ensuring continued international assistance for the SPLM, these children were left at a state of near starvation until the opening of Kakuma refugee camp in 1992. In the early 1990s, they became widely recognisable in the international media as the Lost Boys of Sudan, in reference to J.M. Barrie's story of Peter Pan and his gang of children surviving without parents (Harris 2010).

Due to their significant profile in the media, the US launched a mission to resettle at least 3,500 South Sudanese refugees, the majority still unaccompanied minors or young adults, between 2000 and 2001 (Chanoff 2005; Luster et al. 2008; McKinnon 2008).<sup>21</sup> Regarding their rates of employment, education level, and English fluency after resettlement, McKinnon (2008: 398) argues that Lost Boys of Sudan are recognised as "one of the most successful refugee resettlement programmes in US history."<sup>22</sup> Once they returned to Africa, many members of this community boasted of their wealth and success to prove to their family and friends that they could be leaders in their communities (Grabska 2010). This perceived success by the participants in the transnational communities of the South Sudanese diaspora has contributed to beliefs of financial responsibility to family members still displaced by war (see Chapters 5, 6, and 8).

During their displacement in Kakuma and after their resettlement, many refugees who identified as members of the Lost Boys of Sudan made efforts to find and re-establish

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<sup>21</sup> Chanoff (2005) references 3,500 resettled Lost Boys to the US, Luster et al. (2008) references 3,800, and McKinnon (2008:498) states that there are "nearly 4,000" Lost Boys in this community. These differences in data could be based on who they considered to be members of this population. For example, although there were some South Sudanese girls who were resettled during this time, they were largely ignored in the media and far fewer were given the opportunity of resettlement when compared to their male counterparts due to strict cultural expectations (Harris 2010). Other considerations might be marital status, age, or date of resettlement.

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that the vast majority of those resettled in this refugee population were young single men, and thus significantly more likely to pursue higher education and employment outside the household when compared to other refugee populations.

relationships with the family members with whom they had lost contact as children (Luster et al. 2008). In the attempt to locate these lost relatives, resettled Lost Boys often utilised communication technology such as cell phones and email to create a network of community members in an attempt to connect family members trying to find one another. Luster et al. (2008) suggest that once family reunification was achieved, many resettled refugees of this population took on financial responsibilities within their families due to their higher financial status. These remittances sent to southern Sudan and refugee camps in Kenya and Uganda were meant to fund their families' access to medicine, food, transportation, housing, and education. The reunification of these displaced families was the foundation of these transnational communities, contributing to strong communication networks, financial exchange relationships, and the development of a deep-seated sense of responsibility (Johnson and Stoll 2008, 2013; Patterson 2016; Shandy 2007).

Kenya is home to approximately half a million displaced people, most of whom are living in either Dadaab or Kakuma refugee camps (Sanghi et al. 2016; UNHCR 2017a; UNHCR 2017b; UNHCR 2018a; UNHCR 2018b).<sup>23</sup> Although Kakuma was originally opened for the Lost Boys of Sudan population, it is now also home to refugees from northern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea (Jansen 2008, 2013). Due to the extremely arid environment and severe droughts, it is difficult for either the refugees or members of the host community to engage in agricultural activities (Sanghi et al. 2016; Verdirame 1999). Similarly, although many South Sudanese are pastoralists, animal husbandry is strongly discouraged due to disputes with the local population over land use and property ownership (Horn 2010; Sanghi et al. 2016; Verdirame 1999). As a result, refugees in Kakuma are forced to remain dependent on aid for their

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<sup>23</sup> Dadaab is Kenya's largest refugee camp, with a camp population of approximately 225,000 as of 2018 (UNHCR 2018b). Dadaab is located in eastern Kenya along the Kenya-Somalia border.

survival unless they have enough capital to start a small business in the camp. Despite this dependency, in the last 27 years, Kakuma has developed into a vibrant economy with non-profit organisations and refugee-run businesses providing most of the employment opportunities for both refugees and members of the host community (Sanghi et al. 2016).<sup>24</sup>

Kakuma is administered by a combination of the local county administration and police in collaboration with several international aid organisations led by the UNHCR. Bram Jansen (2013:116) argues that the UNHCR and their implementing partners in Kakuma can be classified as a “pseudo-government” attempting to uphold laws based on international human rights. Their role in Kakuma is to supervise and coordinate refugee services and policy enforcement (Verdirame 1999). Their implementing partners include organisations like the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which are responsible for providing services such as education, medical treatment, food distribution, and skills training. Security is enforced through a combination of Kenyan private security officers, UNHCR protection officers, the local police force, and refugee-led security teams.

Physical security for refugees in Kakuma is a daily struggle. There are significantly high rates of undernutrition, particularly for those who do not have the economic capital or family support to buy food to supplement their allotted rations which were approximately 70% of their required nutritional intake at the time of this study (Pittaway and Bartolomei 2002; Verdirame 1999; World Food Programme 2017). Many inhabitants of Kakuma also suffer from serious mental health issues stemming from the lack of opportunities for

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<sup>24</sup> Refugees in Kenya are not legally allowed to work. Most adults who find employment in the camp volunteer for an “incentive.” Incentives are often a fraction of what a Kenyan national would earn for the same position. This system is justified because refugees receive free housing, water, food, and education whereas members of the host community do not (Verdirame 1999).

refugees, lack of resources, extreme poverty, and from experiences of violence (Horn 2010). Women and girls are often victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, abduction, and forced early marriages (Bartolomei et al. 2003; Napier-Moore 2005; Ossome 2013). Furthermore, these acts of violence against women and children are often dismissed by the Kenyan police and development agencies because they are perceived to be caused by cultural values or simply consequences of poverty. The victims of these crimes are most often the poorest people in the camp with no or very limited family support, thus creating significant inequalities in the camp.

The vast majority of refugees remain completely dependent on rations that have depleted over time, contributing to widespread poverty and an ingrained sense of helplessness (Bartolomei et al. 2003; Crisp 2002; Ossome 2013; Verdirame 1999; World Food Programme 2017).<sup>25</sup> The establishment of a strong family network is, therefore, essential for daily survival, especially for those without capital to protect themselves from abuse. The majority of disputes are handled among the refugee communities and are settled by leaders within that community (Jansen 2013; Napier-Moore 2005; Verdirame 1999). Without a solid family support system to argue your case to the community leaders or to pay a bribe to the local police, victims of abuse rarely receive justice.

Prejudice and corruption by the police, local offices of government, and in the legal system are some of the most significant problems that refugees in Kakuma face. Being a refugee in Kenya means that you are often subjected to arbitrary arrest and detainment unless you have money to bribe the police (Rogers 2017; Verdirame 1999). When traveling outside of designated camp areas, refugees are required to carry “protection letters,” also known as

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<sup>25</sup> According to the World Food Programme (2017), beginning November 2017 their organisation was forced to reduce the food rations allotted to refugees in Kakuma and Dadaab camps in Kenya to 70 percent of their daily intake requirement due to a \$28.5 million USD deficit in their budget. The article suggests that this was only a short-term measure for six months.

movement passes. These passes are provided by the Kenyan Refugee Affairs Secretariat and are legally valid for travel within Kenya. Refugees often perceive these documents as worthless when confronted with the police and typically believe that they do not protect them from harassment and bribe requests (Napier-Moore 2005; Verdirame 1999). Similarly, disputes between refugees in the camp that are brought to the local police are often settled by which side can pay more money (Rogers 2017). Consequently, poor refugees in Kenya are particularly vulnerable to harassment, while others can use their financial stability to act freely and manipulate law enforcement to act in their favour.

Law enforcement, financial security, and even identities within Kakuma are often perceived as arbitrary, and therefore are open to manipulation (Jansen 2008, 2013).<sup>26</sup> Well-connected refugees, often recognised as “small big men” due to their level of authority, become “skilful in manoeuvring the camp environment, understanding and bridging, or evading, because of understanding the different institutional arrangements” (Jansen 2013: 124; Turner 2006). For example, during resettlement interviews, a slow and prolonged process that determines whether a refugee qualifies for resettlement to places like the US, refugees sometimes overstate their insecurity in the camp by identifying with a more at-risk tribe or even stealing another person’s identity. Regarding resettlement opportunities, “need and vulnerability become intertwined with opportunity, and thus subject to negotiation” (Jansen 2008: 573). The refugees who benefit the most from manipulating the refugee system, whether it be in resettlement or law enforcement, are the people with the most money.

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<sup>26</sup> According to Jansen (2008), during his fieldwork in Kakuma his participants told him stories in which approved resettlement case files were sold to the highest bidder who would then take on the identity of the applicant. Similarly, within the refugee system various tribes are perceived to be more vulnerable than others, and consequently presenting an opportunity to declare a different tribal identity than they were born with in the attempt to be move higher on the resettlement list.

The economy of Kakuma is made up of people who are employed by various NGOs, people who own or are employed by businesses in the camp, and people who receive remittances, many utilising several of these economic domains (Jansen 2013). Despite the poverty of Kakuma's population, many refugees have managed to invest in small businesses or fund the building of churches, education centres, radio stations, and health clinics, completely independent from humanitarian assistance. Kakuma is unique when compared to other refugee camps globally in that many of the refugees have a higher standard of living when compared to members of the local population, the Turkana (Aukot 2003; Pérouse de Montclos and Kagwanja 2000; Sanghi et al. 2016). In fact, many refugees employ Turkana community members to work as domestic servants delivering firewood, water, and washing clothes (Sanghi et al. 2016). The development of the camp economy has become a method for refugees to break away from dependency on the refugee system that dominates their lives and to become active agents in their communities.

And yet, life for most refugees in Kakuma is often filled with insecurity and restrictive agency (see Chapter 7). Due to the limited resources and disproportionate balance of power and dependency, security is often negotiable and manipulated to overcome barriers within the refugee system. The Lost Boys of Sudan are one of the most recognisable refugee populations to come from Kakuma, and often symbolise success and prosperity to both their host community and their families that continue to live in Africa. Therefore, the bond between refugees who continue to live inside Kakuma and their family living outside of Africa represents an entanglement of poverty and financial stability, insecurity and agency, all developed on strong personal relationships and commitment to family.

## 2.4 Conclusion

With the rise of increasingly complicated conflict situations worldwide, protracted refugee populations in which victims of violence lack agency are becoming commonplace. In

the effort to simplify the process of refugee identification and resource distribution, the refugee system has reduced refugees to a state which might be called less than human; marginalised and perceived as socially and economically dependent until one of the UNHCR's solutions can be achieved. After decades of living in exile, these perceptions are crippling, having a significant impact on a population's mental health and economic sustainability, fostering a sense of helplessness, dependency, voicelessness, and invisibility. And yet, refugees who have managed to develop economic and social networks have, however, found creative means to manipulate the refugee system and develop sustainable lives in a system that otherwise inhibits personal advancement.

The establishment of transnational networks within refugee communities enables displaced populations to access otherwise unobtainable resources. Resettlement and other migration opportunities, although only accessible to a small percentage of all refugees worldwide, help in the development of transnational networks in which resources gained in places like the US and UK can be shared with their marginalised community members who continue to live in refugee camps like Kakuma. These resources can range from simply having a little more food or having the ability to pay police bribes to gaining enough economic capital to start a small business or to pay for the education of the next generation of their family. These networks have become much-needed vehicles for refugees to make progress within a system that stifles their humanity. These issues will be pursued in the next chapter through an exploration of the concept of transnationalism, the social and economic impact of remittances sent to developing countries, and the literature on refugee transnational communities, in particular their potential to develop an alternative durable solution to protracted refugee situations.

## Chapter 3: Transnational Communities and Practices

The study of transnational communities aims to address the social and financial networks that transcend international boundaries between individuals bonded by kinship ties, community attachments, and a strong connection to their cultural values. However, most of the current literature on transnationalism implies a physical attachment to the homeland, in this case South Sudan, thus largely ignoring the experiences and practices of the forcibly displaced and stateless.<sup>27</sup> As will be shown in section 3.3 of this chapter, refugee communities can also actively engage in transnational practices with their family and community members, sometimes in their homeland, but often in refugee camps and urban centres in neighbouring nations. In order to address this gap in the literature on transnationalism in which the experiences of refugees are significantly underrepresented, I am defining a transnational community as sustained social and financial networks based on kinship networks or a system of shared cultural values that transcend the boundaries between nations.

In section 3.1, I argue that whether a participant in a transnational community is an economic migrant or a refugee they share common values with their community members in other nations. Faist (2000) argues that these relationships are inherently mutually dependent for both parties, reliant on the exchange of remittances, active lines of communication, and an interest in the welfare of other community members outside their nation of residence.

Furthermore, as explored by Bauböck (1994) and Mehta and Napier-Moore (2011), the

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<sup>27</sup> In this context, a physical attachment to the homeland means at least half of a transnational community resides within the nation to which the members of the entire transnational community consider their ancestral homeland. In much of the theory on transnational networks, the homeland represents the epicentre from which these social and financial networks extend. Since the participants represented in this study have limited or no connection to their homeland due to ongoing war and conflict, it is necessary to extend this definition so that it is defined by their attachment to their culture and family rather than connection to the physical location which they consider to be their homeland.

reconceptualisation of citizenship to a transnational scale can promote the emergence of transnational practices and the social production of community membership not determined by lines between nations but rather a migrant's lived experience.

Section 3.2 explores the transfer of remittances between transnational communities; whether they be financial or social, remittances are essential for the sustainability of these communities, particularly for those whose networks transcend the boundaries between developed and developing nations.<sup>28</sup> International remittances sent to developing nations have been shown to promote investment, increase access to education, and lead to higher quality nutrition, sanitation, and healthcare (Acosta et al. 2015; Adams 2006; De Haas 2005; Edwards and Ureta 2003; Hildebrandt et al. 2005). When sent to a refugee population living inside a camp, these remittances from family and community members can be a lifeline (Van Hear and Cohen 2015; Vargas-Silva 2017). In the unpredictable conditions of a conflict-affected area or a refugee camp, remittances are desperately needed to buy food to avoid starvation and to buy medicine to treat deadly diseases. In this context, remittances are needed so that refugees can meet their basic needs of survival rather than simply investing in their future comfort.

Section 3.3 investigates how the experiences of a refugee are considerably different from those of an economic migrant, and argues that the transnational networks among refugee communities should be studied based on their unique experiences of migration, family reunification, remittance exchange, and community investment. Although refugee transnational communities are based on the belief in a common homeland and an attachment to its traditional cultural values, the acknowledgment of such communities' transnational properties is not limited to a physical attachment to that homeland. A refugee transnational

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<sup>28</sup> Levitt (1998: 927) defines social remittances as the "ideas, behaviours, and social capital that flow from receiving and sending-country communities" influencing social roles with the family or in political, religious, or civil activities.

participant typically has limited options to return to his/her homeland, their community members are often forcibly displaced across multiple nations, and their lines of communication are unpredictable due to eruptions of conflict and the remote locations that they often inhabit. In this context, transnational family networks are often based on experiences of the loss of contact with community members due to conflict and the efforts of family reunification.

The study of refugee transnational communities is particularly relevant for protractedly displaced populations, specifically those who have lived in exile for multiple decades while being denied the rights of being a citizen of any nation. According to Rask et al. (2004), protracted refugees often lack social, economic, or political infrastructure and face high degrees of uncertainty for their social development and future opportunities. As suggested in Chapter 2, it can be argued that the world has failed to incorporate refugees inside of the realm of humanity, forcing them to be citizens of no nation and providing them with a very limited ability to change their circumstances (Nyers 2006). As shown in figure 3.2 in this chapter, which I will describe in more detail later, Van Hear's (2003) theory of a refugee diaspora demonstrates that these networks have the potential to transcend the limitations of the nation state and the restrictions of national citizenship.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the conditions of bondedness and mutual reciprocity and dependency that have come to define transnational communities could provide valuable insight into the future of protracted refugee populations. In the case of refugees living inside of camps, and often illegally in urban areas, whose freedoms have been denied through a combination of continued warfare and the failures of the UNHCR to find a solution to their displacement, transnational practices are a potential solution to their mass marginalisation. Through the development of transnational practices that promote their agency by altering their dependency from that of aid organisations to their own community

members (discussed further in section 3.3 of this chapter), protracted refugees have the potential to reduce their vulnerability and socio-economic marginalisation within the refugee system.

### 3.1 Transnationalism: Theory and Practice

Transnationalism has been described as the economic, social, and political networks between multi-stranded communities that transcend geographic location and borders between nations (Basch et al. 1994). The approach has become an overarching theoretical concept that incorporates the analytical methods of social network analysis, and the concepts of social capital, embeddedness, and transnational migration to examine the “strength of ties” of interpersonal relationships (Vertovec 2003).<sup>29</sup> Transnational connections imply collective membership, shared values and expectations, loyalty, and mutual reciprocity between all community members. Although kinship is not necessarily a requisite for transnational participation, most scholars agree that these communities are built on a shared cultural identity, a common homeland, and are strengthened when its members share a similar sense of obligation to one another built on familial bonds.<sup>30</sup>

Transnational social practices imply the exchange of ideas, money, and various other social resources. Identification of transnational communities assumes that migrants maintain active communication with a community in another nation, preserve important relationships, and establish networks that link groups of people in multiple nations together. Conventional (non-refugee) transnational communities are typically created through bonds of kinship and

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<sup>29</sup> Social network analysis is the mapping and measurement of social capital (the value of social networks and relationships). In this context, embeddedness means the cohesion of communities regarding communication, participation, and mutual obligation towards the welfare of their participants.

<sup>30</sup> Transnationalism can also include economic, social, cultural and political relationships (Basch et al. 1994:7). Most transnational communities incorporate multiple of these categories simultaneously.

ties to communities in the homeland, creating a mutually dependent relationship between the migrant and members of their family that remain in the homeland (Faist 2000:193). The commitment to family members living in another nation facilitated through the formation and maintenance of transnational communities is perpetuated by transnational practices such as the transfer of financial remittances.

Contrary to various other forms of globalised actions, these practices are long-term sustained ties rather than fleeting or exceptional. Thomas Faist (2000) argues that there are three types of social and symbolic ties that connect individuals to communities that are not limited to the borders between nations or governed by the restrictions of physical space. These ties are mutual obligation, reciprocity, and community solidarity, and are built and maintained by strong familial bonds and community membership. Faist defines these sustained ties between individuals and groups as “transnational social spaces” in which community members engage in the exchange of ideas and resources for the economic and social advancement of both the migrant and the community in the homeland.<sup>31</sup>

In the study of transnational practices, the concept of community is often synonymous with family and implies the capacity for social support. Family in this sense includes both the nuclear family and extended kinship networks such as siblings, cousins, and in-laws.<sup>32</sup> Basch et al. (1994: 79) argue that:

The family facilitates the survival of its members, serving as a buffer against the intrusiveness of individual state policies; it fosters the social reproduction of its members, their class formation and mobility; and as the repository of cultural practices and ideology shaped in the home society, it mediates identity

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<sup>31</sup> Transnational social spaces have also been frequently referred to as “transnational social fields” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Both of these phrases refer to the conceptualisation of a theoretical “space” in which transnational community members interact and communicate. Rather than representing a physical geographic space, it represents networks and relationships that facilitate the exchange of resources.

<sup>32</sup> As demonstrated by the data presented in this thesis, family is not always clearly defined and is not limited to biological or legal relatedness. In the case of this study, family also incorporated community members, friends and neighbours, likely a by-product of cultural values as well as shared experiences of marginalisation and deprivation in the refugee setting.

formation in the new setting as it socialises its members into a transnational way of life.

Participation in family experiences and the reliance on one another for social, moral, and financial support is one of the core foundations of transnational communities. Johnston (2001) suggests that, in the context of transnational practices, the family is a living network of relations that defies the distance between its members. Family social relations enable migrants to maintain both a cultural and social connection to their homeland while developing networks connecting their old and new nations, exchanging both financial and social remittances for the advancement of the community as a whole. These sustained cross-border familial relationships enable migrants to both maintain their traditional cultural identity while also aiding in their adjustment into their new nation of residence through the provision of a social support system.

It might be assumed that integration in a migrant's host community and the maintenance of social ties to their homeland are mutually exclusive practices, and that a migrant's cultural identity is lost when they adapt to their new nation. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) challenge this assumption by arguing that identity, whether it be national, cultural, or political, is a fluid concept that is continuously adapting to new experiences and beliefs. Consequently, "migrants are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1003).

Similarly, Steven Vertovec (2001: 578) argues that the construction of a transnational identity, one that is defined by two or more cultures, is built on the experiences between multiple environments contributing to "people's cultural repertoires." As transnational migrants are becoming more adept at blending multiple cultural identities, definitions of citizenship and identity are becoming increasingly vague, urging migrants and academics

alike to redefine concepts of social membership, citizenship, and transcontinental bonds (Basch et al. 1994; Vertovec 2001). Social networks, especially familial bonds, enable migrants to belong to several communities, to live and work in different cultures, to perhaps speak several languages, and to hold different statuses of citizenship while continuing to maintain a geographically transcendent relationship with other members of their transnational community.

An important concept in the development of transnational migration theory is an understanding of what Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller (2004) identify as "simultaneity." Simultaneity is defined as the incorporation of daily habits, activities, and social interactions in several nations at once. These authors highlight that the "nation-state container view of society does not capture, adequately or automatically, the complex interconnectedness of contemporary reality" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004: 1006). A common example of this interconnectedness is the transfer of money between family members for daily necessities and investment; a migrant might live, work, and raise their children in a new nation, but by sending money home to their family living in another, they are empowered to continue their traditional social interactions and commitment to their family members. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) argue that since social ties are so variable between cultures, generations, and even communities, it is important to gain an understanding of the strength and impact that simultaneity and transnational participation can have on migrant experiences.

The migration experience, ranging from leaving one's homeland to integrating into a new culture, can be extremely emotionally straining. Zlatko Skrbis (2008) argues that emotions need to be understood as an essential component of transnational family life, and the way in which emotional ties link individuals to their families despite being physically separated should be examined. Skrbis (2008: 238) identifies three concepts of a migrant's

experience, “co-presence,” “longing,” and the “emotionalisation of the ‘national family,’” which assumes the need to be embraced by their community members, that they experience a sense of nostalgia and longing, and finally, that they engage in a diasporic discourse in which the homeland is idealised. These three emotional concepts directly influence not only how migrants adapt to their new environment but also persuade them to maintain ties with family members in their homeland and to engage in community practices based on principles of obligation and reciprocity.

A common misconception in the theory of transnationalism is the assumption that these practices are a contemporary phenomenon that developed as a result of the “Information Age” and various advancements in communication technology. Morawska (2013) and Foner (1997) argue, however, that transnational social practices became common in the beginning of the twentieth century, and in fact, show remarkable similarities to those exercised by immigrants in the twenty-first century.<sup>33</sup> Although various historical studies have proven the existence of transnational practices before “aeroplanes, telephones, fax machines, and electronic mail facilitate[d] contact and exchange among common people,” the scale of these practices was less intense and less immediate when compared to the twenty-first century (Portes 2000: 265). As communication and travel technology advances, so does the ability to form and maintain a transnational community.

Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004) suggest that transnational networks are not purely by-products of migrant communities’ actions or their desire to sustain meaningful relationships with family elsewhere in the world. Rather, these authors argue that much of a migrant’s “capacity” to engage in transnational activities is dependent on state policies and

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<sup>33</sup> Morawska (2013) argues that immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century often remitted a large proportion of their income to their homeland (up to 75%), actively participated in homeland politics, and “transplanted” symbolic cultural symbols in their country of immigration while also bringing back new cultural values and symbols to their homeland.

the control of movement between borders, thus “fundamentally [shaping] the options for migrants and ethnic trans-state social action” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178). These state-enforced restrictions and control of international movement contribute, therefore, to a high degree of variability and capacity for migrant communities to engage in sustainable transnational activities.<sup>34</sup>

To further this argument, Glick Schiller (2018) asserts that the possibility for migrants to engage in transnational practices, such as visiting family, sending remittances, or engaging in transnational politics, is becoming increasingly difficult. She argues that this is particularly true for those currently living in Europe and the US who are non-white, non-Christian, and who are not citizens in their host nation. These migrant populations are increasingly forced to face deportation, harassment, and surveillance for their social, economic, and political ties to their home nation, experiences that can potentially be exacerbated by continuous transnational participation. Consequently, the growing literature on transnational participation needs to also incorporate issues of “anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, white Christian supremacy and anti-fascist/anti-capitalist forms of resistance and socio-political organisation and action” into its theoretical framework (Glick Schiller 2018: 206).

Although the premise of transnational communities and networks implies the exchange of social, economic, and political resources across internationally recognised borders, there is a significant debate as to what constitutes a transnational community.<sup>35</sup> For

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<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that the potential for transnational social action has changed significantly since 2004. Although the physical restriction of movement between borders has remained the same, if not increased in intensity, in recent decades, technological advancements in mobile technology have increased in availability and affordability in even some of the world’s most remote regions. In the case of the population examined in this thesis, transnational social action primarily took place over computer and phone applications like Skype, Facebook, and WhatsApp.

<sup>35</sup> Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004: 1178) argue that transnationalism is often inaccurately defined in the literature on migration studies, to refer to phenomena which are “by-products of globalisation” and extend “beyond loyalties that connect to any specific place of origin or ethnic or national group.”

example, much of the academic research on transnational communities implies that at least part of the community lives and operates in the homeland (Bruneau 2010; Faist 2000; Skrbis 2008; Vertovec 2001, 2003). Michel Bruneau (2010: 44) even states that transnationalism implies that there is “no uprooting from the territory and society of origin, nor trauma, as in the case of diasporas.” This limiting definition largely ignores the experiences of refugees and other forcibly displaced communities who by all other standards engage in transnational practices, sometimes between the homeland, but more commonly between various nations of exile.

In his book, New Diasporas, Van Hear (1998: 5) suggests that diasporas are one type of transnational community; both are characterised by a cultural, religious, or ethnic population which has been dispersed from an “original centre to two or more regions [which retains a] collective memory of the homeland [experiences] partial alienation from the host society [aspires] to return to an ancestral homeland, [is committed] to the maintenance or restoration of that homeland, [and derives] a collective consciousness and solidarity from a relationship with the homeland.” I would argue, however, that since diasporas do not necessarily involve transnational participation, identified as social and economic networks that transcend national boundaries, Van Hear’s assumption is also limited. Diasporas and transnational communities both involve social networks which imply collective membership and an emotional attachment to a common homeland; however, they are neither necessarily embedded in one another nor mutually exclusive.

Since diasporas and transnational communities are both distinct and potentially overlapping social constructs, it is important to pinpoint the similarities and differences of each. Thomas Faist (2010) argues that both are “extremely elastic terms” which imply sustained cross-border social relationships based on a common homeland. However, while diasporic literature emphasises cultural distinctiveness, research on transnational

communities focuses more on migrant incorporation and transnational practices such as regular communication and the transfer of financial remittances.

For the purposes of defining and characterising transnational participation, the social and political concept of citizenship is likely the most significant obstacle to the theory of transnationalism. Citizenship and the institution of the nation-state are humanity's method of dividing the world into different territories, different fields of responsibility, and different levels of belonging. In this context, citizenship can be defined as the “political membership in a given nation-state through which citizens possess civil, political, and social rights” (Mehta and Napier Moore 2011: 418). In the case of transnational participants, this definition, however, fails to accurately conceptualise their social, economic, and political participation in multiple nations.

Rainer Bauböck (1994: 3) argues that the concept of "transnational citizenship" can bridge the boundaries between people as they "emerge in the crossing of territorial borders and in the extension of rights beyond membership of political communities." Although arguably an oxymoron, transnational citizenship could potentially be very useful when describing the emergence of transnational practices and the social production of community membership not determined by lines between nations. Particularly when concerning refugee communities who typically lack national recognition and/or protection, new emerging definitions of belonging and community participation become ever more vital. Considering that this framework is conceptualised by exploring beyond the limitations of nationhood as the primary contributor to the formation of social identities, future research in transnational communities could use this framework to examine the millions of forcibly displaced people who lack the right of citizenship in their current host country.

Mehta and Napier-Moore (2011) suggest that the concept of citizenship is changing to be more based on a migrant's participation in a society, otherwise recognised as “lived

experiences,” rather than formal citizenship. This concept implies that informal citizenship can be gained by contributing to the economy or participating in religious, civil, or social organisations. The authors argue that despite the lack of recognition from formal institutions, citizenship based on lived experiences is becoming much more common in which people from all over the world are claiming membership to multiple nations and multiple communities.

In this thesis, I am using Johnathan Fox's (2005: 192) definition of transnational citizenship in which a person claims "full membership in a civic or political community that is rooted in more than one state, usually based on shared cultures." For example, Paul Johnston (2001: 256) proposes that the concept of the citizen is shaped by public involvement rather than just the association with an institution, such as with a nation-state. Johnston claims that this view allows us to acknowledge the fluidity and transformation of various institutions over time. By acknowledging the social membership of a person in a community or society through their participation in various civic, political, and economic activities, it becomes conceivable to acknowledge the concept of transnational citizenship in which actors, or "citizens," can claim rights within multiple societies as a response to their participation.

Transnational practices that promote community belonging and simultaneity, in which migrants are socially and economically active in multiple nations, are an increasingly relevant field of study. As technology facilitating communication practices and the exchange of money is advanced, growing in accessibility and decreasing in cost, notions of belonging are changing. Under these conditions, family values and cultural traditions can be maintained across both the borders between nations and between generations of migrants. Furthermore, as explored later in section 3.3, transnational citizenship, in which a person's national belonging is identified by their active social, economic, and political participation, has the

potential to decrease the marginalisation of refugees who have no government to protect them under the current limitations of their national citizenship.

### 3.2 Transferring Remittances

The transfer of financial remittances is considered a core concept of many transnational communities, often facilitating the maintenance of communication, travel, social status, and community welfare. Remittances act as a currency of bondedness within communities built upon strong ties of kinship, traditional cultural practices, and emotional reciprocity. As discussed in this section, remittances sent between family members living in different nations have been shown to have the potential to reduce poverty and generally improve the future opportunities of the recipients. However, as argued by Carling (2014), the transfer of remittances requires careful social navigation on behalf of both the recipients and the senders who choose to partake in these relationships of mutual dependency and reciprocity.

Within the last decade, Kenya, like many other developing nations, saw an increase in remittances from US \$570 million in 2006 to approximately \$1.565 billion in 2015 (Ratha et al. 2016: 179). While many academics (Acosta et al. 2015; De Haas 2009; Fransen 2015; Munyera and Matsumoto 2016; Salas 2014) agree that remittances have in general a positive effect on the lives of recipients living in the developing world, there is also a debate that has developed as to whether the scale of remittances has increased as dramatically as the data has shown in recent decades or whether the methods of measuring these financial resources have just simply improved as a result of advancements in technology and data resources. David McKenzie (2014) argues that only "21.7 percent of recorded remittance growth [worldwide] is due to changes in the fundamental drivers of remittances, with almost 80 percent therefore potentially due to changes in measurement." While there is still a lack of consensus as to

what constitutes a "remittance", some claim that we are getting closer to the truth while others contend that we are often overstating data by including other types of financial transactions (Guha 2011; McKenzie 2014). Due to this lack of statistical consistency within the study of remittances, I suggest that ethnographic data can provide significant insight into their influence on the lives of both the remittance recipients and senders.

Financial remittances can be broadly defined as “cross-border monetary transfer(s) made by migrants residing abroad to their families in their country of origin, primarily to meet (their) financial needs” (Guha 2011:2). This definition can be interpreted in a variety of ways and typically depends on how long the migrant has lived in their new country/region of residence, their patterns of migration, and their involvement in transnational activities. Although the definition of remittances typically refers to relatively small financial transfers exchanged between individual households, researchers and institutions sometimes also include stock investment efforts, foreign direct investment, and donations given to non-profit organisations (Guha 2011).

These unclear parameters of measuring remittances vary significantly between countries and economic institutions, making comparative statistics and economic analysis highly unreliable.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the identification of the term “remittance” often implies direct connections with a homeland, and therefore ignores or inaccurately defines the issues faced by refugees and stateless persons. To avoid confusion, I will define financial remittances as the transfer of monetary funds between individuals or communities that live in separate physical regions, whether international or intranational, but are bonded together by

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<sup>36</sup> In 2009, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank began a project that aimed to 1) simplify, clarify, and expand the definition of remittances in order to meet the needs of data users, and 2) develop a “practical compilation guidance to support compilers” (Guha 2011). This system is designed to be internationally universal and aid in minimising the variations of measurement between studies.

kinship networks or a shared cultural heritage to meet the primary financial needs of the recipients.

In recent decades, new theoretical frameworks have been developed in remittance studies that aim to understand the social reasons behind remittance sending patterns and how these transactions aid in community development. As part of the “New Economics of Labour Migration” (NELM) theory, analysing migration as a community or household decision and remittances as components of transnational systems, King and Lulle (2016: 97-98) claim that “remittances contribute to the survival and progress of the family unit based in the country of origin [enabling] migrants to develop and sustain multi-stranded relationships that span borders.” The authors argue that these transnational communities can have direct implications on migration and development and that remittances are a fundamental component of transnational livelihoods.

There is a lack of consensus in the literature about transnational communities, the transfer of remittances, and their influence on the developing world (De Haas 2005; Gamlen 2014).<sup>37</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s researchers argued that remittances did very little to combat poverty and to aid social development in impoverished nations because these resources lead to a “passive and dangerous dependency” and that they are most often spent on “conspicuous ... and non-productive consumption”. These statements, however, lack significant evidence (De Haas 2005: 1274).<sup>38</sup> De Haas (2005) contends that international migrant households have an increased potential to invest and that there is no linear argument to prove that

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<sup>37</sup> The contradictions that have arisen in the literature on migration and remittances, between what Gamlen (2014) identifies as pessimism and optimism in policy research, have undergone wide shifts in consensus for well over a century and often reflect political motives and current global economic and social circumstances.

<sup>38</sup> De Haas (2005) outlines five common myths about Migration, Remittances, and Social Development that have arisen over the past several decades but are founded on poor empirical and analytical evidence. These myths are: 1) that we live in an unprecedented age of migration, 2) that poverty is the root cause of migration, 3) that forms of development assistance are “remedies” against migration, 4) that migration provokes a “brain drain”, and 5) that remittances are most often spent on non-productive consumption.

receiving remittances leads to long-term dependency. In fact, remittances have been shown in several studies (Acosta et al. 2015; Adams 2006; Edwards and Ureta 2003; Hildebrandt et al. 2005) to increase access to education, higher quality nutrition, sanitation, and healthcare. Furthermore, even if non-productive consumption practices do increase, this would contribute to more economic activity in the remittance receiving country, contributing to the development of the economy and wealth distribution.

In his contribution to NELM theory, Taylor (1999) points out that the impact that remittances might have on receiving communities is likely to fall between two competing theories. Taylor classifies the first as the ‘developmentalist extreme,’ which argues that 1) migration decisions are family strategies to raise income, and 2) that remittances, or even the potential for remittances, loosens constraints on investment faced by remittance recipients in poor and developing nations. Comparatively, the theory known as ‘the Dutch Disease’ or the ‘migrant syndrome,’ states that migration patterns drain migrant-sending nations of valuable labour and capital. Taylor believes that the reality for migrant-sending communities most likely will lie somewhere in between these two extremes dependent on the experiences of both the migrant community and their family members who potentially receive remittances.

Finally, De Haas (2005) suggests that the potential for transnational remittances to lead to either increased economic activity or passive dependency on behalf of the remittance recipients is largely dependent on general developmental, plus economic, social, or political constraints. Such constraints could potentially include bad economic infrastructure, corruption, red tape, the lack of appropriate public policies, a lack of legal security, and a high level of distrust in government institutions. In the case of the South Sudanese refugees studied in this thesis, most of the social, political, and economic barriers outlined above are harsh realities for refugees in Kenya, thus significantly contributing to the lack of investment

opportunities and further dependency on both their transnational networks in addition to the UNHCR.

Adams and Page argue that there is a significant positive correlation between the transfer of international remittances and the reduction of poverty in the developing world (Adams and Page 2005: 1660; see also Adams 2006). In a study that examined the uses and transfer patterns among mobile money users in East Africa, Munyera and Matsumoto (2016) found that people living in rural areas with access to increased financial resources experienced a significant increase in food consumption, an improved quality of healthcare, and were more likely to invest in education. These socio-economic factors are referred to in the literature as “human development,” in other words, development which is focused on the human condition rather than purely economic indicators.

In a study on the influence of remittances on the reduction of household poverty across eleven Latin American nations, Acosta et al. (2015) demonstrated a variety of results between each nation considered. For example, their study shows that in six of the nations examined remittances positively correlated to a reduction of extreme and moderate poverty ranging from two to seven percent. The authors argue that remittances have the potential to significantly influence the long-term welfare of the recipients through investment in healthcare, education, and various other forms of human capital. In the case of extremely impoverished remittance recipient communities, this influx of financial resources most significantly influenced children’s access to education, particularly when their parents had low or no educational history.

Similar studies have shown that when lower and middle-income families living in developing nations gain additional financial resources, they are more likely to invest in future social capital resources (Fransen 2015; Salas 2014). In much of the world, basic education involves significant costs in the form of tuition, uniforms, transportation, and supplies. Vania

Salas (2014) argues that remittances have a significant influence on the human capital development of children by altering the cost-benefit relationship of investing in the education of community members.

The relationship between remittances and development can be argued to be more than the simple allocation of money but rather a process of building and expanding the abilities of the individual, the community, and a population in general (De Haas 2009: 295; Sen 1999). Development can be understood as the ability to choose, whether it is an education, a business investment, a career prospect, political involvement, or any number of the medical treatments that remain unavailable to the majority of the world. It is the ability to chase aspirations, to ensure the welfare of family members, and to ensure that there is a future for the individual, their family unit, and their broader community network.

Under Amartya Sen's (1999: 5) definition of "development as freedom", remittances are closely linked to "political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives."<sup>39</sup> As suggested by Sen, development is more complicated than the provision of economic resources to those perceived to be in need, but also entails ensuring access to the labour market, educational resources, healthcare, and adequate nutrition. Remittances could potentially become a gateway to these development standards pending the stable economic, governmental, and

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<sup>39</sup> Sen (1999: 38-40) argues that development requires five instrumental freedoms: 1) Political freedoms through the opportunities of people to decide who should govern them, 2) Economic facilities through the opportunities of people to access economic resources through consumption, production or exchange, 3) Social opportunities determined by access to education, healthcare, and the general ability to live better, 4) Transparency guarantees and the desire/need for openness, and finally 5) Protective security defined as a "social safety net" protecting an individual from misery, starvation, violence, and death. Sen suggests that these freedoms are linked to and supplement one another.

community infrastructures that are necessary for a successful market economy (Bjuggren et al. 2008).<sup>40</sup>

When compared to foreign direct investment and large-scale development projects, De Haas (2005) argues that remittances are considerably less volatile and a more reliable source of income to recipients living in the developing world. However, there are several pitfalls when considering remittances as a potential solution to poverty. Primarily, remittances might not flow to the poorest of any population since migrants typically must have at least some economic and social capital to travel and send money back to their families (Acosta et al. 2015; De Haas 2009).<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, restrictive policies often discourage circular migration patterns and incentivise permanent residence in a migrant's new nation. As time goes by, a migrant who is unable to return to their homeland and become reintroduced into their traditional community can potentially lose touch with their roots, thus decreasing the sustainability of remittance transfer practices.

Remittance decay, the deterioration of remittance exchange practices over time, is still a relatively unexplored topic. Several authors (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2006; Grieco 2004; Stark 1978) suggest that the time pattern of remittances sent by migrant populations forms an inverted “U” shape (see Figure 3.1). The Remittance Decay Hypothesis argues that remittances increase gradually as a migrant adjusts to their host country, and similarly decrease as the migrant’s ties to their homeland become weaker over time. It is also argued that the sending of remittances will spike occasionally in response to specific needs or special

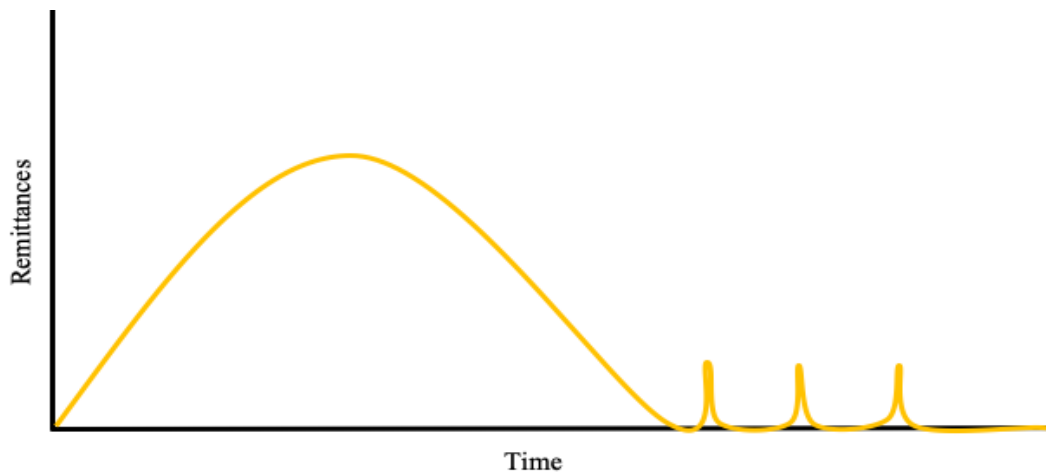
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<sup>40</sup> Bjuggren et al. (2008) argue that the ability of remittance recipients living in poverty to invest their financial resources is highly dependent on the existence and quality of financial and non-financial institutions such as stable banks, systems of government, and community organisations.

<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that most of the refugees who live abroad were resettled by the UNHCR and various NGOs or were granted asylum regardless of their access to money. Although very few refugees are resettled every year, De Haas’ (2009) argument that the poorest of the poor are unable to migrate and send remittances is irrelevant in refugee populations. A refugee’s ability to be resettled is most often determined by the UNHCR’s perception of need, the willingness of a host nation to accept refugees, and the ability of the refugee to navigate the bureaucratic resettlement process.

events. Similarly, Richard Brown (1998) claims that the longer that a migrant is away from their nation of origin, their social ties and perception of need for their family in another nation are likely to decline as they lose their urgency and compete with new commitments in the migrant's nation of residence.

Figure 3.1 Remittance Decay Hypothesis (Stark 1978)



This figure is a depiction of Oded Stark's (1978) Remittance Decay Hypothesis which suggests that the temporal profile of remittances sent from migrants forms an inverted "U" pattern, eventually ceasing except for the occasional spike in response to special events or unexpected circumstances.

In contrast, Carling and Hoelscher (2013) argue that a migrant's ability to engage in transnational practices, particularly through the sending of financial remittances, is determined by their ability to economically integrate into their host society. In their study on several immigrant populations living in Norway, their data suggests that integration and transnational participation are "complementary not competing" (Carling and Hoelscher 2013: 244). Under the assumption that the sending of remittances is simultaneously influenced by a migrant's capacity and desire to do so, integration implies higher rates of employment, higher incomes, and thus the capacity to send significant financial resources to their family living in another nation. In contrast, difficulties speaking the local language, understanding the local

culture, and developing social networks in their nation of residence also implies difficulties sustaining both the migrant's welfare while simultaneously sending regular remittances to family members in another nation.

The different perspectives of these theories on the sustainability of remittance sending patterns, will further vary significantly between each migrant population, reflecting their particular cultural values and the maintenance of their social bonds, in addition to the time elapsed since their migration and their level of integration into their new host nation. Despite the variations in these assumptions and between populations, it can be argued that when migrants do remit, these funds go directly into the hands of people that need them rather than being allocated to governments and aid workers. Although remittances rarely go to the poorest of the poor in developing nations, De Haas (2009:310) suggests that they have the potential to reduce poverty through what he calls "multiplier effects". For example, remittances encourage the development of microenterprises, which even if moderately successful could fund the education of family members, influence the general health and nutrition of remittance recipients, and create employment for other people in the area.

The social and economic intentions and commitments that incentivise remittance transfer practices are highly variable. According to Jørgen Carling (2014: 219), they are composed of "material, emotional, and relational elements." Carling argues that ethnography can provide insight on the culturally-informed expectations and meanings behind the practice of remittance exchange, best understood through the utilisation of what he calls remittance "scripts." He defines scripts as a "structure of expectations for specific types of situations which facilitate social interaction" that can represent the "roles, actions, and statuses" of remittance transactions and the relationships that facilitate these elements (Carling 2014: 220). Although the social systems and inherent meaning behind these scripts are culturally-specific, Carling identifies twelve scripts that he maintains can be applied to any

ethnography.<sup>42</sup> Carling argues that these scripts are extremely broad and that the social interactions that rationalise the behaviours behind them are complicated, typically including multiple intertwining scripts.

For this thesis, I suggest that, of the twelve, the five scripts of Allowance, Obligation and Entitlement, Sacrifice, Help, and Investment are the most relevant for the data presented. These five scripts explain and justify the reasons behind the transfer of remittances (Obligation and Entitlement, Sacrifice, and Help), their uses (Investment), and their management (Allowance) in refugee transnational families. The exploration of these scripts in relation to Kakuma in Chapters 5 through 8, specifically the justification for sending remittances, their uses, and their management will provide much-needed insight into why remittances are transferred to refugee transnational participants and the potential influence they have on poverty reduction and the promotion of individual and community agency for those who continue to live within the refugee system.

One of Carling's (2014) primary arguments is that both the senders and receivers of remittances play active roles in these transactions and that it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of the recipients' actions. The transfer of financial resources is "reactive," responding to both the desire/compulsion to send money, and to requests on behalf of the recipient who must actively make claims of need. Although communication and wire transfers have become easier in recent decades, remittance recipients must still invest valuable resources to support their transnational relationships with migrant community members. These investments could include spending money on cell phones, international calling minutes (otherwise known as airtime), internet access, and transportation to access these resources.

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<sup>42</sup> Carling's twelve scripts are Compensation, Repayment, Authorisation, Pooling, Gift, Allowance, Obligation and Entitlement, Sacrifice, Blackmail, Help, Investment, and Donation.

In one of the early classic papers on remittances, Lucas and Stark (1985) consider the personal motivations behind why migrants engage in these relationships of financial dependency with their family and community that are left behind in their homeland or, as in the case of this study, nations of exile. They argue that altruism, and thus the love for a migrant's family, is the most obvious and primary motivator behind the sending of remittances. However, as suggested by Lucas and Stark (1985), many migrants often have motivations that are purely for their self-interest such as to gain respect and prestige in their family and wider community or to position themselves to inherit family property.

Lucas and Stark (1985) argue that most migrants who send financial resources home typically lie somewhere in between the spectrum of "purely altruistic" or "purely self-interest," a zone that they have identified as "tempered altruism" and "enlightened self-interest." For example, a migrant might send money home to financially support the children in their extended family through their education. In exchange for these resources, they might expect to have more authority in various family decisions such as potential business ventures or marriage opportunities. While most individuals lie somewhere in between the spectrum of altruism and self-interest in this framework, the reasoning behind the sending of remittances is unique to each person being studied.

A common theme in the literature on transnational participants engaging in the transfer of remittances is the concept of reciprocity, the idea that people send financial remittances for the mutual benefit of all parties involved. An example of these economic and social exchanges is "Balanced Reciprocity," a reciprocal relationship in which "all family members are simultaneously receivers and donors embedded in bonded relationships" (Tsai and Dzorgbo 2012: 216). In exchange for significant and regular financial contributions, migrants can build or maintain a connection to their ancestral homeland or traditional culture, gain the trust of both their family and community members, and increase their social status

among the recipients of their contributions (Tsai and Dzorgbo 2012; Zhou and Li 2016). This reciprocal relationship is crucial for the maintenance of family and community connections across borders and arguably mitigates the stress that remittance senders often experience.

The stress experienced by both the senders and receivers of remittances is often the result, as shown in several case studies, of unrealistic demands placed on the migrants to support entire extended kin networks (Hammond 2011; Ikuomola 2015; Johnson and Stoll 2008, 2013; Lindley 2010; Martone et al. 2001; Trapp 2013). For example, Ikuomola (2015) argues that conflict can arise between the senders and receivers based on issues of power and dependency. Johnson and Stoll (2013) assert that refugee migrants who have been resettled often feel obligated to support entire families, despite facing financial difficulties themselves, because they have access to more resources than community members living in their homeland or a refugee camp.

One of the reasons that migrants might experience stress when they engage in remittance transfer practices is because they might feel what Laura Hammond (2011) identifies as the "obligation to give." Hammond, in her study on Somali refugees living in the US, argues that not only are the migrants expected to support their family members in their homeland financially, but there is also often a lack of understanding of the high cost of living in the West, leading to tensions within the family. Despite the limited economic opportunities for new migrants, particularly for resettled refugees, the knowledge that their family members might be without necessities compels them to provide what little they might have. Participants in Hammond's study mentioned that their families often complained that they were not receiving enough money and that these migrants felt tremendous pressure to provide for their family but were unable to meet the demands placed on them.

Accompanying the transfer of financial remittances is the trade of social remittances, recognised in transnational literature as the "ideas, behaviours, and social capital that flow

from receiving to sending-country communities" (Levitt 1998: 927). Although social remittances are more difficult to measure, their impact on both migrant communities and their families remaining in the homeland or nation of asylum can be significant. Social remittances can influence traditional cultural expectations of "interpersonal behaviour, notions of intra-family responsibility, standards of age and gender appropriateness, principles of neighbourliness and community participation, and aspirations for social mobility" (Levitt 1998: 933). These values, beliefs and ideas shape how recipients of social remittances act in their everyday lives particularly through household duties and their participation in political, religious and civil activities.

The transfer of remittances, both financial and social, has become a key topic in the study of transnationalism and the building of transnational networks and communities. Remittances have been shown to influence the reduction of poverty in developing nations, aiding the promotion of human development in some of the world's most economically and socially marginalised populations. Transnational communities are built on complicated relationships influenced by ideas of obligation, reciprocity, social status, and the nature and logic of the social interactions between community members at "home" and "abroad". In the case of the South Sudanese refugees of Kakuma and their protracted state of exile, the study of remittance transfer practices and the social networks that promote them will give insight into this population's agency and the potential of their transnational community networks to contribute to a durable solution to their protracted displacement.

### 3.3 Transnational Refugee Communities

Having reviewed transnational communities in general in the previous sections, the question arises: are there distinct features of transnational communities that contain members

who live in refugee camps? In the context of refugee transnational communities, remittances have the potential to have a significant impact on the livelihood development of community members currently living inside a camp, by contributing to education, health, and the general welfare advancement of the recipients. In exchange for sending regular financial contributions to their families still living inside a camp, refugee migrants living in places like the UK and the US gain the opportunity to remain connected to a culture that they were physically disconnected from and to gain increased status among their family and community members that live in a different nation. As indicated in the previous section, these relationships are often very stressful, particularly in refugee communities in which the financial needs of the recipients are considerable, and where the earning capabilities of resettled refugees are limited. The question remains whether the social and economic impact that these practices have on communities that endure these periods of hardship have the potential to inspire a much-needed sense of independence and agency in the receiving communities.

As we have already seen, traditional transnational communities are typically defined as the social, economic, and political networks between a migrant community and their homeland. However, since refugee populations often have limited access to their homeland, these strong familial networks that transcend international borders might not include communication to their homeland due to ongoing war, limited reliable communication technology, or simply the lack of any community members who still reside in the homeland. When compared to traditional economic migrants, refugee transnational participants typically have different motives for the development of transnational networks. These motives include, but are not limited to, increasingly complex conflict situations, the forced physical separation of family members, and the virtually unattainable "durable solutions" outlined by the

UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention. Their participation in transnational social networks is influenced by the need for survival in addition to a desire for economic stability.

The most significant difference between economic labour migrants and refugee transnational communities is that, for the latter, remittances are often crucial for survival (Van Hear and Cohen 2015; Vargas-Silva 2017). In unpredictable conflict situations which might lack reliable sources of social aid (i.e. medicine, legal representation, and food), the exchange of remittances can mean the difference between life and death. When compared to economic migrants, refugees have been shown to be more likely to send remittances and to send them more often (Carling et al. 2012). Furthermore, these acts of sending money to support their family members are more likely to be altruistic than for self-interest, referring to Lucas and Stark's model, because the immediate danger of the family contributes to high social pressures to remit (Lucas and Stark 1985; Vargas-Silva 2017)

Various characteristics of a refugee transnational community include the lack of options to return home, the spread of family members across multiple locations, and the more immediate need for the transfer of economic remittances (Van Hear 2006; Vargas-Silva 2017). In addition, due to eruptions of conflict and the remote locations of many recipients, communication between family members is typically unpredictable. Family displacement and reunification through established social networks are a part of life for refugees; potential transnational participants can go for decades without contact from their family members with whom they lost touch due to war, and then immediately undertake the responsibility to financially support these community members in need (Luster et al. 2008).

As discussed in section 3.1 of this chapter, while protracted refugees become increasingly disconnected from their nation of origin, concepts of citizenship and notions of belonging can potentially be altered to represent lived experiences rather than formal entities or institutions (Mehta and Napier-Moore 2011). According to Rask et al. (2014), refugee

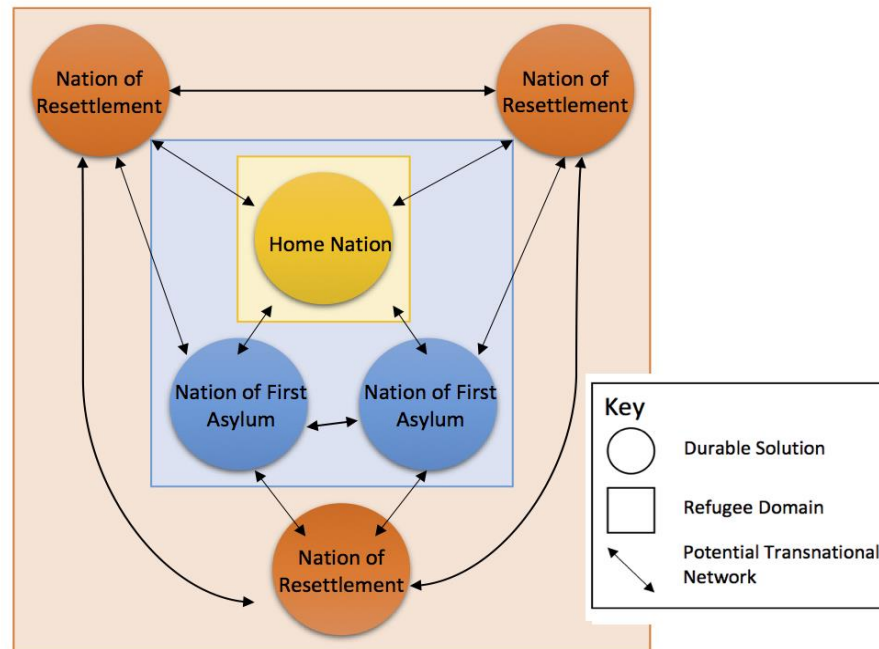
transmigrants, that is my transnational participants, typically lack social, economic, or political infrastructure, and face high degrees of uncertainty regarding social development and future opportunities. In a study on Somali refugee women living in Cairo which examined the “temporal and material dimensions of transnational lived citizenship,” Elisa Pascucci (2016) argued that twenty-first-century citizenship is ultimately a fluid concept based on experience and participation rather than formal national affiliation. Likewise, refugee “identities” must be fluid by nature, capable of building symbolic “social spaces” based on the foundation of familial bonds rather than geographic orientation.

Refugee transnational networks have the potential to be multilateral, not limited to links between the bilateral homeland and the country of settlement. While the participation of members in the traditional homeland is not an essential quality of a transnational community, Basch et al.’s (1994) definition of transnationalism does suggest that all community members share common cultural values and a shared belief in the homeland. Nicholas Van Hear (2003, 2006) suggests that transnational refugee networks exist in three domains: the homeland, the nations of first asylum, and the nations of resettlement (see Figure 3.2). These domains represent a diaspora that facilitates the exchange of people, information, money, and ideas between members of a refugee population at various stages of displacement, integration, and resettlement (Van Hear 2003: 4). He argues that remittances and other forms of transnational activity across these domains have become integral components of refugee livelihoods.

In reference to Van Hear's model of refugee transnational community domains shown in Figure 3.2, the South Sudanese diaspora represents an ideal example of the various levels of this model. For example, in my past research study (Patterson 2016), participants were resettled in the US but were in regular contact with their friends and family in all three domains including other nations of resettlement (Australia), first asylum (Kenya and Uganda) and the home nation (South Sudan). The networks established between the participants of this

study were developed both between and within domains, facilitating the exchange of cultural, economic, and social resources.

Figure 3.2 Refugee Transnational Domains and Corresponding “Durable Solutions”



This figure, based on Van Hear’s (2003) theory, represent the three domains of a refugee diaspora (the home nation, the countries of first asylum, and the countries of resettlement) and their corresponding "durable solution." These durable solutions include repatriation (yellow), integration (blue), and resettlement (orange). Each of these possible domains are associated with a potential transnational network developed among the participants of a transnational community (or diaspora) with the potential to operate both within and between domains.

According to Van Hear (2006: 11), many of the transnational research studies on refugee populations examine important aspects of transnational communities (such as the flow of money and information) but often fail to portray what he calls “the whole picture”, such as the complex political, social and economic relationships and experiences that have developed over time and across multiple borders. Considering that transnational communities incorporate the resources and experiences of multiple cultures, multiple sites, and changing relations between its members, it is necessary to explore beyond a linear analysis of

traditional ethnography through the incorporation or consideration of a model which considers multiple waves of migrant experiences in multiple locations.

Each wave of the diaspora, each generation, and each group of community members that settles in different parts of the world are likely to have significantly different experiences, beliefs, perspectives, and attitudes towards their role and responsibility within their community (Van Hear 2006; Vargas-Silva 2017). Furthermore, the study of refugee transnational communities is further complicated when considering a community's experiences of trauma, flight, survival strategies, and protracted displacement in addition to their adaptation to their life in their current place of settlement. Van Hear (2006) argues that only through an in-depth understanding of a refugee population dispersed across the world can we begin to identify solutions to protracted displacement and comprehend the potential of transnational networks within refugee communities.

While the experiences of displacement and resettlement vary dramatically between populations, Van Hear's refugee diaspora framework of networks and resource exchange can be applied to virtually any protracted refugee population as they each follow a similar pattern of limited mobility, inability to integrate into their host nation adequately, and ongoing conflict in their homeland.<sup>43</sup> Van Hear (2003, 2006, 2014) suggests that transnationalism and the interaction of these three levels of refugee statuses are potential solutions to protracted refugee displacement. He asserts that "over time complex and enduring relations develop among these domains of the diaspora emerging from a combination of migration compelled by circumstance or pursued by choice" (Van Hear 2003: 12). Transnational practices

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<sup>43</sup> The statement that refugees are often unable to integrate into their host nation adequately is based on my knowledge of Sub-Saharan African refugee populations who are forced to live inside camps, are isolated from the majority of the host population, and are prevented from contributing to their economic and political environments. Refugees in Uganda are an example of an exception and are more likely to be integrated to the host community when compared to other refugee populations in Kenya due to difference in policies established by the host government.

empower refugees to actively influence their future while facilitating the maintenance of familial ties between forcibly separated community members.

Although the establishment of transnational communities can potentially become a method for refugees to take control of their lives, it is important to consider the limitations of transnationalism. Several factors might prevent resettled refugee populations from participating in transnational activities including financial insecurity, language barriers, limited employment opportunities, lack of reliable communication technology, continued insecurity in the homeland, and confusing visa and residency regulations (Al-Ali et al. 2001a, 2001b; Hammond 2011; Johnson and Stoll 2013; Mascini 2012).

Pressure to provide financial remittances to family members who continue to live in developing nations, particularly inside refugee camps, is a significant source of stress for many resettled refugees (Hammond 2011; Johnson and Stoll 2013; Lim 2009). Despite the lack of economic opportunities available to them, members of these communities are expected to provide for family members, a role which Johnson and Stoll (2008) identify as becoming a “global breadwinner,” simply because they live in a wealthy nation. The strength of refugee transnational communities is dependent on both the capacity and desire of refugees to remit and maintain regular communication with their family members who continue to live in the homeland or a nation of first asylum (Bakker et al. 2014). In this context, capacity refers to the skills, resources, and organisation of the migrant community to aid in the development of a strong transnational community. Desire is largely influenced by cultural perceptions of commitment towards family and the maintenance of a balanced reciprocal relationship (Lim 2009; Tsai and Dzorgbo 2012).

Al-Ali et al. (2001a) and Mascini (2012) suggest that resettled refugees are socially vulnerable communities who experience considerable stress integrating into their new society; when members of these populations are pressured to support family members who

continue to live in insecure environments, they experience an eventual lack of willingness to engage in transnational practices. Other authors (Brees 2010; Carling et al. 2012; Hammond 2011; Johnson and Stoll 2008; Lim 2009; Patterson 2016) have argued that due to their privileged status, some resettled refugees often feel compelled to provide for family members in need despite experiencing financial hardship themselves.

In the case of South Sudanese resettled refugees living in the US and Canada, the participants of several case studies felt an overwhelming obligation and desire to maintain transnational ties with family members who they were separated from due to war (Johnson and Stoll 2008, 2013; Lim 2009; Patterson 2016; Shandy 2007). Despite varying capabilities and considerable stress, resettled South Sudanese were motivated by both their families' immediate need in addition to their personal desire to maintain their cultural identity that many lost as children. Soh-Leong Lim (2009) claimed that members of a South Sudanese community in California equated the loss of familial connections to the death of their cultural identity and their respectability as a person, consequently acting as a strong motivator for the development and maintenance of transnational relationships.

Diana Shandy's (2007) ethnography on South Sudanese transnational participants, in particular remittance senders, is currently the most extensive study on the experiences of this population group. In her study among unmarried male Nuer refugees who had been resettled throughout the US, Shandy states that on average each of her participants reported sending roughly \$5000 USD each year to family members living in refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia. Remittances were sent primarily through services like Western Union and Money Gram; however, some were also sent back informally through friends who were visiting the country they needed to send the money to, thereby virtually eliminating transfer fees. In the case of formal money transfer channels, remittance recipients may face various obstacles,

such as lacking formal identification, particularly for those living illegally outside of refugee camps, and the inability to speak the local language.

Shandy (2007) found that remittances among this population were typically sent on the condition that their use was agreed upon by both the sender and recipient, such as for education, food, or healthcare. If the money is used improperly, such as for alcohol, other family or community members eventually inform the remittance sender, who will likely stop the payments altogether or choose someone more responsible within the family to handle the finances. Shandy also argues that there are various other reasons why remittances might stop abruptly, highly dependent on the wellbeing and employment of the remittance senders.

Finally, Shandy (2007) argues that remittances sent among South Sudanese refugee transnational communities do not just sustain relationships between family and friends across international boundaries. Remittances also “broker possibilities for dramatic social change in the form of reconfigured residential patterns, local economies, and power structures” (Shandy 2007: 151). In other words, among the South Sudanese diaspora currently living in exile, remittances provide a valuable source of opportunity when the humanitarian aid system and their host nation have failed to do the same. Remittances, and the transnational relationships that facilitate them, could translate to the potential for education, healthcare, higher quality nutrition, economic opportunity, and the potential to end their dependency on the refugee system.

As suggested by Van Hear (2006, 2015), the development of transnational communities could be a potential “durable solution” to enduring protracted refugee situations, incorporating the social and economic resources from community members who have been repatriated, resettled, or who continue to live inside refugee camps. Marlowe (2018) claims that, by examining transnationalism through the lens of belonging in a migration and mobility approach, significant insight could be gained into future opportunities for those who continue

to live without a solution to their displacement. Through engagement in transnational communities and employing a mentality of lived citizenship (as discussed previously in section 3.1 of this chapter), refugee participants gain a sense of belonging that they potentially lack in the traditional sense, whether it be in their home nation, or their nations of asylum or resettlement.

Micah Trapp (2013) suggests that the exchange of remittances through “multi-local networks” empower refugees to assume a more active role in the refugee and resettlement system and decreases dependency on outside resources. For example, in a case study on Ethiopian refugees living in Nairobi, transnational remittances were typically the only or primary form of income and were used as a strategy to both develop the livelihoods of their family members and escape the insecurity of the refugee camp (Lindley 2007). Although refugees who received remittances felt that they were maintaining a state of dependency and were unable to become self-sufficient, remittances were an effective tool for livelihood development and future investment. Unlike humanitarian aid, transnational remittances exchanged among community members are reinforced by a mutual commitment and the general livelihood advancement of all parties involved rather than a continuous state of dependency and vulnerability.

The most significant limitation to the study of refugee transnational communities is that most transnational research has been conducted on economic labour migrants, and thus fails to acknowledge the issues faced by refugees (Mascini 2012; Vargas-Silva 2017). Furthermore, the vast majority of the existing case studies on refugee transnational communities only examine the perspective of resettled refugees and remittance senders, while a small minority examines refugees living in urban areas in the developing world, and even less on the influence of transnational participation for those living in refugee camps (Al-Ali et al. 2001a; Carling et al. 2012; Hammond 2011; Horst 2006; Johnson and Stoll 2008,

2013; Lindley 2007; Marlowe 2018; Omata 2012; Pascucci 2016; Shandy 2007). Therefore, there is a significant gap in the literature on the ways in which remittances and other forms of transnational participation influence refugee welfare and livelihood development.

### 3.4 Conclusion

A transnational community, as explored in this chapter, refers to the collective cross-border membership of a group of people developed upon familial bonds, shared values and expectations, loyalty and mutual reciprocity. In the case of refugee transnational communities, these community bonds are developed upon their experiences of conflict, forced displacement, social and economic marginalisation, limited access to their traditional homeland, and often years of disconnection from their family members. Despite the often-extreme conditions of their economic and social experiences, refugee transnational communities are frequently driven by a feeling of obligation towards their forcibly disconnected community, strong attachment to their traditional values of family responsibility, and an obligation to help their family members most in need.

In the case of protracted refugee populations for which the UNHCR has been unable to find a solution to their displacement for at least five years, and often decades, can transnational participation end their liminal status and empower them to become active participants in a society? As suggested by Baubock (1994) and Mehta and Napier-Moore (2011), transnational citizenship can enable social, economic, and even political participation that transcends the boundaries between nations and promotes the rights of those who have been marginalised by traditional notions of belonging.

As explored in Chapter 2, protracted refugee status in Kakuma refugee camp means much more than the inability to return home or to settle permanently in a new nation. The refugees who spend decades of their lives in this camp suffer from poverty and dependency

on aid organisations that have been systematically developed into life in the camp. For those who are completely dependent on aid organisations for the provision of basic resources, physical insecurity is simply accepted as part of life for refugees. Due to Kenya's restrictive policies, the vast majority of refugees cannot live outside of designated refugee camps and are incapable of earning a salary that would reduce their complete dependency on aid organisations, contributing to their significant need for remittances from their transnational counterparts.

As suggested by Trapp (2013), transnational participation empowers refugees to assume a more active role in their family's and community's current and future stability in a way that does not encourage the prolonged reliance on the international aid system. These refugee transnational networks utilise the social, economic, and political resources that are accessible within protracted refugee communities and have the potential to be more culturally relevant than the UNHCR's current policies. In the attempt to assess the validity of these assertions, the remaining chapters of this thesis aim to examine whether transnational participation has the potential to reverse the marginalisation of refugees in ways that are not limited by their nationality, their residency status, or the willingness of international aid organisations to continue their limited financial support while offering no alternative to their exile.

## Chapter 4: Methods, Ethics, and Issues Encountered in the Field

As an anthropological ethnography, this thesis is an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of a social process that is a by-product of conflict-induced displacement, strong attachments to family and culture, and access to communication technology that is continuously evolving. Like virtually all transnational communities, South Sudanese refugees are bound by an attachment to their homeland, a sense of responsibility to their heritage, a commitment towards the welfare and future opportunities of their community members, and are influenced by the tools and resources available to them.

In this chapter, I will address the methodological and ethical concerns that arose during the course of this research project. Due to the complexity of the experiences of displacement and migration within the South Sudanese transnational communities studied in this project, it was necessary to explore the nature of these relationships and their influence on the remittance recipients living in protracted states of exile from multiple locations and from multiple roles within these relationships. All of the methods employed were qualitative in nature in the attempt to tell the real lives of the participants in this study, their aspirations in life, their frustrations with family members abroad, and their daily struggles.

### 4.1 Locating the Field

Since the work of Malinowski and his establishment of the ‘field’ in anthropological fieldwork, this concept has for decades implied a structure that is spatially and culturally bounded (Coleman and Collins 2006; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Coleman and Collins (2006: 4) suggest that the uniqueness of the anthropological discipline has been grounded in a “particular vision of fieldwork” in which the ethnographer travels to a faraway world and

immerses him or herself into a culture virtually untouched by outsiders. In traditional ethnographic studies, the field is a single location in which to study a particular culture, customs, and lived experiences. However, according to Appadurai (1991: 191, 196), this traditional anthropological model of the field fails to accurately represent the rise in the movement of people and thus the exchange in their cultural values and experiences:

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic “projects”, the ethno in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalised quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond... The landscapes of group identity -the ethnoscares- around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialised, spatially bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogenous... The task of ethnography now becomes the unravelling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalised, deterritorialised world?

Considering that the diaspora discussed in this thesis has been displaced from their homeland of South Sudan, have lived in refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, and have been resettled or have moved as economic migrants to places like the UK and US, any single field location would fail to accurately represent the transnational nature of their relationships. Therefore, in reference to Van Hear’s (2003) refugee diaspora model (see Chapter 3 section 3.3), the populations chosen to be studied in this research project represent two of his three domains; a nation of first asylum and nations of resettlement. However, due to the current civil war in their homeland of South Sudan, it was impossible to conduct research in all three of Van Hear’s domains.

I chose Kakuma refugee camp as the centre of this research project due to its current and historical significance within the globally dispersed South Sudanese diaspora. Kakuma has been open to South Sudanese refugees since 1992, and who have since always represented a significant proportion of the camp’s population. Unlike camps in Uganda, Kakuma is primarily home to the wave of refugees who were originally displaced during Sudan’s second civil war (1983-2005) rather than the current war in South Sudan (2013-

present). Although both of these waves of refugees can be classified as protracted, the extent to which Kakuma's South Sudanese population has been in a protracted state of exile is a good example of the refugee system's inability to fulfil their policy agenda and to provide the people under their care with the support that they need to facilitate a solution to their exile. Finally, due to the significant resettlement programmes of the Lost Boy community, primarily to the US but also to Australia and Canada, Kakuma can be classified as a hub of the South Sudanese refugee diaspora.

Since this thesis examines transnational relationships, I thought it was important to explore both sides of these family networks, remittance senders and remittance recipients, through the utilisation of multi-sited ethnography. Marcus (1995: 96) originally defined multi-sited ethnography as a "strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives of the world system but does not rely on them for the contextual architecture framing a set of subjects." According to Falzon (2009:1-2) "the essence of multi-sited research is to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space (because they are substantially continuous but spatially non-contiguous)." Since transnational relationships are inherently not bound by the limitations of physical spaces for the maintenance of familial bonds and the transfer of economic resources, neither should the research methods used to examine them.

Ester Gallo suggests that when multi-sited research follows issues of migration and the movement of people it is necessary that methodological and research choices reflect the needs and limitations of each site. Even when studying the same population within multiple locations, unpredictable choices of those being researched make field sites appear "disconnected and incoherent with each other" (Gallo 2009: 88). She argues (2009: 89) that this is because "multi-sited ethnography is rooted in the recognition that the 'field' of ethnographic inquiry is not simply a geographical place waiting to be entered, but rather a

‘conceptual space’ whose meanings and confines are continuously negotiated by the ethnographer and their informants.” Therefore, as the ‘field’ in ‘field site’ becomes less defined, the conception of anthropological study becomes ever-more open and unpredictable, a reflection of complex human activity.

The transnational relationships represented in this study were strongly influenced by cultural values, experiences of migration/displacement, and policies developed by multiple nations and cultures. As demonstrated primarily in Chapter 6 of this thesis, the remittance senders and recipients of this population shared values which were grounded in their traditional culture; however, these values were also noticeably altered by their experiences after migration into their new nation of residence. Those fortunate enough to be resettled or to migrate by choice to the US or UK tended to be relatively financially stable and were therefore responsible for financially supporting family members who were living in refugee camps or in South Sudan where wages were notoriously unreliable. In comparison, remittance recipients, restrained by a combination of displacement and refugee policies, often developed a sense of dependency on their loved ones abroad who could financially support them through the hard times.

These complicated relationships were built on a foundation of strong cultural values of responsibility towards those considered kin, despite the distance between family members or the limitations placed on their lives. The strongest family networks developed regular and extended lines of communication, sometimes over the phone but increasingly through applications like Skype, Facebook, and WhatsApp. For example, as discussed further in Chapter 5, several participants in this study chose to maintain their relationships over family group chats in order to facilitate a continuous conversation between all participating community members. Due to the distance between those considered family, these

relationships were transformed into a virtual world, in which everyone continued to care and worry about one another but were increasingly aided by technological platforms.

Although two of my field locations, San Jose, California and London, do not hold the largest South Sudanese communities in either the US or the UK, they were both of significant size and easily accessible during the course of my studies. The participant observation among these communities also led to my introduction to several members of the South Sudanese diaspora outside of these locations whose participation in this study was facilitated by phone and Skype calls. The location of these participants outside of San Jose and London included Salt Lake City (Utah), Dallas (Texas), and Phoenix (Arizona) in the US as well as Manchester, Leeds, and Edinburgh in the UK.

Figure 4.1 is a representation of where and when I conducted my fieldwork. The first phase, carried out in San Jose, was completed as part of my Master's thesis (Patterson). However, many of my participants gave second interviews, particularly among remittance senders after I conducted the majority of my research in Kakuma between November 2017 and July 2018. Similarly, during my time in Kakuma I was also able to conduct phone interviews with men and women who at the time of their participation had lived throughout the US and UK.

Figure 4.1 Field Sites and Dates of Fieldwork

Population	Location	Dates of Fieldwork
Remittance Senders	San Jose, California, US	August 2015- April 2016
Remittance Senders	London, England, UK	June 2017- November 2017
Remittance Recipients	Kakuma, Kenya	November 2017- July 2018

## 4.2 Positionalities

There were several positionalities that I represented while conducting my fieldwork and which I have separated into four categories: the researcher, the volunteer, the advocate, and the cultural/community outsider. Each of these roles influenced the type of access that I was able to gain within my target communities, my relationships with the gatekeepers or informants of these communities, and the type of information collected during my fieldwork, in addition to the means by which I could give back to the communities who helped me complete my work.

In all three field locations (San Jose, London, and Kakuma) I entered these communities with the explicit intention of conducting research on people who identified as South Sudanese and engaged in transnational activities with family and friends who lived in another nation. This significantly influenced the type of people I was introduced to as well as the people who regularly communicated with me and offered their support towards my research project. Therefore, the relationships that I made within these communities were all based on the assumption that I would ask questions about their culture, their relationships with family members abroad, and the various ways they communicated and sent/received money from these family members.

In order to gain introductions into the South Sudanese communities of San Jose and London, I offered to become a volunteer with two organisations: Hope with South Sudan (HwSS) and South Sudanese Women's Skills Development (SSWSD) respectively. During the course of my fieldwork in California between August 2015 and April 2016, I volunteered for HwSS as a treasurer for their small organisation which sought to raise money for South Sudanese refugee children's tuition fees in Kenya and Uganda. Several members of their board of directors identified as members of the Lost Boy community, had developed strong

transnational relationships with their family in Kenya, and often socialised with other members of the South Sudanese community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Similarly, I volunteered to help organise workshops for the beneficiaries of SSWSD, which was run by several South Sudanese women who were active in their community. It was through these relationships that I was invited to several cultural events and parties where I met potential participants and people who offered to introduce me to their friends and family who met the criteria of my research project.

In Kakuma, I chose to distance myself from the humanitarian system, cautious that refugees would perceive me as having influence over their benefits and thus significantly changing the dynamic of our relationships. Consequently, rather than being a volunteer within the organisations whose goal was to distribute aid within the refugee camp, I chose to give back to the community who helped my research by responding directly to the needs and concerns of my participants. As discussed in several chapters throughout this thesis, I was sometimes asked to buy medicine or school supplies for my participants' children when they felt like they had no other choice, but primarily I was asked to be an advocate for their rights. On several occasions during my time in Kakuma, my participants asked for my help to get their family and friends out of jail, particularly when their charges were perceived by their community elders to be unjustified. On these occasions, I went with the elders of these communities to appeal to the camp manager, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), and various UNHCR protection officers. In these cases, being a foreigner and non-refugee within a refugee camp helped me, and the refugees accompanying me, gain access to people with authority who could defend their rights.

Finally, in all three of these locations I was both a cultural and community outsider. I believe that this position within their societies both limited and aided my ability to gain accurate results in my data collection. Firstly, as an outsider who looks different and who

does not understand their primary language (I communicated in English or through interpreters) or cultural customs, it was difficult for me to make my initial introductions and to fully understand the actions and reasonings my participants employed. However, it was also because I was an outsider who was interested in learning about their cultural practices that participants in all three locations actively made time to sit down with me throughout my fieldwork in order to explain some of the cultural phenomena I had witnessed.

It is also important to note that as a white American, the majority of my participants, or potential participants, in Kakuma were interested to learn about my research project and to become acquainted with me. This interest contributed significantly to my presence being known within this community, and due to word of mouth, helped to spread my call for research participants. In addition, being a woman helped me to gain access to the women of Kakuma's South Sudanese population, which, due to their often-invisible social roles, would have been significantly more difficult otherwise.

#### 4.3 Identifying and Accessing Research Participants

The men and women who participated in this study represented a wide range of ages, tribal identities, experiences of displacement and transnational participation, as well as strength of their transnational social networks. My primary target population, due to their history and connection with Kakuma, were participants who identified as members of the Lost Boy population and their family members. However, due to the complexity of migration patterns among members of the South Sudanese diaspora, these classifications were far from simple. Everyone who participated in this study was either born in South Sudan or in Kakuma, and had returned to South Sudan at various points in their lives. All of the men in this study who lived in the US were resettled as refugees. Their wives, however, were only given the opportunity to migrate as wives under fiancée or marriage visas and as mothers to

the sons and daughters of American citizens. In comparison, the majority of the men and women who lived in the UK during their interviews migrated as students or working professionals, while only two came to the UK as asylum seekers.

In Kakuma, many of the men and women who identified as members of the Lost Boy community had previously been refugees in Ethiopia, had migrated back to South Sudan several times within the previous two decades, and had lived at various times in Uganda or elsewhere in Kenya in order to pursue their educations, economic opportunities, or increased security. Consequently, the experiences of the diaspora represented in this thesis are complex, in large part due to the continuous states of economic insecurity experienced by the men and women who identified as refugees.

Kakuma's South Sudanese population was also divided both socially and physically by tribal affiliation, the Dinka, the Nuer, and refugees from the Equatorial region in South Sudan (shown in Figure 1.3 in Chapter 1). South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma generally tended only to socialise, consider as family, and share resources with those from their group (see Chapter 6 section 6.2). Tensions in Kakuma were particularly high between the Dinka and Nuer, a reflection of the current civil war in South Sudan, which contributed towards further insecurity in the camp. For the most part, I found that only the men and women represented in this study who worked as pastors, teachers, or for various aid organisations socialised outside of their own community structure within Kakuma.

Figure 4.2 Participant Demographics

Tribe/Region of Origin		
	UK/US	Kakuma
Dinka	10	21
Nuer	4	29
Equatorian	7	30

Gender		
	UK/US	Kakuma
Men	13	37
Women	8	43
Total	21	80

Age		
	UK/US	Kakuma
18-25	0	20
26-50	21	53
51-75	0	7

The transnational relationships considered in this study fell into at least one, but often multiple, social categories: a spouse, parent, niece/nephew, sibling, an in-law, cousin, or an old friend. In many cases, the participants maintained several of these transnational relationships to the best of their ability, and chose to discuss during their interview the nature of the one that was the strongest or most relevant to my research. In some of these cases, the participants talked with some of their family members abroad regularly and for extended periods of time, but barely communicated with others or only called to talk about money.

Approximately 20 of the remittance recipients in Kakuma were in what I classified as failed or failing transnational relationships. As discussed in more depth in Chapter 5 section 5.3, these were men and women who used to receive remittances but had not within the year previous to their interview or only received a remittance transfer once in the previous year. The patterns of receiving remittances positively correlated to the frequency and length of the conversations with their transnational counterpart and reflected the declining emotional bond between remittance sender and recipient. Although the participants who were identified as having failed or failing transnational relationships, or were only able to maintain very weak

ones, were in one sense peripheral to the core of my project, their experiences gave much insight into the social commitments needed to maintain strong relationships.

Due to the limited South Sudanese population sizes in California and the South East of England, I employed a chain referral recruitment model (Penrod et al. 2003). Similar to snowball sampling, chain referral refers to the reliance on a participant's established social networks to help strategically target the scope of investigation, specifically targeting multiple networks to diversify the sample. For example, there were several participants in this study who were introduced to me by their friends and extended family; however, I also purposefully targeted a diverse population sample based on age, gender, and tribal identity. Penrod et al. (2003) suggest that chain referral sampling is ideal when studying a vulnerable and relatively limited population.

For remittance senders living in the US or UK, I specifically targeted people who identified as South Sudanese, had lived at some point in their lives in South Sudan and/or Kakuma, and who maintained strong transnational connections with family members currently living in East Africa, primarily Kenya, Uganda or South Sudan. Many of my participants maintained active relationships with family members in all three East African nations and held strong opinions about which nations were the most secure, the most affordable, and the most comfortable for their family members who continued to live there. Although not all participants from the US and UK represented in this study were able to send remittances frequently or at regular intervals due to issues of employment or costs of living, all acknowledged that it was their responsibility to financially and emotionally support one or several of their family members in Africa.

The majority of my interviewees in the US and UK were identified due to their association with local community organisations, specifically HwSS based in San Jose California and the SSWSD based in London, or by their association with other participants. I

met two remittance senders while they were visiting their family members in Kakuma, and was introduced to two others over the phone by their family members in Kakuma. Although there were several people in both San Jose and London who actively attempted to help me find participants and to explain various cultural phenomena, due to my work with HwSS and SSWSD there was no need to find gatekeepers in the same manner that was needed in Kakuma.

During my time in Kakuma, I actively worked with four community leaders who helped me as gatekeepers to this population. They functioned as recruitment assistants, translators, and would often describe various cultural activities, values, or customs which I struggled to understand. James was a Dinka pastor who I had been communicating with through email for two years prior to my arrival in Kakuma due to our mutual work with HwSS. Tim was a nineteen-year-old Dinka man who worked as a teacher, and was the nephew of Peter (introduced in Chapter 1) who had been resettled to the US 16 years previously. Tim helped me find the majority of the young adult participants, particularly those who were determined to attend university to combat their marginalised status as the first generation of refugees in their communities born inside the camp. Paul was a Nuer pastor who actively visited the members of his community who he believed were struggling with insecurity. He also regularly conducted youth leadership workshops and advocated for refugee rights within the humanitarian aid system. Finally, Isaac, a member of the Lango tribe from the Equatorial region of South Sudan, was an employee of a local NGO. His charm and charisma helped him develop extensive social networks between South Sudanese tribes and other nationalities in the camp.

#### 4.4 Fieldwork Details: Methodology and Analysis

This research project employed participant observation in collaboration with semi-structured interviews in all three field sites. This section is an outline of the ways in which I employed these data collection methodologies and analysed the results.

Participant observation, defined by Emerson et al. (2001) as the method of “establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting”, is at the core of anthropological and other ethnographic research. By actively living people’s lives with them, to the best of our ability, our research questions and interviews become better informed and can better reflect our participants’ experiences rather than simply our perception of them.

For example, in this study, family and community responsibility were concepts that many of the South Sudanese participants found difficult to translate into words. Family was everything to the members of these communities, and the thought that individual welfare might be more important was inconceivable, particularly for participants who lived in Kakuma. When accurate verbal description fell short among the members of this population about why maintaining transnational familial relationships was so important, observing daily interactions between community and family members filled the gaps in my comprehension. Family took care of each other in every capacity because it was their responsibility as members of their community, despite extreme poverty or tremendous distance. I do not believe that I would have been able to truly understand the depth of this through interviews or surveys given that the familial bond among this South Sudanese population was expressed through actions and mutual concern, not through words.

The majority of my participant observation among the remittance senders of this population was conducted by working together with the two community organisations

mentioned previously, informal conversations over coffee, in addition to several cultural events and community parties. I watched my participants interact with their community members living in the UK and US, talk and text with their family in Africa, and help raise money within their community as a means to take care of their transnational loved ones.

In Kakuma, some of my most insightful experiences were when I was able to spend time with both remittance senders and recipients, in which I was able to personally witness the unique dynamics between these roles within South Sudanese transnational family units. I learned that these families were large, complicated, and messy, but that each participant found great satisfaction looking after the social, mental, physical, and financial welfare of their family members to the best of their ability. Sometimes this meant listening to and supporting their family members abroad about their struggles, acting as a mediator over the phone, or ensuring the welfare of the rest of the family in the camp (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6).

In Kakuma, I spent recurring periods of time getting to know the gatekeepers to this South Sudanese population, their extended families, their daily lifestyles, their life stories, and their aspirations for the future. I often accompanied them to church services, their places of employment, funerals, weddings, and just shared meals with them and their families. On days in which we sought to find interviewees, these men (James, Tim, Paul and Isaac) would either walk from house to house within their neighbourhood or we would wait for potential participants to come into their homes. I discovered several months after I had arrived in Kakuma that much of this work happened without my presence, by which these gatekeepers would ask around their own social network and rely on word of mouth to find potential participants. In the cases in which these men did not already have an established friendship with the potential interviewee, they would often meet up with these individuals prior to their interview to assess whether they met my criteria for participants.

The gatekeepers mentioned above, all of whom were quadri-lingual, acted as translators for 36 out of the 80 interviewees among remittance recipients in Kakuma, the majority of whom were with women. When the interview was not conducted in English, they were translated from Swahili, Arabic, or one of many South Sudanese tribal languages. The remaining 44 interviews were conducted in English, thus no translator was required.

My interviews were held in a variety of places, and were conducted both in person and over the phone. These interviews were semi-structured in order to ensure that they addressed my research questions but also enabled each participant to tell their story how and when they felt the most comfortable. These interviews were divided between specific themes, such as communication, family relationships, the process and emotions about sending/receiving remittances, as well as their future aspirations for refugee family members. These themes enabled me to compare the unique experiences of each man and woman presented in this study while simultaneously identifying similar trends among South Sudanese transnational participants.

The questions asked during these interviews changed regularly during the course of my fieldwork as I became better informed about the social experiences and cultural expectations of my participants. The more I learned about the communities that I was studying, the more informed and prepared I became for each question that I asked. For clarification purposes, I often informally interviewed many of my gatekeepers and South Sudanese friends in Kakuma, the US, and the UK multiple times in order to ensure the validity of my analysis of the more formal interviews conducted in their communities. In these cases, friends and gatekeepers helped me further understand the cultural practices and some of the experiences of other members of the South Sudanese diaspora.

During the course of my fieldwork, I kept a field diary in which I attempted to accurately record my experiences during my participant observation within these South

Sudanese communities as well as my various thoughts and notes concerning my interviews. These notes and the transcripts from the interviews which were recorded were later categorised into themes, informed by my research questions, and later subthemes which became the primary structure of the empirical chapters which follow. This analysis is designed to represent the range of experiences among the participants in this research study in addition to highlighting their commonalities.

#### 4.5 Ethical Considerations

According to the Principles for Professional Responsibility for the American Anthropological Association (2012), anthropologists hold certain obligations towards the people that they study. These obligations include, but are not limited to, avoiding harm or wrongdoing, being open and honest about the context of our work, obtaining informed consent, weighing competing ethical obligations, making our results accessible, protecting and preserving our records, and maintaining respectful professional relationships with research participants. This section is an outline of the ways in which I adhered to this code of ethics to the best of my ability, for both the protection and benefit of my research participants.

At the beginning of each interview in all three field locations, I would explain to each participant the nature of my research and read to them the consent form. In Kakuma, due to a fear that their answers would influence their refugee status or aid package, the majority of my participants requested to give only verbal consent. I also explained to each participant that they reserved the right to refuse to answer any question, to refuse the recording of their interviews, and had the right to end their interview at any time. The majority of my interviews in the US/UK were conducted privately, except in the one case in which I needed a translator. In cases in which phone or Skype interviews were conducted, I emailed each

participant a synopsis of my research plan and the consent form, and they gave their verbal consent.

In Kakuma, these interviews were treated like community or family events in which large groups of people would gather, often at the request of the interviewee, to listen to their stories. It was not uncommon for a group of friends or an entire extended family to gather together for an afternoon, taking turns answering my questions, surrounded by their community for emotional support. I found that the South Sudanese community of Kakuma were willing and comfortable to share their experience with people that they knew and trusted. However, they were also wary of outsiders knowing their stories due to the perception that it would further increase their insecurity in the camp.

For each interview in Kakuma, I gave 100 KSH (75p/ \$1 USD) to both the participants and the recruiter/translator in compensation for their time. Erlén et al. (1999:86) define incentives in research studies as inducements which “entice and motivate people to engage in particular activities...provid[ing] a stimulus for action.” The authors suggest that, in order to address ethical concerns, particularly when conducting research on vulnerable populations, it is crucial to gain informed consent, that a participant is not pressured to participate, and that the researcher creates an environment in which the participants feel comfortable to ask questions. Although the incentives used in this research project were only enough to buy a soda in the camp, these small financial contributions helped all of the people who participated in this study feel like their experiences and knowledge were valuable and worth communicating.

Each of my interviews, both with remittance senders and recipients, were recorded and transcribed with the participants’ permission, with the exception of one woman in Kakuma and one woman in the US. All of the names and some demographic details presented in this study have been changed to maintain anonymity. The data presented in this

thesis is therefore meant to be a reflection of the transnational activities, struggles, and beliefs of the South Sudanese diaspora rather than emphasising the story of any one person.

#### 4.6 Issues Encountered

While conducting my fieldwork in both the UK and Kakuma I encountered several issues that forced me to reconsider my research design and explore alternative options. Some of these issues concerned the availability of participants who matched my criteria, my access to those communities, and issues of tribal affiliation and ethnic tensions. I attempted to navigate these obstacles and come up with creative solutions without compromising the validity of my data or my relationships with the members of the community that I sought to study. In this section I outline the issues that occurred during my fieldwork and my methods of navigating these obstacles.

The South Sudanese community that I became acquainted with in England had never lived in Kakuma. Many of these individuals have never identified as refugees, and had migrated from southern Sudan before much of the violence in the 1980s began. Although they were active members of transnational communities and had family who were either in South Sudan or were refugees, only three out of eleven participants in the UK maintained some sort of transnational connection to Kakuma. The majority of their family members had fled since the recent post-independence civil war that began in 2013, settling primarily in Uganda, a nation that was often argued by the participants in this study as having less restrictive refugee policies when compared to Kenya.

Worried that the South Sudanese population in England was too small, at least the portion that was reasonably accessible to me, I decided to incorporate the interviews that I collected during my Master's research at San Jose State University in California, the original inspiration for this research project. All the participants for this previous research study

identified as members of the Lost Boys of Sudan community, all had lived in Kakuma for at least eight years, and were participants in transnational marriages in which their wives and children lived in Africa (one in Australia) while they lived and worked in California. Four of these participants had family members who continued to live in Kakuma at the time I was conducting my fieldwork there. I was also able to reconduct three of my original seven interviews by calling my participants from 2015-2016 over Skype and I met two additional participants who were visiting Kakuma at the time of their interview but who lived permanently in the US. As mentioned previously in this chapter, I was also introduced over the phone to two participants living in the US at the time of their interview by their family members living in Kakuma.

Although the remittance senders and recipients in this study were not always directly connected, they all shared similar patterns of remittance transfers, social support, and motivations to establish and continue these transnational relationships. I believe that the experiences represented in this thesis are an accurate example of Nicholas Van Hear's (2003) model of refugee transnational domains, introduced in Chapter 3 section 3.3, in which the intricate network of a refugee diaspora incorporates a population's experiences across all stages of their displacement and migration. In this model, transnational participation incorporates social and financial networks between and across three domains: the homeland, the nations of first asylum, and the nations of resettlement. By examining a variety of these networks between two of the three domains, I believe I was able to construct an accurate depiction of South Sudanese transnational communities as a whole rather than within one specific population.

While in Kakuma, I successfully managed to identify current and former remittance recipients in both successful and failed transnational relationships. However, while conducting interviews on the other side of these transnational relationships, that is remittance

senders, I failed to find participants who identified as former remittance senders. This gap in my data was partly because I did not consider this to be a potential pattern until after my fieldwork in Kakuma. In addition, I believe that these participants would have been significantly more difficult to identify, or less likely to be open about the nature of their failed transnational relationships. More than likely, some of the remittance senders that I interviewed could have been classified as having been in both successful and failed transnational relationships at the time of their interview; however, they likely chose to focus on the strongest familial bonds that they were able to maintain.

As previously outlined in section 4.3 of this chapter, during the course of my fieldwork in Kakuma I became acquainted with several individuals that I identified as gatekeepers, whose kindness, curiosity, and willingness to help significantly aided in my ability to gain the trust of the majority of other community members. However, in the beginning of my data collection process, one of my chosen gatekeepers, who was a very valuable and respected elder in his community, attempted to control who and when I interviewed other refugees. Specifically, he asked to attend each interview and maintain the ability to vouch for each participant's trustworthiness. As I mentioned above, I attempted to meet a variety of South Sudanese communities in Kakuma, divided among ethnic lines. Conscious of limiting my results to who might be perceived as being acceptable and what they might even be expected to say in his presence, I struggled with maintaining my friendship with this man in addition to ensuring the validity of my results.

One of the most difficult issues that I was forced to navigate was the deep divisions within Kakuma, not only between nationalities, but also significantly between tribal affiliations. Although everyone that I interviewed proudly expressed that they were South Sudanese, they often communicated resentment when talking about tribes other than their own, tension that was argued by the men and women in this thesis to have been amplified in

recent years, particularly as a result of the current conflict in South Sudan. Although there is relative peace in Kakuma, approximately 100 km from the South Sudanese border, most participants still had family members in their homeland, currently experiencing significant violence between the Dinka and Nuer. As a consequence of a political war that is driven by tribal affiliations, it had become natural to distrust members of other tribes that share their nationality within this refugee camp.

Researching the experiences of women within Kakuma was a significant obstacle that I struggled with during the entire nine months that I was there. Women were particularly busy, especially when compared to the men of this community, collecting water, washing clothes, cooking, and taking care of their children. In addition, on several occasions their husbands insisted on being present during their interview or doing the interview themselves despite their wives having the transnational relationships in which I was interested. Finally, the women of this community were significantly less likely to speak English and therefore often needed a translator. I noticed that two of the four translators recruited for this study, all of whom were male, regularly simplified the answers that women gave during their interviews, compromising my results. Unfortunately, I was unable to find a woman translator who spoke English, did not have childcare duties, did not have to work six days a week, and who could dedicate several hours per week to help me. Therefore, it can be assumed that due to the power imbalance between some of the women participants in this study and their male translators, that some of the collected data might be limited, either failing to portray the depth of their experiences or being translated through the perspective of their interpreter.

## Chapter 5: Foundations of a Transnational Community

The transnational connections maintained by the South Sudanese refugees I spoke to and other members of their diaspora represented in this thesis were driven by a strong sense of community welfare and facilitated through various means of communication. As demonstrated in this chapter, ensuring the welfare of both their nuclear and extended family was a priority in many of my participants' lives, particularly those who were able to maintain strong transnational networks. The commitment to their parents, siblings, aunts/uncles, nieces/nephews, and cousins was the driving force behind the formation of these 21<sup>st</sup> century family networks assisted through advancements in communication technology.

The first two sections of this chapter investigate how members of the South Sudanese transnational diaspora engaged in various forms of communication strategies and how my participants suggested that these social relationships are incredibly important to maintain despite the physical distance between community members. Section 5.3 then examines the conditions under which these strong cultural values of responsibility to family and community failed to be sustainable. In general, these transnational relationships, although facilitated by the transfers of financial remittances, needed to be based on a genuine relationship of mutual concern for the social and emotional welfare of all parties involved. When these responsibilities are neglected, the viability of these transnational relationships deteriorates over time.

Basch et al. (1994:79) suggest that family is a core foundation of transnational networks, "facilitat[ing] the survival of its members." Within the study of transnational practices, the concept of community is portrayed as synonymous with family, both within nuclear and extended kin networks, and implies the capacity for social support. Therefore,

participation within transnational communities implies a reliance on other community members for social, moral, and financial support.

As discussed further in Chapter 3 section 3.1, Faist (2000) argues that the social ties which transnational communities depend on are mutual obligation, reciprocity, and community solidarity. These transnational social ties are built and maintained by systems of community membership and familial bonds and sustained by “transnational social spaces” in which all participants engage in the exchange of both social and financial capital for their mutual benefit. Faist suggests that transnational communities and practices create a mutually dependent relationship in which participation implies a reliance on other community members for social, moral, and financial support. To support this, Johnston (2001) argues that these transnational families are a living network of relations, defying physical distance between one another, to maintain a connection to the homeland and traditional culture while simultaneously working towards the economic and social advancement of the community as a whole.

As suggested by Morawska (2013) and Foner (1997), the transnational activity represented in this thesis is not a by-product of 21<sup>st</sup> century technology, but rather shows remarkable similarity to transnational relationships among immigrant communities at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Portes (2000) asserts, however, that although historical studies have proven the existence of transnational communities and practices before aeroplanes, phones, and email, the scale of these practices was far less substantial when compared to recent advancements. Portes therefore argues that as technology in communication and travel develops so do the capabilities of transnational practices and maintaining meaningful and sustainable transnational communities.

Carling (2014) argues that the viability of transnational relationships and their maintenance is highly dependent on both the senders and receivers of remittance transfers

playing active roles within these transactions. It is crucial, therefore, to acknowledge the significance of remittance recipient actions, a component of transnational relationships that is often overlooked. Carling writes that remittances are “reactive,” responding to both the desire/compulsion to send money as well as the active request to receive financial support. In order to actively engage in the maintenance of these relationships, it is necessary that remittance recipients invest valuable resources to support their transnational relationships. These investments could be economic in nature such as the buying of phones or paying for transportation, but also include the investment of social welfare such as active communication and genuinely caring for the wellbeing of their transnational counterparts.

This concept has been coined as “balanced reciprocity”, the idea that engagement in transnational participation is based on the mutual benefit of all parties who are “simultaneously receivers and donors” (Tsai and Dzorgbo 2012: 216). Tsai and Dzorgbo suggest that in balanced reciprocal transnational relationships, remittance recipients are expected to give back to their financial donors to the best of their ability. This is crucial for the maintenance of transnational communities and often mitigates the stress experiences by transnational participants.

Furthermore, refugee transnational communities are distinct when compared to economic migrants in relation to the desire/compulsion to engage in transnational participation and establish a position of responsibility to remit as well as the social and financial constraints that might prevent them from doing so. Resettled refugees living in developed nations might face significant language, education, and employment barriers, and thus lack the ability or opportunity to adequately support themselves and their transnational family members. Resettled refugee communities are socially vulnerable and likely to experience significant stress integrating into their new society (Al-Ali et al. 2001a; Mascini 2012). However, due to their perceived privileged status, in particular when compared to

their refugee family members who continue to live in exile, resettled refugees often feel compelled to provide for community members in need despite facing significant financial hardships themselves (Brees 2010; Carling et al. 2012; Hammond 2011; Johnson and Stoll 2008; Lim 2009; Patterson 2016; Shandy 2007).

### 5.1 Maintaining Contact

For the participants who maintained strong and sustainable transnational relationships, regular, meaningful and honest communication was key to their success. Therefore, this section explores how the South Sudanese transnational participants whom I interviewed facilitated these lines of communication as well as the topics that were most commonly discussed. As demonstrated throughout this section, communication facilitated through the use of cell phones and increasingly through applications like Facebook and WhatsApp, was essential for the maintenance of strong transnational relationships. For both refugees living in Kakuma and their family members outside of Africa, regular communication ensured that they could inform one another about their emotional and physical wellbeing.

The members of these communities who chose to have an active transnational relationship spoke to their loved ones frequently and for extended periods of time. These lines of communication, their frequency and length, were dependent on the nature of their relationship and how comfortable they were expressing their experiences and emotions to one another. The strongest bonds were typically between husband and wife, parent and child, often talking four or more times a week and for several hours at a time. Other bonds of kinship which were common were between siblings, cousins, aunts/uncles and nieces/nephews. Bonds between close friends who perceived themselves to be like kin were also common. I found that typically, as the bonds of kinship became more distant so did the

time between phone calls. The range in which people reported speaking to their family members ranged from once a year, once every six months, once a month, once a week, to once a day. Similarly, when asked how long on average their conversations were, people reported anything from twenty minutes to three hours. The men and women who reported that they had not spoken to their family outside of Africa for more than a year were considered to be part of a failed relationship, discussed further in section 5.3 of this chapter.

For those who maintained successful transnational relationships, the primary topic of discussion was the general wellbeing of their family members abroad. They asked about issues of health, family relationships, and general mental wellbeing. For South Sudanese community members living in places like the UK or the US, loneliness was a significant issue as they were often disconnected from not only their family but also their culture and language. These issues of mental wellbeing were significantly escalated when their loved ones a world away were ill and they were unable to be physically present with them. For Diane, my primary key informant in the UK, 2018 had been a particularly difficult year. Her sister living in Juba, South Sudan had been diagnosed with lung cancer and had passed away seven months later. Diane argued that “it was so difficult. I wanted and needed to be there to support [my sister] but it is too expensive. All I could do was be there for her on the phone as much as I could.” Although Diane made sure to call every day to talk to her sister and to support her emotionally, she could not afford to go to South Sudan to be with her sister in her last moments.

Knowing the health and wellbeing of family members through active and regular communication was a cornerstone of these transnational relationships. More importantly, concern for your family members abroad went both ways, given and received by all participants. Remittance senders indicated to me that it was important to feel a sense of connection to their community living in refugee camps, or in a nation at war with itself as this

ensured that they were both aware of the issues facing their family and motivated to help in whatever capacity they could. In a reciprocal fashion, I was told that it was important that remittance recipients took a genuine interest in the lives of their family abroad. This included knowing where their family members lived, what they did for employment, and the social issues that they were facing.

Family reunification was also a commonly discussed topic, primarily between husbands and wives but also between parents and their children with whom they had originally lost contact with due to war. One woman named Heather arrived in Kakuma as a result of the conflict that broke out in 2013. Her daughters, however, were two of the original inhabitants of Kakuma having arrived in 1992 when they were forced to flee their village without their mother. Heather's daughters had been resettled to Australia in 2003 and, until their mother had arrived in Kakuma in 2014, had believed that both of their parents had died in the war. Luckily, due to strong community networks, they had been reunited over the phone. Heather told me that "they were so happy, they cried when they first heard my voice. We now talk every week and we discuss me coming to Australia with them." As soon as Heather found her daughters, they applied for her resettlement, an application which Heather claimed was rejected for reasons still unknown to either herself or her daughters. Four years later, she stated that her daughters still regularly discussed moving their mother to live with them in Australia.

Rose, a 58-year-old woman, discussed how she talked to her husband in Canada every day, telling me that "he always says that he misses me and that he needs me there with him." Rose is the second wife of her husband, who was resettled to Canada with his first wife ten years previously. Although their marriage is recognised within their culture and community, they were not considered family according to Canadian immigration officials and therefore could not be resettled together. Although the chances of family reunification in Canada were

slim, Rose and her husband discussed these prospects every day. In this case, the dream of becoming reunited with their loved one was a driving force behind the continuation of their relationship.

For those who lived in Kakuma, it was important for participants in this study to discuss the conditions within the camp, particularly the extreme poverty that they experienced, with those in other countries. The lack of food and the lack of medicine, discussed further in Chapter 7, were the primary impediments to their health and wellbeing. Only by discussing the conditions of the camp, in terms of sheer deprivation, could refugees living in Kakuma ensure continued support when they needed it.

The family members living outside of Africa who were the most sympathetic to their struggles were the ones who had previously lived in Kakuma and understood the extreme conditions of life in the camp. Peter, first introduced in Chapter 1, said “we grew up in Kakuma, we understand there is no food, no medicine, that life is hard, and you cannot do anything about it.” For Peter, much like several other remittance senders in this study who grew up in Kakuma, their memories of the refugee system were of a harsh environment and a vicious cycle of dependency for food, security, and medicine. They knew from experience that urgent and desperate requests for remittances were not exaggeration or laziness.

Interestingly, the majority of the people whom I interviewed in Kakuma had access to a smartphone. The relatively recent change in available and affordable communication technology in the camp contributed to a significant modification in how people were communicating with one another. When compared to international calling minutes (also known as “airtime”), cell phone data was much cheaper, facilitating more consistent and extended conversations. Particularly for participants who were in their twenties, family group chats through applications such as Facebook and WhatsApp were very common. These group

chats often included all of the siblings within a family living in up to four different countries and were ongoing when compared to regular phone conversations.

These group chats were less direct than talking over the phone, but enabled families to regularly keep each other updated. Jeffery, a master's student living in the UK who was also financially supporting his brothers in Uganda, argued that "sometimes it becomes essential because you find out things they would have never told you otherwise." For Jeffery, a common topic of discussion was issues with girls, which his younger brothers in their early twenties were dealing with. As the older sibling, it was Jeffery's responsibility to provide guidance as they became adults and to make sure that they stayed out of trouble.

Group chats solved one particular issue that all participants, both remittance receivers and senders, addressed as being an impediment to their communication: time. For members of the South Sudanese communities living in the UK and the US, their lives were dictated by their busy schedules, often a consequence of working in multiple jobs due to high costs of living. Diane says that her normal day in London consisted of a missed breakfast, running between jobs, a quick meal on the go, and then bed. She claimed that many of her family members in Africa did not understand how she could be so busy so much of the time. However, as a result of these limitations to her daily schedule, she usually dedicated Sundays to catching up with her family in South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda.

In order to account for the difference in time zones and the often-busy schedules of the remittance senders, it was important that family members knew when they could talk to each other. Scheduling specific and regular times in which they were able to call one another ensured that their phone calls could last for extended periods of time. John, a 23-year-old university student living in Nairobi, told me that his family's phone calls revolved around the schedule of his sister in California, typically either between five and seven in the morning before she went to work, or in the evening after she had eaten dinner. Knowing each other's

schedule and working around it meant that members of this family could talk more often and for longer periods. Scheduling also prevented any unexpected phone calls at three in the morning from family members who are calling in the afternoon in Africa.

Some families used video chat services, through applications like Skype, Facebook, and WhatsApp, in which individuals can talk to one another while seeing each other's faces. This method of communication enabled the members of these communities to add an additional dimension to their virtual relationship, mimicking physical proximity. Jacob, a 32-year-old resettled refugee living in the US whose wife and two children lived in Kakuma at the time of his interview, preferred using video chat applications above all other methods. "Being here, I don't get to see my children grow up. At least when we see each other on the phone or computer they can recognise who their father is and I can see them get older every day." For Jacob and his family, the pain of being so far away from one another was ameliorated by not only hearing one another but also by seeing each other grow together.

Many refugees living in Kakuma, however, lacked the money needed to buy airtime or data to call their family abroad. This was a particular issue for those who only had extended family members abroad, such as aunts/uncles or cousins, and consequently did not communicate with them regularly. Many participants in Kakuma mentioned that because their family abroad were so busy they only wanted to be called if there was an emergency. For those who did not have money to buy airtime and whose family members did not call them, they needed an alternative method to contact their community abroad. One method utilised by many in Kakuma was an act that they called *flashing*. To flash someone is to call a person's phone and hang up right away, signalling to your family that you need them to call you back. Flashing was also useful if someone did not have a phone and needed to borrow one from a friend. For those who did not have any other means of communication, whether it

was because they had no money or no phone of their own, flashing was a cost-effective method of signalling to their family abroad that they needed to talk.

My conversations suggest that when a family is physically separated, an emotional attachment to the life and general wellbeing of each other facilitated by regular communication is essential for the maintenance of a strong transnational relationship. As communication technology is continuously being developed and improved, so too is the nature of these relationships. For those fortunate enough to be able to afford smart phones and data bundles, relatively recent technology applications such as Skype, Facebook, and WhatsApp were the preferred method of communication. These applications made communication between family members living in different regions of the world simpler, more frequent, and more realistic when compared to standard phone calls. For refugees in Kakuma who did not have enough money to call their family abroad, they utilised techniques like flashing to maintain communication despite their limited circumstances. In this next section, I will demonstrate why maintaining communication was so important for the participants in this study.

## 5.2 Why was Maintaining Contact so Important?

The notions of family, belonging, and responsibility were the roots of these transnational communities, generating a continued dependence on one another despite prolonged physical absence. Although communication was the primary means by which these families maintained their relationships, their sense of responsibility to one another and the means by which they acted upon it was the fuel. Participants often said that family was everything, referring to a sense of belonging that is otherwise unobtainable, and claiming that it was crucial to have an attachment to their roots and heritage. For the men and women living in the UK and the US, many felt it was their responsibility to support their less

fortunate relatives, particularly children and those in refugee camps who were unable to support themselves. Various ways that these transnational participants undertook responsibility for one another, beyond the provision of money, was to act as a mediator, a sponsor, or a leader within their family. Within this South Sudanese diaspora, it is assumed that everyone struggles in life, and that it is the responsibility of elders in the family and those who are more financially stable to support everyone else.

When asked why it is so important to maintain a relationship with family members abroad, many of my participants gave me quizzical looks and responded with vague statements like “It is obvious, it is because they are family.” According to the majority of the people referred to in this chapter, their family, and therefore their relationships with them, were their identity. Without the proper maintenance of these bonds of relatedness, they felt as if a piece of themselves was missing. When prompted about her relationship with her cousin, Anna, a 24-year-old Kakuma resident, stated that “as we grow, we are always family and we will always need each other.” Likewise, Diane, who had been living in the UK for over twenty years, claimed that “I am still missing them, time doesn’t satisfy me. Although I cannot recognise most of their faces, at least this is better than nothing.”

For nearly all the participants in this study, the maintenance of an attachment to their family was a priority in their lives despite the need for this attachment to be aided by technology. Mach, a 35-year-old man who had been living in the US for seventeen years, stated that “we want to connect with people back home because we want a connection to our roots. I have to help my family because they need my help. We have a very strong culture and we long for that connection.” Among almost all the men and women presented in this chapter, family, culture, and identity were perceived to be synonymous and thus self-explanatory. Although it was easier at an intellectual level for my participants living in the UK and the US to articulate this concept due to their years of integration into Western

culture, for many refugees in Kakuma the question of why their transnational family relationships were important to maintain might as well have been “why are you a person?”

When Diane was asked why she felt such a strong sense of responsibility to support her family in Africa, she claimed that “by being a member of my family, I am expected to contribute what I can when it’s needed. Everyone in the family contributes. We do it so we can survive.” According to Diane, ensuring the welfare of the family was not the responsibility of any one individual, but was rather a collective duty. What was important to Diane was that both her and her family acknowledged her responsibility to help as well as to mutually understand when she was unable to help. After several decades of living in the UK, Diane believed she had mastered the balance between what her family needs and what she is actually able to provide. She argued that in order for families abroad to understand the struggle to meet their obligation to send money, it was crucial that remittance senders spoke openly about their financial limitations in order to avoid conflict, stress, and distrust.

John, the university student living in Nairobi, discussed similar balancing acts between ensuring that everyone contributes to the family’s welfare as well as understanding their limitations. John was responsible for taking care of his three younger siblings, while his household was financially supported by his father living in South Sudan, his mother living in Uganda, and his older sister living in California. John explained that they were six months behind on their rent, but that each adult was working very hard to support the children in the family. In John’s case, the welfare of the family meant that they needed to live in four different countries and ensure that they understood their responsibilities to the group.

Jeffery, the master’s student living in the UK, mentioned similar responsibilities. He claimed that years previously his mother, father and him had equally divided the financial and social responsibilities within their family. Jeffery was responsible for paying for his brother’s university education and ensuring that he acts responsibly because his brother often

refused to listen to his parents. Jeffery said that even though his university studies consumed most of his time, he was still considering getting a part-time job so that he could maintain his commitment.

These financial and social commitments were inherently understood within these communities, among both remittance senders and recipients. Although responsibility and ability were often formally discussed, it was also assumed that all community members who had the ability also had the responsibility to help others in need. When asked why he believes that family members living abroad financially support refugees, Paul, a Nuer pastor and community elder in Kakuma, claimed that “they know what life is like here. They understand what little we have and that we cannot earn money to support ourselves.” Most refugees in Kakuma believed that their family who live outside of Africa made enough money to support family members who are refugees. Within these communities, it was the responsibility of those who were more fortunate to financially support those who did not have the same opportunities. Trust that a family member would contribute what they can when they can, particularly for those who were unable to support themselves, was essential for the continuation of these relationships.

Elders, both within their families and extended social network, held significant authority among this population in determining the roles and responsibilities of each family member. An elderly woman in Kakuma, who asked to be identified as Mama, had a son who was resettled to the US while she was still in South Sudan. In the decades since they were separated from one another, they managed to find each other and now talk on a weekly basis. Mama claimed that “because there is no father [in our family], I often tell him that he needs to help the family and that we are in need here. He needs to step up as leader of the family.” For members of the South Sudanese community living outside of Africa, many are expected

to both follow the instructions of the family's elders in addition to financially supporting their extended family.

When asked why it is important to respect the requests of elders in his family, Mach, argued that "they give you wonderful advice to solve problems. We understand that elders are important because you cannot live without them, they cannot live without us too." The men and women in this study often explained to me that the elders within a family gave them life and made them who they are today. Even if they have been physically separated from each other for decades, participants argued that they would not be who they are today without the love and guidance of their family. For many remittance senders, parents and parents-in-law were priority remittance recipients, second only to their spouses and children.

In the US, I met two men who emphasised the importance of caring for the welfare of both their parents and their parents-in-law. Both of these men, who had been living in California for over fifteen years, had participated in arranged transnational marriages in which their wives lived in Africa at the time of their interview. In Simon's case, his wife in Uganda cared for both his and her elderly parents while he worked to financially support them. For David, although he had been orphaned as a child, he felt a strong duty to support not only his wife and child in Kenya but also her mother. When these men entered into their marriages, they knew the welfare of the elders in their family was a priority. Their responsibility was to provide financial support to those perceived to be most in need, while their wives were responsible for providing the social support as a means to give back to the people who gave life to them and their children.

As mentioned previously, for the families who maintained the strongest relationships with one another, support extended beyond the provision of financial resources. Important responsibilities that were expected of people on both sides of these relationships were the provision of mediation in family or community disputes, and the provision of guidance for

younger relatives. Undertaking these responsibilities ensured that members of their family were emotionally cared for; that disputes were handled respectfully before they resorted to violence; and that younger members of the family were taught how to be responsible adults capable of contributing to the family's welfare.

In Kakuma, I encountered two issues in which family members abroad needed to intervene and mediate a solution. The first was when Bill, an eighteen-year-old secondary school student, and his girlfriend became pregnant. In South Sudanese culture, in cases of premarital pregnancy, it is the responsibility of the man's family to propose marriage and to provide the woman's family with a bride price. As an elder of his family, Bill's uncle in Australia was forced to intervene and negotiate the bride price and terms of the marriage, thus ensuring peace between their families. The other case of mediation that I encountered was through a young woman named Tina in Kakuma who suggested that her husband verbally and physically abused her. Tina often talked to her sister in the US about how to deal with this abuse, from whom she gained useful communication techniques. Tina's sister also frequently talked to Tina's husband to discuss his treatment of her. Tina suggested that her sister's intervention, while it did not stop her husband's mistreatment, had made her marriage bearable.

Guidance, particularly for younger members of their family, was perceived to be essential in order to ensure that the future leaders in their family were both responsible and caring when the welfare of their family was concerned. In general, this meant encouraging young adults to value their education, to learn how to manage money, and to take responsibility for their younger siblings' welfare. Furthermore, everything that was invested in the lives of these young adults was explicitly explained to them so that they understood its importance. Paul, a student in his final year of secondary school, claimed that "I do my part as we struggle until I can repay [my uncle] back for my education. I want to be close to him

to appreciate everything that he has done for our family.” In these cases, repayment of financial support rarely translated to owing an exact amount of money, but rather was interpreted as a responsibility to support their family members in the future.

By investing time and money into the education and development of a responsible and caring person within their family, transnational participants wanted to ensure that future generations would be similarly supported just as they were by the generation before them. Many members of the communities living in the UK and the US that are represented in this study undertook the responsibility to sponsor children within their family through their education and development as an adult. Undertaking the responsibility of sponsoring a child meant that they were expected to both pay for their school tuition fees as well as provide guidance to ensure that these students graduated with good grades.

Sponsorship and guidance of a child or young adult within the extended family supplemented parental obligations. Many young adults who were sponsored claimed that their aunts and uncles who lived in places like the US or the UK often understood them in ways that their parents could not. They talked to them about their friends, their romantic relationships, and their struggles with school. More importantly, their sponsors often inspired them to dream big. Several young men and women said that once they finish secondary school they would like to go to university to become doctors or lawyers. Although their sponsors could rarely afford to pay for their university education, they inspired them to dream beyond the limitations defined by life in Kakuma as a refugee (as discussed more in depth in Chapter 8).

As discussed in this section, undertaking the responsibility to financially and emotionally support their family members was often recognised as a duty. Traditionally, this commitment followed along generational lines, in which the youngest members of a family respected the wisdom of their elders who were in return expected to support and guide

younger generations. As families become displaced all over the world with some having more opportunities than others, I believe that these generational dynamics are slightly changing. Those who live outside of Africa are sometimes expected to contribute more, particularly in a financial sense, due to their higher standard of living and income. However, advice, mediation, and genuine concern for each other's welfare are expected from all family members. This mutual sense of responsibility guarantees that each member of their family is adequately looked after, while ensuring that the next generation will continue their altruistic cultural traditions.

As outlined in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of this chapter, I found that transnational relationships within the South Sudanese diaspora followed certain rules and expectations. These expectations were considered traditional within their culture; however, they were also evolving due to participants' changing abilities to contribute what is expected from each family member, as well as the deterioration of their relationships if not properly maintained through consistent, open, and honest communication. The final section of this chapter considers failed or failing South Sudanese transnational relationships. I argue that these outcomes were a by-product of both the extreme conditions of life as a refugee in Kakuma as well as the failure or inability to adhere to the rules and expectations of their transnational relationships.

### 5.3 Common Pitfalls in a Transnational Relationship

In order for these South Sudanese transnational relationships to prosper, each member needed to equally participate and meet certain expectations to tend for the welfare of their family as a whole. Although these social expectations were culturally passed down, transnational participation in these families was a relatively recent phenomenon. Many of the men and women in this study struggled to willingly care for their family members abroad

whom they had never met or had not seen in person for years. Just knowing that they were related to the members of this community and that they should care about their welfare was rarely enough, and needed the caring relationship to be actively nurtured. The most common pitfalls that led to the failure of these relationships were deteriorating lines of communication, the inability to be emotionally involved in each other's lives, inadequately communicating abilities to send money, and unreasonable expectations for financial contributions.

The men and women living in the US and the UK who participated in this study highly valued their commitment to their families and thus were able to maintain strong transnational relationships. However, from inside Kakuma it became easier to witness the experiences of transnational participants who had failed to maintain these complicated and physically distanced relationships. Approximately one quarter of my participants in Kakuma were classified as being former remittance recipients or only maintaining very weak transnational relationships. This section is an attempt to outline the conditions that contributed to these failed and failing transnational relationships.

The majority of the failed or failing relationships that I encountered were those which were primarily based on extended family relationships such as those between aunts/uncles, in-laws, or cousins. While in Kakuma, I encountered one case of a failing relationship which included members of a nuclear family. Nyadet, a 36-year-old refugee, explained to me how she was caring for her sister's children.

My sister married a man who was resettled to the US and she left her two children here with me. She divorced her first husband and married this man. Her new husband is not their father so they could not come to the US with their mother. She used to say that she would come back for them but now she does not say that anymore. We haven't talked to her for a year. Maybe her husband refuses to give her money to support these children.

Since Nyadet's sister was resettled to the US three years previously, she had not sent any money to support her children still living in Kakuma. Although Nyadet had essentially

adopted her sister's children as her own, she still believed it was her sister's responsibility to financially support them. In this case, however, Nyadet believed that her sister's new husband prevented this support under the assumption that she knew her responsibility to her family and would only fall short of this responsibility if she had no other choice.

The absence of regular and meaningful lines of communication between the remittance sender and recipient was the most apparent reason for a failed transnational relationship within these communities. Participants who showed signs of a failing relationship only communicated once or twice a year with relatives abroad and often only in times of an emergency or to ask for money. I found that in these circumstances, refugees were unaware and typically uninterested in the welfare of their family members living in Western nations, failing to reciprocate the commitment necessary to maintain strong transnational relationships. In these cases, it was the beginning of the end for these relationships, leading eventually to complete disconnection. Although participants rarely explicitly stated how their relationships had arrived at that point, their expectations of their family members abroad and interactions with their transnational counterparts gave some insight into the dynamics of these relationships.

Many refugees in Kakuma told me that they had completely lost communication with their family members who used to send them money. Some refugees said that their family member's phone just rings continuously and they never receive a call back, while others claimed that the phone numbers of their relatives abroad had been changed or disconnected. When asked about her last phone call with her cousin, one woman named Meredith said "we spoke in August of last year. We talked about the issue of money, that we are suffering, the children are suffering. That we have no shoes and no food. He sent money. We tried to call him more recently but he did not pick up." Conversations in which refugees in Kakuma only

asked for money and failed to maintain a genuine relationship through phone conversations regularly led to a complete disconnection between transnational family members.

One significant factor that is unique to refugee populations when compared to other transnational communities was the extreme conditions of life in a refugee camp. I believe that such a drastic difference in lifestyles between places like the UK or the US and Kakuma contributed to an inability to comprehend various difficulties in the life of both remittance senders and receivers. On the one hand, family members living in a developed country frequently failed to understand the constant states of deprivation experienced by refugees, and often believed that their urgent needs were superficial. More significantly, refugees in Kakuma were often incapable of understanding the stress that their family members outside of Africa dealt with regularly. From the perspective of much of the South Sudanese community in Kakuma, all people in developed countries lived like the popular reality TV stars the Kardashians.<sup>44</sup> Many refugees believed that it was the responsibility of family abroad to shower them in wealth, and their refusal to do so was infuriating.

A twenty-year-old refugee named Justin had a cousin in Canada whom he had only spoken to once and had used the opportunity to ask for \$100 USD to pay for his tuition for a computer skills course. His cousin said that he would call him back and has since failed to pick up Justin's calls. When asked whether his cousin might not have the money, Justin claimed that "he has money! He is in Canada, of course he does. I can see that they have a lot of money." In this case, even though they were considered family, Justin was essentially a stranger to his cousin. Furthermore, he did not understand why his cousin could not spare what he thought was a reasonable amount of money for a good cause when, at least from Justin's perspective, he most likely had the ability to support him.

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<sup>44</sup> Several participants mentioned the Kardashians to me, convinced that this was a representation of a standard American lifestyle. Reality TV shows like this often played in public spaces in Kakuma such as restaurants, bars, and tea houses.

Although Justin's transnational relationship had ended before it had even begun, many of the men and women in this study had managed to establish more realistic relationships with family abroad, but at the time of their interviews had no contact with them. The social and economic strain that led to the end of these transnational relationships for refugees in Kakuma normally took years. Often family members abroad would initially establish a line of communication and send money, even if only in times of emergency, because they understood it was their responsibility to help their family. However, due to the inability to understand the stressful conditions of life on both sides of a transnational relationship, participants often found it difficult to sympathise with their counterparts a world away.

One man, a school teacher named Sam, explained to me the dynamics of his transnational relationships. His primary sponsor was his aunt who lived in the US and who tried to call him regularly to ask him how he was doing. He claimed that he did not like to talk to his aunt. "If I do not have a good reason to talk then I find it boring." Sam explained to me that his aunt and her son in the US had financially supported him through a private secondary school outside of Kakuma. He wanted to go to university in the US but no one in his family was able to finance this. What was clear was that Sam felt entitled to his education, and was annoyed that his family could not help him continue it despite his unwillingness to maintain a meaningful relationship with those who had supported him that far. In Sam's case, his aunt who acted as his sponsor, had failed to help him recognise the significance of his family's contributions and the need for him to care about the welfare of the community as a whole, particularly for those who struggled to pay for his school fees.

When asked what their relatives outside of Africa did for a living, where they lived, or who were the important people in their lives, many refugees did not know the answers to these questions. I believe that this unfamiliarity with their family elsewhere in the world is a

by-product of a lack of communication on both sides of the relationship, disinterest on the part of the refugee community, as well as an unwillingness for their family abroad to be open about their lifestyles. For the refugees in Kakuma who were in failed or failing transnational relationships, most people were upset that they were no longer being sent remittances, and that their family members were not fulfilling their duty by taking responsibility for their extended community. However, these participants in general had also failed to recognise that they too had neglected their responsibilities, specifically to care for the emotional wellbeing of their family members abroad.

As emphasised in section 5.1 of this chapter, open and regular communication is crucial for a sustainable transnational relationship. After I came back from Kakuma and described these failed transnational relationships to my UK key informant, Diane, she seemed unsurprised and explained to me that many people who live outside of Africa rarely discussed their struggles to the people they support. According to Diane, “these people hide their struggles. They want to prove that they are living a good life and live in luxury. But they don’t tell you the reality.” She said that they do not want their family members to know that they are unemployed, living in government housing, or cannot afford to pay their bills. Living in a place like the UK, you are supposed to have wealth and opportunities, and failing to achieve these things was often difficult to communicate.

Diane told me that she did the exact opposite. She made sure that her family was well aware of her financial commitments, and how much money she might be able to spare each month. “If they understand that I do not have money, then whatever I give them they will use it wisely.” These lines of honest communication about her inability to meet her family’s every demand, contributed to strong transnational relationships during which she had been able to send money for over two decades. However, if her family had been unaware of her

living situation and the difficulties that she experienced, they would have continued to ask for money whenever they felt like they needed it.

For most of my participants in Kakuma, it was clear that their transnational relationships centred around the need for remittances. This need for money was influenced by several factors. The first, just like in most transnational relationships, was that the ability to earn an income for family members who lived in a developed nation far exceeded those who did not, particularly those living within a refugee camp. The second influence, however, is unique to a refugee population, in that remittances were needed to not only supplement livelihoods but also to survive regular crisis situations, to be discussed further in Chapter 7. Under these conditions, the need for remittances for the transnational participants in Kakuma was heightened, and in many cases, could not be fulfilled by their family abroad. Those who managed to maintain successful transnational relationships understood the limited abilities of their family members to support them because they actively nurtured a meaningful relationship with them and continued to be concerned about the welfare of those who supported them.

In many cases, refugees in Kakuma were unaware as to why their family abroad had cut all lines of communication. However, prior to this disconnection, they clearly stated that the primary topic discussed with their transnational family members was their constant need for money. Based on the phone conversations that were described to me among Kakuma's South Sudanese transnational participants, their family members elsewhere in the world were aware of the deprivation they experienced in the camp, but the inability to develop a relationship beyond the exchange of money led to significant strains on their family. It was clear that the men and women whom I identified as having failed or failing transnational relationships did not know anything about the lives of the people who sent them money and often did not care.

As demonstrated above, bonds of relatedness and strong cultural assumptions of responsibility were not enough to maintain a transnational relationship. In refugee communities, in particular, the drastic difference in quality of life contributed to an inability to understand the struggles of life for one's transnational counterparts. Disinterest in the emotional wellbeing of community members abroad led to deteriorating lines of communication in which refugees only called family in order to ask for money, contributing to total disconnection. Although these relationships were based on blood ties, participants who were in failed or failing transnational communities were essentially strangers to their family abroad, about whom they knew nothing. In order for transnational relationships to be sustainable, particularly those involving remittances, it is necessary that they become emotionally committed to one another beyond the need for money.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

At first glance, communication, primarily through the use of cell phones, was the cornerstone on which these transnational communities operated. However, the means of communication were also highly variable in terms of methods, frequency, and duration which significantly influenced the ability to talk to one another as well as the quality of the conversation. In general, sustainable transnational relationships were dependent on frequent lines of communication that lasted for extended periods of time. The strongest relationships were between husbands and wives, siblings, and parents and children, with conversations taking place several times a week, and usually lasting for several hours.

Although communication facilitated the ways in which families cared for one another, a strong attachment to their culture, and thus their commitment to the welfare of their family, was the driving force behind many of the successful relationships I encountered. This commitment was often described along generational lines in which the wishes of their elders

needed to be respected. Similarly, participants who lived in the US and the UK often undertook the responsibility to sponsor their younger siblings, nieces, and nephews through their education, but also through their guidance to be responsible and caring adults. In general, these relationships were highly dependent on how well the men and women in this study were able to develop a genuine bond with their transnational community members with whom they have no, or very little, physical contact. Although communication is needed to maintain these bonds, unless both sides of the relationship are involved in each other's lives and each participant genuinely cares for the wellbeing of one another, then the transnational network will likely fall apart.

The transnational relationships described in this chapter as failed or failing were the ones in which its members were only concerned about the need for money. In these cases, family members did not ask one another about their general wellbeing, knew very little about the events in each other's lives, and were for the most part unconcerned about the lives of their community members abroad. When these transnational relationships were based purely on the constant need for money, the family members felt disincentivised to contribute to their refugee community member's welfare.

Since the foundation of these relationships was based on a strong commitment to the welfare of their family, it was necessary that these lines of communication centred around knowing and genuinely caring about the wellbeing of family members abroad. Although the commitment to their community's welfare was strong for the men and women in this study who lived in the US and the UK, many refugees in Kakuma struggled to sympathise with their transnational counterparts living in a developed nation. I believe the conditions of life in Kakuma, as well as the distance between family members, significantly influenced the ability of these communities to continue their traditional practices of ensuring the welfare of the family as a whole.

The constant need for financial support often blinded refugees to the struggles that their family abroad went through, contributing to false assumptions that their individual welfare mattered above all else. The unrealistic expectations that were held by many refugees in Kakuma as well as their unwillingness or inability to learn about the lives of their family outside of Africa, often led to a complete disconnection and were thus labelled as having a failed or failing transnational relationship. As discussed in the next chapter, sending remittances and undertaking the responsibility to financially support family members abroad was an extremely stressful process. In order to ensure that this process was sustainable, it was essential that every family member felt appreciated and that their welfare was a topic of concern.

## Chapter 6: Changing Hands: Remittance Transfers and Investment in Economic and Social Capital

Although the foundation of a transnational relationship is based on establishing strong social bonds across international borders through communication, the transfer of remittances is often argued to be a vital component of these communities. While the previous chapter focused on the strength of these transnational relationships and their maintenance strategies, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways in which remittances specifically are sent and used among the participants of this study. From the perspective of remittance senders and recipients respectively, this chapter discusses the ways in which the members of this South Sudanese diaspora navigate their perceptions of need and responsibility for both themselves and those they consider community or family.

Divided into two sections, section 6.1 examines how remittance senders living in the US and UK justify their sense of responsibility to their family in Africa, measure the need for remittances, and finally cope with the stress of being unable to send remittances when they know their family genuinely needs the support. In comparison, section 6.2 of this chapter investigates the social context in which these remittances are utilised, particularly for the welfare of not only the receiving family but also their surrounding local community in the refugee camp.

As discussed further in Chapter 3, financial remittances can be defined as “cross-border monetary transfer(s) made by migrants residing abroad to their families in their country of origin, primarily to meet (their) financial needs” (Guha 2011: 2). Although remittances are often assumed to be sent only to the homeland, in this case South Sudan, this definition fails to recognise the experiences of displaced populations such as the community discussed in this thesis. A more accurate representation of the remittance transfer cycle in a

refugee community can be represented in Van Hear's (2003) Refugee Diaspora Model, discussed further in Chapter 3, section 3.3. Van Hear argues that refugee transnational networks have the potential to operate both within and between three domains (the homeland, the nations of first asylum, and the nations of resettlement) in the form of communication networks and the transfer of financial remittances. This model accurately describes the communities studied in this thesis by acknowledging the potential transnational networks between resettled refugees and economic migrants in the US/UK and their families living in refugee camps outside of South Sudan.

Jørgen Carling (2014) argues that the remittance transfer process is composed of "material, emotional, and relational elements" facilitated by socially developed structures of expectations (scripts). Five of Carling's scripts were found to be relevant in the relationships studied within these South Sudanese refugee transnational communities: these were Obligation/Entitlement, Sacrifice, Help, Allowance, and Investment. The first three scripts (Obligation/Entitlement, Sacrifice, Help) explain why family members living in the US/UK send money to their family members in Africa, and similarly, why remittance recipients share these financial resources with their friends and neighbours within the refugee camp. Allowance, discussed in the first section of this chapter, is represented by the remittance sender needing to know that their earnings are being spent wisely. Investment, discussed further in Chapter 8, is investigated through the experiences of both remittance senders and recipients investing in the education of themselves and of the children within their families currently living as refugees.

Shandy's (2007) ethnography on South Sudanese transnational participants living in the US suggests that members of this diaspora are likely to remit a significant proportion of their income through the use of both formal money transfer channels and through the utilisation of their existing social network. Johnson and Stoll (2008) argue that it is common

among South Sudanese former refugees living in Canada to undertake the role they identify as “global breadwinners” due to their ability to earn a Western wage as well as their families’ continued residence in either a war zone in South Sudan or in refugee camps in neighbouring nations. As suggested by Hammond (2011), social and economic pressure placed on resettled refugees to undertake this role as the global breadwinner and to send substantial amounts of remittances contributes to significant stress for transnational family members living in developed nations.

As explored more extensively in Chapters 3 and 5, family is a central theme in the sustainability of transnational communities, and thus the perpetuation of remittance sending practices; however, kinship relations which are constitutive of family can be defined differently in various cultures and across generations. Evans-Pritchard (1951) and Hutchinson (1996; 2000) suggest that among the Nuer, the second largest tribe in South Sudan, kinship (*mar*) is built upon generations worth of interpersonal relationships. Hutchinson also argues that, within this culture, relatedness and the sharing of food are intertwined, and thus anyone with whom one shares food is considered family. Although family can be argued to be a relative term, several studies on South Sudanese resettled refugees have suggested that members of this population go through tremendous efforts to financially and socially support those they consider family who still live in Africa (Johnson and Stoll 2008, 2013; Lim 2009; Luster et al. 2008; Patterson 2016).

One of the key arguments in this chapter is that traditional notions of kinship within these transnational South Sudanese communities are changing based on their lived experiences and connection to their traditional culture. In Chapter 3, I explored two theories on how the degree of integration that an immigrant experiences influences their financial

remittance sending patterns.<sup>45</sup> Stark's (1978) Remittance Decay Hypothesis argues that the time pattern of remittances forms an inverted "U" shape which grows as migrants adjust to their new host society and increase their material wellbeing, and then decreases as ties to their homeland become weaker over time (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2006; Grieco 2004; Stark 1978).

However, more recently Carling and Hoelscher (2013: 244) have suggested that a migrant's transnational participation is positively correlated with their level of integration into their host nation, arguing that therefore integration and transnational activity are "complementary not competing." Providing some insight on the difference in these theories, I found that a participant's experience within the refugee system, and thus the social and economic marginalisation associated with it, and the strength of their transnational relationships were much stronger factors than their degree of integration into their nation of residence for the sustainability of their financial remittance sending patterns.

If continued transnational participation and the sending of financial remittances are also dependent on the level of integration that a migrant is able to achieve in their host nation, then the capacity for migrants to engage in transnational practices may be becoming increasingly difficult (Glick Schiller 2018). Glick Schiller suggests that migrant populations, particularly ethnic and religious minorities in the US and Europe, are facing rising insecurity in terms of deportation, harassment, and surveillance for their social, economic, and political ties to their home nation. Consequently, the ability of transnational communities to become sustainable is also dependent on the capability for migrants to successfully navigate the social, economic, and political environment in both their home and host nations.

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<sup>45</sup> In the case of this thesis, degree or level of integration refers to the migrant's (remittance sender) communication capability in their host nation, their established social networks, level of education, and employability (Beverluis et al. 2006; Carling and Hoelscher 2013). All of these factors influence the degree to which a migrant is capable of navigating the social, economic, and political institutions within their nation of residence, thus influencing their ability to sustain their transnational networks and to send remittances regularly.

Refugees living in Kakuma often considered all friends and neighbours who had witnessed similar experiences of social and economic marginalisation as kin. Other African refugee populations who have experienced displacement, dependency, and economic and physical insecurity, showed similar community support networks (Grabska 2005; Horst 2006; Omata 2012). For example, Omata's (2012: 267) study on Liberian refugees in a Ghanaian camp found that when confronted with crisis situations in an "impoverished and inhospitable environment," refugee participants who received remittances expressed a moral responsibility to share cash, food, and other resources which facilitated the survival of their surrounding community. For refugees who are economically and socially marginalised, fictive kin relationships, in which friends and neighbours are "like family", have the potential to expand resource accessibility through the provision of material and social support that would have otherwise been unavailable.

Although the aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which remittances are sent and utilised, this process was strongly influenced by who participants considered family and the ways in which they internalised responsibility. Due to the differences in experiences, and the extended periods of time the men and women of these communities were physically separated from one another, notions of kinship and responsibility diverged. Therefore, in this chapter I explore how perceptions of kinship, and thus responsibility, expanded in the refugee camp, contracted for remittance senders with only extended transnational family relationships, and remained relatively similar to South Sudanese cultural standards for remittance senders whose wives and children were in Africa or who were recent immigrants.

### 6.1 Navigating Responsibility, Ability, and Financial Limitations

The act of sending money in itself was a difficult process to establish and navigate. Those who lived outside of Africa maintained a variety of motivations for sending money,

and held very specific perceptions about their families' needs and responsibilities. I found that all of the remittance senders interviewed for this study argued that it was their responsibility to care for their family members in Africa and to do this to the best of their ability. These beliefs contributed to various stress factors, particularly from an inability to provide for all of their families' needs and the attempt to navigate the most cost-effective methods of sending money. From the perspective of remittance senders, this section aims to explore the perceptions of need and responsibility that motivate the sending of remittances, and the methods utilised to obtain and send these financial resources to their family members in Africa.

The remittance senders in this thesis can be classified into two primary categories of transnational participation: those whose transnational relationships were primarily with immediate or nuclear family members, often with extended family also, and those whose only transnational relationships were with extended family. In the case of the South Sudanese Diaspora, immediate/nuclear families typically included wives, children, parents/parents in-law, and unmarried younger siblings, while extended transnational family relationships included older or married siblings, aunt/uncles, nieces/nephews, and cousins. I found that the majority of my participants in the US, who grew up as refugee children in Kakuma and participated in transnational marriages, were all supporting their immediate family members in East Africa. In contrast, for the majority of my participants in the UK, since their immediate family lived in their host nation with them, their transnational relationships were generally with those they considered extended family. The exception to this trend was Jeffery, who was a recent immigrant to the UK and who actively supported his brother's university education.

All of the 21 remittance senders who participated in this study faced challenges in combining their lives in their current nation of residence with their sense of responsibility to

their family in Africa. One man, in particular, who had provided me with great insight into the contemporary South Sudanese culture of family and responsibility, epitomised these experiences. After weeks of coordination, calculating time differences, and missed calls, I was finally able to talk to David, an old friend from California. David became a refugee at the age of five, had lived in Kakuma for eleven years, and was finally resettled to San Jose in 2003. At the time of our call, he was in his car driving for Uber, one of his three jobs. Like many other men within his community, he shared a flat with several other former South Sudanese refugees. Although these men might live and work in California, their wives, children, and extended family continue to live in Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan. In order to provide for his family still living in Africa, David worked as much as he could and sent the majority of his money to his wife, her family, his new-born baby, and his nieces in Kakuma.

David's lifestyle was common among men resettled to the US and who had wives still living in Africa. These men were torn from their homeland and culture at a young age, and have undergone efforts to reunite with their family members that they lost as children. Eight of the participants in this study were resettled to the US as members of the Lost Boys of Sudan community in the early 2000s, and have since participated in arranged marriages with South Sudanese women living in Kenya or Uganda (Patterson 2016). By participating in these transnational marriages, these men undertook significant responsibility, as both head of their household and primary family member living in the West, to financially support their wives, children, and often their wives' parents and siblings. This financial responsibility to undertake the role that Johnson and Stoll (2008) identify as "global breadwinners" had become a priority in their lives, and they were consequently expected to send as much as they could to their family members in Africa.

According to David, he tried to send \$800 USD (£600 GBP) per month to his wife living in Nakuru, a city in western Kenya.<sup>46</sup> He claimed that “the rent has to be paid, and there is no other food source for them. I also have to support my nieces in Kakuma, but unfortunately, I am not able to send as much as I would like, it’s maybe 10-20% of what I send to my wife. I have to support my wife, baby, and in-laws first.” David argued that by marrying his South Sudanese wife (a choice that many South Sudanese men in the US made as an attempt to reconnect with their culture), it was now his responsibility to financially support her mother and siblings. Consequently, this responsibility, although manageable, made it significantly more difficult to provide for his blood relatives, in this case his nieces’ education.

Although it was common among the men resettled as refugees in the US to engage in transnational marriages in which they undertook significant financial responsibilities, members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the UK discussed a larger variation of roles and responsibilities within their transnational networks, specifically to financially support their family members in Africa. My participants in the UK immigrated for a variety of reasons, not limited to their experiences of war and trauma in South Sudan. Some had immigrated as students or working professionals, two came as asylum seekers, and some came as tourists and eventually gained permanent residency. These variations in experiences as immigrants within the UK correlated to a variety of perceptions about the roles and responsibilities within their transnational family networks.

Remittance senders in the UK reported a variety of life circumstances and abilities to provide for their family members when needed. For example, Jeffery, the master’s student

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<sup>46</sup> As mentioned previously in this thesis, South Sudanese refugees living in Kenya who could afford to live outside of the refugee camp often chose to do so, however, typically illegally. Despite the precarious lifestyle, these refugee communities living illegally outside of refugee camps choose to do so due to a higher standard of living and the perception of reduced social and economic marginalisation.

and recent immigrant discussed in the previous chapter, argued that his primary impediment to continuing his studies was the pressure to get a part-time job to support his brothers. He claimed that “I have been thinking about getting a part-time job because my scholarship is barely enough to support me and I have nothing to send to my brothers. I think I could make £600 GBP (\$800 USD) per month but I would be happy if I could send half that.” After only a few months in the UK, Jeffery argued that he was struggling to balance his commitment to his studies with that of his responsibility within his family to financially support his brothers living in Uganda.

When asked whether their family in Africa needed to ask for money to be sent, the men and women in this study reported numerous answers. For those who had recently immigrated to the UK or the US at the time of their interview, or for those who had a spouse still living in Africa, the need for their family to ask for money meant that they were failing in their duties to adequately provide for them. For example, Jeffery argued that:

If I wait for my family to ask for money, then I would never send because they would never ask. It's not appropriate. We don't do that; it is just something that you know that you are supposed to do. My brother could call and talk for hours, but he would never ask for money because he knows that if I had it then I would send it. I just need to sense that they need it. Whatever extra I have I will send anyways. It is not culturally appropriate to ask.

Jeffery stressed the point that families provide for one another within their culture, and to not do so when one has the ability means ignoring their culturally established bonds of kinship, responsibility, and trust.

Similarly, David recounted his financial responsibilities to support his two younger brothers through their secondary education after he was first resettled to the US. He claimed that “I trusted them because they knew how to spend their money wisely. I would think they were starving and I wanted to support them and they would say they could last a few more days. I never had to give them anything extra and they were ok with that.” In David's case, as

in Jeffery's above, the process of sending money was dependent on both the sender being aware when their family might need money as well as the responsibility of the remittance recipients to budget the money wisely, suggesting that trust is central to the sustainability of these relationships.

Several men and women in the UK claimed that they often only sent money when it was specifically requested. The fact that all of these participants had lived in the UK since the 1990s and their nuclear family members lived with them was a significant factor in their decreased sense of responsibility when compared to participants who were either recent immigrants or who had spouses and children to financially support transnationally. The members of their family in Africa that they supported were typically their cousins, nieces and nephews, and adult siblings who were no longer in school or university. Daniel, a medical doctor living in Leeds, claimed that "the money that my family asks for are specific requests. Whatever little we are able to help we try to send." Although each of these participants maintained regular communication with their family in Africa, their lives had become firmly rooted in the UK. Consequently, the needs of their transnational family members were less apparent or were perceived to be less important.

This trend in the difference between these two groups of remittance senders (recent immigrants/transnational nuclear family and established immigrants with only extended transnational family) aligns with both Carling and Hoelscher's (2013) and Stark's (1978) theories on the relationship between integration and remittance sending patterns. The former group were largely based in the US, identified as members of the Lost Boy community, and specifically sought to engage in transnational marriages to increase their connection to their culture that they became disconnected from as children. In this case, greater integration into their host nation and increased social/economic mobility correlated to greater transnational participation, an amplified sense of responsibility, and an enhanced ability to send

remittances, as suggested by Carling and Hoelscher (2013). However, established immigrants living largely in the UK, who considered themselves as economic migrants rather than refugees, and whose only transnational connection was with extended family members, expressed a significantly decreased sense of responsibility despite often being financially stable, thereby confirming Stark's (1978) hypothesis.

The exceptions to this trend were single men who were relatively recent immigrants to both the UK and US. As demonstrated above by Jeffery's account and David's past experience a decade previously, as young single men they had an ability to earn an income that their brothers were incapable of earning as refugees living in Kenya and Uganda. From the perspective of these two men, the ability and responsibility to provide financial support to younger siblings were intertwined, specifically to aid them through their education, an important investment that most participants in this study emphasised as being necessary and which will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

In the cases of decreased responsibility and attachment among my participants living in the UK, the perception of duty to help had altered from just knowing when their family members needed help, argued to be culturally appropriate in South Sudanese kinship networks, to only helping when requests were made for specific needs. I believe that these differences in perceptions of need and appropriateness to request money were simultaneously dependent on their relative attachment to their traditional culture, their length of time in their new host nation, and the nature of their transnational family networks.

Among the transnational participants of these communities, trust that remittances would be used wisely was a common concern. According to several men in this study, trust was earned when both parties knew that the remittances were being spent wisely, ideally lasting longer than remittance senders expected. Two women in the UK also mentioned that they often suggested that their family receiving money engage in communal meals to save

money, and stockpile canned goods in order to prepare for inevitable hardship in the future. These women claimed that since they worked hard for this money, they needed to ensure that every penny was used wisely and that their family could survive until they could send again.

Due to the high cost of living in both the UK and the US, all of my remittance sender participants reported that at some point in the past they had been unable to provide the money needed by their family members in Africa. According to Daniel, over the years he has had to restrict his financial commitments to his family abroad to only funding children's school tuition and various medical emergencies. He argued that school fees are manageable because they are a predictable expense. Medical emergencies, however, are always unexpected, often costlier than anticipated, and need to be acted upon urgently. Daniel claimed that "of course there are times when I cannot send money right away. I just have to tell them 'not now' and ask them to wait. Sometimes we ask them to wait a couple of weeks to see if their condition improved and see if we are in a better position to help." In Daniel's case, he had to balance his personal financial security with that of the health concerns of his family members in Africa.

In the case of urgent situations in which money needed to be sent immediately, but they lacked the funds, three participants reported having borrowed money in the past from friends, neighbours, and co-workers. Nadia, a 29-year old former asylum seeker living in London, said that although she was unemployed at the time of her interview, she previously used this method with other immigrants at her place of work. She described how "once a week a group of women would get together and talk about the needs of our family members abroad, and we would try to help each other by lending money to the ones that needed it. This would all be paid back on payday and then we would start again." Nadia claimed that she had not participated in this group since she lost her job a year previously, but she was confident that once she had a reliable income she could find a similar group.

David recounted a similar support system that had been developed among the Lost Boy community living in San Jose. All of these men grew up together in Kakuma refugee camp, and developed a similar familial support system after their resettlement to the US.

David claimed that:

We all lived together for years. We worked as much as we could and went to school. We needed to support each other...We all had similar responsibilities [to support our family in Africa] and we helped each other when we could. If there was an emergency, we would [pool] together our money with the understanding that it would be paid back when possible.

Since financial resources were so limited and valuable within these communities, remittance senders often went to great lengths to maximise the cost-efficiency of sending money to Africa. Although money transfer companies like Western Union, Money Gram, and Dahabshill were often used, many participants also tried to utilise their social resources when possible. Several men and women in the UK reported having a bank account in either Kenya or South Sudan, in which the cost of transferring money would be significantly cheaper. Diane, first introduced in Chapter 5, said that she also always tries to keep emergency funds with a family friend living in Nairobi. Diane argued that:

I know I can trust this person. I will say 'keep this money here in case there is an emergency.' When I get a call from one of my family members for an emergency, I will call this friend and ask him to send them the money. This is someone I know that even if they spend the money then they will pay it back. This is safer because sometimes those money transfer shops will take the money and keep it, and sometimes they send it too late.

In this case, Diane utilised existing social networks beyond her family within the nation to which she sends money. Sending money within Kenya would account for a fraction of the cost when compared to sending from the UK, but it also ensured that she always had a safe emergency fund when her family needed it the most.

Similarly, five of the participants in this study claimed that they tried to send money when they knew that a family member or friend was traveling from the US/UK to either

South Sudan, Kenya, or Uganda. Jeffery said his friend living in London was planning on returning to South Sudan and that he was trying to earn enough money to give to his friend to distribute to his family once he was home.

I trust him completely. We grew up together, are from the same village, and went to school together. Before he leaves next week, I want to give him £500. If I give him this money, I know that he will deliver it to my father in Juba, who will then distribute it to the rest of my family. I know that it is not uncommon for people in our culture to do this. We trust each other. If someone is already going home, then it is no extra cost to them, and I get to provide my family with more money.

In the case of this study, the sending of financial remittances meant understanding the costs of services and utilising cost-effective methods. In many circumstances, the best method for sending money to their family members in Africa was through the utilisation of established social networks such as those demonstrated above.

Participants in this study reported a wide variety of time frames and amounts in which they sent remittances to their family in Africa. For the men in this study whose wives were living in either Kenya or Uganda, they typically tried to send remittances monthly, ranging from £400-600 GBP (\$530-800 USD) per month. Although these figures were reported to be ideal for recent immigrants (those who had moved to the US/UK within the last five years), as students or asylum seekers/resettled refugees, their ability to send this money was restricted by their limited earning potential. Other participants claimed to only send remittances every two or three months, primarily to pay for school tuition fees and medical emergencies. In these circumstances, participants reported sending £50-350 GBP (\$65-500 USD) every three months, primarily for specific requests rather than the general cost of living for their family members they were supporting.

Within the data collected for this study, there is an important distinction that must be made, identifying two separate and distinct perceptions of responsibility to provide financially for remittance senders' family members in Africa. As suggested earlier in this

chapter, this divide could be made between those who have a stronger attachment to their traditional culture, and thus their immediate/nuclear family who lived in Africa at the time of their interview, and those who have developed a stronger connection to their life in the UK or US and therefore have adopted more Western or individualised perceptions of responsibility. Therefore, for remittance senders, their willingness to send remittance to support their family in Africa was dependent on the nature of their transnational relationships, and thus their connection to their traditional culture, rather than simply their level of integration into their host nation.

Those who identified more strongly with their South Sudanese culture had all either recently immigrated to the UK/US or had a spouse who continued to live in Africa, and in most cases returned to Africa regularly when financially possible. In these cases, participants argued that they were their families' primary financial provider and that they willingly accepted this role. As demonstrated in this section, these participants argued that it was their responsibility to not only provide for their families' financial welfare but also to innately know when they are in need of money.

In comparison, the men and women whose primary social sphere was in their current nation of residence, and who self-identified as British or American, did not suggest that they were their families' primary financial provider. In these cases, participants argued that they positioned themselves as a last resort and were only willing to send remittances for specific reasons such as school fees or medical emergencies. As the lives of these men and women became more fully integrated into their nation of residence, their attachment to their culture slowly diminished and their perceptions of responsibility were altered to reflect their new culture.

Therefore, the willingness to send remittances correlated more to the strength of my participants' relationships with their family in Africa rather than their degree of integration,

or even their ability to send. In many cases, those who only sent money in response to specific requests were much more financially stable compared to those who accepted a greater degree of responsibility within their family. For this reason, I believe that the motivation to send money was only minimally influenced by their ability to send. The immigrants' attachment to their culture and the type of relationships developed and maintained with their transnational counterparts were much stronger influences.

## 6.2 Sharing Community Resources

This section aims to explore the social pressures on remittance recipients within Kakuma to share remittances with extended family members, friends and neighbours. I believe that these social expectations to share resources when there is a need and ability to do so are interrelated with the same motivations and pressures for the remittances to be sent in the first place. The majority of the participants in this study emphasised that it is their responsibility to support their family if they have the ability. Along transnational lines, family was more clearly defined in biological or legal terms such as spouse, mother/father, brother/sister, cousin, aunts/uncles, and nieces/nephews. In Kakuma refugee camp, however, these lines of kinship were transformed to represent shared experiences of bondedness and survival in addition to biological relatedness.

In response to shared experience of trauma and deprivation within the camp, explored further in Chapter 7, extended family, friends and neighbours within Kakuma had learned to rely on one another in order to ensure the collective survival of the group. In the case of Kakuma's South Sudanese community, financial stability was measured by the ability to survive each day. Even if a participant claimed to be financially or materially stable at the time of their interview, their survival in the future was highly dependent on their established social networks. The majority of the men and women who participated in this study from

Kakuma argued that they needed to provide what little they had to their neighbours who had nothing so that when they inevitably had nothing in the future they would similarly be supported.

These conditions created a unique culture that had developed in Kakuma in which traditional South Sudanese notions of kinship and responsibility had altered to meet the needs of life as refugees within this camp. There were several influences that this emerging culture had on the people who participated in it. Foremost, community members were separated into “good” and “bad” people based on their willingness to share financial and material resources when their community knew that they had the ability to do so and when their friends and neighbours needed it the most. Secondly, due to this heightened sense of bondedness, virtually everyone within their tribal community in the camp was their brother or sister, mother or father, dependent on age and seniority within their community. Finally, the effect that remittances had on the livelihood development of the individual remittance recipients in Kakuma was minimal since remittances were expected to be shared with their community around them. In this case, the introduction of remittances into this community acted as a form of welfare stabiliser, distributed to community members who needed it the most, but rarely enabling the recipients to develop their livelihood in a sustainable manner.

Among Kakuma’s South Sudanese population, family was an ambiguous term, virtually synonymous with community and embodied a sense of bondedness that had arguably been developed through shared experiences of deprivation. In many instances, members of this community introduced me to their brother or sister, daughter or son, only for me to discover that these relationships were not built on blood ties but rather based on their friendship and loyalty to one another. For example, Simon, a 40-year-old quality control manager for Kakuma’s school system, explained to me that:

Brother does not necessarily mean that you share the same parents, but you are from the same people. We are one family, and we are responsible for one

another. I have to be my neighbour's keeper because we are all equal. When they don't have [food], we must share what little I have together.

These fictive kin relationships and terminology, much like biological kin within this culture, symbolised solidarity, mutual support, and responsibility, and was argued to be crucial for their continued survival. In the extreme conditions of Kakuma that threatened daily survival, it was the expectation of the community that individuals and families share what they have with the less fortunate members of the community. A 46-year-old builder named Charles said that:

When someone is arrested, I contribute [money to pay the police bribe]. If someone says 'I don't have shoes,' then I can give. This builds your relationships with the good people around you. We don't just share money and things; we share our problems. If you do not do these things, then you have no relationships, and you have no one to support you when you need something.

This culture of willingness to share resources, and distinguishing community members between “good” and “bad” people, was a common theme discussed throughout most of my interviews in Kakuma. Sharing community financial and material resources was often described as the sharing of problems.

The men and women of this community often talked about “good” and “bad” people when discussing remittances and common expenditures. People would say “how can I eat if I know my neighbours have not eaten for three days?” Paul, the Nuer pastor and community leader introduced in Chapter 5, argued:

Of course, it is difficult to share what little we have but that is our society. You cannot suffer here while someone has something. You must support the community otherwise many of us would have perished. So many of us don't have relatives and support outside of Kakuma. If a family is struggling, my wife and I will discuss what we can give them because we cannot let them die. How could you let a friend suffer and die while you survive? We must divide what little we have and pray that it all works out.

From Paul's perspective, the survival of the community as a whole was dependent on the willingness of each able community member to look after the collective. “Bad” people were consequently identified as those who were known to have financial and material resources

but refused to share these resources beyond their immediate family. Since “bad” people looked out for themselves, when they eventually needed help their community were less likely to support them.

When asked how their friends and neighbours knew that they received money from family members abroad, participants would often say that they could be seen shopping in the market, that their children were bathing with soap, or that they were eating more meals per day than plausible if their only income were their WFP food rations or a refugee salary. Mama, the elderly woman first introduced in Chapter 5, said that “I need my neighbours’ help going to pick up the money because I do not speak Swahili. I also need help getting food from the market. Everyone around me knows that I get money from my sons in the US.”

John, the university student living in Nairobi also previously introduced in Chapter 5, told me that he participated in a more formal community support system. He said that the “South Sudanese in Nairobi belong to this community group where we each pay 1000 KSH (£8 GBP) per month. As members of this organisation, they help us when we desperately need money for things like tuition fees, medical fees, or food.” A few participants in Kakuma said that these organisations were common within their culture, but in the camp, it was too difficult to organise a sustainable version due to the unpredictable income of its community members. Instead of paying a membership fee each month, members of this community simply asked themselves whether they had the ability to help someone in need.

Ability to help their community members through the provision of financial and material resources was interpreted in a variety of ways, mirroring to some extent the same position and sense of responsibility experienced by the remittance senders in this thesis. Some people told me that they could not justify having food for a week, when their friends and neighbours had obviously not bathed or eaten for several days. Some people said they only tried to help their extended family, specifically anyone remotely related to them by

blood or marriage. Finally, others argued that their family only pooled together resources for a community member in the case of a medical emergency when the refugee clinics were incapable of treating a life-threatening but reasonably affordable condition such as malaria.

Although it was not perceived to be sharing resources by the participants in this study, all of the men and women who identified themselves as leaders within their community helped their friends and neighbours through actions as well as through the provision of financial and material resources. For example, Paul organised youth leadership workshops, and actively confronted authority figures when a member of his community was imprisoned for reasons he believed were unjustified. Similarly, Isaac, discussed further in Chapter 7, was fostering 14 teenage boys at the time of his interview. He said that “they have been here ten years. It’s difficult parenting so many teenagers, but if they were not here, they would be on the street.” The actions of these men were not uncommon within this community. They argued that they were luckier than most because they had jobs and wives to support their choices, and that it was their responsibility to help those who could not help themselves.

Within this emerging culture of sharing community resources, many participants suggested that it is not appropriate to ask for money or material resources from community members. Similar to Jeffery and David’s experience outlined in section 6.1 of this chapter, refugees in Kakuma argued that it was their responsibility as members of their community to recognise when someone needs help and to offer what they can when they can. Rachel, a wife and mother of three small children, argued that “we are all refugees, we all live the same life. We are all starving. It is our responsibility to help the people around us, but if we cannot offer then our friends know that we cannot help.” Participation within this community meant continuously questioning who needs help, how could one potentially help them, and does one have the ability to help them without significantly putting one’s own family at risk in the future.

Finally, since open and honest communication and trust were significant factors in the sustainability of my participants' transnational relationships, the need to share remittances with other community members in the camp also needed to be disclosed to their transnational counterparts. I found that the remittance senders who were most sympathetic to this social responsibility were those who used to be refugees in Kakuma themselves. One woman in California named Claire, who was a former remittance recipient turned sender, described the expectations of her community in Kakuma. "Our neighbours would know when we got money, they would ask for a little to help with their rations. Because I had something and they had nothing I needed to share." Claire described how her husband who lived in California at the time was aware of this responsibility and accepted it as part of the conditions of living in Kakuma.

I believe that remittances under these conditions have a much wider reach than most outsiders expect, but also that the ability of these remittances to significantly influence livelihood development is marginal. In the case of the South Sudanese community of Kakuma refugee camp, remittances created a ripple effect for the receiving community. The welfare of the remittance recipients was significantly improved through the provision of financial resources for food and medicine (discussed further in Chapter 7); however, in order to remain a valuable participant within their community, remittance recipients were also expected to share any financial and material resources with their friends and neighbours around them. Therefore, remittances introduced into this community had a much greater influence for the survival of the collective as a whole, and a correspondingly limited influence on the personal development of the receiving family.

### 6.3 Conclusion

The flow of remittances through transnational networks and within Kakuma itself was facilitated by strong notions of kinship, responsibility and trust. In general, both remittance senders and recipients believed that it was their responsibility to financially help those who they identified as family with social, financial, and material resources when they have the ability. Since all of the remittance senders in this study lived in wealthy nations at the time of their interview, it was assumed by both sides of these relationships that they would be financially responsible for the members of their family who were incapable of supporting themselves. Therefore, these relationships were based on a system of trust that family members outside of Africa would provide what they could when they could. Similarly, remittance senders needed to trust that their recipients would spend these financial resources wisely and only ask for money when absolutely needed.

Although this was the ideal situation for most of the participants in this study, the actual ability to adhere to these traditional cultural notions of responsibility and trust was dependent on several factors. For remittance senders, their willingness to send remittances to support their family in Africa was dependent on the nature of their transnational relationships, and thus their connection to their traditional culture, rather than simply their level of integration into their host nation. In this study, I found a clear correlation between a strong sense of responsibility to send remittances with participants who were either recent immigrants or established immigrants whose spouse and children were their primary transnational relationships. In contrast, participants who could be considered well integrated into their host community, specifically in terms of education and employment, but who also only had extended family as transnational counterparts, expressed a significantly lower sense of willingness to be their families' global breadwinner.

Therefore, I found both Stark's (1978) Remittance Decay Theory and Carling and Hoelscher's (2013) integration-based theory to be accurate. In both the UK and the US, with the exception of three individuals, all of my participants had lived in their host nation for over a decade, spoke English, had obtained some form of higher education, and were able to earn a livelihood through employment. However, as discussed in section 6.1 of this chapter, those who lived in the UK and those who lived in the US held very different perceptions of responsibility towards their family, a theme that was more significantly influenced by the nature of their transnational relationships and their experiences within the refugee system than their level of integration in their current host nation. It is important to note that these were general trends, and that the perception of responsibility to transnational family members was different for each person.

Furthermore, the impact that the remittances had on Kakuma's transnational participants was also strongly influenced by changing cultural notions of family and responsibility within the camp itself. In this population, the definition of family was often expanded to include anyone within their tribal community within the camp, particularly those who were identified as "good" people. Under these conditions, remittance recipients were expected to share their financial, material and social resources with their fictive kinship network in the same manner that their transnational family members shared with them.

Therefore, within both sides of these relationships, I found that participants very strongly argued that family takes care of each other when they have the ability. However, how participants defined family and ability varied considerably and was highly dependent on their experiences in their nation of residence and their attachment to their traditional culture. Interestingly, members of the South Sudanese community living in the UK were more likely to experience a diminished perception of responsibility to their transnational counterparts, while participants in Kakuma held a heightened sense of accountability to not only their

family but also their friends and neighbours. The notions of responsibility for the remittance senders living in the US who identified as members of the Lost Boy community and who typically engaged in transnational marriages were positioned somewhere in between, closer to traditional cultural values than the other two groups. For both the remittance senders and recipients in this thesis, it was clear these perceptions of responsibility to family, whether fictive, legal or biological, had very little to do with financial security and were more strongly related to their attachment to their traditional culture as well as their lived experiences of insecurity.

Due to the expanding notions of kinship among Kakuma's South Sudanese population, often contradicting Western perceptions of relatedness, the impact that remittances had on this community was unexpected. According to much of the literature on transnational remittances, these flows of economic welfare should have a positive impact on the recipients' livelihood. However, as indicated in this chapter, such impact is dependent on the social, economic and political constraints in the receiving nations (Acosta et al. 2015; Adams 2006; Adams and Page 2005; De Haas 2005). As discussed in the next two chapters, this anticipated outcome for the livelihood development of remittance recipients was part true and part false for Kakuma's transnational participants.

For urgent expenses that risked survival, such as access to food or medicine, the benefit of these remittances for the recipients of Kakuma was significantly diminished due to their responsibility to share their resources with their surrounding community as well as the political and economic insecurity prevalent in the camp. Therefore, while the introduction of remittances often acted as a ripple effect, ensuring the survival of the collective community, on the other hand, it had relatively little impact on the immediate general welfare of the original recipients. However, as discussed in Chapter 8, South Sudanese transnational

participants in Kenya also put tremendous effort in investing in education, perceived to be the livelihood development of the next generation of their family.

Although remittance recipients in Kakuma were expected to share their financial and material resources with their extended family, friends, and neighbours in the camp, I found no evidence to suggest that participants asked for remittances specifically for these reasons. Refugees in Kakuma shared what they had available and accessible to themselves and their family in the camp, which sometimes included remittances, but did not make requests to fulfil these social obligations. Therefore, the survival of the individual was dependent on the strength of their personal social network reaching out to friends, family and neighbours in the camp as well as transnational social networks developed with their family, and sometimes family-like, relationships.

The manner in which transnational remittances changed hands within these South Sudanese communities was a complicated process. Remittance senders often struggled to earn enough money to support their families, and to juggle meeting the demands of their family members in Africa with that of their own life in the UK or US. Similarly, once remittances reached Kakuma, community members were often aware that a transnational participant had received money. Just as it was expected that family members living in the West support family who needed help in Africa, remittance recipients in Kakuma who were perceived to be more financially stable than other members of their community were thus expected to provide financial support. Financial support was clearly justified by perceived bonds of kinship, although these perceptions varied drastically between participants living in the West and Kakuma, strongly influenced by their attachment to their traditional culture and their experiences of shared trauma.

## Chapter 7: Surviving Daily Crisis Situations through Transnational Resources

The transnational relationships presented in this thesis, and the social and economic navigation required to facilitate them, were tools to combat the insecurity that the protracted South Sudanese refugees of Kakuma faced on a daily basis. Due to a combination of policies which restricted the movement of refugees in Kenya, their inability to work legally, and their lack of freedom of speech, members of this population found themselves in an inescapable state of refugeeness. Their social and economic marginalisation, a by-product of Kenyan and UNHCR policies, ensured that the members of this population remained continuously dependent on humanitarian aid until they could achieve one of the UNHCR's three "durable solutions".

This chapter is an exploration of how the transnational participants of Kakuma's South Sudanese population navigated their protracted states of marginalisation, through the utilisation of their social networks and community resources, both transnational and local, to survive each day. This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which considers a prevalent form of insecurity which the participants in this study regularly addressed as being a serious impediment to their welfare, and consequently, were the primary expenses for which remittances were used.

Starting with the most prevalent form of insecurity endured by this population, section 7.1 examines how the South Sudanese community of Kakuma dealt with the persistent lack of food due to an inadequate quantity of rations provided to each family in the camp. Similarly, 7.2 looks at both the prevalence of various diseases and illnesses in the refugee camp and the inability of the members of this community to access adequate medical treatment. Finally, 7.3 explores the vulnerability and violence that the members of this community suffered due to harassment by the local police. Although this form of insecurity

was the least common of the three, it was the most costly and difficult to combat without risking further insecurity for their family and community as a whole.

Kakuma is administered by a combination of limited governance by the local county and police in collaboration with the Department of Refugee Affairs operated by the Kenyan government, in addition to several international aid organisations led by the UNHCR (Betts et al. 2018b; Refugee Consortium of Kenya 2012). Bram Jansen (2013:116) argues that the UNHCR and their implementing partners can be classified as a “pseudo-government” attempting to uphold international human rights-based laws. Their role in Kakuma is to supervise and coordinate refugee services and policy enforcement (Verdirame 1999). Security is enforced through a combination of Kenyan private security officers, UNHCR protection officers, the local police force, and refugee-led security teams.

Physical insecurity for refugees in Kakuma is a daily struggle. According to the World Food Programme (2017), the primary supplier of food rations for refugees in Kakuma, in 2017 they were facing critical levels of insufficient funding to adequately feed refugees in Kenya. This resulted in refugees in Kakuma only receiving 70% of their required calories per day. Consequently, for refugees who lack economic capital or a livelihood to support their families, food insecurity in the form of malnutrition and near-starvation are commonplace (Betts et al 2018a; Verdirame 1999; World Food Programme 2017).

Many refugees in Kakuma suffer from malaria, various infections, parasites and pneumonia, in addition to the occasional outbreak of typhoid and cholera (Bayoh et al. 2011; Just et al. 2018; Verdirame 1999). This population is theoretically entitled to free medical treatment from two camp hospitals, run by the Red Cross and the International Rescue Committee (IRC); however, in her thesis on the coping strategies of South Sudanese women living in Kakuma, Gladden (2012) indicates that several of her participants argued that the

treatment received at the free clinics for refugees was rarely enough and expressed high levels of dissatisfaction for the medical service available to them.

Newhouse (2015) argues that the macroscale policies of encampment, humanitarian management, and resource restrictions have had violent effects on displaced populations dependent on humanitarian aid.<sup>47</sup> Verdirame (1999: 75) suggests the UNHCR and other humanitarian aid agencies in Kenya manage refugee camps in ways which seem to be in “blatant disregard of international human rights standards” by compromising their responsibility to protect refugees and shifting their priorities in humanitarian situations. In the context of Kakuma refugee camp, Newhouse (2015) maintains that violence has become a by-product of various practices and actors which police the physical and symbolic boundaries of the camp. These restrictions constrain the legal pathways available to refugees in Kakuma to combat their insecurity and their “persistent precarity” (Newhouse 2015: 2293). Illicit activities, such as the selling of food rations, become a strategy to 1) improve their standard of living, and 2) contest the inadequacy of humanitarian assistance in the refugee camp.

Betts et al. (2018b) suggest that refugees in Kakuma are forced to rely on their close social networks to supplement their lack of food or medicine within the inadequate humanitarian system upon which refugees have become dependent. The structural violence that refugees witness every day, as suggested by Newhouse (2015), has been developed as a consequence of the violence built into the foundation of Kakuma’s camp operations. The vast majority of refugees remain completely dependent on an insufficient amount of food rations, contributing to widespread poverty and an ingrained sense of helplessness (Bartolomei et al. 2003; Betts et al. 2018b; Crisp 2002; Ossome 2013; Verdirame 1999). The establishment of a

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<sup>47</sup> Newhouse (2015: 2293) defines violence as “practices (brutal acts) that cause direct harm to humans. Those harms have to be understood in physical, symbolic, cultural and emotional terms....it is also critically important to draw the lines of connection between the often less visible routine, ordinary, and normative everyday violence...and the eruptions of extraordinary, pathological, excessive, or gratuitous violence.”

strong family network is essential for daily survival, especially for those without capital to protect themselves from abuse.

Prejudice and corruption by the police, local offices of government, and in the legal system are some of the most significant problems that refugees in Kakuma face. Hope (2018) argues that the Kenyan police have consistently been identified as the most corrupt institution in the nation, representing a systematic failure of governance. Hope defines police corruption in Kenya as bribery, “extortion, robbery, burglary, theft, or overzealous policing with the aim of personal advancement” (Hope 2018: 85). Furthermore, Kumssa (2015) argues that the people who suffer the most from police corruption in Kenya are the poor, refugees, and those who live in slum areas, specifically because they lack the economic or political power to defend themselves. Being a refugee in Kenya means that you are often subjected to arbitrary arrests and detainment unless you have money to bribe the police (Betts et al. 2018b; Refugee Consortium of Kenya 2012; Rogers 2017; Verdirame 1999). Consequently, poor refugees in Kenya are particularly vulnerable to harassment, while others can use their financial stability to act freely and manipulate law enforcement to act in their favour.

The transnational participants of Kakuma’s South Sudanese community were the lucky ones. They had additional social and economic resources available to them in times of extreme emergency and/or to supplement the food and medicine needed to live a relatively stable lifestyle. Although the literature suggests that remittances sent to developing nations increase the ability of recipient communities to develop their livelihood, some authors argue that this is largely dependent on their economic, social and political constraints (Acosta et al. 2015; Adams 2006; Adams and Page 2005; De Haas 2005). Due to the regular states of insecurity that the members of this population found themselves in as victims of policy, explored further in this chapter, transnational remittances did little to develop their livelihood

but rather acted as a welfare stabiliser, ensuring the survival of both the receiving family and often their surrounding friends and neighbours.

While King and Lulle (2016: 97-98) suggest that transnational remittances have the capability of contributing to the “survival and progress” of the receiving families, I found that due to this population’s “persistent precarity” (Newhouse 2015: 2293) in their daily lives, remittances did little to aid in the livelihood development of the recipients.<sup>48</sup> In the case of Kakuma’s South Sudanese community, while remittances contributed towards the survival of the receiving families, I found that progress was stalled due to their vulnerability as refugees in addition to the social, economic and political restrictions placed on their lives. As suggested by Vargas-Silva (2017) and Van Hear and Cohen (2017), remittances in the context of this refugee population acted as a lifeline for the recipients, often meaning the difference between life and death.

## 7.1 Food Insecurity

Despite the remoteness of the refugee camp, Kakuma’s market neighbourhoods flourished with food goods ranging from fresh vegetables, grains, meats, and sweets. Although these markets offer the perception of food security, their goods come at a price that the poorest members of the community can hardly afford to pay. Furthermore, despite being the longest resident inhabitants of the camp, Kakuma’s South Sudanese community’s market presence was virtually non-existent compared to the camp’s Somalian, Ethiopian, and

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<sup>48</sup> As discussed in the next chapter, the exception to this pattern was the investment in education, primarily those considered to be the next generation within their families. However, even in the case of investing in education, I found that these efforts often only contributed to further insecurity, and for the members of this community who continued to live inside of the refugee camp rarely contributed to a sustainable standard of living.

Congolese populations.<sup>49</sup>

However, all refugees are entitled to food rations distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP) in association with the UNHCR. Once a month, refugee families in Kakuma will queue outside of the WFP's food distribution centre as early as 5am. As the day goes on, this line can continue outside of the centre's courtyard and along the street. In a single day, tens of thousands of people will be asked to show identification in the form of their UNHCR manifest and will be distributed their family's monthly food rations. At the time of my stay in Kakuma between November 2017 and July 2018, most families reported that they received between 1 and 3 kilograms of a grain such as maize or sorghum on a monthly basis. Depending on the size of each family, this worked out to be 11 to 20 grams per person per day. These grains were supplemented with oil, a small amount of sugar, and some firewood. For the vast majority of the South Sudanese community in Kakuma, these food rations were their primary, and in many cases their only, food source.

One afternoon I met a 19-year-old secondary school student, John, who was born in and had lived his entire life inside Kakuma. When asked about food, John explained that the shortage of food was a part of daily life for the members of his community. He argued that the rations were "never enough."

People always have problems; they just have to eat smaller every day, and then the food runs out. That is what the UN gives; there are so many refugees so they must give us smaller amounts. A family cannot survive on it. If you do not have enough people supporting you, or even only one person supporting you, the money you get will always be used for food rather than other expenses.

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<sup>49</sup> Betts et al. (2018b) argue that refugees face greater restrictions than the host community concerning access to banking institutions and loans, and therefore entrepreneurship is highly dependent on family and savings for credit. These authors suggest that the lower market presence of the South Sudanese community of Kakuma is due to their recent arrival compared to other nationalities; however, this does not account for the population examined in this study. Of the South Sudanese that I communicated with in Kakuma, many saw more value in investing in education (further explored in Chapter 8) than in the development of businesses, especially when compared to other nationalities represented in Kakuma.

For John and many other refugees in Kakuma who were born and raised in the camp, food insecurity was all they had ever known. Like many other educated young adults in Kakuma, after secondary school John anticipated being employed as a teacher in the camp by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), one of the many aid organisations in Kakuma. His monthly salary as a refugee in Kenya would likely be 7,000 KSH per month, equivalent to \$70 USD (£53 GBP), a fraction of the wage that a Kenyan national would make for the same job. Once he begins to work, he will be expected to undertake financial responsibility for his extended family in Kakuma, similar to the responsibilities assumed by his transnational family members living in the US. Consequently, virtually all of his salary will be used to buy food for his family, leaving almost nothing for other emergency situations or livelihood investment.

Although all of my participants agreed that the monthly food rations that they received from the WFP were not enough to support their entire family for a whole month, their survival techniques varied depending on their resources available and their social networks both within and outside of Kakuma. At the time of my arrival, the WFP was in the early stages of launching a new programme called Bamba Chakula, a Swahili phrase loosely translating to “get food.” Bamba Chakula was a mobile money system aimed to give refugees the right to choose their food and to have the opportunity to buy what they wanted rather than simply being given rations. Instead of waiting in line on distribution day, the head of a refugee family would receive the money electronically on their phone, a resource that could be used at one of the many approved refugee-run shops around the camp, thus stimulating the economy.

For many families, this new project was flexible enough to temporarily prevent food insecurity, particularly for those who knew that they would eventually receive remittances.

Nyjuok, a 35-year-old woman who cared for her seven children and husband, was at the time of her interview one of a handful of refugees who were chosen to launch this programme.

Nyjuok claimed that:

If we are short [on food], we can go to a local shop and borrow food for a few days, especially if it is close to the distribution day. Then our Bamba Chakula will come to our phone, and the owner of the shop will deduct what we owe. We usually get 2,400 shillings (£18.25 GBP) for our family of nine people for one month.

In this case, Nyjuok managed to utilise both the flexibility of the WFP's new food distribution project and her neighbourhood shop owner's trust that she would pay him back. Although Nyjuok managed to feed her family, since her survival technique was dependent on a system of credit, she had to find additional income elsewhere, or she would remain in a state of indebtedness and near starvation. Nyjuok held a strong belief that her sister, currently living in the US, would eventually send remittances to mitigate this cycle.

Careful utilisation of their social resources through family connections and networking abilities, as well as financial resources gained through humanitarian aid projects and remittances, enabled the refugees in this community to survive their persistent states of food insecurity. For example, Isaac, a 36-year-old man who had been working in a cafeteria in one of the NGO compounds, had negotiated a deal with his Ethiopian refugee employer. Isaac was supporting his wife, his two children, his brother's wife, and her son, in addition to 14 orphans that he had taken in 10 years previously. Isaac's monthly wage for working 60 hours per week was only 5000 KSH (£35 GBP), but he was also entitled to take home any leftover food from his place of work at the end of the day, thanks to his long-standing friendship with his employer. Although he did not have the money to buy clothes, shoes, and school supplies for 17 children, he at least he ensured that his family were able to eat every day. Though Isaac's only transnational connection was for extreme medical emergencies, he was more fortunate than most of his neighbours in the fact that he and his family were

relatively food secure due to his personal relationships.

Lucas, a 38-year-old married man who had nine children and fostered three others, employed different tactics when his family ran short on food by utilising his strong kinship ties to community members in South Sudan. For example, Lucas stated that:

For one family, [the WFP] gives us 2 kilos. It does not take very long to feed your family and finish this. Then I must go looking for something else. I must communicate with my siblings in South Sudan and request that they sell a cow and send me the money so that I can buy food. That is how we must survive here.

To make up for the lack of available resources for his family, Lucas was required to rely on his ability to maintain strong relationships with his family in his home nation and trust that they would support him and his family in Kakuma when he needed it the most.

When his family in South Sudan were unable to sell a cow, Lucas would contact his friend Albert currently in Australia. According to Lucas, he had lived with Albert in Kakuma for over ten years; as members of the Lost Boy community, they had survived a multitude of traumatic experiences together as unaccompanied minors within the refugee system. However, like many of the original South Sudanese community of Kakuma, their paths diverged in the early 2000s. Lucas married and started a family in the camp. His friend Albert on the other hand became one of thousands that were resettled to the US, Canada and Australia, resettlement programmes that primarily targeted single men.

Despite their separation for almost two decades, and lack of any blood relationship, Lucas and Albert had created a childhood bond of survival that facilitated a continued relationship of mutual dependency. When Lucas has no other option to feed his family, he told me that he can always rely on Albert to send him some money. Similarly, Lucas told me that Albert expects him to keep him updated about the wellbeing of their childhood community still living in Kakuma and their extended family in both the camp and elsewhere around the world. I found that through the provision of money to buy food staples like maize,

rice, beans, and maybe a little powdered milk, resettled refugees living in the global north have the opportunity to fill a much-needed responsibility but these relationships also helped them gain valuable insight into the health and wellbeing of their community members that they left behind.

All of the participants in this study currently living in Kakuma were highly dependent on both the humanitarian system and their relationships with their local and transnational community to feed their families. Even among the 42 participants who maintained some sort of employment in the camp, due to their inability to gain a legal work permit and earn a sustainable wage, all expressed concerns about food insecurity due to their perceived responsibility to feed their often large and extended families. Remittances sent from family and friends in times of food insecurity typically ranged from \$50-100 USD (£35-75 GBP), and frequencies ranged from only at Christmas to once per month, although most people claimed that they received money for food every three or four months.

As discussed above, the food insecurity that refugees in Kakuma faced during my stay was systematically built into the refugee system and was most detrimental for refugees who were primarily or completely dependent on the goodwill of aid organisations like the WFP and the UNHCR. Their food rations were equivalent to one or two cups of maize porridge a day, supplemented by their marginal ability to earn a salary or to receive the occasional financial remittance sent by community members abroad. Every man and women who participated in this study and lived in Kakuma experienced food insecurity, the degree of which was highly dependent on their social skills and ability to maintain meaningful relationships with people who might help them survive the next day.

For remittance senders living abroad, the provision of financial remittances filled a much-needed responsibility to help make life in Kakuma survivable, particularly for the poorest members of the camp. However, due to the inconsistency of the amount and

frequency of remittances sent to the South Sudanese families in Kakuma, they were only a temporary solution to food insecurity, only delaying similar hardship to the near future.<sup>50</sup> As discussed above in the example of Lucas and Albert, I found that strong transnational relationships within the South Sudanese diaspora were not necessarily based on biological relatedness. The people who chose to support each other, particularly in times of insecurity, did so due to their perceived responsibility to those whom they considered their community, often incorporating familial ties but not uncommonly extending beyond those considered a blood-relation.

The lack of food was only the most common form of insecurity witnessed by the refugees of this community. As discussed in the sections below, medical emergencies and police harassment, respectively, when coupled with food insecurity and other forms of uncertainty, made life in Kakuma a constant state of crisis for the men and women represented in this study.

## 7.2 Medical Emergencies

Issues with health and access to adequate medical treatment were a persistent struggle for all the refugees in Kakuma who participated in this study, an experience that was intensified for the poorest members of the South Sudanese community. In Kenya, refugees are entitled to free healthcare provided by NGOs like the IRC and the Red Cross. However, these hospitals and clinics are notoriously underfunded and often fail to prevent or treat even

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<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that refugees typically lived in Kakuma because they had no other choice. Several of the remittance senders in this study claimed to send remittances regularly, often monthly, to their families living outside Kakuma in urban centres throughout Kenya and Uganda. Although these refugee communities are often illegal and particularly vulnerable, those who had the financial security to live outside of the refugee camp actively chose to do so. Therefore, the members of this population who continue to live inside of the refugee camp do so because they lack the financial security, typically the regular remittances, needed to support their families outside the humanitarian aid system.

the most common diseases in Kakuma, such as malaria. When discussing their experiences with treatment in these free clinics, refugees would explain to me that they were frequently not tested for any disease and were more often than not sent home with only paracetamol. Participants mentioned bringing their sick family and friends to these hospitals several times, but their treatment was entirely dependent on the resources available in the clinic on that given day.

Scattered throughout the camp and Kakuma Town were dozens of private medical clinics, and one that was government operated, with the equipment to test the wide range of diseases found in the region as well as the medicine to treat them.<sup>51</sup> However, these clinics cost money, and while they were physically accessible, they were not affordable to the majority of the South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma without help from their local community or family and friends abroad.

In one instance, I was asked to pay for the treatment of an eight-month-old girl who had been suffering from a fever for almost a week and was unable to access treatment in the refugee hospital. Her father, James, had called early one morning and asked me to meet him in Kakuma Town at one of its many clinics. He then explained that his daughter had been sick with a fever for five days. Due to her age and the high mortality rate for small children in Kakuma, they had been taking her to the refugee clinic every day. Each time they were told that their infant daughter only had a cold. She was never tested for any of the multitude of diseases prevalent in the camp, and her vulnerable age and susceptible immune system were not prioritised in the free clinic for refugees. It was clear to James and his wife that they needed to seek alternative treatment in one of the clinics in town, at a price that neither him nor anyone in his community could afford to pay.

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<sup>51</sup> Some private medical clinics in Kakuma are operated by refugees, others by Kenyan nationals who migrated to Kakuma in search of business opportunities.

James was a member of the original Lost Boy population and had been a refugee since he was nine years old. Like many other men within this community he had been a soldier in various militias in the past few decades, but at the time of his interview was volunteering as a pastor in Kakuma. James, who had been one of my key informants, had just graduated with a Bachelor's degree in accountancy but struggled to find paid employment in the camp. As one of the more socially connected members of this population, James had close friends all over the world due to his involvement in the church. Although he was relatively food secure because of these transnational relationships, medical emergencies were much more unpredictable and needed to be acted upon very quickly.

James had asked me if I would be willing to pay for his daughter's much-needed treatment. I sat in the waiting room with her parents as the doctor tested her blood for known diseases in the area until she was eventually diagnosed with malaria and an infection. Her treatment, one that probably saved her life, was only 700 KSH (£5.40 GBP). Like many of my participants, most of the limited funds that James had access to were used to supplement their family's insufficient food rations. Consequently, medical emergencies like this, although anticipated, could not have been prepared for financially.

This incident was only the beginning of my experience witnessing the impact that malaria had on my participants and their families over the next few months. The months between January and April 2018 were plagued by downpours and flooding that facilitated the breeding of malarial mosquitoes. Several people referenced this time period as the season of sickness in which waterborne diseases, the lack of proper sanitation, and mosquitos were at their height. None of the people that I had met who had malaria during my time in Kakuma could afford a mosquito net, easily bought for 600 KSH (£4.50 GBP), further escalating the deprivation and poverty in this extreme environment. In these cases, extreme poverty and social and economic marginalisation were a cyclical pattern that bred illness that then

contributed to high rates of mortality and further impoverishment.

Although medical emergencies were perceived by the members of this community to be inevitable, ultimately their occurrence was unpredictable. For the South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma who struggled to feed themselves every day, planning and saving for a medical emergency was not a realistic option. When a member of their family became ill, they hoped that the refugee clinic was adequately supplied that day and, if it was not, they prayed that a family member or friend could send them money so that they could seek treatment elsewhere. All of my participants claimed to have been regularly turned away at one of the refugee clinics, were often barely seen and rarely tested. According to the men and women in this study, paracetamol was the most commonly prescribed drug, expected to treat everything from ulcers, malaria, infections, and intestinal parasites to cholera and typhoid.

For many refugees who had limited or no income, remittances were the primary tool used to combat this institutionalised deprivation. However, the ability to receive remittances quickly in an emergency was almost entirely dependent on the ability of remittance senders to be prepared for these requests and have money already set aside for these circumstances. Unlike in the case of food insecurity, money for medical emergencies needed to be sent within a few days, often had to be in much higher amounts, and there was no guarantee that the treatment would cure the sickness. The men and women who maintained strong and reliable connections with their family and friends in the global north typically received money the day after making the request for a medical emergency, while others struggled even to contact their loved ones when they needed it most.

South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma employed a variety of techniques to convey the desperate and urgent need for remittances to treat sickness within their community. While some only needed to ask, other participants needed to prove that either they or a loved one was actually ill. Isaac, whose methods for securing food were discussed in the previous

section, had no family outside of Kenya or South Sudan but had made several close international friends who worked and lived in Kakuma at various points in time. One of Isaac's friends was a Dutch pastor who had worked with his community for over five years. Several years after this man had left, one of Isaac's foster children was badly burned on his arm, chest, and leg. In order to ask for funds from his old friend, Isaac emailed him a picture of the child to prove his need for money to access treatment. This pastor was able to send Isaac \$150 USD two days later, thus enabling his son to get adequate treatment.

During my stay in Kakuma, it was clear that Isaac suffered from cataracts. When I asked him about his eye condition, he stated that over a decade previously the IRC took him to Kitale in western Kenya to seek treatment. He claimed that this treatment did help initially but the condition has gotten worse in recent years. When asked if he thought the IRC would send him for specialised treatment again, he argued that "there is no money for refugees anymore. If they cannot even feed us, how could they possibly give us the [medical] treatment that we need." Isaac is the only breadwinner in his very large family, ensuring that his biological kin and 14 foster children can adequately eat. If this 36-year-old man eventually becomes blind because he did not have access to medical treatment, his family would lose what little financial stability they have.

Family members abroad who have never lived in Kakuma, and were therefore ignorant of the conditions within the camp, would simply insist that their loved ones seek treatment in one of the many clinics free to refugees rather than requiring them to send money. Like many people who had some idea of the resources inside a refugee camp, but who had never actually lived as a refugee, they often failed to understand the realities of life in Kakuma. All my participants claimed to have sought treatment in these free clinics regularly; however, the inadequacy of their treatment required that they seek further help from their family members outside of the refugee system. For most of my participants in

Kakuma, their ultimate goal was not to live a wealthy lifestyle through the use of international or transnational resources, but just to survive their current state of insecurity.

On several occasions, parents explained to me that they were unable to access treatment for their children in time and were still suffering the consequences. Nyadet described how other girls beat up her 14-year-old daughter in school. She was left with an untreated concussion and now suffers from memory issues and migraines. Similarly, a 29-year-old woman named Nyachual told me that a dog bit her nine-year-old son. She explained that the refugee hospital gave him pain medication but did not treat him for rabies.

I asked my cousin [in the US] for money to buy the rabies medicine for my son, but she said that she didn't have anything to give. I had to take him back to the refugee hospital. The first time they said the medicine was not there and then the second time they gave it to him. However, since they waited so long he now has mental issues.

Although her son survived, he continues to suffer from seizures and is mentally disabled, although neither of these issues had been diagnosed by a medical professional, nor had they been treated due to Nyachual's inability to afford the fees.

Several of my participants suffered from chronic issues that had lasted for years. One elderly woman told me that she was prone to stomach ulcers that were so painful that she would spend entire weeks bedridden. Her adult children living in the camp would take turns cooking and feeding her as well as attempting to take her to the nearest refugee clinic where she was often given paracetamol for the pain. Occasionally her daughter living in Australia would send her \$100 USD (£75 GBP) to go to Kakuma Mission Hospital, the only government funded clinic in either the camp or the town. Although their treatment plans were better than those in the refugee clinic, they would often just give her pain medication. Due to the remoteness of the region, even the clinics that cost money had limited testing and diagnostic abilities. Unfortunately, this woman's daughter could not afford to send her mother to a hospital in Nairobi to undergo more conclusive testing. As a result, she lives in an

almost constant state of pain, hoping for more good days than bad.

The men and women in this study suffered a wide range of medical issues, ranging from ulcers, cataracts, and arthritis to malaria, rabies, cholera and typhoid. Those who were fortunate enough to receive money for medical treatment from family members abroad were sent anything from \$50 to \$200 USD (£35-155 GBP). In general, most of this money was spent on medical examinations, tests, and medicine to treat the illness. In some cases, participants were instructed by their doctors to feed their sick children milk, a costly luxury in Kakuma. Any additional funds were spent on supplementing the limited food rations for the rest of their family.

As discussed within this section, although food insecurity was more common than medical emergencies, the need to seek adequate treatment tended to be a much more urgent issue and required more substantial remittances that needed to be readily available and sent quickly. Despite the apparent presence of free medical facilities in Kakuma for refugees, they often failed to meet the urgent medical issues that all of my participants said that they and their families had experienced. In order to supplement the failure of the refugee system to adequately provide treatment, the South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma who managed to form meaningful transnational relationships sought remittances to pay for treatment available in one of the many clinics in either the camp or the town. The ability to quickly secure these emergency financial resources meant that they were able to prevent ongoing medical issues and avoid more expensive treatment, or even the possibility of sudden death.

### 7.3 Police Harassment

The last significant form of insecurity that the South Sudanese community of Kakuma faced was institutionalised harassment by the local Kenyan police force. Throughout Kenya, the arrest and detention of refugees was frequently arbitrary, typically based on their

ethnicity, their marginalised status in Kenya, and lack of ability to protect themselves from Kenyan authority figures. The men and women who had been victims of police harassment were typically the refugees who had been living in Kenya for decades rather than victims of the most recent civil war. Although there were protection officers employed by the UNHCR and other aid organisations to help refugees in such circumstances, access to these officers was extremely difficult. Most people in the community had lost their faith in the protection system and found ways to utilise transnational remittances and other community resources to pay steep police bribes.

My first experience with discrimination by the Kenyan police was when I first arrived in Nairobi in November 2017. I had arranged to meet James, who was my first introduction to Kakuma, and his friend Mark in the city and they agreed to show me around. While walking through the bustling crowds of central Nairobi, James' arm was grabbed by one of the many armed police officers stationed throughout downtown. The two spoke angrily in Swahili for a minute until finally James was able to rip his arm away and walk off. As the police officer tried to do the same thing to Mark, he quickly disappeared into the crowd, catching up with James and I a few minutes later.

As we sat down for lunch, I asked James what the police officer wanted. James claimed that "he was asking for my travel documents. I refused to give them to him because I knew that they would not matter." According to James, Mark and he were immediately recognised as non-Kenyan due to their dark skin, tribal scarring on their foreheads, and missing front teeth, a traditional coming of age practice among the Dinka. James argued that "he knew we were refugees, and thought he could take some money from us as a bribe. In Kenya, we are not like you. Even though we are also foreigners, we do not have a government to protect us." Both James and Mark were part of the original Lost Boy community and had been living in Kenya as refugees since 1992, occasionally returning

home to South Sudan. They both told me that their travel documents were worthless when shown to a Kenyan police officer. Money was their only true protection, a resource that the majority of the South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma lacked.

Over the next nine months in Kakuma, I was forced to deal with the police on several occasions. In the attempt to get my friends and neighbours out of jail for their arbitrary arrests, I spoke to the local police chief, the refugee camp manager, the local magistrate, the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), and several UNHCR protection officers. On one occasion, I helped facilitate the negotiation and payment of a bribe for a group of youth leaders who were arrested, ironically, for holding a workshop on peace and reconciliation without the permission of the camp manager. When asked about their experience with the police, my participants who were familiar with the corruption of Kakuma's police force argued that money for bribes was their only protection. Without financial resources, they risked continued detention and possible deportation back to South Sudan. Kakuma's police preyed on the inability of refugees to protect themselves, utilising fear and punishment to solicit easy money.

My key informant for Kakuma's Nuer population was Paul, a pastor and active community leader. On two occasions, Paul had asked me to help him get members of his community out of jail. In both instances, the victims had been detained for crimes they had clearly not committed, and were threatened with expulsion from the camp or prosecution unless they could pay a large bribe to the police officers who arrested them.

The first time Paul had asked for my help he explained that an issue had come up concerning his neighbour who he had identified as his family, and as an elder it was his responsibility to mediate discussions. The day prior his neighbour was approached by the local police accusing him of being in possession of a phone that was stolen from a man in Nairobi two years previously. According to the police, the person who stole this phone had

beaten its owner into a coma from which he had only recently woken up. This reopened case led them to the streets of Kakuma. According to many of his local community members, this man named Andrew, who was a 32-year-old primary school teacher, had not left Kakuma since 1998 and had bought the phone off of a street vendor in Kakuma Town.

The police gave Andrew 48-hours to pay them a bribe of \$200 USD (£155 GBP) or they would arrest and send him for trial in Nairobi. Even though Andrew, Paul, and their entire community knew that he was innocent, no one thought that it was worth the risk to go to trial. As refugees in Kenya for decades, they were well aware of the discrimination that he would face along the way, and argued that there was no guarantee he would receive a fair trial. The consequences for failing to give in to the police's demand for a bribe meant that he would potentially be separated from his family for years, unable to earn an income, and possibly be deported back to South Sudan where, as a Nuer, his life might be at risk.

Although the UNHCR has protection officers to deal with situations just like this, in order to access them, refugees needed to wait in an extremely long line in the blazing hot sun outside an UNHCR field post office for hours, or have a special gate pass to get past the security guards into the UNHCR compound. Neither of these options ensured that you would see a protection officer or that they would be capable of intervening. Issues with the police are intentionally made to be time-critical, with immediate deportation threatened unless someone in power intervenes or the victims are willing to pay a bribe, so quick action is paramount. Although I did help Paul access a protection officer before Andrew was taken from Kakuma, his family had long since lost confidence that the UNHCR or the Kenyan legal system would protect them from harassment. Andrew and Paul's community pulled together resources, both transnationally from family members abroad and locally from friends and neighbours, to pay the bribe demanded by the police. Andrew was then released without question.

A month later Paul called me one afternoon and asked if I could help him find someone to get a young woman named Rebecca get out of jail. I first met her at the Kakuma police station where she and her three-month old baby were being detained. According to Rebecca, the police came to her doorstep in search of her husband. They were given orders to arrest him and repatriate him back to South Sudan because he had recently criticised the South Sudanese government in a Facebook post. Since her husband was currently in Nairobi, the police arrested her and her baby for his “crime.” The police had demanded from her family a bribe of \$2000 USD (£1540 GBP) to release her and her baby.

Although Paul and I did not manage to find a UNHCR protection officer, we did use my gate pass to get an audience with the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), an organisation funded by the Kenyan government to protect refugees. We sat down with a RCK representative as they recorded Paul's account of the event. They said they would look into it, but most likely they would not be able to prevent Rebecca's deportation for her husband's crimes against the South Sudanese government. Neither the UNHCR nor the RCK intervened, in this case, to protect Rebecca from her arbitrary detainment and potential deportation to South Sudan that risked her and her baby's lives.

Eventually, Rebecca's family and community were able to negotiate the police bribe down to \$250 USD (£192 GBP). Luckily she had a brother in Ethiopia and a sister in Australia; together they were able to raise the money, send it to Rebecca's mother in Kakuma and release her from her jail cell. After being imprisoned for three days, both Rebecca and her infant daughter suffered from malaria and were forced to ask her community for more money to pay for their treatment.

Based on my experience among Kakuma's South Sudanese population, harassment by the police was fuelled by multiple factors, the most important of which was this community's marginalised status in Kenya and their extreme poverty. Although all refugees in Kakuma

were subjected to the often arbitrary will of the Kenyan police, by being the poorest refugee population in the camp, the South Sudanese suffered the harshest consequences from an enforcement system that demanded money in exchange for their safety. Protection officials who were supposed to deter refugee mistreatment were incredibly difficult to access, and their ability to intervene was limited. Although harassment by the police was much less common than food insecurity or medical emergencies, it often demanded larger sums of money from refugees and their family members, and needed to be acted upon urgently. In all the examples of arrest that I became involved in and that my participants told me about, remittances from family and friends abroad were used to pay bribes to the police.

#### 7.4 Conclusion

Each of the three forms of insecurity discussed in this chapter were by-products of the failure of the refugee system to promote the welfare of Kakuma's inhabitants, a reality that was intensified by the extreme poverty of its South Sudanese population. These various forms of insecurity were institutionalised into the refugee system and affected every family represented in this study. In the case of Kakuma's South Sudanese population, insecurity was a consequence of their economic and social marginalisation in a country where they have almost no rights to protect them or ability to provide for their families.

Although my participants all reported an almost constant state of physical insecurity, they each utilised a variety of survival techniques dependent on their social networks and limited economic resources. Within this community, the maintenance of strong social relationships, both transnationally and locally, was central to each individual and family's ability to endure each day. Under these conditions, remittances sent to the members of Kakuma's South Sudanese community were critical to maintain some semblance of economic stability in an environment which preyed on its poorest inhabitants. In the case of this

population, remittances meant the difference between whether or not a family would eat that week, and whether they would be able to access the medical treatment to cure life-threatening conditions, or to avoid harassment by the Kenyan police. As suggested by Vargas-Silva (2017) and Van Hear and Cohen (2017), remittances acted as a lifeline for the receiving members of this diaspora currently living in Kakuma, often meaning the difference between life and death for the participants in this study and their family, friends, and neighbours.

In the case of this community, remittance recipients were almost completely incapable of developing their livelihoods through the utilisation of their transnational resources because of their institutionalised economic and social marginalisation. As discussed in the next chapter, although remittances could rarely be used for recipients' livelihood development in the present, the investment in education was the exception to this trend and often emphasised as crucial. I found that the dichotomy between the inability of remittance recipients to escape their refugeeeness, that is their marginalised social and economic status in Kenya, and their investment in the next generation created a sense of hopelessness in the present but also a belief in a hopeful future. Although none of my participants in Kakuma had more than \$100 USD (£75 GBP) in savings, and were therefore constantly worried about future expenses, virtually all strongly believed that their and their children's education would lead to social and economic security in the future.

## Chapter 8: Challenging Refugeeeness through the Pursuit of Education

The value of education was a strong theme throughout my experience of the South Sudanese diaspora in Kakuma, the UK, and the US. As mentioned previously, between 2015 and 2016 I volunteered for an organisation in California called HwSS which was created to help resettled South Sudanese refugees in the US support the refugee children of their families through their education. These children were primarily based in Kakuma and were sent to boarding schools in Kenya and Uganda. At the time, I underestimated the complexity of these transnational relationships and the drive of this resettled refugee community to fund the education of their extended family left behind in the refugee camp. The desires of this resettled refugee community living in California exceeded their financial capabilities at the time, so they creatively used their social networks and faith-based communities to help them meet their responsibilities as what Johnson and Stoll (2008) describe as the “global breadwinners” within their families.

The transnational bonds created between refugees currently living in Kakuma and their family members living in Western nations, who have achieved high levels of success compared to other refugee populations, have created an interesting dynamic concerning education, motivations to pursue it, and expectations after completing it (McKinnon 2008).<sup>52</sup> This chapter explores the role that education played for the South Sudanese community of Kakuma, the various ways it has been pursued, and how these aspirations for education have been influenced by their transnational relationships with family abroad. In reference to De Haas’ (2005) argument that remittances can either lead to economic activity or passive dependency depending on various economic, social, or political constraints, I argue that both

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<sup>52</sup> McKinnon (2008) argues that the 3,500 members of the Lost Boy community who were resettled to the US between 2000 and 2001 are considered one of the most successful resettlement programmes in US history in terms of rates of employment, education level, and English fluency after resettlement.

the aid system and transnational remittances promote a sense of dependency within this refugee community due to the incapability of either to support the long-term development of this population's livelihood. However, I pose the question as to whether remittances help refugees challenge their sense of refugeeness created by the refugee system.

When I first arrived in Nairobi in 2017 to begin my fieldwork, I began to witness the importance that remittance recipients placed on the value of education. Mark, a South Sudanese refugee sent by HwSS to escort me to Kakuma, took me out to dinner with his niece Jessica who was visiting the city during the school break. Jessica had recently graduated with top marks from the Morneau Shepell secondary girls school in Kakuma, and was then employed as one of their English teachers. Mark and Jessica explained to me that she wanted to go to medical school and help her community. Over dinner, we discussed university applications, scholarships, visas, and the various ways to gain experience by volunteering in the camp.

During my time in Kakuma, such discussions about applying to university were common among the young adults of the camp's South Sudanese community. As the youngest participants in this study, the 20 men and women aged 18 to 25 years old had all spent the majority of their lives in Kakuma, many born within the confines of the camp, and they all held a strong interest in pursuing a higher education. On several occasions, after completing an interview, my participant's friends gathered around to ask me questions about university. Where do I apply? How do I get accepted? How do I get a scholarship? What could I study?

Although I attempted to answer the questions these young adults had about pursuing university, the reasons behind these questions were more difficult to understand. As an American, a university education and the funding to support it was accessible. I had pursued higher education because that was what my culture told me was the logical step to a successful career. To this new generation of South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma, however,

education was not just a key to a career, it was perceived to be the solution to their and their families' displacement. Furthermore, for the majority of this community gaining access to higher education was far from simple. Between an ongoing war in their homeland, the cost of tuition, visas, transportation, and the lack of knowledge required for university applications and scholarships, these future community leaders were facing much steeper barriers than I could have managed at their age.

Kirk and Cassity (2007) argue that education programmes within the refugee system should be considered a "minimum standard" for the security and wellbeing of a camp's inhabitants in an emergency situation. These authors suggest that in humanitarian emergencies, chronic crises, and early post-war reconstruction, education aids in security as well as the physical, cognitive and psychological wellbeing of students and their surrounding community. According to these authors, although several humanitarian organisations like the UNHCR, the LWF, Save the Children, and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) advocate for the right to education, there has been "little coordination of these efforts, limited funding and no solid foundation of accepted good practice on which to base their interventions in humanitarian contexts" (Kirk and Cassity 2007: 51).

Supporting Kirk and Cassity's observation, Meda et al.'s (2012) study on the accessibility of education for refugee children in South Africa, argues that this demographic is likely to face limited opportunities to enrol into primary and secondary schools due to their refugee status. Obstacles preventing access to education include being unable to afford their tuition fees in addition to the costs of transport, uniforms and books. Other limitations include lacking official documents for children to register with a school or finding that the schools accessible to refugees are already full. Meda et al. (2012: 166) suggest that refugee children are, therefore, marginalised and denied opportunities due to their refugee status, a theme that is "symptomatic of the global refugee experience".

Between 1983 and 1991, members of the community now described as the Lost Boys of Sudan, learned to access and appreciate Western education, a resource that became open to them through makeshift schools developed by Christian missionaries in refugee camps in Ethiopia (Chanoff 2005; Scott-Villiers et al. 1993). Chanoff (2005: 41) argues that after the members of this community settled in Kakuma in 1992 and in the face of their families and cultural identities being stripped from them through conflict, displacement, and death, the Lost Boys strove to “reconstruct themselves through education.” Finishing secondary school enabled these young men to become teachers in the refugee camp, and after their resettlement to Western nations like the US, their pursuit of higher education led to employment opportunities.

Several authors suggest that when remittances are introduced into low and middle class communities in developing countries recipients often invest in the education of their children in addition to the healthcare and nutrition of the entire family (Acosta et al. 2015; Fransen 2015; Munyera and Matsumoto 2016; Salas 2014). In Acosta et al.’s (2015) study, the authors found that in extremely impoverished nations, the influx of financial resources in the form of remittances significantly influenced children’s access to education, particularly when their parents had no or very low educational history. In the context of this thesis, education can be included under Sen’s (1999) theory of “Development as Freedom” in which economic opportunity enables refugee remittance recipients to make active choices for the betterment of their future when education is perceived to be linked to economic stability, political liberties, social capital, good health, and further investment in the future of the receiving communities.

In section 8.1 of this chapter I will describe how for refugees in Kakuma, primary and secondary school education was expensive, always requiring fees for uniforms, notebooks, pens, and for those who could afford it, tuition, transportation, and boarding. These costs

multiplied with each child in the family, and in general exceeded the income accessible to the refugees. As discussed more in-depth in the previous chapter, the pursuit of education remained a strong aspiration for this population despite ongoing insecurity. To many of Kakuma's South Sudanese community, education was an investment for the entire family, both in the camp and elsewhere in the world. The financial costs and insecurity incurred in the present were perceived to be an investment towards their future independence and livelihood development, reducing their reliance on both humanitarian aid organisations and their transnational family members.

In section 8.2, I will assess the extent to which the transnational participation of Kakuma's South Sudanese community and their receipt of remittances has contributed to the belief that education is the solution to their protracted displacement. Despite finding very little evidence to support the assumption that education aided in the advancement of my refugee respondents' livelihoods, the participants in this study held a strong belief that the continued education of their family members was needed for a sustainable future. Based on the experiences and desires presented in this chapter, I believe that these aspirations were strongly influenced by the success stories of their community members living in the global north, particularly those who broke free of their refugee identity and the social and economic marginalisation associated with it.

### 8.1 Accessing Education

For most of the men and women in this study, education was associated with both immediate costs in the face of already existing and significant forms of insecurity and an investment towards the future financial security of their family. Depending on a family's willingness and ability to invest in their children's education, costs ranged from buying school supplies, paying for a private school in Kakuma, paying for boarding school elsewhere

in Kenya, and finally to investing in higher education. At the most basic level, the vast majority of children in Kakuma were guaranteed a primary school education, but their parents were required to cover the cost of materials associated with this education (Mendenhall et al. 2015). For refugees who received free education in the camp, their families needed to invest at least £20-40 GBP (\$30-60 USD) per child per year on basic resources, thus acting as a significant barrier to their education (Lutheran World Federation Kenya-Djibouti Programme 2015). Depending on the level of support from family members abroad or from various non-profit organisations, refugee families often pursued advanced levels of education when the opportunity arose.

Betts et al. (2018b) suggest that education within Kakuma's population was positively correlated with the ability to speak multiple languages, the development of skills, and the ability to translate these skills into income generating activities.<sup>53</sup> During my time in Kakuma, refugees would often explain to me that they needed their children to receive an education so that they could learn to speak Swahili and English, so that they would be able to get a good job to support their family in the future, and ideally so that they would have the skills to enable their family to leave the refugee setting, whether it be back to South Sudan, to Uganda, or elsewhere in Kenya. In many ways, education was perceived to be the solution to their current liminal circumstances.

The cost of education for the children within these communities varied drastically between each participant. In general, many of the remittance recipients whose children went to school in Kakuma only received money from their transnational networks for food and medical emergencies. Since primary school was guaranteed for all refugee children in

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<sup>53</sup> According to Betts et al. (2018b), South Sudanese refugees in Kakuma had an average of 6.25 years of education comparable to Kenyan national average of 6.5 years, but significantly above South Sudan's average of 4.9 years (UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update).

Kakuma, remittance recipients who were in failing or failed transnational relationships (discussed further in Chapter 5.3) struggled to communicate to their contacts overseas why money was needed for school supplies.<sup>54</sup>

One of the characteristics associated with Kakuma's refugees who had tenuous or withdrawn relationships with their family abroad was their inability to communicate to remittance senders the conditions of life in the camp, in particular the choices a refugee was forced to make to ensure that their children go to school. Several men and women in this community suggested that their family members who sometimes sent remittances, particularly those who had never lived in Kakuma themselves, could not comprehend the deprivation of life in the camp. For the participants in this study whom I identified as having failing or failed transnational relationships, their family members abroad struggled to understand the cost of even the most basic education and, therefore, its inaccessibility.

In comparison, for the refugees in Kakuma who maintained the strongest transnational bonds, their family members abroad wanted them to become educated so that they could become valuable contributors to their community network. Within this population, education of the individual translated to the perception of economic and social stability for the community as a whole. One woman in Kakuma named Rosie stated that "our children's education is the development of our future. If a child is educated, he will help his community. He can become a doctor or a teacher and help others. We are investing in the future of our community." Virtually every man and woman in this study argued that education contributed to financial and social opportunities for the family as a whole, often directly contrasting the marginalised lifestyle of a refugee in Kakuma.

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<sup>54</sup> Education in Kakuma is funded and managed by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). At the time of my stay in Kakuma, they operated 26 primary schools and 5 secondary schools.

During my fieldwork in Kakuma, the financial barriers to children's education escalated when the LWF announced that in the 2018 school year they would begin charging tuition for all students attending school inside the refugee camp. From February 2018, all primary school students would be required to pay 1000 KSH (£7.50 GBP) each term, and similarly all secondary school students would be charged 3000 KSH (£23 GBP) per term. In the months between November 2017 and January 2018, this was the most commonly discussed topic during my conversations among Kakuma's South Sudanese community. Several people argued that they could barely afford to feed their families, could rarely afford adequate medical treatment when they were sick, and were now being presented with another barrier preventing them from escaping poverty and deprivation.<sup>55</sup>

I believe that the primary reason that the South Sudanese community of Kakuma was in such an uproar about the sudden rise in the cost of school tuition, was the fact that the education of their children was equated with the future advancement of their families. The men and women of this community mentioned to me that when their remittances would not cover the costs of education in Kakuma, they would often try to sell various goods on the street or exchange what little food rations they could for school supplies. One woman named Sarah said that she used to have a little kiosk in front of her house, the profits from which she would use to buy school supplies for her children.

I have five children who always need uniforms and school supplies. My brother [in the US] used to send money to make sure that my kiosk was fully stocked. But last year he said that he could not send money anymore. The last of the money was used for my children's education. I had to shut the shop until I get more money. I struggle to help my children continue their studies.

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<sup>55</sup> As far as I am aware, the UNHCR and the LWF never implemented these tuition charges for the schools within Kakuma refugee camp. However, in the months leading up to these events, there were several protests within Kakuma's secondary schools in which students attacked teachers, several of whom had to be hospitalised and evacuated by helicopter.

Much like Sarah, several participants in this study suggested that they often struggled to meet the costs of education, even when tuition was free. Parents often had to choose between investing in other livelihood development opportunities, or even feeding their families, so that their children could learn to read, to speak English and Swahili, and to learn basic mathematics.

The aspirations for Kakuma's South Sudanese children to become educated, and the struggles to fund them, meant that the men and women of this population traded other available resources, such as food, to pay for these costs when no other option seemed to be available. Several other men and women mentioned to me that in the weeks between the distribution of their monthly food rations and the beginning of each school term, they chose to sell some of their families' food to a local shopkeeper in exchange for notebooks and pens for their children. For the parents who chose these methods to fund their children's education, they traded their present security, although already marginal, as an investment towards their family's future independence.

It is important to note that the actions undertaken by refugees to trade their food to buy their children an education were not made casually. As discussed in the previous chapter, the majority of the members of this population lived with very little food and other economic resources. By making the active decision to live without some days' worth of food each month so that they and their children could have a chance at a better life was probably one of the most difficult decisions any member of this community was forced to make while living in Kakuma. Several men and women in this camp claimed that they were willing to suffer for the foreseeable future so that their children's families would not have to suffer the same way. They were not just making an investment in their children's lives, but the future lives of their entire family.

For those fortunate enough to maintain strong transnational relationships, the education of each family's children was the primary investment for which remittances were used. As suggested by several studies, remittances have a significant influence on the human capital of children by altering the cost-benefit relationship of investing in the education of children (Acosta et al. 2015; Adams 2006, Fransen 2015; Salas 2014). When a family no longer has to choose between feeding or educating their children due to an influx of financial capital, it becomes easier to invest in their children's future through their education. In this context, education becomes what De Haas (2009) has argued to be a "multiplier effect" of remittances sent to developing communities, in which additional financial capital introduced to this population is used to promote the further economic and social stability of their communities.

These methods for paying for school supplies described above were the extreme examples of what Kakuma's South Sudanese community would do when no other option was available. Refugees who were fortunate enough to receive remittances specifically to pay for the cost of education, rarely needed to resort to selling their already limited food supplies. In some cases, refugees were able to receive remittances from one or several sources to pay for these basic costs of schooling in Kakuma. In addition, approximately a third of my participants had the opportunity for either they or their children to attend a secondary school outside of Kakuma. In exceptional cases this education was funded by large non-profit organisations, however they were more commonly supported by family members living in Western nations or small faith-based organisations with whom these transnational family members were able to establish and maintain social networks with their family living in Kakuma.

For refugees who received limited remittances to send their children to a state or private school in which tuition needed to be paid, families often needed to choose which of

their children to support. Jok, a 19-year-old man who had recently completed his secondary education in Kitale (western Kenya), explained that his uncle in the US only had enough money to pay for the tuition of one child within his family at a time. Jok explained that he was chosen because he was the eldest male of all his siblings and cousins in the camp and that “every term my uncle would send my mother money to pay for my transportation to and from school, for my tuition, and for my food. He would always call me after each term and talk to me about my marks and try to motivate me to study more.” Jok argued that since he was chosen to receive an education, it was now his responsibility to financially support the younger children in his family. At the time of his interview, Jok was working as a teacher in a primary school in Kakuma, earning 7000 KSH (£50 GBP) per month.

One example of a small faith-based organisation utilised by the South Sudanese diaspora is HwSS, which specifically sought to fund the education of children from Kakuma by sending them to school throughout Kenya and Uganda. After working for this organisation in San Jose, California for several months, I discovered that it was originally established by resettled South Sudanese refugees living in California and their church. Members of this refugee community wanted to fund the education of their family members, but at the time lacked the financial security to do so. These transnational participants were able to gather enough social and financial support from their community in California to create this small organisation whose primary goal was to meet their family obligations of funding the education of their extended family members in Kakuma.

John, first introduced in Chapter 5, was one of the original beneficiaries of this programme. His sister Margaret, who also participated in this study, had arrived in California in early 2001, and was going to college to become a nurse while working a part-time retail job and caring for her five children. Due to the high cost of living in the San Francisco Bay Area, she advocated for her brother John’s education to be funded by her church and HwSS.

This small organisation paid for his tuition at a boarding school in Kitale as well as the first two years of his university education at the University of Nairobi so that he could study to become a cyber security analyst. Most of the people that I met in Kakuma from this community who were fortunate enough to attend university had their tuition fees paid by similar organisations as a by-product of their transnational family member's social networks developed in Western nations.

While in Kakuma, several of the young adults who participated in this study, ranging in age from 18 to 25, told me that their secondary education was funded by similar community organisations based in the US, Canada, the UK, and Australia. These organisations would raise money, whether it be from church parishioners or other members of the South Sudanese diaspora, to pay for tuition fees in Kenyan or Ugandan schools outside of the refugee system. One man named Sam told me that his secondary school was paid for by a South Sudanese couple in Australia to whom his uncle had suggested they sponsor his education. Sam told me that "they called me often, and asked how I was doing in school. It was like they became my family." In this case, even though Sam's uncle lacked the financial security to meet the expectations placed on him as a resettled refugee living in Australia, he had managed to use his social network to uphold his responsibility towards his family.

During my time in Kakuma, I met two men whose children had managed to excel through the Kenyan education system as refugees and who have since been given international opportunities to pursue a university education. One of these men, named Louis, discussed with nostalgia the education of his daughter:

My daughter was in preschool while I was in primary school. I would get out and she would wait for me at the gate so we could walk home together. As she completed her education, she always got perfect grades. When she completed primary school, she tested 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation. She was given a scholarship for a good Kenyan boarding school in Lodwar and I went back [to South Sudan] to become a primary school teacher. My daughter now studies business at a university in Canada.

Louis' experiences with his children's education as refugees living in Kakuma was probably most people's ideal situation. His daughter achieved very competitive scores, received scholarships, and was able to attend a university in a Western nation. His other children were fortunate enough to gain legal work permits and were working professionals in Nairobi and Kampala at the time of his interview.

Louis' daughter was a beneficiary of the Windle Trust, a non-profit organisation that sought out high-achieving students living as refugees in Kakuma and offered them full scholarships to study at a university of their choice in Canada. Most of my participants in Kakuma who were under the age of 25 expressed both interest in this programme and frustration at their inability to access a scholarship to Canada like some of their peers. Due to, at least in part, their transnational relationships with family members living in the global north, education seemed like a piece of their future that they could control, and university in a Western nation was often perceived to be a gate pass out of Kakuma and for the success of their family.

During my time in Kakuma, I interviewed several young adults who discussed their transnational relationships and their perceived responsibility to receive an education for the advancement of their family as a whole. One woman named Evelyn stated that she was always told that "education is the key to life. If I am educated, then I can help my family." Similarly, a man named Chris commented that "If you are helped by someone, and they believe in you then you have the motivation to continue. You can have goals for what you want to do when you are an adult. If I didn't have that, then I don't know where I would be mentally." To these refugees, most of whom were born in and spent the majority of their lives in Kakuma, education represented an escape for them and their families. Education equated to economic advancement, livelihood development, and investment in community support networks. So many people in this community believed that the potential return for all their

sacrifices made towards the education of their community members directly contrasted the liminality of their and their parents' current lifestyle.

The discussion above suggests that for refugees who maintained the strongest transnational relationships, discussed in Chapter 5, investing in the education of the children of this community was rarely questioned as the best course of action. For members who were committed to the welfare of the family as a whole, education equated to the economic and social advancement of the community rather than the individual. Both remittance senders and recipients represented in this study argued that investing in the education of the children in their family would contribute to their families' financial and physical security.

It can be argued that both transnational resources such as remittances and the distribution of foreign aid promote a sense of dependency. However, within the aid economy of Kakuma refugee camp, social and economic marginalisation and vulnerability were often perceived by South Sudanese refugees to be required traits for continued support in the form of food, healthcare, education, and security (Jansen 2008, 2013; Turner 2010).<sup>56</sup> Despite the presence of these states of existence, in which marginalisation and vulnerability are standard, the amount of aid given to this community gradually decreases as their status as refugees becomes increasingly more protracted. In comparison, remittances sent to this community for the purpose of education were provided based on the assumption that the primary beneficiaries would become self-sufficient leaders within their community capable of emotionally and financially supporting other family members in a similar manner. So, while

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<sup>56</sup> During my time in Kakuma, there were various projects, by organisations like Don Bosco, Norwegian Refugee Council and the Jesuit Refugee Service, that provided livelihood development and skills training courses. These projects were designed to help refugees gradually become less dependent on the refugee system. However, since refugees in Kenya could not legally work, their ability to earn a living wage was marginal. Several aid workers claimed that these projects were designed to help refugees rebuild their lives once they were repatriated to their home nation. For the South Sudanese community, these prospects were unrealistic and did not help them achieve economic independence while they continued to be refugees.

the former operates on the assumption that the beneficiaries lack agency, the latter actually promotes their agency and eventual ability to gain self-sufficiency.

From a policy perspective, access to education in a refugee's nation of residence and outside of the refugee system, as well as healthcare and social networking opportunities, is one of the ways that the UNHCR measures a refugee's level of integration into their host community (Beversluis et al. 2016). Therefore, by enabling South Sudanese refugees in Kenya to receive a Kenyan education outside of a refugee camp, remittances aid in the ability of these communities to contribute to their host society with their "refugee resources" through their social, economic, and possibly political participation in Kenya (Jacobsen 2002). Therefore, it can be argued that education supported by remittances has the potential to break the liminal state of dependency that has come to define the refugee system through physical and conceptual isolation (Harrell-Bond 1986; Napier-Moore 2005).

For South Sudanese refugees, children represented hope and opportunity, a potential bridge between the limitations of their current marginalisation in the refugee system and their ability to achieve freedom and prosperity in the future. Investing in the education of their children, whether it was in a limited capacity in the refugee camp or by paying for tuition elsewhere in Kenya, gave refugees and their transnational family members hope that their circumstances would improve in the future. It gave them the chance to believe that they would not always be dependent on humanitarian aid for food or medicine, and that one day they could return home to South Sudan or begin their lives by being able to integrate into Kenya or by migrating elsewhere in the world.

This perception of the value of education and the ability of educated members of this community to uplift their family out of poverty was strongly influenced by the transnational relationships in which my participants in Kakuma engaged. The transnational family members who invested both emotional and financial support into the education of their

community were typically educated themselves, contributing to their ability to invest in the next generation. As discussed in section 8.2, although the members of this community acted upon the premise that education would lead to social and economic opportunities, the reality was far different between the members of this population who continued to live as refugees and those who were fortunate enough to become resettled refugees or economic migrants living in the global north and outside the refugee system.

## 8.2 Entangled Values: Comparing Experiences of Education and Marginalisation

Many of my participants in Kakuma, particularly men who self-identified as Lost Boys and their children who were young adults during my time in the camp, strongly believed that education was the solution to their displacement and economic instability. As much as I believe in the strength of knowledge, I believe that the perception of education being the solution to their protracted situation is a simplification, influenced by their transnational relationships.

From my experience in Kakuma, members of this community actively strove to complete secondary school, and strongly desired to pursue university degrees. Even when I encountered members of this community who had achieved undergraduate degrees, and who could not find employment within the camp with a salary that could realistically support their families, their solution was to pursue further graduate degrees. There was also a strong assumption that their education would lead to well-paid employment opportunities, an assumption for which I found little evidence among those who continued to live in the camp.

As I suggested above, the prevalence of this belief that refugees should achieve the highest and best quality education available was significantly influenced by their transnational family members living in the global north. The majority of the remittance senders whom I interviewed in either the US or the UK had managed to work hard enough to

pay for a university education, and in several cases, had pursued a graduate degree. The members of this generation argued that education was extremely important, often meaning the difference between being able to financially support their family or not. Consequently, as emotional and financial sponsors for children within their families in Africa (discussed in Chapter 5), they believed that the ultimate path to success and freedom for their families was through their education.

Peter, first introduced at the very beginning of this thesis, represented these relationships perfectly. Peter lived in Texas, had been an American citizen for ten years, and usually tried to visit Kakuma for several months out of the year to reconnect with his wife, niece and nephews, and his infant son. During our many informal conversations while walking through the camp, Peter enjoyed discussing the various ways the adults within their communities could teach their teenagers to be future leaders. While painting a makeshift blackboard on to his family's compound wall for tutoring their children, he explained to me the nature of his relationships with his niece and nephews. He claimed that "I must be a role model for our family. My good fortune to have a life in the US must be shared among all of us, otherwise what is the point?" Peter was adamant that the teenagers within his family pursue an education and a professional career to the best of their ability. He argued that the only way to change their circumstances within the refugee system was through an active development of an independent and prosperous future through education. Peter is emblematic of the assumption that the next generation could follow the same trajectory as the previous generation, that education would contribute to the financial and social security of their family as a whole.

All of the young adults who participated in this study dreamed of going to university. For some of them, small community faith-based organisations, facilitated by the social networks of their transnational counterparts, managed to pay for their tuition fees at

universities in Nairobi or Kampala. As mentioned previously, two parents told me about their children who were currently going to university in Canada as scholarship recipients.

However, the majority of the young men and women in Kakuma who had finished their secondary education in private schools throughout Kenya, were forced to return to Kakuma and wait for their opportunity to attend university. In these cases, although their family living in Western nations pushed them to pursue higher education, they could rarely afford to pay for the tuition fees.

Peter held very strong feelings about motivating his niece and nephews to believe that they could create a career that could potentially help their community in Kakuma and eventually in South Sudan as the generation who will ideally rebuild their nation after decades of war and displacement. His nephew Tim had recently graduated from secondary school thanks to Peter's financial support and dreamed of becoming a doctor and returning home to South Sudan. At the time of our interview, Tim was working as a teacher in one of the primary schools in Kakuma, earning barely enough money to feed his family. He remained hopeful that he would one day attend university and be able to give back to his community. Similarly, his sister Achienne, was in her final year of secondary school and dreamed of becoming a human rights lawyer protecting women who experienced sexual violence during wartime in South Sudan. Although neither Tim nor Achienne could afford university through either remittances or scholarships, they held on to their dreams that their education could make a difference for the people of their community and in their efforts to help rebuild their home nation.

The example of Peter and his family suggests that this perception that education was the solution to their problems as protracted refugees was significantly influenced by the members of the Lost Boy community who were resettled primarily to the US, Australia, and Canada in the early 2000s (Chanoff 2005; Luster et al. 2008, McKinnon 2008). In a study

conducted by Chanoff (2005:41), a member the Lost Boy community recounted his initial experiences in Kakuma and the connection that he made to education:

When we came to Kenya, we saw a huge difference between the educated and the non-educated. We saw the hierarchy. Those people who had degrees were the uppermost, and those who had high school diplomas were in second place. And we saw the Turkana, the local people, who had their cattle and nothing else. We saw the huge gap, and we understood the real meaning of education in terms of living.

Chanoff argues that the children of this population had their identities, their families, and their cultural values stripped from them, and attempted to reconstruct themselves through their education. Although they had to study much harder to attend university in the US, their university educations were perceived to be the gateway to their futures. This perception that education was the key to a successful and prosperous future independent from the refugee system was passed on to the next generation of their families in the camp as well as to the members of the Lost Boy community who were never given the opportunity to resettle with their counterparts.

Several of the men living in the US who participated in this study described what the first years after resettlement were like for them and other members of the Lost Boy community. David, first mentioned in Chapter 6, told me that:

When we arrived, we all lived together and we have since worked as much as we could. Many of us have three or four jobs...In the fifteen years since we have been [in the US] we have become [American] citizens, we went to community college, and then university. We worked hard and studied so that we can support our families.

All of the remittance senders who participated in this study, both in the US and UK, highly valued the role of education. Although education involved significant cost, to the members of these communities the eventual rewards were worth the immediate costs. Of the 21 remittance senders discussed in this study, 12 had university degrees at the time of their

participation, and four of them also held graduate degrees. Their careers ranged in fields such as medicine, engineering, education, business, law, and international development.

In relation to their transnational familial connections, these careers and the education required to achieve them were pathways to security for their extended family members in South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda that they chose to financially and socially support. As discussed above in Chapters 5 and 6, these relationships were developed on the cultural belief that they had the responsibility to support their family members, particularly those who were marginalised due to war and displacement, until they had the ability to support themselves. One of the primary interpretations of this responsibility was the need to invest in the education of the next generation of their family, enabling the beneficiaries to support other members of their family to the best of their ability.

The primary distinction between the remittance senders and recipients of this study, and the difference in the opportunities available to them presented through their education, was their ability/inability to pursue employment and other economic opportunities. For reasons that cannot be entirely answered by the data presented in this thesis, education did not automatically equate to employment opportunities either inside or outside of the refugee setting. Of the three men who I met in Kakuma who had undergraduate degrees at the time of their interview, two of whom were in the process of applying for graduate programmes, all were unable to secure employment in the camp that offered salaries more than 8,000 shillings (£60 GBP) per month, only slightly higher than their children made as teachers in the camp with only secondary school educations.

One of these men, James, an active community leader, struggled to find employment despite his experience, education, and social networking skills. James, an original member of the Lost Boy community, had lived between South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kakuma, and Nairobi as a refugee since he was nine years old. Between 2013 and 2016 he had been employed by

HwSS to facilitate the transportation of students from Kakuma to their boarding school throughout Kenya and Uganda in addition to ensuring the payment of their tuition and boarding fees. During this time period, James was an essential middleman between a small organisation based in California and his community in Kakuma receiving aid.

When I arrived in Kenya at the end of 2017, James was in Nairobi for his graduation ceremony at the Pan African Christian University, about to receive a degree in accounting. During our initial meeting over dinner in Nairobi, James explained to me that his degree was funded by an Australian Christian organisation due to his work as a minister in Kakuma. During my 10 months in Kakuma, I managed to meet up with James on many occasions. He often explained to me that he was struggling to find paid employment after his graduation, and that his primary source of income continued to be from family members and friends living in the US.

On one occasion while discussing job opportunities available to him, he told me that he wanted to go back to university, “I think I should get a Master’s degree. I would like to study theology or economics.” James was actually luckier than most of the people I met in Kakuma because he received a scholarship for his university education due to his active participation in his community and his well-established international social networks that he had managed to build over the previous decades. Despite not knowing where his next scholarship would come from, James remained optimistic that he would make friends with the right people, who would again offer to pay for his education, which would eventually lead to employment opportunities for him either in Kakuma’s non-profit sector or another position in Kenya that would entitle him to a work permit.

In Kakuma, the primary barrier preventing the translation of the education of its South Sudanese community to employment was the inability to receive a work permit. Of the 80 participants interviewed in Kakuma, 42 men and women maintained some sort of

employment in the camp. These jobs ranged from teachers, nurses, research assistants, pastors, cooks, waiters, and *boda boda* (motorcycle taxi) drivers. However, the monthly salary that these refugees could earn only ranged from 5,000 KSH (£35 GBP) for unskilled labour to 8000 KSH (£60 GBP) for highly skilled work. These salaries were significantly less than a Kenyan national would make for the same job due to the inability for members of this refugee community to gain legal work permits. This system forces refugees in Kenya to volunteer for an “incentive” (rather than a salary) despite their educational qualifications or experience.

Simon, the quality control-manager for Kakuma’s school system originally introduced in Chapter 6, represented an interesting example of the barriers to a sustainable salary despite employment that was made possible through his education. Simon had continued his education on full scholarship at a branch of Kenya’s Masinde Muliro University that had recently opened up in Kakuma. At the time of his interview he had just completed his Bachelor’s degree in education. Simon began teaching nearly 15 years prior, shortly after finishing his secondary school education, and was currently hired to train teachers and manage the curriculum taught in the camp across the 26 primary schools and 5 secondary schools available to refugees and the local population. On one occasion Simon claimed that “it’s hard. I train teachers who I know make much more money. [My salary] is quite low and embarrassing for someone with a university degree.” Simon was hoping that completing his university degree would help him get a permit to work legally in Kenya, in which case he could earn 60,000 KSH (£450 GBP) per month compared to the 8,000 KSH (£60 GBP) of his current salary; unfortunately, these aspirations were unmet and the receipt of his Bachelor’s degree did not influence his income.

Among the South Sudanese diaspora represented in this thesis, I found that success presented throughout livelihood development and facilitated through the pursuit of an

education was limited to the participants who benefited from opportunities to migrate to the US or UK. Although many of the refugees had completed their secondary education and sometimes their university education, their knowledge and qualifications did not translate into economic security or livelihood development for those who continued to live inside Kakuma. Based on the experiences of the men and women whom I interviewed, a secondary education entitled refugees to employment opportunities that offered 2000 to 3000 KSH (£15-20 GBP) more per month when compared to those without a degree.

I believe that the members of this population placed such a strong value on their and their children's education because the success stories, however rare, were clearly visible. For the members of these transnational communities who lived in the US and the UK, pursuing higher education led to employment opportunities and higher salaries which contributed to their ability to sufficiently support their family members in Kakuma and elsewhere in Africa. In these cases, the education of the individual contributed to the economic and social stability of the family as a whole. Due to the nature of these transnational relationships, in which communication and social support are necessary for their maintenance (discussed further in Chapter 5), these values and aspirations were passed down from remittance sender to recipient under the assumption that education would further contribute to their community's welfare and stability.

However, the primary difference between remittance senders and recipients, between those living independently outside of the refugee system and those inside it, was the ability to gain legal employment and to earn a liveable salary to support their family. None of the refugees in Kakuma who participated in this study had a work permit, despite their education, qualifications, or experience. Consequently, members of this population were forced to "volunteer" for an incentive rather than work for a salary, often for non-profit organisations like the LWF and Red Cross based in the refugee camp. Since these incentives were never

enough to adequately support their families based in the camp, these men and women remained dependent on both the refugee system and their family members living abroad.

Despite the evidence to suggest that education does not necessarily lead to livelihood development as a refugee in Kakuma, participants often suggested that they needed to pursue higher forms of education, aspiring towards both undergraduate and graduate degrees. It was clear that the strong will to achieve economic stability through education did not translate in Kakuma in the same way that it did for their familial counterparts living in Western nations. This raises the question as to whether the experiences and success of the South Sudanese diaspora is replicable for those who continue to live under the restrictive policies placed on them due to their refugee status in Kenya.

### 8.3 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ways in which participants in transnational networks seek to challenge the dependency fostered by the refugee system and envisage a better future through investment in education. For members of these communities, education equated to the future advancement of the welfare and stability of the family as a whole.

For the remittance recipients, education symbolised hope and opportunity, directly contrasting their liminal lifestyle as protracted refugees in Kakuma. In an attempt to maintain this hope for a better future, refugees within this community would go to tremendous efforts to pay for their children's education. For those who struggled to maintain their transnational family support networks, this often meant selling their already limited food supplies in exchange for school supplies such as uniforms, books, and pens.

Young men and women in Kakuma who were fortunate enough to be members of stronger transnational social relationships, were often beneficiaries of higher qualities of education in institutions throughout Kenya and Uganda. In cases in which their transnational family members abroad were unable to meet the demands of their responsibility to the

refugee community, participants developed international social networks through small community-based organisations which often paid for the children of their family's education. Finally, in rare cases, refugees in Kakuma were able to pursue higher education. Sometimes they were funded by family members to go to university in Nairobi or Kampala, and sometimes they were funded by large organisations like the Windle Trust to attend university in a Western nation.

As I suggest in section 8.2 of this chapter, I believe that the strong perception that education was the solution to their displacement was in a large part produced by their relationships with family and friends living in Western nations, in particular those who used to live in Kakuma themselves. For the remittance senders within this population living in the US and the UK, education contributed significantly to their economic and social security. Due to the strength of these transnational relationships, this belief that the education of the individual contributed to the advancement and security of the family as a whole was passed on, particularly between participants who maintained mentor-mentee relationships. For the members of this community, education was relatively attainable and was perceived to be a reasonable solution to their displacement due to their community's past experiences of success outside of the refugee system.

For the members of this population, education was a means to challenge their social and economic marginalisation within Kenya and the refugee system. As protracted refugees in Kenya, these South Sudanese men and women could not return to their home nation, they could not work legally in Kenya, or otherwise become integrated into Kenya's general population, and, due to the lack of resettlement opportunities in addition to strict and costly visa processes, their chance of migrating to a Western nation was highly improbable. This population was trapped inside of Kakuma, waiting for help while simultaneously incapable of helping themselves due to strict refugee policies. Within these communities in which

education was considered the key to the success of their transnational family members living in the global north, South Sudanese refugees strongly believed that education was the solution for all community members despite their current experiences or restrictions placed on their lives. From the perspective of many of my participants in Kakuma, education was one of the few aspects of their lives over which they could maintain some sort of control.

I argue that both international aid and transnational remittances promote a sense of dependency among protracted refugee communities, particularly those living within camps. Both are forms of financial and social welfare that promise an end to their refugeeeness, a solution for the future. However, the aid economy is completely dependent on 1) the generosity of the international community, and 2) the vulnerability, deprivation, marginalisation, and insecurity of the beneficiaries. The former is likely to decrease as a refugee population becomes protracted, and the latter, that is their vulnerability and marginalisation, ironically is likely to increase while the aid system operates under the assumption that it decreases with time. Essentially, as refugees become victims of policy and marginalisation rather than of war, they become increasingly dependent on a welfare system that punishes them for the vulnerability which it created.

In conclusion, I found that the strong transnational relationships which support the transfer of economic and social remittances into the refugee setting did create an economic dependency on behalf of the remittance recipients. The primary difference from the dependency developed within the humanitarian aid system, however, was that these transactions were not conditional on the poverty and insecurity of the remittance recipients. Remittances were sent due to a system based on reciprocal social support for both the senders and recipients. Furthermore, in the case of investing in education, remittances were sent as a social and economic investment in the family as a whole, under the assumption that beneficiaries would become self-sufficient leaders of their community in the future. In

summary, while the refugee system kept the South Sudanese community of Kakuma in a state of marginalisation and liminality, remittances sent to refugees for the purpose of education attempted to break this trend. In the case of the refugee population represented in this thesis, transnational activity symbolised hope and opportunity, directly contrasting the protracted state of deprivation in the camp.

However, while many of the members of Kakuma's South Sudanese population were able to complete their secondary education, and in some cases university as well, none of my participants in the camp reported having a legal work permit and thus capable of earning a wage above 20% of what a Kenyan would make for the same job. While members of this population reported a wide range of qualities and levels of education, experience, and networking skills, none were capable of leaving the refugee camp in order to support both themselves and their family without international aid and remittances.

I argue that this perception that education was the solution to their and their families' displacement and social and economic marginalisation was an oversimplification of the complex conditions in which they lived. Although the remittance recipients in this study were more fortunate than many others in their community in Kakuma because they received financial and social support that was not dependent on the refugee system, these transnational relationships had virtually no influence on the remittance recipients' refugee status within Kakuma. Despite tremendous efforts to invest in the education of their refugee community members, they continued to lack freedom of movement, basic civil rights, and most importantly, the legal right to work in their nation of residence. In the case of this community, the barrier to their self-sufficiency was not simply their lack of education but rather the restrictive policies imposed on their lives due to their inescapable refugee status.

Despite this reality of being incapable of achieving sustainable livelihoods through investing in education, almost every one of the 80 men and women in Kakuma who

participated in this study believed that education was highly valuable. This value placed on education arguably contributed to further insecurity and deprivation in the present under this community's assumption that it would eventually lead to their economic and social security. These assumptions were in large part based on the exceptional experiences of the Lost Boy community who were resettled to Western nations in the early 2000s. Compared to other resettled refugee populations, the members of this community were highly successful in their pursuit to achieve university education and to gain enough financial security to become their transnational families' "global breadwinners" (Johnson and Stoll 2008; McKinnon 2008).

A significant portion of Kakuma's South Sudanese community believed that the experiences of the resettled Lost Boys were replicable to all members of the South Sudanese diaspora, especially with the economic and social support from those who have already achieved this success. This raises the question as to the problems that potentially arise when the majority of this population's aspirations are directed towards advancing the education of their children. What was clear within the data collected for this study was that education was primarily pursued under the false assumption that it would contribute to their community's livelihood development and capability of becoming independent from the refugee system. However, it is also important to question whether the South Sudanese population of Kakuma's quest for education and the perception of its benefits, whether or not it is realistic, helped them to maintain their desire and motivation to break the cycle of their marginalised lifestyle.

## Chapter 9: Conclusions, Insights, and Further Research Development

The population examined in this thesis is a case study of what Van Hear (2003) refers to as a refugee transnational diaspora. Strung across the globe, these multi-dimensional social relationships, bonded together by an attachment to a common homeland and traditional culture, represent various experiences of displacement and migration, both from the perspective of those who escaped the refugee system and those who did not. The transnational participants discussed in this thesis actively fought their family's refugeeeness, the constant struggle with issues of socio-economic marginalisation, dependency on the humanitarian aid system, deprivation of basic resources, and physical insecurity.

The refugee transnational participants currently living in Kakuma experienced a life of victimisation beyond the conflict that had originally displaced them. After decades of living in the refugee system, this population was suffering significantly less from the trauma of warfare, and considerably more from their inability to change their life circumstances despite their will and motivation to do so. After living in this state of isolation in Kakuma for almost three decades, in which their freedom of movement was limited, in which they had no ability to work legally to adequately support their families, and in which they were forced to continuously live hand-to-mouth on ever decreasing humanitarian aid, the South Sudanese population of Kakuma have survived through community solidarity, both locally and transnationally.

The transnational and local social networks examined in this thesis, when combined with the belief that the education of their community members would lead to their social and economic freedom, helped to facilitate a strong sense that their lives could be improved in the future. The transnational networks in particular, whether they were with a spouse, children, extended family, or an old friend, gave the South Sudanese community of Kakuma

reassurance that there was life beyond the walls of the camp, beyond the limitations of their refugee status.

Family members in the US and the UK represented hope and opportunity for refugees in the camp. They were often highly educated and had worked hard to develop a means through which they could provide for both their transnational and local family members. They had the ability to move as they pleased, the right to be employed, and the ability to make active choices for the betterment of their family as a whole. These two sides of the same diaspora, bonded by a mutual sense of responsibility to one another, represent two extremes of a population displaced by war for multiple generations: those who were able to move on from their traumatic past and those who continue to be identified as victims decades later.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, this ethnographic study aimed to address the following research questions in order to understand the nature and influence of these refugee transnational communities:

1. Does the transfer of economic resources help separated South Sudanese family members build transnational communities?
2. What do both remittance senders and recipients hope to achieve through the transfer of transnational remittances?
3. Do remittances help refugee recipients and their surrounding community members challenge insecurity within the refugee camp?
4. How do these transnational relationships influence research participants' perception of future opportunities?

Regarding question 1, I found that although the exchange of financial remittances helped to facilitate and maintain these transnational family networks, communication and balanced reciprocity of social concern were key to their development and sustainability. Regarding question 2, a primary goal of these transnational communities, similar to those formed by economic migrants, was the exchange of financial resources aimed at the

livelihood development and increased welfare of the remittance recipients. However, due to the social and economic marginalisation experienced by the South Sudanese community of Kakuma, in which remittances were primarily needed for basic survival and in which livelihood development through education was nearly impossible to achieve, the long-term impact that remittances had on this community was marginal (question 3). Finally, the data presented showed that these transnational relationships had a profound influence on the aspirations of the South Sudanese community of Kakuma and their perception of future opportunities, despite the limited evidence to suggest that these opportunities were accessible for this population (question 4).

## 9.1 Further Theoretical Development

Building on the findings presented above, this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge through the development of four primary theoretical arguments outlined in the following four sections.

### **9.1.1 Sustainability of Transnational Communities**

As discussed in depth in Chapter 3 section 3.1, Thomas Faist (2000) argues that transnational communities are highly dependent on mutual obligation, reciprocity, and community solidarity with other community members. Both Faist (2000) and Johnston (2001) suggest that social ties that transcend the physical borders between nations are built and maintained on a living network of community membership and family solidarity in which all participants engage in the exchange of both financial and social capital for the mutual benefit of the transnational community as a whole.

Jørgen Carling (2014) furthers this argument by stating that the viability of these transnational community relationships is simultaneously and equally dependent on both remittance receivers and senders playing active roles. Therefore, remittances are “reactive,”

responding to both the desire/obligation to send financial resources and to periodic requests for financial support. In order for these transnational relationships to be sustainable, it is necessary that remittance recipients invest valuable time and economic resources to support these relationships. These investments range from buying phones, data, airtime, or transportation, but also include active communication with and caring about the welfare of their transnational counterparts.

Tsai and Dzorgbo (2012) argue that transnational relationships need to be based on a concept they identified as “balanced reciprocity” in which all participants of a transnational community are simultaneously receivers and donors to other members of their community. In balanced reciprocal relationships, financial remittance recipients are expected to give back to their donors to the best of their ability, typically in the form of social remittances or through a commitment to the development of their relationship beyond the need for, and exchange of, money.

As explored in Chapter 5, the members of the South Sudanese communities represented in this thesis who had the strongest transnational bonds were those who spoke to their loved ones frequently and for extended periods of time. Under these circumstances, the primary topic of discussion was the general wellbeing of their family members, as well as issues of health, family relationships, and mental/emotional wellbeing.

Consequently, knowing the health and wellbeing of transnational family members through active and meaningful communication in a reciprocal fashion was the cornerstone to the preservation of these relationships. Remittance senders needed to feel a sense of connection to their communities living in camps or elsewhere in East Africa, and transnational participation ensured that they were both aware of the issues that their family faced and motivated to help.

Reciprocally, in order to maintain the balance of social and emotional reciprocity, it was crucial that remittance recipients were aware of the quality of life of their family members living in developed nations, and knew things like where they lived, what they did for employment, and the social issues that they were currently facing. The former transnational participants represented in this study, or those who maintained weak transnational ties, were those who failed to live up to these responsibilities, often both ignorant and uninterested in the lives of their current/former transnational counterparts.

As explored in Chapter 6, the notions of family and responsibility, or obligation as suggested by Faist (2000), were at the root of these transnational relationships, typically justifying continued dependence on one another despite prolonged physical absence. The remittance senders argued that it was their responsibility to financially support the less fortunate members of their family who were unable to support themselves, particularly the children and elders, because they had the ability to do so.

Various ways that the remittance senders undertook responsibility for one another beyond the provision of money were to act as mediators, sponsors or leaders within their family. Social guidance, particularly for the younger members of a family, was perceived to be essential for the future sustainability and survival of the family as a whole. This transnational sponsorship system, through the investment of both time and money into the development of caring and responsible adults, ensured that future generations would be similarly supported in the future.

As demonstrated above, the data presented on the tools needed for strong transnational relationships (mutual obligation, reciprocity, and community solidarity) support existing theories outlined by Faist (2000), Johnston (2001), Carling (2014) and Tsai and Dzorgbo (2012). However, my study contributes further to understanding why transnational relationships fail, specifically why the tools of mutual obligation, reciprocity, and community

solidarity might be unachievable. There is existing literature on resettled refugee transnational communities which suggests that these vulnerable populations face language, education, and employment barriers in their host nations (Al-Ali et al. 2001a; Mascini 2012). However, due to their perceived privileged status, especially compared to family members who continue to live inside refugee camps, they feel obligated to send significant financial remittances despite facing financial hardship themselves (Brees 2010; Carling et al. 2012; Hammond 2011; Johnson and Stoll 2008; Lim 2009; Patterson 2016; Shandy 2007).

Contributing to these insights, as discussed in Chapter 5 section 5.3, my research suggests that the most significant barrier to the strength and sustainability of these transnational relationships was the inability of either side to comprehend the difficulties of life experienced by their transnational counterparts. From the perspective of refugees in Kakuma, their family members who were fortunate enough to live in a developed nation were living a life of luxury and were thus more than capable of providing enough financial support to help those in the refugee system to live a decent life. Similarly, remittance senders, particularly those who had never lived in Kakuma themselves, found it difficult to comprehend how refugees who were beneficiaries of food rations, healthcare, and education within the refugee system could constantly need financial support.

The refugee participants in these circumstances were typically unaware of and uninterested in the welfare of their transnational counterparts, contributing significantly to their weak social bonds. Refugees who had stopped receiving remittances were often upset that their family members were failing in their duty to support them in their time of need. However, these participants also failed to recognise that they too had neglected their responsibilities to care for the emotional wellbeing of their family abroad.

The desperate need for remittances, which significantly contributed to the deterioration of these transnational relationships, was influenced by both the inability of

remittance recipients to earn an income capable of supporting their family in Kenya and the fact that remittances were needed not only to supplement their livelihoods as refugees, but also to survive continuous crisis situations. In comparison, those in successful relationships understood the limited abilities of family members abroad to provide financial support because they actively nurtured these transnational bonds.

### **9.1.2 Degree of Integration and Remittance Sending Patterns over Time**

This thesis examines two primary theories on the correlation between the degree of integration that a migrant has achieved in their new nation of residence and the level of responsibility/obligation that they feel to financially support their family members in their home nation, or in this case, a nation of asylum. The Remittance Decay Hypothesis (Stark 1978) suggests that the time pattern of remittance sending practices forms an inverted “U” shape. This theory argues that remittances gradually increase in amount as a migrant slowly integrates into their new society, and similarly decrease as their ties to their homeland become weaker over time (Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo 2006; Grieco 2004; Stark 1978). Likewise, Brown (1998) argues that the longer a migrant is away from their nation of origin, their social ties and perception of need for their family are likely to decline.

In contrast, Carling and Hoelscher (2013: 244) claim that integration and transnational participation, specifically through the sending of financial remittances, are “complementary not competing.” These authors suggest that the sending of remittances is simultaneously influenced by both a migrant’s capacity and desire to do so. Integration into a new nation of residence implies higher rates of employment, higher incomes, and thus the capacity to send higher amounts of remittances to family members abroad. In comparison, difficulties in speaking the local language, understanding the local culture, and developing

social networks also implies difficulties in financially supporting their transnational social networks.

Interestingly, the data presented in this thesis indicate both of these theories to be true, dependent, however, on the nature of their transnational family relationships and their experiences within the refugee system. The remittance senders can be classified into two categories: 1) those having transnational relationships primarily with their nuclear family members, and 2) those whose only transnational relationships were with extended family.

Those who maintained strong transnational ties with their nuclear family, also often with their extended family as well, primarily lived in the US, identified as members of the Lost Boy community, had previously lived in Kakuma, were given refugee resettlement status, and had actively tried to reconnect with the culture that they became detached from as children. However, participants who lived in the UK at the time of their interview were primarily supporting extended family members, had never actually lived in a refugee camp, and came to the UK predominantly as economic migrants.

In both of these immigrant communities, the members of this South Sudanese diaspora stressed that family provides for one another within their culture, and to not do so when one has the ability means ignoring their culturally established bonds of kinship, responsibility, and trust. However, what was clear among the remittance senders was that those who were former refugees and maintained transnational relationships with nuclear family held a much stronger sense of responsibility to their family in Africa than those who did not.

Under the circumstances of a decreased sense of responsibility and thus a progressive detachment from their transnational family members, the perception of duty had altered from just knowing when their family members needed help, argued to be culturally appropriate, to only sending remittances when specific requests were made. I argue that the motivation to

send financial remittances was only minimally influenced by their ability to send or their degree of integration into their host nation. Rather, the immigrants' attachment to their culture, the type of transnational relationship which they developed and maintained, and their experiences of need and poverty within the refugee system were much stronger influences. Therefore, furthering both Stark's (1978) and Carling and Hoelscher's (2013) theories, degree of integration into a migrant's host nation was virtually insignificant; the nature of their transnational relationships and their attachment to their traditional cultural values, and thus their "desire" to remit, were significantly stronger influences in remittance sending patterns over time.

### **9.1.3 Influence of Transnational Remittances on Refugee Welfare**

A central theme throughout this thesis was the influence that the South Sudanese refugees' transnational activity had on their protracted state of refugeeness in Kakuma, that is their social and economic marginalisation, policy-induced vulnerability, and dependence on the humanitarian aid system.

Cindy Horst (2006) claims that Kenyan refugee camps in particular fail to provide refugees with economic and physical security and facilitate what she identifies as "refugee dependency syndrome" due to both their physical confinement and institutionalised need for humanitarian aid. In this case, refugee dependency is defined as "acceptance of handouts without taking any initiative to attain self-sufficiency, accompanied by symptoms of excessive and unreasonable demands, frequent complaints, passivity, and lethargy," traits that become more pronounced the longer a refugee population remains in a state of exile (Horst 2006: 92).

Refugees are theoretically entitled to temporary protection, security, food, healthcare, and shelter until a solution to their displacement can be achieved. However, this is not always

provided in a sufficient manner. Firstly, as demonstrated in Chapter 7, access to these support systems was highly dependent on the availability of resources and funding within the refugee system, resources that many participants in this study and several authors have argued to have noticeably depleted and become inadequate for survival (Betts et al. 2018a; Gladden 2012; Napier-Moore 2005; Newhouse 2015; Pittaway and Bartolomei 2002; Rogers 2017; Verdirame 1999; World Food Programme 2017). Secondly, as many of these South Sudanese participants reached their 25th year in Kakuma during the time of their interview between 2017 and 2018, a life beyond the confinement of Kakuma's walls was difficult to imagine.

During that time, the members of this population have become objects of policy, defined in convenient images, a system of labelling which portrays refugees as perpetual dependents, and often more stigmatising and alienating than helpful in designing effective policy solutions (Harrell-Bond 1986; Jansen 2013; Kaiser 2006; Zetter 1991). As suggested by Turner (2010), the refugee system's policy of "contain and control" is primarily designed to keep refugees alive and has a deep impact on the identities and self-esteem of the refugees themselves. Turner argues that these strategies foster a sense of continued victimisation, dependency, personal inadequacy and a lack of political agency.

So, the question remains, do transnational remittances increase the welfare of the socially and economically vulnerable population considered in this thesis and ultimately decrease their dependence on the refugee system?

Within the data collected, I found that the need for remittances in Kakuma's South Sudanese population was profound. All of my participants in Kakuma discussed in-depth the issues of insecurity which they and their community continuously faced. These forms of insecurity ranged from the constant, but relatively manageable, food insecurity to the less common but also dangerous and expensive harassment by the police, with the lack of medicine lying somewhere in between in terms of both degree of insecurity and costliness.

Although these forms of insecurity were always anticipated by this population, they could rarely be prepared for, due to their frequency, unpredictability, and the inability of refugees to earn a sustainable income in the camp. Consequently, the most common use for remittances sent to this population was to combat their continuous states of emergency rather than to significantly achieve an improved quality of life.

What was particularly interesting was that a culture of resource-sharing was present in Kakuma under these extreme conditions, in which notions of kinship and responsibility had expanded to meet the needs of life in the camp, as similarly witnessed in other studies on African protracted refugee populations (Grabska 2005; Horst 2006; Omata 2012). The members of this population argued that there was a social expectation to share material and financial resources when they had the ability to do so and when their friends and neighbours needed help the most. This communal sense of collective duty ensured the survival of the community as a whole to the best of the participants' ability, a social system which was partially facilitated with the introduction of remittances.

Consequently, due to this need to ensure the survival of their community, rather than just their immediate family, the effect that remittances had on improving the livelihood of this population was marginal. I suggest that the introduction of financial remittances into Kakuma's South Sudanese population acted as a form of welfare stabiliser, distributed to the community members who needed it most, but rarely enabled the direct recipients to develop their livelihood in a sustainable manner.

As suggested by several authors (Acosta et al. 2015; Adams and Page 2005; Adams 2006; De Haas 2005), despite the assumption that remittances sent to developing nations contribute to livelihood development, their impacts are also highly dependent on the social, economic, and political constraints experienced by the remittance recipients. As demonstrated in the data which I have presented, this was proven true due to the policy

restrictions imposed on refugees as well as their community responsibility to share material and financial resources, contributing to their inability to significantly improve their livelihoods.

#### **9.1.4 Intersection between Transnational Participation and Refugeeess**

As demonstrated in Chapter 8, the most significant influence that these transnational relationships had on the welfare of the South Sudanese population of Kakuma was actually psychological rather than physical or economic. Specifically, since investment in the education of the remittance senders had led to their economic development, it was believed by all parties that the same could be achieved for those who continued to be defined by their refugee status. While the current lifestyle of Kakuma's South Sudanese population was perceived in terms of marginalisation, poverty, and the lack of agency, the development of their future opportunities through investment in education contributed to strong perceptions of future independence, economic sustainability, and a gate pass to a life beyond their refugee status.

What was also interesting about the population which I surveyed was the vast differences in experiences with education between remittance senders, particularly those who were former refugees in Kakuma, and their family members who still reside inside the camp. According to Chanoff (2005), the experience that these remittance senders, members of the Lost Boy community who were resettled to the US in the early 2000s, had with education was originally presented to them throughout makeshift classrooms developed by Christian missionaries. During their time in Kakuma, the members of this population strove to “reconstruct themselves through education” (Chanoff 2005: 41).

Finishing secondary school enabled these young men to become teachers in the refugee camp, and after their resettlement to Western nations like the US, their pursuit of

higher education led to employment opportunities. McKinnon (2008) asserts that these former child refugees have become part of one of the most successful refugee resettlement programmes in US history due to their high level of education and employment rates.

While small businesses were largely uncommon among the participants in Kakuma in this study, education was the only significant investment in which the members of this population participated. The cost of education, which ranged widely, was the primary expenditure that financial remittances sent to Kakuma were used for the beyond simple mitigation of their continuous states of insecurity. For most of the men and women who participated in this study, both remittance senders and recipients, education was associated with both immediate costs, risking further insecurity in the present, but was also perceived to be an investment towards the future financial security of the family as a whole.

For the refugee participants who maintained the strongest transnational bonds, their transnational counterparts wanted them to become educated so that they could eventually become valuable contributors towards their family network. Within this population it was emphasised that the education of the individual translated to the perception of greater economic and social security for the community as a whole. Even refugees who maintained weak or disconnected transnational ties went to tremendous efforts to pay for school supplies for their children, often selling food rations or spending money that would otherwise be used for medicine.

Education was also regularly funded by small faith-based organisations, organised and sometimes run by members of the South Sudanese diaspora living in the developed world. These resettled refugees and economic migrants, both aware of their responsibility to their family in Africa, but who also faced significant financial hardship themselves, utilised their extended social networks in their new nation of residence to meet these commitments.

A fraction of the refugee community in Kakuma with excellent academic records were given university scholarships in Canada through an NGO called the Windle Trust. All of the young adults who participated in this study and who lived in Kakuma at the time of their interview expressed frustration at their inability to access similar scholarships. Due in large part to their transnational relationships with family abroad, education seemed like a piece of their future that they could control. Furthermore, an education at a Western university was perceived to be a ticket out of Kakuma, vital for the future success and sustainability of their family.

These young adults argued that it was their responsibility as valuable members of their family to get the best education accessible for the advancement of their entire family network rather than for their individual success. Education represented an escape for both them and their families, often equated to economic advancement, livelihood development, and investment in community support networks. Therefore, from the perspective of this generation of South Sudanese refugees, education directly contrasted with their liminal lifestyle of socio-economic marginalisation, vulnerability within the refugee system, and the inescapable state of dependency in which they and their families are currently trapped.

In Chapter 8, I suggested that even though both transnational resources and the distribution of foreign aid within the refugee system can be argued to promote a sense of dependency among their recipients, the aid system promotes their socio-economic marginalisation and vulnerability in order to justify continued dependence. In comparison, remittances sent to the South Sudanese population of Kakuma were justified based on the assumption that the recipients would become self-sufficient leaders capable of supporting other members of their community. The children within this population in particular represented hope and opportunity, a potential bridge between the limitations of their current

life as refugees in Kakuma and their ability to achieve freedom and prosperity for their entire families.

There was a strong belief among Kakuma's South Sudanese population that children should achieve the highest and best quality education accessible, a belief that I argue was strongly influenced by their transnational relationships. I found that a significant proportion of the remittance senders whom I talked to were highly educated, a fact which contributed to the attainment of professional careers and salaries capable of sustaining their transnational family network. However, the primary difference between the remittance senders and recipients in this study, and thus the opportunities available to them, was a difference in their freedom to pursue legal employment and other economic opportunities.

During my time in Kakuma, I saw several limitations of this perception that education was the key to their future prosperity; the most significant of which was the inability of the refugees in Kakuma to gain legal work permits in Kenya despite their experience or level of education. This was the primary impediment preventing the members of this population from earning enough money to become financially sustainable beyond the need for humanitarian aid or remittances.

The assumption that many participants in this study maintained that education was the solution to their problems was a vast oversimplification of their current situation, which was dictated by the policy-enforced restrictions placed on their lives due to their refugee status. For this reason, there was a significant difference in the opportunities accessible to the remittance senders and recipients, obstacles that could rarely be overcome through the pursuit of education. The primary barrier preventing self-sustainability of the South Sudanese population of Kakuma was their refugee status, a virtually inescapable label contributing to their continued dependence on both the humanitarian aid system as well as their transnational networks.

As demonstrated in the data presented in the foregoing chapters, the value placed on education and the high level achieved by remittance senders in the South Sudanese diaspora, strongly influenced their ability to develop and maintain their transnational social networks, undertaking the role as global breadwinners within their families, and thus confirming the theories by Chanoff (2005), Johnson and Stoll (2008), and McKinnon (2008). However, this thesis also expands the work by these authors, demonstrating the exaggerated and distorted influence of the perception that education was the key to their livelihood development, and thus their freedom from the refugee system. While these transnational social networks, and the emphasis that they placed on the value of education, had a profound impact on the optimism and motivation of the remittance recipients in this study, they also showed limited, or even no influence on their livelihood development.

## 9.2 Further Research

The remittance recipients considered in this study were some of the poorest members of the South Sudanese diaspora. Other refugee remittance recipients live throughout Kenya and Uganda, often illegally, but in otherwise relatively comfortable, secure, and sustainable lifestyles. Therefore, it is likely that remittance recipients within this diaspora do show signs of livelihood development and increased security. However, due to the conditions of life in Kakuma and the refugee policies placed on those who live there, these resources were primarily used to combat insecurity rather than towards any significant investment other than education. An expanded exploration of this refugee diaspora would include transnational participants who live in these “illegal” communities throughout Kenya and Uganda, in addition to their families currently in South Sudan, refugees living in a Ugandan refugee camp, as well as former refugees living in Canada and Australia, countries which had significant refugee resettlement programmes targeting South Sudanese in the past.

Similarly, in the attempt to study all variations of the global South Sudanese diaspora, it would also be helpful to examine remittance recipients who were never victims of war and have therefore never been defined by their refugee status nor experienced policy-induced social and economic marginalisation. Although it can be assumed that all members of this diaspora have been in some way influenced by war in South Sudan, whether directly or indirectly, due to this nation's history of an almost constant state of war or civil unrest since the 1950s, their experiences with migration, integration, and transnational cultural participation could range widely. It is only through including all of these experiences that we can gain a truly accurate representation of the complexity of this transnational diaspora, a reflection of 21<sup>st</sup> century migration patterns and transnational activity.

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