

RESEARCH MATTERS

ARC Discovery Project Towards Improved Settlement Policies for Refugees

This 3-year ARC-Discovery funded project is conducted by Dr Aniko Hatoss (Senior Lecturer at the University of Southern Queensland) in the Toowoomba communities of African languages. The project aims to develop a new theoretical model of community-level language planning with a special focus on the Sudanese community. The three-year study uses a sociolinguistic survey and ethnographic interviews as data collection tools. The main language groups include Dinka, Acholi, Nuer and other African languages spoken in Sudan and its neighbouring countries. The study aims to establish an empirical basis from which motivational factors in mother-tongue maintenance can be explored in conjunction with actual language planning initiatives from community and government levels. The project outcomes will provide an insight into the language and settlement issues in the community which will inform government policy.

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A Research Project from South Australia “Young African Australians’ experiences of violence and non-violence”

This study aims to understand young African Australians’ experiences of violence and non-violence. It will focus on young people aged 12-25 years who arrived as refugees from African countries, such as Burundi, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan, and are currently living in metropolitan Adelaide. This will focus on young people’s experiences in South Australia, rather than prior to arrival. The primary research questions are:

- What are young African Australians’ lived experiences of violence and non-violence?
- How do they explain these experiences?
- How do elders and workers explain these experiences?
- How can violence be reduced?

This study will utilise principles and processes from several qualitative research methodologies, including phenomenology, ethnography and participatory action research. A range of methods will be used, including establishing an advisory committee, participant observation, interviews, focus groups and reflective journaling.

Background

Around 13,000 refugees are resettled in Australia each year (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2007). Almost 6 000 refugees have been resettled in South Australia over the past five years. The majority have been from African countries and have been under 25 years old (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2005). The media is often used to construct negative images and stories of refugees (White & Wyn 2004). Young African Australians, in particular, have received much media attention since the former Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews reduced the intake of African refugees. He stated, via the media, that 'some groups don't seem to be settling and adjusting into the Australian way of life' (Farouque, Petrie & Miletic 2007, p. 2). He cited an 'increase in crime among African youth', 'the establishment of race-based gangs' and suggested that African males are 'congregating in parks at night, often to consume alcohol' (Anderson 2007, p. 3).

However, there are no statistics available to support this construction of young African Australians as "trouble makers" who are "failing to integrate". It is unknown whether young African Australians are more or less likely than other young people to experience violence. Currently, we are hearing those in power, such as politicians and journalists, speak about young African Australians. We are not hearing the stories of young African Australians themselves. This study seeks to give voice to young African Australians, particularly in relation to their experiences of violence and non-violence in South Australia.

References

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Refugees and Mental Health: Understanding Sudanese People's Responses to Trauma as Distinct from its Effects

Working with refugees who experience trauma associated with forced migration necessitates an understanding of their own concerns and ways of coping. These people's understandings about how they best cope through difficult circumstances provide important sources of information for the community, researcher and practitioner. Often the extra-ordinary stories in these people's lives are well known and repeatedly told to embassies, immigration officials and other support agencies (i.e. flight from country, witnessing and experiences of violence, post traumatic responses). However, the ordinary testimonies that highlight these peoples' culture, values, forms of resilience and how they have responded to traumatic events are not as strongly established or known. Such ordinary stories of identity hold the potential to illustrate these people's intentional understandings of the value they hold and what may be of assistance to them now and in the future.

My current doctoral qualitative research project, commenced in 2007, involves working with Sudanese men who are living in Adelaide. I am using an approach that recognises the impact of trauma in their lives but also ascertains their initiatives, hopes and values, which establish forms of healing and resistance distinct from the trauma story itself. Using a constructivist grounded theory methodology, I am conducting individual interviews and attending community events to further establish how these men have responded to trauma within forced migration and resettlement contexts.

This research is supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council Biomedical Scholarship.

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NOTES

Success Story: Juma Abuyi

Juma Abuyi, from Sudan, arrived in Tasmania five years ago after spending many years in refugee camps in northern Kenya with his mother and three brothers. Completing secondary education in Hobart, he then enrolled in a Social Science degree in the University of Tasmania, going on to an Honours degree and an important thesis, 'Out of Africa: Sudanese Men's Experience of Living in Tasmania'. He is now employed as a youth worker and bi-cultural family support worker with the Migrant Resource Centre in Launceston.

The one constant between his experience as a child in Sudan and his current life is soccer. He is now Manager of the North Launceston Eagles Soccer Club, and he trains young soccer players. He comments that the informal setting of soccer training provides good opportunities to discuss settlement problems with newly-arrived youths from his home country, combining on-field and off-the-field skills and problems such as driving without a licence, car insurance, teamwork and making new friends.

For full story, see: http://www.immi.gov.au/media/success_stories/

Institute of Postcolonial Studies Perspectives on Political Change in Zimbabwe

The Institute of Postcolonial Studies held an informative meeting on Zimbabwe on 14 August in Melbourne. Sekai Nzenza, who was in Zimbabwe for the recent election, read her own moving short story written about the people in her village in the current economic and political emergency. Mick Pearce, a Zimbabwean architect now living in Melbourne, spoke of his experience working in Harare in an earlier time, and of the current crisis. Simon Tengende, whose play *Discrit Zimbabwe* was staged at *La Mama* in June and more recently at the University of Melbourne theatre, talked about the inspiration that led to his writing of the play.

There were no comforting thoughts concerning a resolution of Zimbabwe's present political and economic situation, and general discussion indicated an expectation that those holding power would be unlikely to yield to change in the near future.

Swaziland Newsletter

The Swaziland Newsletter is available online together with documents and other material not available in the regular newsletter. The Newsletter is published by Africa Contact (Denmark) The current issue includes the letter below, and additional material concerning the empowerment of Swazi women.

Earlier issues can be read at <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/SAK-Swazinewsletter> together with documents and other materials not included in the regular newsletter. If you wish to subscribe to the newsletter, please send mail to: SAK-Swazinewsletter subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk
All correspondence should go to swaziland@sydafrika.dk

Free subscription to the newsletter will also give access to a photo section with thirteen albums: Swaziland. Historical. Occupation, exploitation and rebellion. Colonial times. Sobhuza. Settlers in the colony. People of Swaziland. Images of power. Women of the land. Children. Men of the land. The struggle for democracy. Images of a democratic movement.

Dear friends,

We have felt it important to raise the question of the rights of women in Swaziland.

It is one of the most important issues in the political future of Swaziland. In many ways, the most important one of all. The women of the land are those who more than any other live through the difficulties of the present. Their equal and creative contribution to the democratic movement is necessary if it is to create a future life for all.

This newsletter reflects a discussion of the human rights and human tasks of women far out over the borders of Swaziland. It is our hope that this can contribute to awareness and discussion, to the process of equality and change.

"Let the women speak! And listen" is the title of one of the following articles. It is more than that.

Patrick Mac Manus
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