SECTION 1

What We Know

The chapters in this section provide an overview of the African populations immigrating to the United States with experiences of armed conflict and raise awareness of the experiences of two specific African populations affected by armed conflict. The chapters in the section draw attention to the complexity of factors affecting African populations affected by armed conflict and the necessity for social workers to be informed about and attend to the micro and macro aspects of practice to address the needs of this population effectively.

Chapter 1 describes recent immigration patterns from Africa and provides a backdrop for understanding the direct and indirect effects of armed conflict on these new arrivals and their social and cultural networks. Chapter 2 focuses on child soldiers, one group affected by armed conflict in Africa, and helps service providers begin to grasp the enormity of their experiences, consider support that is needed to support positive reentry into society for these individuals, and recognize the strengths that those who have survived bring with them. Chapter 3 presents a personal experience of immigrating to the United States as a result of the Rwandan genocide and provides an in-depth understanding of the challenges facing African individuals and families from contexts of war. Seeing this experience through the eyes of a social worker allows helping professions to be more aware of the needs of people coming from such experiences; understand how the process of immigrating can be filled with loss, confusion, and unpredictability; and understand what is needed to improve this experience of new arrivals.

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Africans Coming to the United States from Contexts of Armed Conflict:

Relevance for Helping Professionals

Joanne Corbin

The number of African immigrant, refugees, and asylum seekers immigrating to the United States has increased dramatically over the past 30 years. Although this number is small, at 4 percent of the U.S. population, it represents an increase of 400 percent since the 1970s (Wilson, 2009). Most of these new arrivals are coming from countries that have experienced political and armed conflicts. Those new arrivals not directly involved in such conflicts as combatants or civilian casualties are often indirectly affected by the breakdown of political, economic, and social infrastructures that affect the entire country. These new arrivals from Africa bring experiences of conflict in addition to histories, cultures, and worldviews that are different from those of the helping professionals they will encounter in the United States.

Social workers and other helping professionals need to prepare themselves to address the unique concerns and needs of this population. Such efforts will require an understanding of the historical, political, and economic factors that clients have experienced prior to immigrating to the United States. Most literature about social services and immigrant issues focuses on the category of immigrants as a whole or for major population groups, yet the population of African new arrivals with experiences of armed conflict requires help from professionals who have knowledge of their specific needs and unique cultures. This chapter provides such information to support the capacity of helping professionals to provide culturally aware assistance to such immigrants, thereby strengthening their ability to successfully engage these clients in services.

First, the demographic and resettlement patterns of African immigration to the United States will be reviewed as will the reasons for African emigration.

This chapter will then present information about the African worldview, religious beliefs, and cultural practices so that social workers can draw on such knowledge to work more effectively with African clients.

U.S. Demographics

My interest in understanding more about the demographic patterns of new arrivals (immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers) from Africa began when I learned that approximately half of all new arrivals in the mid-2000s to my home state, Massachusetts, were from Africa (see Table 1-1). Data from the same source indicate that up to 38 percent of these new arrivals from Africa resettled in western Massachusetts, where I reside (Office of Health and Human Services-MA, 2011). These data provided me with insight about a population of which I had not been aware. I was then motivated to investigate the specific needs of African refugee and asylum seekers.

Similar patterns in demographics exist in the national data on African immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. During the period 1983 to 1992, African immigrants to the United States accounted for 2 percent to 3 percent of the immigrant population to the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 1992, as cited in Kamya, 1997, p. 155). This percentage increased 5 percent to 9 percent from 2000 to 2006 (Jefferys, 2007). African refugees specifically have accounted for 9 percent to over 50 percent of all refugees coming into the United States in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Office of Refugee Resettlement [ORR], 2004a). African asylum seekers have accounted for 18 percent to 28 percent of all asylum seekers coming into the United States (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2008). Overall, the current percentage of the U.S. foreign-born population from Africa is small at 4 percent (Wilson, 2009), but this percentage has steadily increased from .4 percent of the foreign-born population in the 1960s to 2.5 percent in the early 2000s (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

The growth in the African foreign-born population in the United States parallels the growth in the overall U.S. foreign-born population. In 2003, the U.S. population was approximately 283 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003); the foreign-born population was 33.5 million, 11.7 percent of the total U.S. population (Larsen, 2004), the highest percentage since 1900, when the percentage of the foreign-born population was 14.7 percent (Gibson & Lennon, 1999).

Reasons for Increased African Immigration to the United States

The first reason for the increase in African migration to the United States is that more individuals are joining family members who have become permanent U.S. residents. During the 1980s and 1990s, there were changes in

TABLE 1-1: African Refugee and Asylum Seekers Arrivals in Massachusetts

Year	Annual Total—All arrivals	Annual Total—Arrivals from Africa	% Arrivals from Africa
2000	2,240	564	25
2001	1,895	495	27
2002	1,006	164	16
2003	1,190	462	39
2004	1,731	955	55
2005	1,601	721	45
2006	1,100	483	44
2007	1,032	453	44
2008	1,419	313	22
2009	2,120	272	13

Source: Office of Health and Human Services-MA, 2011.

family-sponsored immigration applications, making it easier for individuals emigrating from other countries to join family members in the United States; greater opportunities were also available for individuals to emigrate from countries that were underrepresented in the United States (DHS, n.d.).

A second reason is that many African immigrants have sought to advance their educational goals and professional skills. Takougang and Tidjani (2009) explained that African immigrants in the 1960s and 1970s sought to complete their education and planned to return to use their skills in African countries that were gaining independence from colonial rule. This is consistent with Kamya's (1997) study of African immigrants, in which he found that 85 percent were emigrating for educational purposes. However, beginning in the 1980s many African immigrants to the United States were choosing to remain in the United States and find other ways of supporting families and communities in their countries of birth (Takougang & Tidjani, 2009). In addition, changes in U.S. immigration legislation during the 1980s and 1990s made it easier for students and professionals to remain in the United States (DHS, n.d.).

A third reason for African immigration is the social, economic, and political upheavals in many African countries. The number of legal residents, refugees, and asylum seekers coming to the United States from African countries increased due to the conflicts in that region. Singer and Wilson (2007) identified three distinct migration periods to the United States. The first was the Cold War period from 1980 to 1991, which focused largely on refugees from the dissolution of Soviet republics. The second was the Balkans period from 1992 to 2000, when refugees were fleeing the breakup of Yugoslavia and its successor states. The third is the "civil conflict period" of the late 1990s to the

present. This period consists of refugees coming as a result of the political and civil conflicts in Africa and Asia (Singer & Wilson, 2007). African immigration to the United States has by and large occurred during this period.

Supporting this pattern, Hume and Hardwick (2005) studied the resettlement of refugees from African countries in Portland, Oregon, beginning in the 1980s and found that they were fleeing war and persecution in Ethiopia or present-day Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chad, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Violence, fueled by a struggle for control of resources like minerals or oil and battles for political power, has affected everyone living in these regions. Worldwide, Africa has 39 percent of the world's armed conflicts[1] (Ploughshares, 2010). Unfortunately, civilians are increasingly involved in such conflicts as combatants or victims of attacks on neighborhoods, schools, and hospitals (UN Security Council, 2005). Children are a particularly vulnerable group as those under 18 years of age have been forced or coerced to become combatants in three-fourths of the world's armed conflicts (Human Security Center, 2005, pp. 35, 113).

There are no specific data about the percentage of African immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the United States who have been involved in armed conflict, but it can be extrapolated from the data that most are coming from countries currently or recently involved in armed conflict (DHS, 2009a). The census data on the foreign-born population and ORR data provide information about the countries of origin for new arrivals. Looking specifically at those individuals emigrating from Africa, from 2000 to 2009, the 10 African countries with the greatest numbers of immigrants to the United States were Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Somalia, Kenya, Morocco, Liberia, South Africa, and Sudan (see Table 1-2) (DHS, 2009a). All but two of these countries (Ghana and Morocco) were identified as having a current or recent armed conflict.[2] The 10 countries with the highest number of refugees arriving from Africa between 2000 and 2009 were Somalia, Liberia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, DRC, Eritrea, Rwanda, and Togo (see Table 1-3) (DHS, 2009b). Only Togo had not experienced a current or recent armed conflict but has had a recent history of political violence. The 10 African countries with the greatest number of asylum seekers arriving in the United States from 2000

[1]An *armed conflict* is a political conflict involving the armed forces of at least one state (or one or more armed factions seeking to gain control of all or part of the state), and in which at least 1,000 people have been killed by the fighting during the course of the conflict (Ploughshares, 2006)

[2]Ploughshares (2010) indicated the African countries currently experiencing armed conflicts as Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Sudan-Darfur, and Uganda. Countries with recently ended armed conflicts in Africa are Angola, Angola-Cabinda, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia/Eritrea, Guinea, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and South Africa.

to 2009 were Ethiopia, Somalia, Cameroon, Liberia, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Eritrea, Togo, and Zimbabwe (see Table 1-4) (DHS, 2009c). Cameroon, Togo, and Zimbabwe were countries in this list without current or recent armed conflict. Clearly, most African immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are coming from countries with a recent experience of armed conflict.

In addition, other countries are almost always affected by current armed conflict on their borders. For example, Ghana is listed earlier as a country not affected by recent armed conflict; however, the recent political upheavals in Cöte d'Ivoire were expected to cause instability in Ghana as civilians fleeing Cöte d'Ivoire crossed into Ghana along the border of those two countries. Other African countries without a history of recent armed conflict are similarly affected by violence in neighboring countries. Children and families are often directly caught in the fighting in countries where there is armed conflict; in addition, the infrastructure of their societies, including the medical, educational, social, economic, political, communication, and transportation systems of the area are severely damaged, if not destroyed, as a consequence of the conflict. To emphasize this point, Collier (2007) studied the impact of civil wars on countries and determined that a war lasting an average of seven years in a country that was already economically and politically vulnerable leaves it 15 percent poorer than it would have been without such a war. Political instability, economic instability, and human rights abuses are often associated with these conflicts, which often result in mass displacement of populations. Such displacement of people from their countries of origin to neighboring countries, or elsewhere, poses huge challenges for human and social service resources at the local, national, regional, and international levels.

Resettlement Patterns in the United States

African immigrants arriving in the 1960s and 1970s seeking educational opportunities often remained in the areas in which they attended school, such as New York, Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Houston, and the District of Columbia (Takougang & Tidjani, 2009). Since that time, more African immigrants have focused on establishing residences and employment in other places, such as South Dakota, Washington, and Ohio (Takougang & Tidjani, 2009). Takougang and Tidjani (2009) described the more recent African immigrants as economic refugees whose focus is on economic sustainability for themselves and their families and extended family networks in Africa.

The greatest numbers of African refugees have been settling in Minnesota, Texas, New York, Georgia, California, Arizona, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, and Illinois (see Table 1-5) (ORR, 2009). Specific data exist on

TABLE 1-2: Immigrants from Africa 2000–2009

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Totals
Algeria	906	875	1,030	759	805	1,115	1,300	1,036	1,037	1,485	10,348
Angola	87	94	92	59	107	188	272	199	221	173	1,492
Benin	62	75	137	76	185	193	275	258	317	401	1,979
Botswana	13	24	30	27	34	54	53	49	41	55	380
Burkina Faso	48	68	64	60	103	128	221	238	238	416	1,584
Burundi	28	79	120	74	100	186	320	257	255	1,505	2,924
Cameroon	860	791	984	927	1,309	1,458	2,919	3,392	3,771	3,463	19,874
Cape Verde	1,079	868	871	745	1,015	1,225	1,780	2,048	1,916	2,238	13,785
Central African Republic	4	11	13	6	17	24	51	52	88	107	373
Chad	23	44	47	8	23	31	73	74	96	102	521
Democratic Republic of the Congo	123	145	178	110	155	260	738	1,129	1,261	2,122	6,221
Republic of the Congo	189	311	677	513	670	1,064	1,600	972	950	1,563	8,509
Cote d'Ivoire	439	596	629	483	666	930	2,067	1,193	1,645	2,159	10,807
Djibouti	14	22	30	16	37	50	34	23	39	54	319
Egypt	4,450	5,159	4,852	3,348	5,522	7,905	10,500	9,267	8,712	8,844	68,559
Equatorial Guinea	5	3	8	D	13	10	13	4	16	32	104
Eritrea	382	540	560	556	675	796	1,593	1,081	1,270	1,928	9,381
Ethiopia	4,053	5,092	7,565	6,635	8,286	10,571	16,152	12,786	12,917	15,462	99,519
Gabon	18	32	41	40	50	66	85	95	82	171	680
Gambia	231	390	343	263	422	581	897	826	739	978	5670
Ghana	4,339	4,023	4,248	4,410	5,337	6,491	9,367	7,610	8,195	8,401	62,421
Guinea	3	11	16	29	347	495	1,110	1,088	1,735	1,725	6,559
Guinea-Bissau	204	273	289	176	5	26	25	25	17	20	1,060
Kenya	2,197	2,501	3,199	3,209	5,335	5,347	8,779	7,030	6,998	9,880	54,475
Lesotho	9	6	13	5	14	12	18	14	16	14	121
Liberia	1,570	2,273	2,869	1,766	2,757	4,880	6,887	4,102	7,193	7,641	41,938

Libya	180	223	158	140	185	223	271	186	285	296	2,147
Madagascar	33	61	43	40	54	60	72	53	77	71	564
Malawi	61	70	56	62	83	131	131	123	133	164	1,014
Mali	109	119	105	124	163	277	408	412	523	576	2,816
Mauritania	88	117	124	131	170	275	720	651	844	597	3,717
Mauritius	54	84	83	57	65	99	108	88	83	110	831
Morocco	3,614	4,958	3,387	3,137	4,128	4,411	4,949	4,513	4,425	5,447	42,969
Mozambique	41	48	54	36	59	54	78	81	69	66	586
Namibia	30	54	46	40	40	63	56	57	46	53	485
Niger	30	1,330	1,263	808	62	126	116	97	107	183	4,122
Nigeria	7,831	8,253	8,105	7,872	9,374	10,597	13,459	12,448	12,475	15,253	105,667
Rwanda	73	148	217	109	163	276	502	357	378	952	3,175
Senegal	554	663	530	522	769	913	1,367	1,024	1,149	1,524	9,015
Seychelles	18	18	20	16	25	16	15	7	16	10	161
Sierra Leone	1,585	1,878	2,246	1,492	1,596	2,731	3,572	1,999	2,795	2,687	22,581
Somalia	2,393	3,007	4,535	2,444	3,929	5,829	9,462	6,251	10,745	13,390	61,985
South Africa	2,824	4,090	3,861	2,210	3,370	4,536	3,201	2,988	2,723	3,171	32,974
Sudan	1,531	1,650	2,921	1,883	3,211	5,231	5,504	2,930	3,598	3,577	32,036
Swaziland	12	18	12	23	15	16	11	13	18	42	180
Tanzania	480	476	577	554	747	829	949	832	838	2,773	9,055
Togo	386	487	935	1,187	2,041	1,523	1,720	1,565	1,661	1,680	13,185
Tunisia	307	438	540	353	457	495	510	417	410	416	4,343
Uganda	418	457	575	455	721	858	1,372	1,122	1,174	1,364	8,516
Zambia	211	295	308	280	359	499	672	576	613	704	4,517
Zimbabwe	322	475	484	358	628	923	1,049	1,057	953	983	7,232
Totals	44,534	53,731	60,101	48,642	66,422	85,098	117,422	94,711	105,915	127,050	

Note: Extracted from Table 3, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2009a). D means that datum was withheld to limit disclosure.

TABLE 1-3: Refugees from Africa 2000–2009

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Totals
Algeria	57	31		4	D	D	D				92
Angola	D	34	16	21	20	21	13	4		8	137
Benin											
Botswana											
Burkina Faso											
Burundi	165	109	62	16	276	214	466	4545	2,889	762	9,504
Cameroon	7	5	6	6	D	6	29	5	D	4	68
Cape Verde											
Central African Republic		D		D	24		23	15	56	59	177
Chad	D	D	D	D	4		4	10	23	6	47
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1,354	260	107	251	569	424	405	848	727	1,135	6,080
Republic of the Congo	11	6	5	41	73	43	66	206	197	293	941
Cote d'Ivoire		D	3	4		5	23	11	30	9	85
Djibouti		12	D	D	6					3	21
Egypt											
Equatorial Guinea	12			D		25	11	14		9	71
Eritrea	94	109	13	23	128	327	538	963	251	1,571	4,017
Ethiopia	1,347	1,429	330	1,702	2,689	1,663	1,271	1,028	299	321	12,079
Gabon											
Gambia	13	5		9	3		6	13	6	10	65
Ghana											
Guinea											
Guinea-Bissau											
Kenya	11	13	24	3		D	5			D	56
Lesotho											
Liberia	2,620	3,429	560	2,957	7,140	4,289	2,346	1,606	992	385	26,324

Libya											
Madagascar											
Malawi											
Mali											
Mauritania		202	6			3	88	62	26	16	403
Mauritius											
Morocco											
Mozambique											
Namibia											
Niger											
Nigeria	50	85	28	57	34	11	15	20	76	3	379
Rwanda	345	94	47	47	176	183	112	202	108	111	1,425
Senegal											
Seychelles											
Sierra Leone	1,128	2,004	176	1,378	1,084	829	439	166	99	51	7,354
Somalia	6,026	4,951	237	1,994	13,331	10,405	10,357	6,969	2,523	4,189	60,982
South Africa											
Sudan	3,833	5,959	897	2,139	3,500	2,205	1,848	705	375	683	22,144
Swaziland											
Tanzania											
Togo	511	280	16	47	35	72	18	40	204	14	1,237
Tunisia	D	10									10
Uganda	18	12	D	D	8	10	20	38	42	8	156
Zambia											
Zimbabwe		6			D	D	13	D	3	10	32
Totals	17,624	19,070	2,551	10,719	29,108	20,746	18,129	17,486	8,949	9,678	

Source: Extracted from Table 14, United States Department of Homeland Security (2009b). D means that data were withheld to limit disclosure.

TABLE 1-4: Asylees from Africa 2000–2009

Country	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Totals
Algeria	66	40	22	15	10	6	6	3	8	6	182
Angola	57	50	28	19	5	5	3	5	4	3	179
Benin											
Botswana											
Burkina Faso	9	4	3	7	7	9	13	31	17	21	121
Burundi	29	52	63	26	25	17	29	25	28	21	315
Cameroon	349	324	710	814	597	385	224	294	282	220	4,199
Cape Verde											
Central African Republic	D	5	23	22	7	17	5	6	12	15	112
Chad	16	11	13	24	20	12	19	31	35	38	219
Democratic Republic of the Congo	222	149	198	76	69	53	46	35	38	31	917
Republic of the Congo	258	247	255	119	92	55	51	71	54	42	1,244
Cote d'Ivoire	24	44	24	126	86	92	71	49	43	38	597
Djibouti											
Egypt	471	471	490	242	143	142	175	193	234	308	2,869
Equatorial Guinea											
Eritrea	204	143	167	124	132	142	112	152	181	234	1,591
Ethiopia	1,444	1,172	1,049	573	753	464	435	497	586	704	7,677
Gabon											
Gambia	24	31	21	29	31	28	37	43	50	49	343
Ghana	24	14	7	D	10	4	5	8	6	8	86
Guinea	95	160	184	122	155	127	94	121	117	117	1,292
Guinea-Bissau	5	D	D	D	11	D				3	19
Kenya	101	127	251	239	191	131	84	181	215	234	1,754
Lesotho											
Liberia	690	769	608	352	309	122	61	48	61	45	3,065

Libya	21	5	4	D	3		3		3	D	39
Madagascar											
Malawi											
Mali	5	3	9	9	18	25	28	51	36	52	236
Mauritania	96	98	91	60	58	44	13	11	4	13	488
Mauritius											
Morocco	7	8	15	3	5	6	3	D	D	4	51
Mozambique											
Namibia											
Niger	51	39	19	30	21	8	8	4	11	4	195
Nigeria	50	33	26	18	31	31	23	28	36	38	314
Rwanda	97	61	39	33	33	51	64	70	75	59	582
Senegal	17	15	18	15	18	10	7	11	9	22	142
Seychelles											
Sierra Leone	219	304	171	44	62	44	22	19	19	34	938
Somalia	1,994	1,279	431	142	146	74	48	71	69	87	4,341
South Africa	7	D	13	10	4	11	5	4	4	5	63
Sudan	512	520	446	110	84	56	52	84	86	75	2,025
Swaziland											
Tanzania	5	17	16	4	11	19	4	6	8	6	96
Togo	64	85	198	326	349	199	81	58	37	34	1,431
Tunisia											
Uganda	121	119	155	71	59	45	31	78	55	55	789
Zambia		8	14	7	14	13	6	9	6	D	77
Zimbabwe	8	42	94	192	238	202	141	156	193	153	1,419
Totals	7,362	6,466	5,891	4,017	3,819	2,665	2,016	2,473	2,635	2,805	

Source: Extracted from Table 17, United States Department of Homeland Security (2009c). D means that data were withheld to limit disclosure.

TABLE 1-5: States Receiving the Largest Number of African Refugees 2000–2009

	2000		2001		2002		2003		2004	
Total African Refugees entering United States	17,561		19,021		2,548		10,717		29,125	
	State	n	State	n	State	n	State	n	State	n
	Minnesota	2,593	Minnesota	2,489	Minnesota	286	Minnesota	1,452	Minnesota	3,412
	New York	1,490	New York	1,521	Texas	254	Texas	1,000	Texas	2,,579
	Texas	1,400	Texas	1,459	New York	166	New York	915	New York	1,771
	Georgia	1,096	Pennsylvania	1,125	Pennsylvania	164	Georgia	740	Georgia	1,749
	Virginia	1,080	Georgia	1,082	Arizona	142	Pennsylvania	652	Arizona	1,548
	California	992	California	969	Maryland	108	California	647	California	1,379
	Pennsylvania	875	Virginia	812	Georgia	106	Maryland	558	Ohio	1,185
	Arizona	684	Maryland	805	Illinois	106	Arizona	547	Virginia	1,079
	Ohio	642	Arizona	769	California	92	Virginia	517	Pennsylvania	959
	Maryland	516	Washington	648	Virginia	92	Illinois	444	Illinois	955
	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009	
Total African Refugees entering United States	20,709		18,155		17,476		8,935		9,690	
	Minnesota	3,039	Minnesota	3,999	Minnesota	2,310	Texas	1,067	Texas	1,133
	Texas	1,862	Ohio	1,632	Texas	1,735	Arizona	575	Arizona	797
	New York	1,265	Texas	1,315	Ohio	1,121	Minnesota	528	New York	718
	Ohio	1,230	New York	872	Illinois	804	New York	485	Georgia	655
	Georgia	1,066	Arizona	815	Arizona	770	Ohio	469	Colorado	388
	Arizona	1,000	California	785	New York	759	Pennsylvania	356	Ohio	347
	Illinois	808	Georgia	700	Georgia	701	Georgia	342	Tennessee	330
	California	749	Washington	670	Washington	684	Illinois	314	California	329
	Virginia	749	Illinois	605	California	590	Virginia	312	Washington	309
	Pennsylvania	674	Pennsylvania	538	Tennessee	576	Colorado	310	Utah	294

Source: State figures extracted from Office of Refugee Resettlement 2000–2009 data sets (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2000–2009).

Somali and Ethiopian refugees, two of the largest African groups resettled in the United States. Approximately half of the Somali refugees have resettled in five urban areas: Minneapolis-St. Paul; Washington, DC; Atlanta; Chicago; and Seattle (Singer & Wilson, 2007). Approximately 38 percent of Ethiopian refugees have resettled in Washington, DC; Minneapolis-St. Paul; San Diego; Atlanta; and Dallas (Singer & Wilson, 2007).

The resettlement patterns for African new arrivals overlap to a small degree with the patterns for U.S. new arrivals overall. States such as California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois have tended to receive the largest percentages of all immigrants (Fix & Passel, 1994; Urban Institute, 2006); however, beginning in the 1990s, immigrants started to move into other urban and rural areas including Nashville, Atlanta, Louisville, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Greensboro-Winston Salem, Charlotte, Memphis, Portland, Vancouver, Seattle, and Washington, DC (Morse, 2004).

Story Behind the Numbers

The demographics presented in the preceding section provide an overall picture of the population from Africa; however, these numbers do not provide an understanding of the individual stories connected to these numbers. Eugenie Mukeshimana, the author of chapter 3 describes her immigration experience from a context of armed conflict. Several of the issues outlined in her narrative illustrate the complexities of emigration from contexts of armed conflict. The first issue is that the label that is attached to the way individuals immigrate to the United States may not be an accurate signifier of their experiences. The term "refugee" connotes that someone is fleeing a condition of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution in his or her country of origin. The conflict or violence-related experiences of individuals entering the United States on student visas or a family- or relative-sponsored visa, for example, may not be immediately apparent; however, these individuals may experience the emotional, social, and communal effects of armed conflict. The second issue is that the U.S. communities that receive new arrivals from conflict-affected communities very likely know little about the countries from which the individuals are coming. The nature of the conflict, the impact of conflict on everyday life, and the challenges of leaving one's country are important aspects of immigrants' lives. Helping professionals may be unaware of these specific circumstances. The third issue is the loss of connection that those emigrating from Africa may experience—the loss of family and community networks as well as the loss of an overarching culture of collectivism that orients individuals to social and cultural norms. The fourth issue is the challenge of starting life anew in the United States amid continuing concern about family remaining in the country of origin.

Efforts here to highlight of some of the factors underlying the experiences of individuals emigrating from African contexts of armed conflict may strengthen helping professionals' understanding of the human experience of immigrating to the United States from such situations.

Key Issues for New Arrivals from Africa

New arrivals from Africa come to the United States with particular worldviews, cultures, and histories that are distinct from the culture to which they are immigrating. Many come from traditional contexts in which collectivism is the predominant perspective, religion is central in everyday life, and cultural and traditional practices play a major part of their lives. The majority also come with some experience of armed conflict or political conflict.

Collectivism. The influence of the collectivist worldview on all aspects of life is an important cultural consideration when working with children and families from Africa. The defining characteristics of collectivism are as follows: the self is defined as interdependent; personal and communal goals are closely aligned; cognitions that focus on group norms, obligations, and duties guide social behavior; and relationships are maintained even when they are disadvantageous (Triandis, 1995). These characteristics can be quite different from those of an individualistic orientation in which the self is defined as independent; personal and communal goals are not necessarily closely aligned; social behavior is guided by attitudes, personal needs, rights, and contracts; and decisions about maintaining relationships can be evaluated on the basis of advantages and disadvantages (Triandis, 1995). Of course, not everyone from Africa will hold a collectivist orientation, but it is a prevailing perspective. It is also important to understand that these concepts are not mutually exclusive; many African individuals demonstrate aspects of collectivism in some spheres of their lives, for example, family, while displaying more individualist aspects in other areas, for example, work. Such a worldview permeates the social context of the individual and shapes the nature of the relationships in which one is embedded. Community identity is the basis on which individual identity has meaning in the African culture (Kamya, 1997).

It has been generally assumed that African cultures are collectivist; however, most of the research on collectivism has focused on Eastern cultures (Eaton & Louw, 2000). Eaton and Louw (2000) conducted one of the first studies to explore collectivism in Africa. They found that the African sample in South Africa demonstrated significantly higher dimensions of collectivism than the non-African comparison sample and concluded that theories about self, derived from collectivism, are useful and applicable in an African context. Certainly more research is needed to explore collectivism in other areas of Africa.

One's worldview influences understanding of self, self in relationship, definitions of health and mental health, and the interventions needed to address illness or psychological distress. Therefore, it is essential for social workers and other professional helpers to become informed about these critical perspectives. In writing about counseling in South Africa, Maree and van der Westhuizen (2011) noted that most of the counseling that occurs is informed by a Western worldview and is thus culturally incongruent; they recommended that indigenous practices and an understanding of the social and political context be included in counseling. I would add that it is also essential to consider how a collectivist orientation influences the issues that clients present in order to work with them in a culturally informed way.

Traditional Religion. Traditional beliefs of religion and spirituality are an important aspect of an African's life. One's entire life from before birth to beyond death is conceptualized as a religious experience, "The whole of existence is a religious phenomenon. . . . Both that world and practically all his activities in it, are seen and experienced through a religious understanding and meaning" (Mbiti, 1990, p. 15). The individual cannot be separated from religion or the religious connection within one's community. Names of people have religious meaning, as do features of nature, such as boulders, hills, and forests. Failure to recognize this integration of religion in all aspects of the African worldview leads to misunderstandings about fundamental aspects of African life by those with differing worldviews (Mbiti, 1990). Traditional religion has remained important even after the introduction of Christianity and Islam in Africa. For example, in Uganda, approximately 85 percent of the population is identified as Christian; however, most still participate in traditional religious ceremonies. Research conducted in northern Uganda found that those who were practicing Catholics retained traditional spiritual practices (Odoki, 1997). As a result of Vatican Two (1962–1965), the Catholic Church supports the use of traditional practices when they do not conflict with Catholic doctrine (Odoki, 1997).

Religion and spirituality remain important influences in the lives of Africans after immigration to the United States (Kamya, 1997). Kamya (1997) has found significant positive correlations between spiritual well-being and hardiness, spiritual well-being and coping resources, and spiritual well-being and self-esteem among African immigrants. Such data indicate the role of religion and spiritually in strengthening one's functioning. Formal religious connections in the lives of African immigrants have been important for maintaining and enhancing collective interactions and collective identity (Hume & Hardwick, 2005). Religious connections also have been the major source of support to new arrivals and providing them with social, cultural, economic, and political networks (Hume & Hardwick, 2005). Traditional African culture and

the religious community have provided for the holistic needs of families; the church is not just a place to worship. "To be blessed implies having children and food, and to be healthy, but in this case only if the whole community shares in it. . . . most of the indigenous churches are simultaneously welfare organizations" (Oosthuizen, 1991, p. 41).

For immigrants from Africa, faith-based organizations in the United States are providing a role that the religious communities would have offered in their countries of origin. Faith-based organizations are especially important in areas with larger numbers of new immigrants. These new immigrants often rely on trusted religious leaders for advice, information, and support in adjusting to their new environment (Ochs & Payés, 2003). In addition to the religious groups and organizations in the United States, there are also continental organizations (for example, the African Immigrants and Refugees Foundation), national organizations (for example, Ugandan associations), and ethnic-based organizations that provide information, offer legal services, and provide support to individuals in times of need (Takougang & Tidjani, 2009).

Cultural and Traditional Practices. The African worldview is an important aspect of understanding the role and function of traditional practices and ceremonies for Africans. Culture shapes individuals' understanding of emotional, social, spiritual, and physical well-being. Concepts of health and illness are similarly shaped by one's cultural orientation. This understanding must be taken into consideration in the development of the interventions to address problems and illnesses. Traditional practices address this cultural understanding of illness and integrate the physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of an individual. For example, one ceremony used for cleansing an individual after exposure to an impure situation in northern Uganda is called Stepping on the Egg. This ceremony cleanses the individual who has been exposed to an impurity, repairs the disrupted relationship with the community and the spiritual world, and guides the individual and the community members to support one another in the future. (See chapter 4 for a more detailed explanation of Stepping on the Egg.) Similar ceremonies have been documented as occurring in other areas of Africa (Denov, 2010; Honwana, 2006). Such ceremonies have been meaningful for many African individuals who have been affected by armed conflict; they offer a culturally based way of making meaning of the experiences and provide for acceptance back into the community (Corbin, 2008; Honwana, 2006). Traditional cultural beliefs continue to be strongly held by Africans even after they have immigrated to Western cultures (Mbiti, 1990). Awareness of and acceptance by U.S. social workers of the concepts and practices that are part of traditional rituals can facilitate the process of assessment and diagnosis, establishment of supportive working relationships, and the design of interventions in their practice with African immigrants.

Impact of Armed Conflict. African immigrants coming from contexts of armed conflict may have been directly involved in the conflict as combatants, may have lived in the areas affected by the conflict, may have been displaced by the conflict, or may have resided in areas indirectly affected. Those involved as combatants may have been drawn into that role on a continuum from volunteering to being forced into the armed conflict. Those involved in combat have witnessed torture, beatings, and violent killings; had to torture or kill others; have been forced to engage in sexual acts; have destroyed homes and property, and have stolen from civilians. They have also often been seriously beaten or injured. Rape of women, men, girls, and boys has been increasingly documented as a weapon used in war in Africa and elsewhere.

Those residing in areas in which the conflict is occurring often suffer injuries, wounds, and death. There is little protection from armies responsible for protecting citizens, so individuals try their best to protect themselves and their families. Those who are displaced and living in internally displaced persons' camps or refugee camps have minimal protection from the combat experience and are often more vulnerable to attacks (Achvarina & Reich, 2006). Those residing in areas of armed conflict or in displaced contexts also witness and experience many of the atrocities of those involved in combat.

Those indirectly affected by the armed conflict and living at a distance frequently have family and friends who remain in the conflict area. Those indirectly affected must also deal with the breakdown in the government's ability to protect its citizens and depleted economic, medical, and educational resources. Those affected by the armed conflict directly or indirectly experience serious physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual effects. To better comprehend the impact of armed conflict on their African clients, social workers can take advantage of the many sources of information on all African countries through the Internet. Connecting with the national groups that often exist in their communities can also provide greater depth of knowledge. Asking clients initially about their experiences in armed conflict may provide limited information, as it often takes time and the establishment of a trusting relationship for difficult experiences to be revealed. However, efforts to understand more about the actual context from which clients come can help social workers pay attention to the range of issues clients may be dealing with; such efforts are critical to forming strong relationships with clients.

Conclusion

The recent increase in the number of African immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers settling in the United States offers a tremendous opportunity for U.S. social workers to expand their awareness, knowledge, and skills related

to working with this population. Complex reasons and conditions affect the decision to immigrate to the United States, such as the consequences of armed conflict, concern about family left behind, and uncertainty about the future. In addition, issues of race, class, gender, ethnicity, language, and so forth can compound the challenges of immigration. Most African immigrants are coming from countries that are experiencing or have recently experienced armed conflict; thus, it is important for social workers to become familiar with these events. Services and interventions can be better developed for this population when practitioners understand the reasons that immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers leave their home countries and the experiences they have had along the way.

In addition, social workers must expand their knowledge of cultural worldviews, religious values, and cultural practices of clients coming from African cultures, to avoid language, social, and behavioral misinterpretations. Increased awareness of cultural orientation will also increase practitioners' abilities to provide culturally grounded assessments and interventions. Generation of this type of practice knowledge is sorely needed. The following chapters are designed to provide such information for social workers and helping professionals so they can offer appropriate and effective assistance to the growing population of African immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

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