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Introduction

As you open this book, consider one enormous fact: something like 1 in every 135 of us on Planet Earth is a displaced person – at least 41 million of us; 17 million refugees outside their own countries, something like another 24 million internally uprooted.

Erskine Childers Refugees: Rationing the Right of Life

Although the number of empirical studies on the integration of refugees is increasing rapidly, there is a dearth of theoretical reflection – at least as far as the specific problems of coping with refugee flows in the Third World are concerned.

Tom Kuhlman
The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries

Africa enjoys an unenviable reputation as the home of poverty, starvation, and displaced populations. Contemporary news stories center on crisis events, so almost inevitably the dominant characterization of the continent's woes telescopes into the grave image of a single, distraught refugee languishing in an isolated region.

A visual image conveys an essence to its viewers, but pictures, shorn as they are of context, are hollow. The same can be true of a written depiction. Attempts to explain problems and processes associated with refugees often dissipate into description, and descriptive studies fall short of providing a coherent and purposeful analysis of the interplay between the forces of change, choice, and context in refugee life experiences – analysis that would help in deriving practical ways to provide relief and assistance.

Conceptual differences are not merely academic. They generate contrasting analyses of the problems that lead to policies and pro-

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grams that affect people's lives. I have chosen a perspective that relies on recent theoretical developments in social theory, economic geography, and peasant studies. The prime characteristics of my framework are a central concern with the transformation of rural economies grounded in an historical approach. Its chief characteristics include the role of the state, different responses by household units to changes within the relations of production and of exchange, and sensitivity to narrative accounts of events, decisions, and choices by the participants.

In practice, there have been few attempts to identify refugees' structural position within host societies or relate their integration to larger socioeconomic processes at work in agrarian settings. 1 But using a perspective that is more fully cognizant of the transformation of peasant and pastoral economies can strengthen refugee analysis. It provides a basis from which to explain the logic of survival strategies adopted by refugees; explicate the material roots of social tension between refugees and the host community; understand land management practices and labor allocation strategies adopted by refugees; make a more discriminating and considered evaluation of refugees' net impact contributions and burdens - upon a regional economy; determine more effective policies for resettlement by apprehending mechanisms of impoverishment that impinge on refugees; and predict differential responses by refugees to repatriation opportunities.

This type of approach is particularly appropriate in view of new contextual variables that amplify the complexity of refugee movements in a tightening global economy. Refugee movements are more and more conditioned by identifiable social forces housed at different scales of analysis - global, regional, local, household, and individual. Hence, the basic objective of this study is to place the complexities of everyday life for rural refugees into a larger context, both in time and in social "space." Our basic method will be to explicate the changing dynamics of structure, process, and power that weave rural transformation together with refugee flight, settlement, integration, and repatriation. This emphasis differs from other studies that focus on patterns, typologies, and measurement. The brief review in the next few pages clarifies the components of my conceptual "lens" and specifies basic tools for analysis.

The Theoretical Challenge

A spate of research is rapidly replacing a previous paucity of academic interest in refugees. Anthropologists are challenging the stereo-

type of refugees as passive and dependent individuals, examining the role of ethnicity in cultural assimilation, and underscoring the "antiparticipatory ideologies," which dominate the relationship of many relief agencies to refugees.² Psychologists draw our attention to the adaptive process by refugees as a function of individual perception of, and response to, diminished control over their environment.³ Political scientists are focusing on international refugee institutions, immigration policy surrounding asylum, and the administration of assistance to refugees.4 Geographers are shifting their concern from spatial patterns of flight and resettlement to a variety of new approaches.⁵ Sociologists are exploring acculturation and adaptation in a new society and changing social networks during migration and resettlement.⁶

These studies enhance our understanding of the ways refugee populations move, resettle, and repatriate within a wide array of physical, social, and regional environments. But a fundamental question remains: Are forays from the vantage point of various disciplines sufficient, or, is there a need for additional theory formulation? An ongoing debate continues over the need to pioneer new refugee theory or borrow and utilize theory from the bailiwick of different social sciences.7

At least as yet, the distinctiveness of refugees has not been established in a theoretical sense. Perhaps in time it may be proven otherwise, but refugees remain a field of study based on a category of people, for which the defining conditions are more difficult than ever to differentiate. Hence, the present researcher is more optimistic about building a conceptual frame of reference from ideas and findings from the social sciences at large than by pursuing an endogenous theory.8 The next section begins to clarify the conceptual basis for the present study by citing some deep tensions tugging in opposite directions within the field of refugee studies.

Beyond Categorical Reification

One "tug-of-war" within refugee studies involves definitional distinctions. There is an acute need for more refined bases by which to determine refugee status because it entitles them with valuable forms of legal protection and material assistance.⁹ Hence, a growing debate exists over the criteria for determining who is a refugee; what combinations of conditions and motivations are sufficient and necessary grounds on which to make that determination?

The search for more precise criteria is not an academic exercise for it has, quite literally, bearing on matters of life and death. ¹⁰ There is, however, a major danger associated with an intense focus on the determinants of refugee status. That danger is the reification of "the

refugee" in our analysis. For example, a thorough review of the current geographical literature on refugees reveals that involuntary migration usually is given exceptional status; that is, refugee migration is treated as a separate category from other forms of migration. 11 Although the term "refugee" is critical for purposes of legal distinction and entitlements, researchers are recognizing that the designation itself offers no sustainable analytical coherence. 12 Those who do not realize this fact run the risk of "placing themselves in a conceptual cul de sac, trapped and emasculated by the categorization."13

Reversing the logic of this argument is quite plain: for the purposes of analyses, researchers should not box refugees into one category as distinct from other kinds of migrants. Richmond offers a useful alternative. He argues that refugee movements ought to be viewed on a continuum stretching from proactive migrants who seek to maximize net advantage to reactive migrants who face severe constraints in their freedom of choice: "At one end of the continuum is the decision to move after deliberate consideration of all relevant information, rationally calculated to maximize net advantage, including both material and symbolic rewards. At the other extreme, the decision to move is made in a state of panic with few alternatives but to escape from intolerable threats. Between these two extremes, many of the decisions made by both 'economic' and 'political' migrants are a response to diffuse anxiety generated by a failure of the social system to provide for the fundamental needs of the individual, biological, economic, and social."14

Richmond's continuum eliminates the problem of exceptional status, thereby opening up the refugee analyses to the insights of a larger literature and theoretical framework. Doing so has encouraged researchers, for example, to examine critically the parallels between the experiences of political refugees and those of other populations who flee natural disasters or development projects. 15 This study brings to bear insights from the wider literature on the dynamics of economic, social, and agrarian change in African peasant societies.

Beyond Conceptual Provincialism

Another tug-of-war involves the appropriate scale for analysis. Clearly, the primary participant, the refugee, should represent a "first circle" of research interest. Whereas refugees were once analyzed using abstract models (likened in Kunz' classic piece to "billiard balls" whose paths were determined by "kinetic forces"), the contemporary literature witnesses a "human face" of involuntary migration. 16 This shift from the search for a "classic" abstract model of refugee flight to a renewed sensitivity to the experience of displaced human beings is

a welcome one, but it can pose a problem that is parochial in nature. Robert Chambers has warned of the dangers of a "refugee-centric" approach; one that neglects the wider circles in which refugee experience and behavior occurs. 7 In doing so, he calls researchers into a "second circle" of investigation, one that is sensitive to the relationship between refugees and their hosts and specifically appraises the dynamics that exist between them.

Social theorists call refugee researchers to enter a "third circle" of investigation. Social systems and structures involve a much broader arena of analysis, but they can play a prominent role in shaping refugees' lives. The growing discourse on the nature and meaning of "environmental refugees" is a good illustration. Implicit in that debate are social structures because climatic changes, droughts, degradation, and famines are no longer understood as independent of sociopolitical and economic forces. Many migration studies focus on the micro level (e.g., the psychology of individual decision making)¹⁸ or, alternatively, examine the operation of causal structures (e.g., the manner by which capitalism may create, stymie, or shape flows of labor migrants). 19 So too, refugee studies are apt to split the analysis and, more likely than not, ignore many key structural forces that displace people, shape their flows, or determine the conditions under which they resettle.²⁰

The Conceptual Framework

This study attempts to transcend the dualisms of refugee versus nonrefugee, of micro level versus macro level, and of structure versus agency. The analysis engages three circles of causality - the immediate sphere of the refugee, the proximate sphere of the recipient society and economy, and the wider sphere posed by systems and structures. To bridge the gap between different levels of explanation, a conceptual framework is needed that is sufficiently reflexive to relate decisions, actions, and normative behaviors made by individuals, households, ethnic groups, or communities to the broader social context. Structuration theory is one means by which to explore causal relations that span different scales of analysis.

A structuration approach moves deductively downward from foundation concepts to historical claims and then to specific conjunctures, but it also moves in an inductive mode upward from actions to reasons, then to rules, and finally to structures. 21 By focusing attention on an ongoing interplay of structure and action with "room" for conflict, opposition, and negotiation, structuration dissolves the common separation of micro level analysis from macro level work.22

Structuration is concerned with a basic question: How do individuals respond to constraints and pressures imposed by the structures of the society in which they live? Social structures constrain but they also enable because they open up certain possibilities for action while at the same time restricting or denying others.²³ This is precisely the case for refugees, who formulate survival strategies and secure a livelihood by both negotiating with, and transforming, the set of opportunities and constraints posed by the society and economy into which they move.

Structuration is especially appropriate for refugee studies due to the expanding effect of globalization upon involuntary migrants. Giddens identifies four major subdivisions of the current world system: a global information system; a system of related political institutions (states and international agencies); a world military order; and, a world capitalist economy with related institutions.²⁴ Refugees are linked to all four. They are associated to the first by an intensifying battle for media coverage, the heightened ability of the media to reach hidden pockets of displaced people, and the growing capacity of displaced populations to relate to other displaced people elsewhere, and then, to emulate their responses. Emigration and labor laws, coercive measures designed to defend national interests, and the widening echelon of relief organizations and administrations connect refugees to many layers of political institutions. And they are linked to the world military order by arms sales and civil conflict. Each theme deserves investigation, but it is the fourth subdivision – the world capitalist economy – that is most central to this study.

We have identified two common dangers associated with conceptual provincialism that lead to less productive analyses. A sensitivity to the reflexive nature of forces acting on refugees, both those that originate outside camps or host communities as well as those that begin within them, is one way to move beyond descriptive generalizations. This study reflects those elements that Zolberg identifies as "the keys to the most stimulating approaches to current migration theories":

(1) they are generally historical, not in the sense of dealing mostly with the distant past, but rather in paying appropriate attention to the changing specificities of time and space; (2) they are generally structural rather than individualistic, focusing on the social forces that constrain individual action, with special emphasis on the dynamics of capitalism and of the state; (3) they are generally globalist, in that they see national entities as social formations, as interactive units within an encompassing international social field, permeable to determination by transnational and international economic and political processes; and (4) they are generally critical, sharing some degree a committment to social science as a process of demystification and rectification, and in particular are concerned with the consequences of international migrations for the countries of origin and destination, as well as the migrants themselves.²⁵

These four characteristics constitute the broad theoretical foundation for this book. Structuration provides a more cogent conceptual framework on which to erect the particulars of the study. To begin construction of an in-depth study, we must define in more specific terms some basic tools of analysis required to do the job.

The Tools of Analysis

The fact that all regions are articulated into a global political economy, yet in an uneven manner, has important implications for apprehending the life course of refugees who are forced to move between countries. Refugee movements frequently occur between substantially different social formations. Many refugees leave "production systems" that are relatively cooperative and resettle in economies where a much more competitive system of production conditions their sources of livelihood. For this reason analyzing the social relations of production and of exchange is an appropriate mode of analysis.

Understanding social relations requires careful explication of labor organization, the process of accumulation, and the prevailing dynamics of power at work in a specific locale. When applied to refugee settings this type of analysis relates resettlement, flight, and repatriation to the broader structures of society. Social relations of production and exchange operate at the center of the analysis. On a vertical continuum, they lie at an intermediate point between structures that emanate from above and responses that come from below. On a horizontal plane, they often function as the most significant nexus between households.

Explication of the social relations of production that exist at a specific refugee site can play a critical role in the analysis for a number of reasons: (a) it highlights salient features in the host economy; (b) it clarifies the opportunities and constraints that refugee households and individuals face in securing a livelihood; (c) it examines the appropriation, distribution and utilization of the social product shared between refugees and the host society; and, (d) it differentiates the effect of a refugee influx on different groups. Hence, discussion of the social relations of production plays a lead role in the analysis to follow.

Five other types of conceptual tools used in this study are analyses of economic stratification, mechanisms of immiseration and accumulation, social institutions and normative practices, time-space geographies, and intrahousehold relations. Like the social relations of production and exchange, each provides a meso-level "window" for research into the complex chemistry of refugee migration, resettlement, integration, and repatriation.

Although refugees often are viewed as undifferentiated masses, economic stratification is an normative aspect of refugee settlement.²⁶ Some refugees become markedly better off during exile while others remain destitute. This study seeks to make sense of social differentiation among refugees. My assumption is that the prevailing social relations of production sort households into meaningful class positions. A clear grasp of the existent stratification is very useful because it provides a basis for understanding how different segments of the population acquire wealth as well as for predicting their fortunes in the future.

What is needed to explain social stratification adequately are analyses that delineate specific mechanisms of immiseration and accumulation. Such mechanisms determine differential access to social, physical, and financial resources among refugees and their hosts and thereby underlie the process of social differentiation. They also rivet together the social relations of production. Generally, the most important mechanisms are those that determine differential access to land, labor, or credit.

Social institutions and normative social practices represent a relatively tangible, enduring, and accessible middle level between structure and agency because they involve critical junctures between choice and constraint. Their decomposition or sedimentation are important signposts of structures at work. Focusing on contrasting institutions among different ethnic groups can provide a significant comparative dimension to the analysis and broaden the texture of a study. Hence, social practices provide researchers with another valuable "keyhole" to explanation.

Another tool of analysis involves the media of time and space. Their use reflects the meeting of agency and structure in a very concrete way.²⁷ Gender relations, for example, are bound up in contrasting uses of daily activity space among women compared to men. Repetitive use of space and time by workers illustrates the structure of relationships associated with different production systems. In the same fashion, the time-geographies of refugee men, refugee women, refugee children, and refugee workers of many different sorts signify the way in which host societies affect refugees as well as the effects of forced dislocation.

The fifth tool relates to recent debates about the manner in which to conceptualize households. Although the peasant literature is concerned with the relationship of agrarian transformation to household social processes, the refugee literature has paid insufficient attention to changes that occur in the face of rural transformation as well as dislocation itself.²⁸ This remains the case in spite the fact that forced migration produces crisis conditions which, in turn, loosen and unhinge rules that had governed households before flight. During exile, the process of social "relocation" in a new environment restructures roles and responsibilities as well. Households are arenas that reflect, internalize, and shape conflict and change. Hence, we will pay particular attention to relationships within refugee households and how the larger process of rural transformation affects relations between its members.

The preceding discussion is not to imply that the process of refugee settlement should be read directly from a theoretical framework. Clearly, important and unique contingencies exist in every refugee setting. But the present author is convinced that many critical dynamics of the refugee experience can be grasped by enlarging the sphere of analysis and applying concepts from other research fields. (The addition of longitudinal field data is also important.) The theoretical stance and conceptual tools outlined here will help to explicate the refugee experience as an ongoing process that is lodged within, and shaped by, larger ones operative in agrarian societies.

Conclusion

Theories of refugee resettlement are broadly categorized by their central assumptions as well as by their mode and level of analysis. The classical approach to resettlement operates with a "functionalist orientation" that focuses on cultural assimilation, psychological adaptation, and economic integration as means whereby refugees come to occupy "niches" within a plural society.²⁹ It contrasts with the "conflict orientation" of this study. This is not an idle distinction. Even in more remote regions of Africa, refugees are moving into social formations that are structured by economies of accumulation that make the locations into which they flee places of contention and conflict. Refugee integration is, indeed, as Harrell-Bond stresses, more apt to involve a situation of unequal access to resources - and

one group being exploited by another - than one in which host and refugee communities are able to coexist, sharing the same economic resources.³⁰ The process of integration between refugees and their hosts is far more of an active scramble than a scenario of either slow cohesion or mutual co-existence. Some refugees struggle to find survival strategies, others maintain a precarious subsistence, and still others build their position by appropriating the labor, capital, and products of those around them.

"Scrambles" may be extremely active, but they are not devoid of logic or structure. Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo underscore that point well in their book. They suggest that "refugee flows ... are patterned by *identifiable social forces* and hence can be viewed as *structured* events that result from broad historical processes" [emphasis added].31 Refugee resettlement, integration, and repatriation will be viewed in the same manner throughout this book; patterned by identifiable social forces, they are structured processes that result from broad historical processes. Conflict between refugees and their hosts may culminate in relatively isolated incidents of naked force and coercion, but many everyday forms of inequity are linked to the asymmetrical distribution of power and wealth within the host economy. Our focus then must include the changing and contended positions that refugees occupy within the host society and new "phases" in the dynamics of process and power that transpire over time.

In summary, I hope to reformulate the idea of refugee integration as an ongoing process of active structuration - between refugees, the host community, and external actors such as the state, relief agencies, and the global economy - that pivots on changing relationships of conflict and inequity. The logic of such relationships played out on the physical and social terrain of East Africa is what I seek to unravel.

Notes

- 1. R. Black, "Refugees and Displaced Persons: Geographical Perspectives and Research Directions," Progress in Human Geography 15 (1991): 281-98; R. Mazur, "The Political Economy of Refugee Creation in Southern Africa: Micro and Macro Issues in Sociological Perspective," Journal of Refugee Studies 1 (1989): 441-67.
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- 5. For examples of a political perspective see N. Kliot, "Borderlands As 'Refugeeland' - Political Geographical Considerations," presentation at the Association of American Geographers (Toronto, 19-22 April 1990) and C. Wood, "Equilibrium and Historical-Structural Perspectives on Migration," International Migration Review 16 (1989): 298-319. For examples of a cultural perspective see D. Greenway, "Prospects for the Resettlement of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan: A Cultural-Geographical Assessment," in Refugees: A Third World Dilemma, ed. J. Rogge (Totowa, N.J., 1987), 193-99; L. Luciuk, "A Landscape of Despair: Comments on the Geography of the Contemporary Afghan Refugee Experience," presentation at the Association of American Geographers (Toronto, 19-22 April 1990). For examples of a quantitative or spatial approach see K. Conner, "Factors in the Residential Choices of Self-Settled Refugees in Peshawar, Pakistan," International Migration Review 23 (1989): 904-32.
- 6. E. Marx, "The Social World of Refugees: A Conceptual Framework," Journal of Refugee Studies 3 (1990): 189-203; J. Berry, "Acculturation and Psychological Adaptation: A Conceptual Overview," in Ethnic Psychology: Research and Practice with Immigrants, Refugees, Native Peoples, Ethnic Groups and Sojourners (Amsterdam, 1988), 41–52.
- V. Robinson, "Into the Next Millennium," 12.
- 8. For further defense of this assertion see C. Bun, "Refugee Camps as Human Artifacts," a Review of Vietnamese Refugees in Southeast Asian Camps, by Hitchcock, L., Journal of Refugee Studies 4 (1991): 284.
- 9. See A. Zolberg, A. Suhrke, and S. Aguayo, Escape from Violence: Conflict and the Refugee Crisis in the Developing World (Oxford, 1991); J. Hathaway, "Reconceiving

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- Ibid., 3. 10.
- Black, "Refugees and Displaced Persons."
- 12. J. O'Brien, "Understanding the Crisis in Sudan," Canadian Journal of African Studies 20 (1987): 275-79; Black, "Refugees and Displaced Persons."
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- Given this limitation, I follow Sarre, Phillips, and Skellington, Ethnic Minority Housing in taking actors' statements primarily as indications of their practice, and only secondarily to provide some indications of the structures of meaning or signification at work. (For a more complete amplification of modalities see chapter 4 in P. Cloke, C. Philo, and D. Sadler, Approaching Human Geography: An Introduction to Contemporary Theoretical Debates (London, 1993).
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- 24. Giddens cited in Richmond, "International Migration," 17–18.
- Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo, Escape from Violence, 403.
- 26. T. Kuhlman, "The Economic Integration of Refugees in Developing Countries: A Research Model," Journal of Refugee Studies 4 (1991): 1–20.
- 27. See A. Pred, "Social Reproduction and the Time-Geography of Everyday Life," in A Search for Common Ground, ed. P. Gould and G. Olsonn (London, 1982), 157-86. It may be important to comment further on Giddens' theorization of space for geographers. Giddens downplays location in preference for interaction and he downplays place in preference for locale as a dominant arena of interaction that he calls "power containers". See Cloke, Philo, and Sadler, Approaching Human Geography, 126, for an expanded discussion.
- Two notable exceptions are A. Spring, "Women and Men as Refugees: Differential Assimilation of Angolan Refugees in Zambia," in Involuntary Migration and Resettlement, ed. A. Hansen and T. Oliver-Smith (Boulder, 1982) 37-47, and S. el Shazali, Eritreans in Kassala (Draft of Final Report), Joint Research Project of the

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- 29. See as an example, A. Hansen, Refugee Self-sufficiency Versus Settlement of Angolan Refugees (1966-1989) in Zambia, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Discussion Paper No. 17 (Geneva, 1990).
- 30. Harrell-Bond, Imposing Aid, 7.
- 31. Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo, Escape from Violence.