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Perceptions About the Asylum-Seeking Process in the United States After 9/11

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Keith Nalumango

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2019

Abstract

Perceptions About the Asylum-Seeking Process in the United States After 9/11

by

Keith Nalumango

MS, Walden University, 2012

BA, University of Zambia, 1977

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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May 2019

Abstract

Asylum seekers in the U.S. have faced a plethora of impediments leading to some of them abandoning their applications, which may deny them their rights under the United Nations convention on refugees. Despite the abundance of literature on the plight of these persons, no study has examined the lived experiences of asylum seekers in the U.S. from the time they apply for asylum to the time their applications are adjudicated. Using Benet's polarities of democracy as the theoretical framework, the purpose of this single participant narrative study was to explore these experiences in order to provide policy makers with a better understanding of the impacts of US Asylum policies on the rights of asylum seekers. The study's single participant was an attorney from the Congo who sought and received asylum in the U.S. Thematic analysis was applied to her responses using hand coding. Cultural challenges were identified as the dominant negative theme in the asylum-seeking process. These cultural challenges generated fear in the face of survival issues such as joblessness, poor housing, hunger, and lack of health care. These interrelated sub-themes, analyzed through the lens of the polarities of democracy, suggest that policy makers might improve the asylum-seeking process by using the theory to better understand the impacts that the process has on the rights of asylum seekers. This may allow policy makers to develop strategies to maximize the positive aspects of the polarities of democracy pairs while minimizing the negative aspects, particularly for the pairs of freedom and authority, justice and due process, and diversity and equality.

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Dedication

To the memory of my mother and father, to my wife, Judith, for all the encouragement, and my only son, Lou, for being an all-weather friend. Last but not the least, to all asylees the world over, past, present, and the future, and to those who, like my immigration attorney Jennifer Doree, make things happen for these vulnerable persons.

Acknowledgements

Many people made this journey possible. Among these are my sisters Clare, Patricia, and Namakau who cheered me on. My friends/family Jackie Andrews and Amanda Ryland gave me reason never to give up even when the times were bad. I turned to my classmates Michelle Johnson and those from "Walden Cohort 1," Shannon Stanley, Christine Henderson, Casmir Bilong, and Karen Gibbons Versuk, for invaluable student-to-student scholarly guidance whenever I needed it.

This long journey started in my Master's class when Dr. William Benet, then my instructor in board governance, invited me to apply for a doctoral degree and introduced me to his Polarities of Democracy theory. Dr. Benet was later to become my dissertation chair. I thank him for the vigorous all-round mentoring, in the same way I thank Dr. Morris Bidjerano, my second committee member, for his insightful advice on methodology. I also thank Dr. Patricia Ripoll, my third committee member, for her guidance.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The escalation of political strife, violence of various forms, and the persecution of persons in many countries around the world has spurred a dramatic increase in global migration (United Nations, 2014). This development led to the number of displaced people worldwide reaching an unprecedented 65.3 million in 2015, out of which 21.3 million were classified as refugees, and another 3.2 million persons were seeking asylum (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016). In 2015 alone, as many as 34,000 people were forced daily out of their countries of origin to seek refuge across international boundaries (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016).

Due to its global proportions, immigration has influenced the politics of many nations. In the United States, for instance, immigration has often invited intense debate on the phenomenon's merits and demerits (Zong & Batalova, 2015a), to the extent that Bello (2016) and Mayer (2015) saw a strong likelihood of the immigration question influencing the choice of which candidate would win the 2016 presidential elections. Chishti and Pierce (2016) opined that in the run-up to the U.S. 2016 elections, immigration was the key issue that divided the two major political parties, the Republican and the Democratic parties.

According to Zong and Batalova (2015a), there were 42.4 million immigrants living in the United States in 2014. This constituted about 8.5% of the country's population. Immigrants enter the United States either legally or illegally. Persons who are displaced from their nations of origin enter the United States either as refugees, or as

visitors who may eventually apply for asylum. While it is not easy to arrive at the exact number of undocumented immigrants in any country at any time, the Washington, DC-based Immigration Policy Institute estimated that there were 20 million illegal immigrants in the United States in 2015 (Zong & Batalova, 2015a). The Pew Research Center, on the other hand, approximated the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the United States in 2014 at 11.1 million (Krogstad, Passel, & Cohn, 2016). What is known is that in 2015, some 23,533 persons were granted asylum in the United States (Mossaad, n.d.a).

Asylum seekers all over the world face many challenges. These may include language and cultural shifts that require asylum seekers to adapt to new environments. Asylum seekers may also face financial hardships (Kerwin, 2012), discrimination leading to mental illness (Kaibuku, 2016), and legal problems, such as difficulty in comprehending the asylum-seeking process, or having to prove that in their countries of origin, asylum seekers faced persecution (Allard, 2013; Cheng, 2011). Since September 2011, people seeking asylum in the United States have faced more hurdles than before (Kerwin, 2012; Whelan, Laban, Peters, Boldero, & Kashima, 2010). It is possible, in the light of these challenges, that asylum seekers may face instances of injustice, such as the denial of human rights.

To understand the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States, I used Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model as my study's theoretical framework. It is my hope that understanding the asylum-seeking phenomenon through the prism of democratic principles will spur all persons involved in the asylum-seeking

process, such as policymakers and operatives, into taking positive action that will ameliorate the hardships faced by asylum seekers in the United States. My study also has the potential of contributing to the development of the polarities of democracy model as a tool for managing social problems.

In this chapter, I briefly review background information on the asylum-seeking experience in the United States, as studied by scholars during, mostly, the past five years. I then state the research problem and the need to study it. In the section that will follow, I state the purpose of the study. The other sections of this chapter state the research questions, briefly discuss the theoretical framework that guided the study, followed by the nature of the study. I then define uncommon terms that were used in the study, the assumptions, limitations, and the scope and delimitations of the study. I also state the significance of the study to the public administration discipline and end the chapter with a summary of the main points.

Background

The United States is one of the most popular destinations in the industrialized world for people fleeing from their countries on humanitarian grounds (Kerwin, 2012; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.b). While the management of the asylum-seeking procedure seems to be a tedious, mammoth task, it would seem that not enough resources are invested in the process, thereby resulting in long waiting periods by applicants, especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States (Kerwin, 2012). During the waiting period, applicants live in a state of insecurity (Whelan et al., 2010). Other than receiving inadequate support from government agencies, family, and friends,

asylum seekers live in fear of not only the possibility of learning about unfavorable outcomes of their applications, but also of being arrested and interrogated by authorities, of exposure to violence in detention camps, and of being deported (Kalt, Hossain, Kiss, & Zimmerman, 2013). Asylum seekers also hire lawyers who charge high legal fees. These persons are similarly required to renew their work permits annually and at high cost. It is also possible that asylum seekers could face discrimination from potential employers on the basis of either their lack of an American education and work experience or for not speaking English or Spanish. Kalt et al. (2013) opined that asylum seekers are a vulnerable group, while the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (n.d.a) refers to asylum seekers as persons of concern. A study on what effects these challenges may have on those seeking asylum in the United States is, therefore, necessary.

It seems possible that the long waiting period and other challenges associated with the asylum-seeking phenomenon may be denying applicants some basic human rights in a country that carries the mantle of the leadership of the free world. The problem, therefore, is that policymakers may not be aware of the impact the asylum-seeking experience may have on persons who are seeking asylum.

In 2015, the United Nations predicted that as many as 46.6 million persons worldwide would be classified as a population of concern for that year alone (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, n.d.a). According to this United Nations agency's estimates, some of these persons would be seeking asylum, others would be in refugee status, and yet others would be considered stateless (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.a). As stated in the introductory section of this chapter,

the actual number of displaced persons for 2015 was 65.3 million, translating into a much higher figure than that predicted by the United Nations. This makes the phenomenon of the displacement of people a major global problem.

The United States grants asylum status to persons on, among other categories, humanitarian grounds (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015a). In 2017, the majority of persons seeking asylum in the United States come from El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico and Venezuela (Mossaad, n.d.b), all of which are non-English-speaking countries. These persons face a language problem in a country where English is the dominant language.

The processing time for refugees and asylum seekers became longer and more restrictive after 9/11 (Rhodan, 2018). In 2012, for instance, only about 21,000 applicants, representing a third of the average yearly asylum-seeking population in the United States, received asylum status (Martin, 2011). To add to this plethora of hurdles, the process of adjudication for who gets asylum varies from country to country. In the United Kingdom, asylum court judges use common sense and experience to grant asylum (Herlihy, Gleeson, & Turner, 2010). In the United States, immigration officers initially decide the fate of asylum seekers before immigration judges hear their appeals, when that becomes necessary.

The gap in the literature I identified at the time of my study was that no study had examined the lived experiences of asylum seekers in the United States from these persons' own perspectives, covering the period from the time they submit their applications to the conclusion of those applications.

According to Atlanta Asylum Network (n.d.), 2 years after 9/11, immigration courts in the Greater Atlanta area approved the least number of asylum applications in the nation. In my study, I attempted to discover and give meaning to the experiences of these asylum seekers through their own stories, within the context of positive social change, and through the prism of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory. The study covered the post 9/11 era, a period which, according to Kerwin (2012) has seen an increase in the numbers of people waiting for their asylum cases to be heard.

The importance of this study lies in the hope that its findings will facilitate a greater understanding by policymakers and other stakeholders in the asylum-seeking process of the challenges faced by asylum seekers, and from the point of view of what ought to pertain in a democratic society. It is my hope that the knowledge gained from this study will lead to a change in public policy that will facilitate a reduction in the difficulties encountered by asylum seekers, resulting in positive social change.

Problem Statement

Research has shown that persons seeking asylum in the United States face many hurdles arising from the asylum-seeking process. Einhorn (2011) found that immigration officials in many countries, including those in the United States, suspect asylum seekers of lying about the real reasons for seeking asylum. Hamlin (2012) stated that it has become difficult to use human rights as a reason for seeking asylum in the United States. Ray (2013) found that the asylum-seeking process encouraged persons to lie about their true intentions for entering the United States, and Lim (2013) avowed that there is racism in the United States asylum-seeking process. Other researchers found that asylum seekers

were vulnerable in the areas of, among others, disease (Chai, Davis-Cole, & Cookson, 2013), hunger (Welch, 2004), housing (Piwowarczyk, Keane, & Lincoln, 2008), unemployment (Samaddar, 2015), and mental health (Kaibuku, 2016). The problem, therefore, is that asylum seekers in the United States face an array of problems that stem directly from the asylum-seeking process itself. The need, then, exists for all stakeholders, whether at policymaking or operative levels, to take positive action and effect social change. It is possible that the phenomenon may be denying asylum seekers some basic human rights to which every human being living in a democratic society should be entitled. By analyzing asylum seekers' perspectives on the asylum-seeking process, I attempted to show the extent to which asylum-seeking poses severe problems to both those seeking it and to those who administer the process. Refugees have a right to this process under the convention of the United Nations (1951). By using Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model, the study points to possible means of managing the dilemmas that accompany the asylum-seeking process, as opposed to finding easy solutions.

While the studies in the preceding paragraphs were undertaken by various scholars on the asylum-seeking phenomenon, in this study, I attempted to facilitate, through open-ended questions, a holistic approach to the asylum-seeking conundrum by recording the voices of asylum seekers on the total asylum-seeking experience in the United States. Further, for this study, I used Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy which to date has not been used to study the experiences of asylum seekers anywhere in the United States.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this narrative study was to discover and understand the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States about the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process since September 11, 2001, even if such persons had applied for asylum before 9/11. The participant was, at the time of the study, a resident of mainland United States. Using Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory, my objective for the study was to describe and interpret asylum seekers' experiences in a democratic society, with its internal contradictions of individual vis a vis community rights. The objective of this study was to facilitate a further understanding of the challenges faced by asylum seekers and to suggest possible changes in public policy that may address those challenges.

Research Questions

The central question of the study was:

RQ: What do persons who completed the U.S. asylum-seeking process after September 11, 2001, perceive as the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

An evaluation of the available literature on the asylum-seeking phenomenon seems to suggest that asylum seekers experience challenges that affect their human rights, individual freedoms, and justice. In managing the asylum-seeking phenomenon, immigration authorities, on the other hand, also seem to face the challenges of making the best decisions against the background of individual liberties and communal obligations.

The management of the asylum-seeking process would, therefore, seem to be a paradox that needs to be evaluated through an appropriate lens. While on the one hand, United States immigration authorities seem to want to protect asylum seekers from persecution, in the course of protecting the homeland from terrorism, the same authorities would seem to be subjecting asylum seekers to suffering. The asylum-seeking process, therefore, poses a dilemma to those who administer it.

To understand the complex nature of the asylum-seeking phenomenon and how asylum seekers' rights could be affected by the experience, I used Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory. Using Johnson's (1996) polarity management concept, the polarities of democracy model outlines 10 interrelated elements necessary for democracy to succeed. I devote a detailed evaluation of the theory in Chapter 2 of this study.

Nature of the Study

I used the qualitative narrative method to collect data through open-ended questions from my participant in a face-to-face interview. Using purposeful sampling that included the snowballing method, I looked for participants from among persons resident in the U.S. mainland, but mainly from the state of Georgia, provided these persons experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon as residents of the United States. According to Creswell (2009), the narrative design facilitates an environment in which participants talk freely about their experiences on the phenomenon being studied and the meanings they attach to those experiences. I then analyzed those data through hand-coding.

Definitions

To facilitate the understanding of this study, I defined the terms listed below as follows:

Asylee : A person who is seeking or has been granted asylum by a host nation (Asylee, 2016).

Asylum: The "protection from arrest and extradition given especially to political refugees by a nation or an embassy or other agency enjoying diplomatic immunity" (Asylum, 2016). In the context of this study, the term refers to the state of a person who qualifies to be a refugee, is either already in the United States or is at a port of entry and is seeking admittance to the United States (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015b).

Refugee: According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2015b, para. 1), persons "who have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group or political opinion" and have been granted protection by the United States.

Refoulement: The practice by immigration authorities to return people seeking asylum back to their countries of origin, even when such persons could face persecution in those countries (Mellinger, 2014).

Assumptions

The purpose of this narrative study was to discover and understand the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States about the positive and/or negative

aspects of the asylum-seeking process since 9/11, as told in these persons' own voices and within the context of a theoretical lens.

To facilitate a thorough investigation of a phenomenon, qualitative researchers use four philosophical assumptions, ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological. Ontology refers to "the nature of reality and its characteristics" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Reality is subjective, in the sense that different study participants will interpret the same phenomenon differently. Having experienced the phenomenon, myself, I braced myself for a version of an asylum-seeking experience that would be different from the one I underwent. To get closest to my participant's reality of the phenomenon, I planned to transcribe the face-to-face interview verbatim, using the exact words said by the participant.

Epistemology concerns itself with how evidence is gathered through participants' views of the study phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Guided by the philosophical assumption of epistemology, I assumed that establishing rapport with participants would involve conducting face-to-face interviews where, as Creswell (2013) advised, "the participants live and work" (p. 20), as that would result in the participants feeling comfortable enough to provide rich data.

My choice of this study's topic was influenced not only by the topical nature of the asylum-seeking phenomenon in the United States, but also by the fact that I experienced the phenomenon myself. Axiological assumptions allow researchers to "make their values known in a study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). I assumed, therefore, that my personal experience with the study phenomenon, presented through a reflective

commentary on the study participants' views, would play a major role in the study's data interpretation process.

Rudestam and Newton (2007) referred to methodology as all the "procedures and techniques for data collection and analysis" (p. 38). Recognizing that this study was inductive and emerging, I assumed that the narrative qualitative design, which, among other things, is amenable to change at any point in the research process, would fit in with the philosophical assumptions that embraced ontology, epistemology, and axiology and, thereby, provide the best vehicle for a study on the perspectives of persons who have experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon.

Limitations

The data collected in this study came from a participant's narratives. I then gave meaning to these narratives through my own interpretation against the background of how asylum seekers should be treated in a democratic society. For logistical reasons, the selection of the study's participants was to focus on persons who lived within the state of Georgia and neighboring states. Although it was my wish to include participants from as many countries of origin as possible, I found myself restricting my search for participants to those who spoke English only, as language could be a barrier to collecting rich data. Further, as a product of the United States asylum-seeking process myself, I certainly have biases that could influence both my interviews and data interpretation.

In Chapter 3, I outline the measures I took to reduce bias and other limitations that were likely to arise during the study.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was to explore the perceptions of residents of the U.S. mainland who sought asylum in the United States after the 9/11 phenomenon about the asylum-seeking process. The study's sample was, therefore, restricted to persons who were resident in the United States and had already gone through the asylum-seeking process and not those who were still seeking asylum. I was also aware that the diversity of the participants' cultural backgrounds could lead to different interviewees interpreting similar experiences differently, hence providing data that have a cultural slant to them. By being aware of these possibilities, I was alerted to the possibility of participant responses that could impede the study's transferability.

Significance

For decades, immigration has been a topical subject in Washington, DC (O'Keefe, 2014) that has sometimes led to protracted conflict between federal and state laws (Garcia & Manuel, 2012; Haberfeld & Lieberman, 2012; Stafford, 2012). Immigration affects everyone, from private citizens to administrators in the public, nonprofit, and for-profit sectors. My search in the literature showed a gap in knowledge about the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States on their experiences from the time they apply for asylum to the time asylum is granted in the post-9/11 era. As I show in Chapter 2, asylum seekers in the United States experience many problems. The significance of the study, therefore, arises from the need to discover problems that are specific to asylum seekers from the perspective of the asylum seeker and within the framework of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model. In my study, I

intended to tell the untold experiences of these men, women, and their children who, for long periods, await their turn to be allowed to live in the free world, while experiencing enormous cultural, social, legal, and economic challenges. Knowledge of these experiences may lead to policy changes in asylum-seeking procedures, hence lifting the heavy burden of everyday adversities from a part of the community that could otherwise contribute more productively to the United States economy. To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that have explored asylum-seeker perspectives on the asylum-seeking process in the United States after 9/11 and through the lens of the polarities of democracy model.

It is my hope that this study will be a source of useful information for all the stakeholders in the asylum-seeking process, such as policymakers, administrators, and the asylum seekers themselves. I also hope that this study will facilitate interest in further research on the asylum-seeking phenomenon in the United States, and further strengthen the efficacy of the polarities of democracy model.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of asylum seekers in the United States on the asylum-seeking process after 9/11 through the lens of the polarities of democracy model. I used the narrative research methodology to collect data through a face-to-face interview with a single participant who had experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon in the United States. The significance of this study will be to inform stakeholders in the asylum-seeking process about the dilemmas that characterize the phenomenon, hoping that if all the persons involved in the asylum-seeking process were

aware of the enormous obstacles that are inherent in the process, all stakeholders in the phenomenon would make decisions that could lead to positive social change.

In Chapter 2, I review selected literature on the asylum-seeking phenomenon in the United States. The literature explores some of the laws, procedures, and experiences that characterize the asylum-seeking process. I also use the review to underscore the need to undertake this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A number of scholars have described asylum seekers as a vulnerable people (Barneche, 2014; Kalt et al., 2013; Kerwin, 2012). Studies have shown that one of the major hurdles asylum seekers face worldwide is how to convince host nations' immigration authorities that their reasons for seeking asylum are valid and in accord with international refugee law (Allard, 2013; Cheng, 2011; Einhorn, 2011; Herlihy et al., 2010; Moya, 2012; Zimmerman, 2010). Host nations suspect that asylum seekers leave underdeveloped nations not on grounds of fear for their lives, as they always claim, but merely to seek economic benefits from the industrialized world (Cheng, 2011; Einhorn, 2011; Hamlin, 2012; Kerwin, 2012). As is the case in other host nations, to gain access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), applicants must show that in their countries of origin, they were either persecuted or faced the possibility of being persecuted (Martin & Yankay, 2014). Researchers have shown that the asylum-seeking process in the United States is burdensome and procedurally complicated (Allard, 2013; Bart-Plange, 2014; Kerwin, 2012; Messer, 2015; Nessel, 2015; Noonan, 2015; Ray, 2013; Sarikakis, 2012; Woodman de Lazo, 2014). Studies have also shown that the United States asylum-seeking process is very harsh on women and gay and transgender persons (Brane & Lee, 2013; Fialho, 2013). Further, according to Barneche (2014), Kerwin (2012), and Ray (2013), the asylum-seeking process is financially unaffordable to many who seek it. In 2003 alone, these factors led to more than 170,000 asylum seekers failing to go through the entire process, either by voluntarily aborting their quest to gain

asylee status or through deportation (Hamlin, 2012). In my study, I sought to record these and new findings on the asylum-seeking experience and attempted to determine whether these hardships amount to asylum seekers being denied basic human rights.

The literature review that follows will show that since the September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, a phenomenon that is commonly known as 9/11, authorities in the United States have put in place laws that have made it harder for persons to seek asylum on human rights grounds, hence excluding persons from the asylum program on suspicion that such persons may be terrorists (Fullerton, 2010). Yet other studies in the literature review show that the impeding nature of the United States asylum-seeking process makes applicants feel unwelcome (Whelan et al., 2010). These conditions include detention (Barneche, 2014; Bart-Plange, 2014; Brane & Lee, 2013; Fialho, 2013; Hamlin, 2012; Kalt et al., 2013; Noonan, 2015; Moya, 2012; Olsen, 2012; Welch, 2004; Woodman de Lazo, 2014; Zoma, 2014). According to a study by Kalt et al. (2013), asylum seekers are also subjected to anti-immigration sentiments expressed through government policies, such as, but not limited to, unemployment due to delayed work permit accessibility, rigorous interrogation, violence, the possibility of being tortured, reduced or inaccessible social services, poor health, and anxiety over the long waiting periods asylum seekers have to endure before their cases are adjudicated. Consequently, asylum seekers experience trauma, poverty, and emotional distress (Barneche, 2014; Brane & Lee, 2013; Hamlin, 2012; Rottman, Farris, & Poe, 2009; Welch, 2004). What is interesting about these findings is the similarity in themes that span over a long period, dating back to 9/11, and obtruding into the second decade of the

millennium. The purpose of this study was to hear narratives of those affected by the

asylum-seeking process in the United States during the asylum-seeking process itself, as

a way of informing stakeholders about these firsthand experiences and hoping that the

findings would attract policy review. Rudestam and Newton (2007) stated that a study's

topic must be "worth exploring" (p. 61) and contribute to the body of knowledge on the

phenomenon. I believe that this study contributes to the body of knowledge on the

asylum-seeking process, as seen through the theoretical framework of Benet's (2006,

2012, 2013) polarities of democracy. My literature review does this by showing what

aspects of my proposed topic have already been studied. The literature enabled me to

delve into areas of the asylum-seeking experience that unearthed new knowledge that

informed the study. Consequently, the literature review revealed a gap in the literature in

the asylum-seeking process that needed to be studied.

Major Sections of the Literature Review

The first section of my literature review is a brief review of Johnson's (1996)

polarity management model, which serves as the origin of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013)

polarities of democracy theory. This is followed by a discussion of the polarities of

democracy theory, which I used as my theoretical framework. In the sections that follow

the discussion, I evaluated the sources I found in my search for articles that were relevant

to my study. Most of these sources are recent, some of them as recent as 2018. However,

while staying current on the topic would have avoided the possibility of my study being

dated, I also used studies that were completed before 2011. I determined the choice of

these studies by their relevance to the current discourse on immigration and sometimes

used them as a means of highlighting historical perspectives. Examples of sources

include those by Fullerton (2010) on terrorism, torture, and refugee protection, Rottman

et al. (2009) on which persons qualify for asylum, and Welch (2004) on the war on terror,

hunger, and the detention of asylum seekers. The study by Samaddar (2015) on the

history of unemployment among immigrants can best be read together with Welch (2004)

on hunger among asylum seekers, the latter having been conducted more than a decade

before this study. Despite the time these studies were conducted, they deal with similar

subjects that would seem to have remained relevant to the asylum-seeking phenomenon

for a long time. I make the argument that the issues raised in these studies continue to be

current to the extent that immigration played a major role in determining who won the

United States 2016 presidential election and continues to dominate the nation's political

landscape as the 2020 presidential elections approach.

In the detailed synthesis of the literature that follows, I show how my study's

theoretical framework relates to the themes I used in the study. The evaluation of the

themes is preceded by a brief overview of the current state of global immigration, with

emphasis on asylum. I conclude the literature review with a summary of my findings on

the themes from the current literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The methods I used to review the relevant literature included mainly a search in

the Walden University Library databases. These university databases, under Policy and

Administration, included Political Science Complete, Business Source Complete, SAGE

Premier, ProQuest Central, and LexisNexis Academic. I found the Political Science

Complete and the Business Source Complete the most useful. The reports in the LexisNexis Academic database were valuable in pointing to leads on themes I found in scholarly studies.

Other search sources included Google Scholar. Likewise, I also used sources from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the agency's mother body, the United Nations, the world body whose statutes give the legal framework host nations use to accept asylum seekers into their programs. In addition, I used sources from United States government agencies that deal directly with asylum issues. These included the DHS Office of Immigration Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Except for these government sources, all the articles I used were peer-reviewed and published in either professional or academic journals.

The main search terms I used to locate articles for this literature review included *global immigration, U.S. immigration, U.S. asylum seekers,* and *asylum after 9/11.* I found the term *U. S. asylum seekers* the most productive in providing the richest sources that informed me about the asylum-seeking experience in the United States. I used this information to come up with themes that enabled me to conduct my study on perceptions of asylum seekers in the United States about the asylum-seeking process.

Theoretical Foundation

In this section, I discuss the origins and foundations of the study's theoretical framework and its application, the rationale for my choice of the theory, and how the theory relates to my study.

Polarity Management

Developed by Johnson (1996), polarity management concepts suggest that, by their nature, some ongoing human problems cannot be resolved but merely managed. To each of these problems, there are two opposite sides, or poles, which are mutually dependent. Johnson stated that as a shift is made from one pole to another, two forces come into play, "crusading and tradition-bearing" (p. 55). My understanding of this concept is that while, for example, emphasis on individual performance is necessary to get an individual member of a team to exert themselves to the highest point of productivity, some degree of emphasis on team performance may still be necessary. This is because no individual can achieve the synergy that comes with the sum total results of the performance of the entire team. Polarity management concepts were designed to manage these unavoidable shifts, with the aim being to maximize the positive aspects and minimize the negative aspects of the problem.

When problems cannot be resolved by available resources, they become dilemmas that can only be managed (Johnson, 1996). To that effect, when two opposing sides of a polarity are in conflict, efforts taken to manage only one of the poles in the polarity, and in isolation, could lead to the other pole being neglected, hence creating a new problem (Johnson, 1996). The concepts' central idea, therefore, is "to get the best of both opposites while avoiding the limits of each" (Johnson, 1996, p. xviii). Johnson, therefore, suggested the optimization of the positives of one side of a problem and eschewing the limits of the negative pole. To illustrate: In a case where associates in a corporate environment operate within the strict rules of the adage that the customer is always right,

hence implying that when pitted against customers, associates can never be right, the downside of such a restrictive atmosphere could be the loss of morale among team members, resulting in decreased productivity. While there is no easy solution to this dilemma, according to Johnson, the problem could be managed only by looking critically at the pros and cons of each side of the issue. To manage the dilemma, the organization must recognize the four sides of the problem namely, the left and right side of each opposite measured against the upside and downside of each pole that collectively constitute a quadrant, which Johnson referred to as the polarity map.

Polarity management concepts have been used globally by management professionals to identify and manage ongoing problems faced by individuals and organizations alike (Polarity Partnerships, 1992-2016). In my literature review, I allude to the relevance of Johnson's (1996) model to Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy. I also show the relationship between these two concepts in the management of dilemmas faced by both individuals and the organizations that are involved in the asylum-seeking process in the United States. I submit a fuller discussion of the theoretical framework's application to the study in Chapter 5.

The Polarities of Democracy Model

I used Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model as my theoretical framework. In devising the theory, Benet (2006, 2013) stated that he used Johnson's (1996) polarity management concepts, which I discussed above, as his conceptual framework.

Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory outlines 10 interrelated elements required for democracy to succeed. The elements are paired into five categories as (a) freedom and authority, (b) justice and due process, (c) diversity and equality, (d) human rights and communal obligations, and (e) participation and representation (Benet, 2013). As is the case with Johnson's (1996) polarity management model, none of the pairs in the polarities of democracy theory will function properly in the absence of the paired opposite, hence none of the pairs will work effectively without the positive aspects of both elements being examined. Further, the five polarity pairs themselves appear to be interrelated. The pair of freedom and authority, for instance, appears to be directly related to the pair of justice and due process, in the same way that the pair of participation and representation appears to be related to the diversity and equality pair. The polarities of democracy model is founded on the premise that while democracy is the all-embracing template through which human oppression can be resolved (Benet, 2006), some problems are not acquiescent to resolution-finding. This means that the problems, which must also be ongoing, are dilemmas to which there is no simple solution. Under the model, those seeking to manage the two opposing sides of such dilemmas would use a polarity map to measure the positive aspects of both sides against the negative aspects of each one in a quadrant. Because of the poles' interdependent nature, in the quadrant that makes the polarity map, there are upsides and downsides that push from one side to another (Benet, 2006, 2013). As in Johnson's polarity management model, in the polarities of democracy model, the idea is to maximize the positive aspects of both poles and minimize their negatives.

To put the polarities of democracy model in the perspective of current world dilemmas, the events that took place after the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, France, come to mind. To effectively police the nation of France, the French government declared a state of emergency that was meant to last for 3 months, but with the possibility of an extension for another 3 months (Kampmark, 2015). Among other things, the state of emergency was intended to do three things: first, to transfer "power from civil authorities to those of a military nature" (Kampmark, 2015, para. 5); second, to authorize the government to control the social media; and third, to sanction "warrantless searches round the clock" (para. 14). The reaction to these and other provisions in the emergency law was the growth of a fear among the French public that such sweeping state powers could be used to curtail people's right to demonstrate in public, or to enter recreational facilities, resulting in what Kampmark likened to a "police state" (para. 11). In January 2016, French high school and college students protested a proposed three-month extension of the emergency law. These developments constituted a dilemma to which there was unlikely to be a solution, but whose polarities could only be managed.

To manage the above dilemma namely, the declaration of a state of emergency in France, through the polarities of democracy model, solution-seekers using the polarities of democracy model would attempt to manage the overarching need for the French government to protect its citizens against terrorism through the state of emergency. On the opposite side of this dilemma, though, would be the need to protect the individual rights of French citizens against seemingly draconian laws. The latter would require the observance of the tenets of due process, while the former would seek to reduce the

incidence of due process. The dilemma would be considered managed through a leveraging act that reduces the negatives namely, the minimizing of the non-observance of due process, and the maximization of individual rights, but with neither act harming the other to a point where the negative effects of the poles are reduced.

As I show in the literature review that follows, there is evidence that asylum seekers in the United States are detained without due process (Brane & Lee, 2013). I used the pair of human rights and communal obligations to observe if, by denying asylum to persons who seek it on the grounds of human rights, the United States government is denying individuals basic human rights, as noted by Fullerton (2010). As disclosed by Lim (2013), there have been cases where asylum seekers have been subjected to racial profiling, which alerted me to the possibility of the polarity of democracy model's pair of diversity and equality being relevant to the study. While I used all the five pairs of Benet's (2006. 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy to guide my discourse on which polarities were relevant to this study, I finally focused on the use of three pairs of the polarities of democracy model. These are (a) freedom and authority, (b) justice and due process, and (c) human rights and communal obligations.

Benet (2006) observed that while, on their face value, justice and due process do not seem to be opposites, justice "functions as the idea that is desired" (p. 136). In other words, whereas justice is one of the tenets of any democratic society, according to Benet, due process is the process, or the action, through which the desire, or justice, could be achieved. Due process, therefore, is the path to achieving justice, and the polarities of democracy model could provide the vehicle through which a society could gravitate away

from the absence of democracy and move toward more democracy. This study, therefore, attempts to show, on the one hand, the dilemma that arises from the denial of due process to asylum seekers in order to maintain national security, and on the other hand, the need to protect the wider society for the common good. In this scenario, the polarities of democracy model would seek to manage both elements by suggesting an increase in levels of due process, and at the same time, by reducing the level of detention without due process, but without doing harm to either individual freedoms or national security. In this example, the downside is the lack of due process, and while its removal would be a positive phenomenon to asylum seekers, the need for national security for the wider society would be the positive element that would have to compete with the downside. The dilemma would be how to leverage the need to maintain the rights of the individual in relation to the interests of the wider society.

I did not use the polarities of democracy model pair of participation and representation in my study, for while every democratic society must have, in government, representatives elected through participation by all eligible members of the community, in the United States, asylum seekers are not qualified to participate in the electoral process. However, in the absence of elected representation, I sought to find out who advocates for asylum seekers, and how well this representation is delivered.

Benet (2013) stated that the polarities of democracy theory is an effort meant to establish a uniting tool that could facilitate a path to social change in the midst of, among others, three threats to human survival namely, the environment, economic, and militaristic challenges. According to Benet, these threats have led to poverty, where

disparities between the wealthy and the poor keep widening, and unemployment, destitution, and high levels of hunger, among other problems, keep growing. These threats are relevant to my study, as, in their countries of origin, asylum seekers could possibly have been victims of unemployment that led to poverty, or of changed demographics resulting from climate change, necessitated by economic measures, such as the drilling of oil in their areas of residence, or violence inflicted by authorities to silence opposition to these developments. Tobor's (2014) study on amnesty for Urhobo militants in Nigeria is a good example of how a people could fall victim to commercial interests that ignore the inevitable environmental degradation of the environment. Tobor used the polarities of democracy model to examine the efficacy of the amnesty program that was meant to resolve that conflict. Noting the importance of debate and due process in conflict resolution, Tobor concluded that the polarities of democracy model enabled him "to examine the extent to which the Urhobo culture (could) contribute to maximizing the positive aspects and minimizing the negative aspects of the model's elements" (p. 61). As I have stated above, and as I show in the literature review that follows, American democracy is the main reason why most, if not all, asylum seekers choose the United States as their destination for refuge. My study attempts to begin a debate on whether the dilemmas faced by those involved in the asylum-seeking process are managed as suggested by the polarities of democracy model.

While Tobor (2014) was the first scholar to use the polarities of democracy model as a theoretical framework in a dissertation (W. J. Benet, personal communication, December 7, 2015), Strouble (2015) was the second person to do so. Like Tobor,

Strouble found the model to be a "significant utility" (p. 8) and a functional tool for observing "democratic processes in various types of communities" (p. 8). Strouble stated that the three threats to human survival identified by Benet (2013) applied to his study on racism vs. social capital. My literature review shows that asylum seekers are vulnerable people (Kalt et al., 2013), some of whom, in their countries of origin, faced the possibility of death, or were victims of violence, power politics, environmental degradation, unemployment, and poverty, among other threats.

As I demonstrate in detail under each theme of the study in the literature review that follows, asylum seekers are mostly minority groups who may often be ignorant of their basic rights in a foreign land, and suffer injustice due to, among other adversities, imprisonment, often without due process, and, because of their immigration status, lack elected representation. Evidence shows that these persons face dilemmas. My study suggests that these dilemmas could best be managed through the framework suggested by the polarities of democracy model. I also show, however, that whereas asylum seekers, by virtue of being human beings, must be entitled to basic human rights, host governments feel obliged to protect their citizens from the possibility of harm from those who seek refuge. The problems these two sides of the same coin represent cannot be resolved but may be managed by considering what needs to be done to satisfy, if only partially, both sides of the argument at the same time.

Finally, other than its applicability to studies that use critical theory, as evidenced in the case of Tobor's (2014) and Strouble's (2015) studies on conflict resolution and race, respectively, Benet (2013) posed challenges for further study of the polarities of

democracy model. According to Benet, the polarities of democracy model could be the right research tool to apply to a problem if, among other things, the researcher's problem addressed social change measures that could lead to the alleviation of threats to human survival, and if the application of democratic practices could provide the path to resolving the problem. This study presents a problem that poses numerous dilemmas, hence making the polarities of democracy model the best choice for a theoretical framework. As I was writing this report, human beings were dying from manmade causes across Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and other parts of the world. The cause of these deaths ranged from political wars and violence related to drugs, gang activity, and religion. Scores of these people are likely to end up in the United States asylum-seeking process, which, as I show later in this literature review, is encumbered with laborious procedures. As I was writing this report, asylum seekers from hotbeds of tension in the Middle East were being turned away at European borders, and in the name of national security. Likewise, hordes of asylum seekers from Latin America were not being allowed entry into the United States (Moore, 2018). These are polarities that need to be managed. While it is not possible for a single study to fully meet the challenges posed by Benet on the need for further study of the polarities of democracy model, I believe that this study will add to the body of knowledge required to build the polarities of democracy theory as a springboard for effecting social change.

United States Immigration Overview

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (n.d.b), the refugee crisis caused by the civil war in Syria was "the biggest humanitarian emergency

of our era," (para. 1). In 2014 alone, there were 59.5 million displaced persons in the world. This means that "one in every 122 humans (was)…either a refugee, internally displaced, or seeking asylum" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.a, para. 2). During the same year, the United States received 121,200 applications for asylum, representing a 44% increase from the previous year (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.b). Worster (2014) and Zong and Batalova (2015b) stated that most asylum seekers in the world prefer to come to the United States. In 2013, there were 41.3 million immigrants living in the United States, thereby constituting 13% of the nation's population (Zong and Batalova, 2015a), marking a steep rise from 1970, only 43 years earlier, when the immigrant population accounted for only 4.7% of the nation's population. In 2014, 40% of the immigrants in the United States were naturalized citizens, while 53% were either permanent residents, persons living legally in the country on one form of visa or another, or doing so illegally (Zong & Batalova, 2015a).

It would seem that at the time of writing this report, the latest official numbers of unauthorized immigrants issued by the DHS dated back to 2011, when the official number of such persons was about 11.51 million. However, an estimate by the Washington, DC-based Immigration Policy Institute was that in 2015, there were 20 million illegal immigrants in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2015a). I can only assume that no one knows how many unauthorized immigrants there are in the United States, as most, if not all, are unlikely to contact government agencies. Whatever the correct figures are, there is evidence that the United States has a very large immigrant

population. This study concerned itself with the experiences of one category of immigrants in the United States namely, those who sought asylum in mainland United States after 9/11.

Hostilities Toward Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers in the United States face hostilities from various sections of the host community. The asylum-seeking process begins within the host nation's borders. This means that the asylum seeker either enters the country legally, or may cross the border illegally, and then report himself or herself to the authorities, and request to be admitted into the asylum program. Because of the way these persons enter host nations, asylum seekers are unlikely to experience hostility from the host nation at the port of entry. However, once asylum seekers report to host nations' authorities about their intentions to seek asylum, they open themselves up to a series of hostilities.

Studies conducted in industrialized countries, including the United States, show that host nations doubt the validity of the reasons given by asylum seekers to seek asylum (e.g. Cheng, 2011; Einhorn, 2011; Hamlin, 2012; Herlihy, Gleeson, & Turner, 2010; Kerwin, 2012; Zimmerman, 2010). This suspicion leads to asylum seekers finding themselves living in hostile environments (Whelan et al., 2010). According to Ray (2013), United States asylum laws are so prohibitive that to enter the country, some asylum seekers have to tell untruths about their real motives, such as entering the country as visitors who intend to go back to their countries soon after the visit but end up seeking asylum. This means that some asylum seekers start off their path to asylum status on falsified grounds. Studies have shown that United States authorities suspect that persons

from Latin America and the Middle East use false reasons to seek asylum (Cheng, 2011; Lim, 2013).

The interpretation of the international law that facilitates the admission of persons into national asylum programs has, for a long time, been a subject of interest to scholars (e.g. Cheng, 2011; Kerwin, 2012; Noonan, 2015). There is current debate as to whether international refugee law, as interpreted through the relevant United Nations resolutions, based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, with subsequent amendments to the declaration, coupled with efforts made through various bodies, and the evolution of the practice of granting asylum by states, bestows upon asylum seekers the right to be granted asylum, as opposed to merely being entitled to applying for asylum and enjoying that status (Worster, 2014). Ray (2013) opined that international refugee law falls short of giving rights of asylum to seekers. Allard (2013) stated that the United States is not obligated to grant asylum to those seeking it, and that the government suspects that applicants seek asylum in the United States not because of founded fear in their countries of origin, but as a means of seeking economic gain from a developed country. Allard opined that while accessibility to the asylum program faces the hurdle of opposition from government authorities which believe that some persons who seek to enter the program do not qualify, granting asylum should be seen as an act of morality, stemming from religious motivation. Fullerton (2010) argued that by passing laws and devising regulations that make it impossible for otherwise legitimate asylum seekers to be granted asylum, the United States violates international refugee law.

Different people leave their countries to seek asylum in other nations for different reasons. While some seek asylum for fear that their spouses could harm them, it was not until 2014 that domestic violence, stemming from a case that was heard by an immigration court in 1987, was considered as a valid reason for seeking asylum in the United States (Noonan, 2015). The fact that this decision came 27 years after the problem surfaced shows how resistant to change the asylum-seeking process can be in the United States. In his study on the protection of refugees, including asylum seekers, by USRAP, Kerwin (2012) exemplified this problem with his findings on hurdles faced by journalists from Mexico. Seeking asylum in the United States, the journalists claimed that they faced persecution from gangster-related activities, such as drug dealing, corruption, and extortion, but their application was turned down because the reasons they had given did not amount to political persecution (Kerwin, 2012). Cataloguing a series of hurdles faced by refugees in their quest to enter the USRAP, and specifically citing the denial of access to the program by asylum seekers who deserved to be admitted, Kerwin concluded that, despite its successes, the refugee program requires "high-level policy attention" (p. 33).

Research has shown that since 9/11, the United States government has been denying asylum to people who use human rights as a reason for their application (e.g. Hamlin, 2012; Kalt et al., 2013; Rottman et al., 2009). Fullerton (2010) argued that while the term "terrorism" is not even mentioned in any section of international refugee law, the United States is guilty of using terrorism as a reason for detaining or excluding persons from getting asylum. In the discussion that follows, I attempt to show that asylum seekers face extreme hostilities at the federal, state, and community levels, and that the

need exists to hear about these hostilities from those who have been direct victims of the phenomenon. It is my hope that the study's findings might be used to develop changes in public policy that can enhance the asylum-seeking process.

National Security Concerns as Basis for Government Fears

Like in many nations, the fear of terrorism in the United States is real, to the extent that Bello (2016) opined that it is that fear which steers the nation's foreign policy. While 9/11 could be considered as the major catalyst for current hostilities toward immigrants, studies have shown that the United States government has, for a long time, exhibited great hostility toward immigrants and, in particular, seaborne asylum seekers, on suspicion that such persons pose a threat not only to national security (e. g. Mellinger, 2014; Ray, 2013), but also to the cultural and economic wellbeing of the nation (Lu and Nicholson-Crotty as cited in Kaibuku, 2016). Using refoulement, asylum seekers who reach the United States by sea are forced to return to their nations of origin, where they are likely to face persecution. According to Mellinger, asylum seekers are sometimes considered by United States authorities as "a threat to national identity, job security, or social services" (p. 15). Ironically, though, the United States has a long history of opening its borders to immigrants from all parts of the world. After all, as Bello noted, the United States prides itself in the fact that it is a product of immigrants, many of whom arrived at its borders by sea. However, the post-9/11 era led to "a sharp decline" (Kerwin, 2012, p. 2) in the country's admission of refugees. Kerwin further noted that security concerns about admission of refugees to the United States have heightened during "the past two decades" (p. 2), a period dating back to long before 9/11. The denial of asylum

to applicants based on the fear that the applicants could be terrorists is, therefore, not a new phenomenon.

As far back as the Ronald Reagan administration of 1981 to 1989, seaborne asylum seekers from Haiti were turned away at United States borders even before they touched United States soil, on the grounds that they were a national security risk (Mellinger, 2014). Hamlin (2012) noted that while the United States had, from the 1960s to the 1980s, warmly opened its doors to Cuban asylum seekers, as early as 1994, reception toward Cubans had "cooled" (p. 33). According to Mellinger, the justification for refoulement was that seaborne asylum seekers could, if not detected at the borders and returned to their countries of origin, easily become undocumented aliens, which would mean that the government would not know about their existence in the United States and, hence, security agencies would not be able to account for these persons' activities. Because the fear is that illegal immigrants could easily engage in terrorist activities, the policy of refoulement continued to exist even under President Obama's administration (Mellinger, 2014). Mellinger further argued that while, morally, this policy seems to be working against the human rights of seaborne asylum seekers, refoulement is legal, as it falls within the ambit of both international and United States laws.

The case for international terrorism. Using national security as a basis for ensuring that no one who is suspected to be a terrorist is admitted into the USRAP may find justification not only in the past, but also in current events. In 1993, a Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, who had lived in the United States as a registered asylum seeker, was said to

have played the leading role in plotting to bomb New York's World Trade Center in the same year (Hamlin, 2012). Yet not only did 9/11, or the December 2, 2015 terrorist attacks on San Bernardino, California, tell the whole story of international terrorism. On November 13, 2015, terrorists attacked and killed more than a dozen people in a Paris nightclub, in France. This event was followed soon after by similar attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso. Going as far back as May 2011, two refugees from Iraq were arrested in the United States on charges of aiding Al-Qaeda (Kerwin, 2012), a terrorist organization that, in 1996, had avowed to fight the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.a). By 2011, or ten years after 9/11, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had investigated more than 70 major cases of terrorism on American soil, most of the cases involving persons having ties with the Middle East (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.b). During the first two months of January 2016, the Federal Bureau of Investigation dealt with nearly 30 cases of terrorism, straddling from arresting and persecuting suspects on suspicion of engaging in terrorist acts, with some suspects pleading guilty, or the courts handing down sentences (Federal Bureau of Investigation, n.d.c). These incidents, along with a litany of others allegedly conducted by persons with connections to the Middle East, became reference points for people who wanted to keep asylum seekers who hailed from the Middle East away from United States soil. Juss (2012) opined that after 9/11, the United States' war against terror gained so much momentum internationally, the author equated the United Nations' 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees to the "unwanted step-child of the human rights movement…(that is)…cruelly treated" (p. 2). It is clear from the above narrative, therefore, that past and current

terrorist events have helped to shape the hostility asylum seekers in the United States have experienced, but especially after 9/11.

As a means of protecting the homeland from international terrorism, the United States government, after 9/11, took deliberate steps to make it harder for asylum seekers to be granted asylum. Among these were Liberty Shield, and the Blanket Detention Order of 2003, which led to the arrest, detention, and removal of aliens from the United States (Welch, 2004). Operation Liberty Shield 2003 was probably the most specific step taken by the government to stop specific categories of persons from seeking asylum in the United States. Under the project, asylum seekers from 33 countries would be detained upon arrival if they entered the United States, and the Internet activities of individuals would be monitored (DHS, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2003; Welch, 2004). Further, in January 2002, the Bush administration opened the Guantanamo Bay Prison to hold persons whom the government suspected might get involved in terrorist activities if they were not detained (Wilke, 2005). While these suspects were not arrested within the United States but were abducted and tortured abroad by United States authorities before they were sent to the Guantanamo Bay Prison (Wilke, 2005), their detention was the result of the government's anti-terrorism policy which possibly had a negative impact on asylum-seeking. Some of the Guantanamo Bay prisoners became asylum seekers when authorities found no good reason to keep them in detention but could not send them back to their countries of origin (Fullerton, 2010). Ironically, while United States authorities would not send detainees to countries where they were likely to face torture, Guantanamo Bay prisoners were subjected to "US anti-terrorist practices, such as waterboarding"

(Fullerton, 2010, p. 7). By 2010, as many as 18,000 persons seeing asylum in the United States had been negatively impacted by the new measures, either by way of delaying their applications, or denial of asylum (Welch, 2004). In some cases, even those persons who had already been granted asylum were not given permanent resident status, and their family members who were outside the United States were not allowed to join them (Welch, 2004).

During the 2016 United States presidential election campaign, national security interests tied to immigrants and, specifically, to asylum seekers, was one of the most topical issues. The American news media and pro-immigration nonprofits reported cases of legislators and state governors who expressed opposition to the proposed resettling, in the United States, of asylum seekers who were fleeing from the civil war in Syria (e.g. Chisti, Hispman, & Ball, 2016; Morelli, 2015; Umble, 2015). When Donald Trump, then only one of the many Republican Party presidential candidates, not only expressed anti-Mexican immigrant sentiments, but also suggested that Muslims should be temporarily barred from entering the United States, his popularity rose to higher heights among Republican Party supporters (Bello, 2016). Mayer (2015), who described Trump as a "blustery, narcissistic, electoral newcomer" (p. 542) and a candidate with a credibility gap, attributed the candidate's popularity to, among others, his anti-immigration stance. Yet, according to Bello, Trump was not the only candidate to benefit from this anti-immigrant rhetoric, for his rivals in the presidential race within the Republican Party also gained popularity from the anti-immigrant viewpoint when they opportunely echoed it. These developments seemed to indicate at the time that the American population, as seen

through the representations of one of the nation's two major political parties, was expressing open hostility toward immigrants, with national security as the reason for the resentment. Trump was elected president in November 2016, and soon after his inauguration in 2017, he issued an executive order which barred citizens, including refugees, from seven Muslim-majority nations in Africa and The Middle East from entering the United States, citing national security as the reason for the ban (Zapotosky, 2017). The executive order, together with a revised one that followed, was struck down by federal appeals courts because, the courts stated, the ban did not reflect the spirit of democracy as practiced in the United States (Zapotosky, 2017).

Animosity toward immigrants of color has been one of the hallmarks of Trump's presidency. In January 2018, a year after he became president, for instance, Trump was reported to have used disparaging and racist remarks about immigrants from Africa and Haiti (Davis, Stolberg, & Kaplan, 2018). These developments seem to suggest that both President Trump and the federal appeals courts may be wrestling with dilemmas that are associated with the freedom and authority and the diversity and equality polarity pairs of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model.

To understand asylum-seeking as a phenomenon that takes place within the context of a nation's fight against international terrorism, I considered it imperative to examine the dilemmas that come to the fore in the administration of justice. In his treatise on Noccolo Machiavelli, Nederman (2014) stated that the father of modern political theory wrote, as early as the 16th century, that citizens tended to mistake liberty for security, and that while the state could not guarantee liberty, it could provide security, but

by first disarming the citizenry, so that the arms the citizens possessed would not be used to harm the state. While preferring clemency to cruelty, Machiavelli believed that the latter built empires and protected princes. Machiavelli's arguments may still hold true today. The first two decades of the 21st century saw the fall of dictatorial regimes, among them Iraq and Libya. Before the collapse of these regimes, the unity of these nations had thrived despite the cruelty that was inherent in their political structures, which were characterized by the lack of freedoms, the negation of justice, due process, human rights, participation and representation. The removal of these regimes, however, led to the abrupt dearth of internal national security in those countries and the proliferation of international terrorism. National security is one of the main functions every government must provide to its people. In performing that function, governments must make hard choices to match the challenges that are presented by prevailing circumstances. Roberts (2004) opined that such choices could be made even at the expense of transparency. When such circumstances manifest themselves, it may be feasible to apply Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy pairs of freedom and authority; justice and due process; and human rights and communal obligations as tools for reducing or increasing the extent of each pair, resulting in neither national security nor individual liberties being compromised. Judging from the aftermath of the fall of the Iraqi and Libyan dictatorial regimes, Roberts' argument would seem to support the need for national security's paramountcy over individual liberties.

To understand the role national security concerns play in the asylum-seeking process as it pertains to the United States requires a brief examination of the concept of

democracy, itself. While acknowledging the complexities attached to the definition of democracy, Benet (2013) stated that it is a tool that "serves as a solution for oppression" (p. 31) and could, therefore, be used to bring about social change. Christiano (2006) opined that democracy entails building a structure where all members of a group, collectively, directly or indirectly, and as equals, arrive at decisions that affect them. Like Benet, Christiano acknowledged the difficulties inherent in a system where everyone has a say, and yet decisions made by all must apply to all. Christiano further pointed out that while individual liberties constitute one of the cornerstones of democracy, individual liberties cannot exist in the absence of the liberties of the wider society. The question that comes to mind, therefore, is whether state authority should protect the interests of the wider society, in the name of preserving national security, at the expense of individual liberties, even when those individuals are aliens fleeing death to seek asylum. Christiano argued that the state has the moral obligation to ensure citizens obey authority, for in a democracy, state authority is derived from the majority who elect the wider society's representatives. It would seem, therefore, that in view of the conflicting interests the asylum-seeking process brings into the arena of democratic governance, United States authorities, like those in France, face the dilemma that comes with the management of the polarities of democracy as a daily, living concept.

Legislative Hostilities Toward Asylum Seekers

While the actions taken by the executive arm of the government cannot be exclusively separated from the actions of the legislature, Fullerton (2010) opined that the United States Congress has played a major role in making the asylum-seeking process

very hostile, resulting in individuals with genuine reasons for asylum-seeking being victimized by new anti-terrorism laws. Kerwin (2012) stated that these laws subject asylum seekers to intense security screening. In strengthening the government's resolve to ensure that those suspected of terrorism were excluded from the asylum-seeking program, and were removed from United States soil (Nessel, 2015), Congress passed the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. While the government saw the Act as a tool for enhancing national security, its critics saw it as an attack on individual freedoms (Banks, 2009; Cheeks, 2009).

To execute what came to be commonly known as the war on terror, the George W. Bush administration, in 2002, and through an Act of Congress, created the DHS. With 22 government departments and agencies operating under its supervision, DHS's main function was to bring together all the nation's security efforts under one umbrella (DHS, 2014). Whelan (2004) aligned this development to the increase in the rejection of asylum applications that followed. To support these views, Welch (2004), and many years later, Hamlin (2012), asserted that the transfer of the agency that was previously known as the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, or INS, to the newly-created DHS marked the beginning of an era of higher dimensions in the abuse of human rights by the United States government, and aimed specifically at immigrants. For the first time in the asylum-seeking program, for instance, authorities arraigned applicants who presented false documents on felony charges (Welch, 2004). By 2015, the mood toward immigrants, and specifically toward those from the Middle East and Mexico, had reached xenophobic proportions that made headlines in the national media.

To further strengthen national security, Congress passed the REAL ID Act of 2005, whose aim was to set standards for the issuing of government identity documents, such as driver's licenses and state identification cards. Opposition to the passing of this law was instant, and came not only from the civil society, but also from some state authorities. While the states' opposition to the Act lay in the fear of the financial burden the implementation of the law would entail, critics saw it as a threat not only to individual privacy and human rights, but also as a case of federalism (Ni & Tat-Kel Ho, 2008; Reagan, 2008; Reagan & Deering, 2009). Noting the need for balance between the government's national security concerns, on the one hand, and the maintenance of individual rights, on the other hand, Banks (2009) noted that 9/11 was a unique experience in American life and stated that "special circumstances call for special measures" (p. 41). The passing of these laws posed an ongoing dilemma which, I believe, could not be resolved but managed, as outlined in Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model.

In 1996, which was long before the passing of the PATRIOT Act, a monumental legislative action took place. Following the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, Congress passed the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Penalty Act to provide, under the Material Support Bar provision, for the barring, from the United States asylum program, of any persons who, willingly or under duress, may have given material support to terrorists (Messer, 2015). What the 2001 PATRIOT Act did, among other things, was to expand the list of deeds asylum seekers could have been involved in that would be defined as giving material support to terrorists to include, among others, acts that may

have had nothing to do with violence (Messer, 2015). While this law provided a waiver for persons who gave material support to terrorists under duress, Messer opined that due to ambiguities in the law, it was not possible to get such a waiver. Because the law made it impossible for people with genuine reasons to get asylum in the United States, Messer recommended the streamlining of the waiver procedures. Under the Material Support Bar provision, for instance, women who were kept by terrorists as sex slaves could be excluded from seeking asylum in the United States. In February 2015, the Obama administration eased on the implementation of the Materials Support Bar provision by exempting specific categories of persons seeking asylum (DHS, 2015). The Materials Support Bar provision was but one of the many pieces of legislation and actions that human rights activists considered hostile to persons seeking asylum in the United States. In a study on the plight of asylum seekers in the immediate post 9/11 period, Welch (2004) noted that the execution of the war on terror was characterized by contentious measures that saw the contravention of the rights of not only aliens, but also of American citizens. Between September 2001 and December 2003, some 15,300 asylum seekers, irrespective of whether their cases were admissible or not, were among the many persons who were detained at United States ports of entry, and without due process (Welch, 2004). In the same period, the number of rejected asylum applications rose to the highest figures since 1999 (Welch, 2004).

From the above discussion, it is evident that the creation of the all-powerful DHS made the asylum-seeking process neither easier nor more sensitive to the needs of asylum seekers, persons whom Barneche (2014) and Kalt et al. (2013) characterized as a

vulnerable group. The findings by these studies supported conclusions made earlier by

Kerwin (2012) that despite the creation of the DHS, the asylum-seeking process had

continued to face many glitches. These difficulties included the lack of effective

coordination among the key stakeholders namely, the nonprofits and government

agencies that deal with asylum seekers. The absence of a body that could effectively

integrate asylum seekers into the American society was yet another major hurdle in the

program. Above all, there was fear among the host communities about the possibility of

terrorists being admitted as asylees, coupled with another fear that asylees would take

jobs from American citizens (Kerwin, 2012). In contrast, Meissner (2015) observed that

the steps put in place to halt illegal immigration between Mexico and the United States

have had some success. Meissner posited that the number of illegal immigrants from

Mexico did, in fact, decrease. Meissner attributed this development not only to the 2007-

2008 economic recession in the United States, or to the growth of the Mexican economy

over the past two decades, but also to the United States' "zero tolerance policies at the

border" (p. 497), a move that was partially necessitated by 9/11.

Hostilities From the States

State authorities have also expressed hostility toward asylum seekers. Following

the exodus of asylum seekers from war-torn Syria in 2015, some state governors called

on the United States Congress to stop asylum seekers from that country from settling in

their areas. This call, however, has its history in prolonged battles between the states and

the federal government over illegal immigration (Haberfeld & Lieberman, 2012; Stafford,

2012). While immigration is a federal, and not a state issue (Stafford, 2012), following

9/11, some state legislatures, among them Arizona, Indiana, Georgia, and Louisiana, passed laws aimed at curbing illegal immigration, positing state security as the reason for these measures. All these laws had something in common: they gave power to local police to stop people they suspected of being illegal aliens and demand proof of legal residence. According to Haberfeld and Lieberman (2012), Arizona's 2010 Immigration Bill SD 1070 was hostile and unpopular even among American citizens, as it exposed aliens of a specific ethnic group namely, Latino-Americans, to racial profiling.

While it may sound reasonable for state authorities to support the federal government's efforts to curb terrorism, the states' measures had serious problems that verged on the violation of human rights. Louisiana's Prevention of Terrorism on the Highways Act of 2002, for instance, barred anyone who was not legally present in the United States from driving in that state. Cravens (2013) opined that the Louisiana measure was the harshest amongst all the immigration laws enacted by any state. Under the Louisiana law, the definition of persons barred from driving on the state's highways included persons who were not citizens of the United States and were not permanent residents, either (Cravens, 2013). This meant that students, or asylum seekers whose asylum applications were pending, were among the persons included in the category of persons who could not drive in Louisiana. A study by Toomey et al. (2014) found that the Arizona law had the effect of reducing healthcare accessibility to immigrants from Mexico. Georgia's 2011 Illegal Immigration Reform and Enforcement Act, also known as H.B. 87, provided for the authorization of local authorities to cooperate with federal

agencies on matters of illegal immigration, such as illegal immigrants' employment, through E-Verify, and issuance of identity documents, among others.

On the surface, all these state laws seemed to be aimed at stemming illegal immigration, with the noble goal of protecting the nation from terrorism as the reason for passing them. However, professional and human rights organizations, such as the American Civil Liberties Union, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, and National Women's Studies Association, or NWSA, condemned the Georgia law as discriminatory (Kowalski, 2013). NWSA referred to the Georgia law as "racist and xenophobic" (Mantilla, 2011). During this debate, Rocha, Hawes, Fryar, and Wrinkle (2014) posed the question "whether the well-being of individuals should supersede economic and security concerns" (p. 79). The long-standing argument by those who support a humanitarian approach to illegal immigration has always been that illegal immigrants provide labor to needy industries, such as agriculture. To that effect, some states have embraced the humanitarian approach and adopted multicultural policies of allowing illegal immigrants access to services such as driver's licenses and educational facilities (Rocha et al., 2014). Again, this is another dilemma that might best be managed by using Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model. Should undocumented aliens, on humanitarian grounds, be documented and enjoy facilities they are not entitled to, so that they can not only be accounted for by security authorities, but also effectively contribute to the national economy by doing jobs citizens find hard to perform, and pay taxes? Within this milieu of complex polarities, the question of whether the asylum-seeker should have access to similar facilities comes up for debate.

Hostilities From the Public

In addition to congressional and state legislative hostilities, segments of the United States public have shown hostility toward asylum seekers and other immigrants. As Kerwin (2012) stated, there is fear among United States host communities that if allowed to settle in the United States, asylum seekers would take over jobs held by citizens. Following 9/11, rhetoric against immigrants continued, and a study conducted in several industrialized European nations and in the United States found that during the first part of the first decade of the 21st century, 11% of Americans supported an increase in immigration, while 66% preferred the opposite (Iyengar, et al., 2013).

Discrimination toward immigrants, as discussed by Iyngar et al. (2013) and later by Kaibuku (2016), was earlier studied by Konczal and Varga (2012). In their study conducted in Florida on the contention held by many United States citizens that asylum seekers, or immigrants in general, enjoy the lion's share of free social services such as healthcare, Konczal and Varga concluded that this is not true. To the contrary, the study found that not all immigrants have access to such benefits, as some of them are too scared to ask, due to fear of, among other things, deportation, coupled with the bureaucracy that comes with the facilitation of such services. What is true, however, is that some organizations have been formed for the specific purpose of providing social services to needy immigrants. It would seem, therefore, that public hostility toward asylum seekers, or immigrants in general, may be based on the lack of understanding of what pertains in the immigration community. It is my hope that my study has unearthed new knowledge

on how public policy can address these hostilities, particularly in line with Walden

University's concept of positive social change.

Vulnerabilities

Available literature shows that the United States asylum process makes asylum

seekers, among other things, a vulnerable group of persons (e.g. Barneche, 2014; Kalt et

al., 2013). Kerwin (2012) opined that the United States' refugee program is a success and

a positive foreign policy endeavor. However, Kerwin also noted that, depending on their

economic status, asylum seekers find the asylum-seeking procedures to be so complicated

that those who seek asylum need legal representation, and yet most cannot afford to hire

an attorney to walk them through the knotty process.

Some asylum seekers enter the country legally, on a nonimmigrant visa, and

others enter the country illegally. Both categories must lodge an application for asylum

within a year upon arrival, that will eventually lead to an interview that could lead to the

applicant's expedited removal, detention, or further consideration of the application

(Kerwin, 2012). For people who enter the country legally, the asylum-seeking process

begins with visiting an attorney to start the application before the applicant runs out of

immigration status, for the application must be made within a year after the applicant's

arrival in the United States (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015a).

The first major hurdle an asylum applicant faces is to prove that he or she

deserves to be granted asylum. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965,

asylum is given to persons "who have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted on

account of race, religion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group or

political opinion" (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015, November 12b).

While applicants may have a good case to show that they were persecuted in their

country of origin, the asylum-seeking process is not easy to navigate, so applicants need

legal representation (Nessel, 2015). Studies have shown that applicants who have legal

representation have a higher chance of being granted asylum than those who do not (e.g.

Kerwin, 2012; Nessel, 2015). The law, however, does not give asylum seekers access to

public-funded social services, such as healthcare (Bart-Plange, 2014) or government-

supported legal representation, resulting in applicants who cannot raise attorney's fees

representing themselves in the usually interminable application process (Moya, 2012).

Yet, in some cases, some applicants do not even understand the process itself, so they end

up being taken unawares when they end up in detention camps (Moya, 2012). To support

these views, Bart-Plange (2014) stated that asylum seekers, who are new to the way

things are done in the United States, often find the asylum-seeking process a toilsome

burden. In some cases, immigrants do not even know what services they are entitled to

(Makwarimba et al., 2013). This seems to suggest that the asylum-seeking process is

fraught with impediments, sometimes arising from applicants' lack of knowledge of how

it operates.

Other studies have also shown that asylum seekers experience insurmountable

problems arising from the application process itself (e.g. Allard, 2013; Ray, 2013). Allard

stated that the burden of proving one's claim for admission to the asylum program rests

upon the applicant, a goal that an asylum seeker may find too technical to achieve. The

burden of proof in an asylum application demands that the applicant must show that the

stories used as evidence in the application are credible, so that authorities will be

persuaded to believe them, in which case, they must be based on fact (Allard, 2013). Like

Bart-Plange (2014), Ray (2013) asserted that while seeking asylum in the United States is

complicated and chancy, the process is also financially unaffordable and inaccessible to

many, resulting in the Court of Appeal for the Fifth Circuit identifying the need for

public-funded attorneys to represent asylum seekers (Kerwin, 2012). To rid the process of

these vices, Ray suggested that persons seeking asylum in the United States should be

screened before they enter the country, so that they can avoid facing the hardships asylum

seekers face once on United States soil. Yet, according to Kerwin, depending on the

geographical location in the United States, the way adjudication of asylum applications is

handled shows glaring disparities "in approval rates" (p. 28). Kerwin's findings suggest

that it is possible that a person who applies for asylum in the state of New York, for

instance, could be less adversely affected by the asylum-seeking process than one who

applies for the same status in the state of Georgia. To make matters worse, applications

for asylum must be made in English, and since the majority of asylum seekers come from

non-English-speaking countries (Mossaad, 2019), many applicants either do not speak

English, or are not proficient in it, and authorities are not obliged to offer interpreters

(Moya, 2012). This could result in applicants making many application errors, and

immigration authorities have been known to have picked on these errors and interpreted

them as deficiencies in applicants' evidence (Moya, 2012). These issues put a lot of

psychological pressure on the asylum seeker, to the extent that they render him or her

vulnerable to the system.

Unemployment is yet another major phenomenon that makes asylum seekers a vulnerable group of immigrants. Asylum seekers can only qualify for work authorization half a year after applying for asylum (Nessel, 2015). The need to get work authorization as early as possible has led to some asylum seekers rushing their applications for asylum long before such cases are ready for presentation (Nessel, 2015). Moya (2012) noted that this rush into the application process could jeopardize the chances of the application's approval by immigration authorities. And yet without work, asylum seekers are unlikely to have access to their daily needs, let alone enable them to hire immigration attorneys. This puts asylum seekers in financial difficulties, resulting in them either turning to charity for their livelihood, or entering the work market illegally, a factor that, according to Nessel, makes employers take advantage of asylum seekers.

As the study by Konczal and Varga (2012) showed, the myth held by some United States citizens that asylum seekers have access to public social services at the expense of citizens has no foundation. This finding was supported by Moya (2012), Bart-Plange (2014), and Nessel (2015). This means that up to a year after applicants have been granted asylum, they are not entitled to healthcare benefits under the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (National Immigration Center [NIC], 2012). To qualify for benefits under the Act, an alien must be classified as a Lawful Permanent Resident, or LPR, which an asylee can only apply for one year after qualifying as an asylee (NIC, 2012). These and the other problems faced by the asylum-seeker sometimes lead to the asylee suffering from mental health problems and penury (Kaibuku, 2016; Nessel, 2015). Nessel's study found that United States laws discriminate against asylum seekers, as other categories of applicants

to immigration benefits are treated more fairly (p. 333). What seems to be true is that while asylum seekers need to wait their turn to qualify for benefits that are extended to citizens and permanent residents of the United States, these persons are subjected to extreme hardships, such as poverty, through unemployment, arrest, and deportation back to their countries of origin where they could be tortured.

Asylum-seeker hardships did not begin at 9/11, a period which current literature suggests ushered in a dramatic change in asylum-seeker application scrutiny. Samaddar (2015) noted that poor treatment of all categories of immigrants dates to earlier times. As early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants who entered Western nations, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, and as workers, not necessarily as people seeking refuge from persecution, had to deal with issues of prejudice, hunger, destitution, "inclusion and exclusion" (Samaddar, 2015), phenomena Asgary and Segar (2011) and Kerwin (2012) saw as recurring problems in 21st century immigration trends. Pedraza (2014) stated that specifically, immigrants from Latin American countries believed that discrimination played a major role in the shaping of United States immigration policies. Lim (2013) stated that there was racial profiling in the United States asylum-seeking process when, during World War I, Chinese asylum seekers were incarcerated in military camps. Using the conceptual framework of second-class citizenship, Lim's study showed that depending on their race, even those persons who had been legally admitted to the United States asylum system were considered as outsiders through racial profiling. Lim further stated that although the United States Congress had constantly changed the country's immigration laws, such as removing

racism from the statute books, African American evacuees during the 2005 Hurricane Katrina disaster were called "refugees," while Middle Eastern immigrants have been racially profiled since 9/11. Nwoye (2009) found that during the process of relocation, African immigrants in the United States feel dislocated, depressed, and bewildered. These and other factors confronting migrant communities lead to heightened levels of mental health illness among immigrants (Kaibuku, 2016).

Resettling asylum seekers into a new culture is not an easy task. Asylum seekers sometimes travel thousands of miles to seek refuge in strange lands and in cultures that differ tremendously from those in their countries of origin. Most asylum seekers in the United States come from non-industrialized nations (Martin & Yankay, 2014), and some of them have no Western education. These persons need support to settle down in their new communities. It is the policy of the United States to grant asylum to the most vulnerable populations (Kerwin, 2012), and the responsibility of resettling refugees and asylees is vested in the Office of Refugee Resettlement, whose function is "to provide new populations with the opportunity to maximize their potential" (Office of Refugee Resettlement , 2016, para. 1). This means that, as opposed to dealing with professionals, the challenge of resettling these vulnerable persons is greater. Getting this category of asylum seekers into the job market is difficult. While the resettlement program offers "cultural orientation, healthcare, civic engagement, and social services" (Kerwin, 2012, p. 10) to refugees, asylum seekers could spend almost ten years in refugee camps (Kerwin, 2012), as opposed to living within their new communities, meaning that their opportunity to integrate into American society is greatly reduced.

The successful resettlement of any person requires a lot of human, financial and material resources. According to Kerwin (2012), support to asylum seekers in the provision of social services is sometimes short-lived. Help from the International Organization for Migration, or IOM, for instance, lasts only up to 90 days (Kerwin, 2012). Among the many nonprofits that give support to refugees in the United States are faith-based organizations, or FBOs. Because of their religious nature, FBOs assist asylum seekers through spiritual strategies that are tailored to individuals' faith affiliation, so that where applicable, these immigrants must be put in Bible study groups (Zoma, 2014). Barneche (2014), however, stated that the needs of asylum seekers are different from those of refugees in that the asylum-seeking process is much longer than that which refugees go through. As a result, asylum seekers, and not refugees, are more likely to face serious resettlement hurdles, leading to destitution (Barneche, 2014). Other than counseling, such as stress-alleviation, to both those inside and outside immigration detention facilities, FBOs also offer temporary shelter to asylum seekers (Zoma, 2014). Zoma also stated that the fact that these organizations are faith-based means that asylum seekers who do not belong to the religions or denominations FBOs represent feel uncomfortable about receiving such assistance. Barneche noted, though, that helpful as they are, FBO activities are constrained by the amount of financial assistance they get from donors. Otherwise, when feasible, FBOs provide food, clothing, transportation, and companionship, the latter involving connecting asylum seekers to persons who are likely to make friends with them (Barneche, 2014). The asylum-seeking and resettlement effort

is, therefore, an expensive and complex program that does not fully cater to the needs of its recipients.

Compared to refugees, asylum seekers in the United States are more likely to face health problems. This arises from the fact that refugees, and not asylum seekers, are screened for infectious diseases before they enter the United States (Chai et al., 2013). In a retrospective, observational study using a sample of 8,148 child refugees, Yun et al. (2016) found that little is known about the health status of persons who enter the United States as immigrants. Although the study did not categorically seek asylum seekers for inclusion in its sample, the authors recommended that all refugees, irrespective of whether they are asylum seekers or not, should be screened for health issues before they enter the United States. What would make that recommendation impossible to implement is that not all asylum seekers enter the United States by declaring their intention to seek asylum.

Other than Kaibuku's (2016) study, which showed that Kenyan immigrants face the lack of social support leading to serious mental health issues, a study of African asylum seekers in the United States by Asgry and Segar (2011) also showed that 85% of asylum seekers in the study's sample suffered serious illnesses. These maladies included mental problems because, among other things, the asylum seekers believed they were subjected to discrimination, and yet the asylees had limited access to medical facilities. In a study on Washington, DC-based asylum seekers, Chai et al. (2013) found that while the prevalence of infectious diseases among asylum seekers was about the same as that among refugees, the incidence was higher for asylum seekers than refugees in cases of

HIV, and yet asylum seekers have no immediate access to healthcare facilities. Generally, though, it would seem that both refugees and asylum seekers have the same healthcare needs, but not necessarily the same accessibility to healthcare all over the United States (Chai et al., 2013). United States immigration authorities do not provide screening services, nor demand any, when persons file their application for asylum, and yet this is a requirement for those who wish to enter the United States as refugees (Chai et al., 2013). According to Chai et al., however, the District of Columbia Department of Health, or DCDH, offers free screening services to asylum seekers. Otherwise, the first time United States immigration authorities ever ask for the medical records of the asylum-seeker is when the applicant applies to convert to permanent residence status, when applicants have to present the I-693, Report of Medical Exemption and Vacation Record. Due to the long waiting period which characterize the asylum-seeking process, the demand to fill in Form I-693 may come many years after the asylum-seeker has entered the United States. It is most probable that no asylum-seeker will enter the United States with health insurance. The dilemma this poses is that, like everyone else, asylum seekers need healthcare services, but they cannot access these due to financial handicaps that are caused by their legal status, which does not allow them to work. This conundrum is compounded by the fact that, unlike other nations, the United States does not consider healthcare provision as a right even to its own citizens (Wheeler, 2013, July 18). The government, therefore, does not offer health services to a group of persons that is not allowed access to employment during the first six months of the asylum process, and that

may mean that compared to refugees, asylum seekers stand a higher risk of dying from curable diseases.

In my search for literature on asylum-seeker vulnerabilities, the issue of hunger did not come up in current literature. But judging from the themes I have found, such as financial hardships arising from unemployment due to the absence of work permits, and reduced social services provision, among others, I suspected that hunger would be a prominent theme. To pursue this theme, I cite two studies undertaken during the first decade of the 21st century and use the dated data as a starting point for hunger as a theme in this study.

In a study on psychological factors that are responsible for asylum-seeker stress in the United States, Welch (2004) found that the study's participants identified hunger as their most unmet need. Similarly, Piwowarczyk, Keane, and Lincoln (2008) stated that not only was hunger a major encounter, but also that because asylum seekers had to wait for 150 days before they could get work authorization, this group of immigrants was more likely to suffer from hunger than refugees. The 150-day rule does not apply to refugees, as The Refugee Act states that refugees who can work should be given jobs soon after entering the United States (Office of Refugee Settlement, 2012). Other than hunger, Welch identified other causes of stress among United States asylum seekers as poor health, inferior housing, dangerous neighborhoods, unemployment, and lack of resources, leading to inability to pay rent. Piwowarczyk et al. added clothing and shelter to the list of asylum-seeker needs, but prioritized asylum-seeker needs as studying English, food, dental care, and vision requirements. Piwowarczyk et al. further found that

only a fifth of asylum seekers had jobs, a fifth lived nomadic lives, a fifth could not pay their rent, and most asylum seekers believed that their housing situation was unsafe. Welch found that in contrast to refugees, asylum seekers were more prone to lead nomadic lives, as the formers' needs were ably taken care of by refugee organizations.

These studies make stunning revelations about the problems asylum seekers face in relation to those faced by refugees. Both Welch (2004) and Piwowarczyk, Keane, and Lincoln (2008) found that asylum seekers are more at risk of experiencing hunger than refugees. Ironically, though, Piwowarczyk et al. found that while in the countries from which they had fled, asylum seekers had more access to food than refugees did, indicating that the situation was reversed in the United States. These factors were directly related to the fact that "being an asylum-seeker was highly correlated with not having current work authorization" (Welch, 2004, p. 67). While the participants in both studies came from a globally diverse pool of participants, meaning they came from different cultural backgrounds, and, in the case of Piwowarczyk et al.'s study, a relatively high number of the respondents were college graduates, Welch found that asylum seekers chose not to discuss their food problems, sometimes because they feared that they would be labelled economic burdens. Being economic burdens, Welch stated, would, in the participants' view, lead to authorities asking asylum seekers to go to another country and seek asylum there. Another reason asylum seekers gave for being too shy to discuss hunger with authorities was the fear that they would be admitting their failure to feed themselves and their families (Welch, 2004). This shyness may be explained through Fromm's (as cited in Benet, 2006) observation that human beings have a tendency to

deny themselves self-expression when they are in a state of "loss of uncertainty and sense of belonging" (p. 84), which is what the asylum-seeking process seems to do to those who seek it in the United States. Yet Welch established that sometimes, the hunger problem stemmed from the fact that asylum seekers were not aware of the free resources available to them. The results of the two studies, therefore, tally with the conclusions made by Kaibuku (2016) on mental health among Kenyan immigrants, which was undertaken more than a decade later. I assumed, therefore, that hunger could be a relevant theme to emerge from my study.

Fear

The literature I have cited above seems to suggest that asylum seekers in the United States not only face many obstacles in their pursuit for sanctuary, but also must be living in fear. A study by Kaibuku (2016) shows that some immigrants in the United States, and not necessarily asylum seekers, go through negative experiences. According to Kaibuku, Kenyan immigrants living in the northeast United States lack support, experience culture shock, are disenchanted, and face discrimination, exploitation, shame and exclusion, leading to mental health afflictions. In my search for the availability of remedies to these negative experiences, I found a study by Escobar (2010) in which the author reviewed the work of as many as 178 organizations that give support to immigrants living in the Philadelphia area and who came from Columbia, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. According to Escobar, these organizations assisted immigrants in the areas of finance, leadership, English studies, health, cultural and immigration training. Escobar pointed out that these organizations were so successful in their work that they

had influenced public policy formulation in Philadelphia. While the focus of these nonprofit bodies differed according to the immigrants' countries of origin, all of them shared the goal of giving material and emotional support to immigrants as a means of incorporating them into the American society. To that effect, these organizations liaised with other pro-immigration organizations, such as churches, and even for-profit organizations and individuals. Although the study excluded asylum seekers from its sample, the author acknowledged that the study's findings could be applicable to all immigrants, and that, as in Kaibuku's study, all immigrants faced discrimination.

While Escobar's (2010) findings apportion discrimination to all types of immigrants, I have shown in the preceding sections of this literature review that the asylum-seeker is more prone to negative experiences than the refugee (e.g. Piwowarczyk et al., 2008; Welch, 2004). Compared to that of the refugee, for instance, the asylum seeker's immigration status is one of uncertainty. While a refugee's immigration status is decided by immigration authorities before the refugee enters the host nation, depending on the validity of the reasons given for seeking asylum, the asylum seeker's stay in the host nation could be easily terminated (Piwowarczyk, Keane, & Lincoln, 2008). It is also evident from available literature that using fear or international terrorism as the main, if not the sole, reason, both United States federal and state authorities have over the years made the asylum-seeking process more arduous. To the asylum seeker, whether detained or not, and especially if the applicant came from one of the 33 countries that fell under Operation Liberty Shield, the news that the leader of the free world discriminated against

a specific category of persons and detained aliens without regard to due process would possibly invoke great fear.

The detention of persons at Guantanamo Bay Prison and at immigration detention centers within the United States could act as a catalyst for an asylum seekers' fear. While the detainees at Guantanamo Bay are not asylum seekers, the existence of prisoners at this facility reflects the extent to which international terror has helped shape the way the United States treats aliens who are enemy combatants. With that in mind, and considering the heightened engagement of the American public in the debate on asylum seekers and international terrorism, it is expedient to assess how asylum seekers in the United States are treated through the lens of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy pairs of freedom and authority; justice and due process; and human rights and communal obligations. If aliens can be detained in United States prisons without due process, it is reasonable to assume that asylum seekers may be asking themselves whether they would be exempt from such treatment if authorities considered them enemy combatants.

Wilke (2005) stated that Guantanamo Bay prisoners who have been brought before United States courts face a judicial system that tends to agree with the executive arm of government, hence subjects the detainees to "political justice" (p. 639). Wilke opined that this development, where the question was "whether enemies are persons capable of having rights at all," (Wilke, 2005, p. 648) threatened the doctrine of the separation of powers, where, in this case, the judiciary colluded with the executive wing of government to dispense injustice. Guantanamo Bay prisoners, therefore, have no hope of finding justice in United States courts, but in executive decisions (Wilke, 2005). I see

the asylum seeker's fears stemming from the mere knowledge that the United States uses government authority to deny people freedoms, through the absence of due process, and irrespective of whether such persons are citizens or aliens. In the case of Guantanamo Bay prisoners, the detainees are aliens, which raises the question of whether the United States legal system treats aliens differently from the way it treats its citizens. Asylum seekers are also likely to interpret this phenomenon as one that denies human rights to individuals, even though the authorities' argument may be that the government has an obligation to protect the American community at large from acts of international terrorism. Ironically, asylum seekers choose to come to the United States because of the country's commitment to the pursuit of freedom through democratic rule. Butt (as cited in Benet, 2006) stated that democracy entails the facilitation of "human dignity, security, self-fulfillment, and the promotion of justice, freedom, and equality for others" (p. 79). To underpin the United States' commitment to giving shelter to those who needed to escape oppression from any country in the world, Roosevelt (1941) included "freedom from fear" (para. 5) as one of the four most important human freedoms. My study attempts to know if asylum seekers live in fear of the possibility of government authorities taking away their freedoms without regard to due process.

Barneche (2014) and Kalt et al. (2013) stated that asylum seekers, who are a vulnerable people, are tortured in host countries. Except in the case of some former detainees at Guantanamo Bay Prison whose status changed to asylum seeker (Wilke, 2005), I could not find evidence of asylum seekers, in the recent past, who were tortured on American soil. However, it is possible that asylum seekers destined for the United

States may have cause to fear that they could face torture in their countries of origin if they faced refoulement at United States borders or, if already on United States soil, they were deported back to their countries of origin, even if such torture was inflicted not by state agents, but by criminal gangs, as Cheng (2011) found with regard to some Latin American countries. Under international law, states that are signatories to the United Nations 1984 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment are obligated to adhere to the convention's Article 3(1) not to "expel, return ("refouler") or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1996-2016). It is reasonable to assume that the fear that comes with torture among asylum seekers in the United States would stem from the knowledge that one's neighbors have been deported to a country where they could face torture. Fullerton (2010) stated that protections against torture in the Convention Against Torture do not fully cover asylum seekers "who fear persecution that does not rise to the level of torture" (p. 27) and opined that the protection given is low-level. Fullerton further argued that as the onus is on asylum seekers to prove that they would be tortured if they were deported to their countries of origin, the process of facilitating protection has "a strong sense of unfairness" (p. 27). This unfairness would seem to suggest an ineffective management of Benet's (2006, 2016, 2013) justice and due process polarity of democracy pair.

Other studies have shown that asylum seekers in the United States are not fairly treated. Noonan (2015), who is a United States immigration judge, noted that in relation

to citizens, aliens are seriously discriminated against in the United States. The detention

of asylum seekers takes away these applicants' freedom of movement. Kerwin (2012)

noted that even in the pre-9/11 era, and as early as 1996, asylum seekers were forcibly

removed from United States soil, hence creating fear among those asylum seekers who

were not affected by such removals. Kerwin further stated that in some cases, persons

who were arrested and subsequently deported from the United States were treated in that

manner because they had not followed some sections of immigration laws, such as the

mandatory requirement for refugees to apply for lawful permanent resident status after

one year. The ignorance of the law on the part of asylum seekers points to the complex

nature of the United States asylum-seeking process and the subsequent fear it inflicts

upon those who seek refuge in the land of the free.

I see the implicit fear that characterizes the asylum-seeking process as a

phenomenon that is exacerbated by the findings by Kerwin (2012), Moya (2012), Nessel

(2015), and Rottman et al. (2009) that it takes many years for an asylum applicant's case

to be processed to its conclusion. This long wait, which is accompanied by a host of

social and financial problems, leads to great anxiety (Barneche, 2014). The process can

be so long and horrendous that in 2003 alone, as many as 171,664 persons out of the

177,040 that had applied for asylum in the United States left the country, either

voluntarily or through deportation (Hamlin, 2012). Two years after Hamlin's findings,

Rocha, Hawes, Fryar, and Wrinkle (2014) found that illegal immigrants tolerated the

hardships that affected immigrants more than those who pursued the legal path to

residency, a factor that made illegal immigrants stay longer in the United States than

those who sought legalization. Yet within the matrix of legalization of status can be found the negative phenomenon of detention.

I see detention as a possible source of fear among asylum seekers. Along with other categories of immigrants, asylum seekers are often arrested and interrogated, and they face violence in detention camps before they are deported (Kalt et al., 2013). According to Brane and Lee (2013), 10% of immigrants detained in United States immigration facilities are women. Further, in relation to the length of time spent in these facilities by male detainees, the length of time spent in detention by women, about half of whom were asylum seekers, rose by 18% in 2013 alone (Brane & Lee, 2013). The dotted location of these detention facilities namely, in the southeast, southwest, and the north of the United States, means that those who are arrested in places where these centers do not exist are detained far away from their homes, thereby dislodging the detainees from their families (Brane & Lee, 2013). In addition to being minorities in these detention facilities, female detainees are inconvenienced by their need for specialized facilities (Brane & Lee, 2013).

Yet women are not the only group of asylum-seeking detainees who require special needs. Fialho (2013) stated that gay and transgender asylum seekers in United States immigration detention facilities are subjected to discriminatory treatment, such as sexual and physical abuse, lack of access to healthcare, and solitary confinement. An attempt by authorities, in 2011, to manage this problem by creating a detention facility that catered for transgender detainees at Santa Ana Jail, in California, created yet another dilemma in the asylum-seeker conundrum namely, the confinement of one group of

detainees to one area of the detention center, resulting in its seclusion from other

detainees (Fialho, 2013). This is yet another dilemma highlighted by Benet's (2006,

2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory, which states that there are no easy solutions

but options that increase the upsides and reduce the downsides of a problem. These issues

are likely to have adverse emotional effects on all categories of asylum seekers,

irrespective of their gender, or whether they are in detention or not. Welch (2004) stated

that in the 1990s, immigrants in detention centers, some of which were for-profit

operated, faced harsh conditions, resulting in asylum seekers suffering "psychological

setbacks" (p. 123), such as verbal ill-treatment, trauma, "extremely high levels of anxiety,

depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" (p. 123). Welch also stated that these

afflictions dogged the detainees even after their release from the detention centers. It is

possible that the mere knowledge of these problems by asylum seekers who have not yet

been detained could cause fear.

  The above discussion shows that asylum seekers face many hardships. From the

literature, it was difficult to determine which hurdle in the asylum-seeking process is the

most burdening. While asylum seekers face a plethora of problems that translate into

dilemmas, I note from the literature (e.g. Kerwin, 2012; Moya, 2012; Nessel, 2015;

Rottman et al., 2009) that the long waiting period asylum seekers must endure before

their applications are decided upon attracted the attention of United States authorities.

Consequently, DHS introduced measures to reduce the waiting period between the time

persons put in their application for asylum to the time interviews were held, with the hope

of reducing the waiting time to three years (U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services,

2016). According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2016), however, the Los Angeles immigration office was, in March 2016, scheduled to interview asylum applicants who had filed their cases in August 2011. Hostility toward immigrants, and not only asylum seekers, continues to include detention (Rhodan, 2018), typified by oppressive procedures, racism, and claustrophobia on the part of those who administer the asylum-seeking process (Sarikakis, 2012). What I believe would make an asylum-seeker live in fear is to learn that:

- by using human rights as a reason for seeking asylum, I would stand little chance of being granted asylum, as stated by Hamlin (2012); Kalt et al. (2013); and Rottman et al. (2009)

- asylum seekers have been sent to detention centers upon entering the United States, as stated by Noonan (2015);

- in 2003 alone, as many as 96% of asylum seekers had either withdrawn their applications, or were forcibly removed from the country, the latter going through the process of arrest and detention;

- during the first decade of the 21st century, the government was detaining as many as 375,000 aliens annually, as stated by Hamlin (2012);

- asylum seekers who were arrested found it difficult to communicate not only with their families, but also with their attorneys, hence bringing into question the facilitation of due process, as stated by Brane and Lee (2013);

- the detention facilities the asylum seekers are sent to expose women to extreme inconvenience, as stated by Brane and Lee (2013);

- women detainees are likely to be exposed to sexual harassment and end up suffering from depression, as stated by Brane and Lee (2013);

- women are more likely to spend more time than men in detention facilities before they are either released or deported, as stated by Brane and Lee (2013).

Merely learning about this catalogue of adversities could cause an asylum seeker extreme anxiety, which could lead to insomnia, depression, desperation, possibly even erratic behavior, among other possible afflictions. I believe that the use of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory was the best tool I could use to give a proper perspective to my study. The themes I have outlined in this literature review seem to indicate the possibility of a denial of the basic tenets of democracy to asylum seekers by those who wield power. Consequently, I examined the themes I identified in the literature within the context of managing the polarities that characterize the need for the maintenance of national security in a world fraught with international terrorism.

Summary and Conclusion

In this literature review, I have attempted to show that many studies have been undertaken to highlight experiences of immigrants in the United States. I have shown that whereas asylum seekers are an integral part of the immigrant community, they face unique problems which translate into dilemmas that cannot be easily resolved but call for a special management approach. Out of these experiences, I found themes that I believe were relevant to this study. The plethora of sources I have cited in this chapter by no means answered my study's question, which sought to unearth new information based on my identified themes through the lens of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of

democracy theory, and within the specific period from the time an asylum applicant

lodges in an application to the time the case is adjudicated. The gap in the literature,

therefore, existed for this study to be undertaken. I have also shown that the polarities of

democracy theory may be an effective tool through which the dilemmas that characterize

the United States asylum-seeking process, against a backdrop of international terrorism,

could be best managed. It is clear from existing literature that asylum seekers face

suspicion, hostility, discrimination, hunger, impoverishment, arrest, detention, violence,

and deportation, among other tribulations, and that these adversities lead to afflictions,

such as trauma, anxiety, and depression. The literature also shows that while various

levels of the United States government use international terrorism as the basis for

strengthening hostilities against asylum seekers, the government lacks the capacity to

fully investigate every asylum seeker's past. These barriers to asylum-seeking, coupled

with some asylum seekers' inability to hire attorneys who would walk them through the

complicated asylum-seeking process, would seem to indicate that Benet's polarities of

democracy pairs of freedom and authority; justice and due process; and human rights and

communal obligations have been ignored by authorities, leading to a negation of

individual freedoms. It is my hope that my study will attempt to bring to the fore the

dilemmas that characterize the asylum-seeking process in the United States, and

consequently, contribute to positive social change, as espoused by Walden University.

Through the narrative of a person who has experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon,

I hope I have also contributed to the development of the polarities of democracy theory,

which Benet (2013) recommended as a means for managing dilemmas and lessening

oppression. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design that facilitated what I believed was

the most effective method of answering the research question.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative study was to discover and understand the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States about the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process since September 11, 2001. The participants were to be persons who had experienced the asylum-seeking process while living in the United States and had been granted asylum. Studies included in the literature review in Chapter 2 of this study indicate that persons seeking asylum in the United States face an array of challenges stemming mainly, but not exclusively, from the host nation's fear of international terrorism (Chai et al., 2013; Kaibuku, 2016; Kalt et al., 2013). This fear seems to make asylum seekers vulnerable persons who may be subjected to hostilities that compromise basic human rights (Kerwin, 2013). The literature review also seems to point to the absence of a qualitative study that has delved into the perspectives of persons who have been affected by these challenges since 9/11, using the theoretical framework I applied to the study. To answer the study's question, I asked questions that were linked to the relevant pairs of the study's theoretical framework, Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy.

In this chapter, I discuss the study's research design and rationale, my role as a researcher, the methodology I employed, and trustworthiness of the study. In the process, I attempt to explore in detail the ethical issues I expected to face while conducting the study, the sample and means of identifying participants, and the data collection and analysis tools. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the main issues.

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, I used the qualitative research design and the narrative approach to collect data. According to Rudestam and Newton (2007), the three types of research methods are qualitative, quantitative, and the mixed method. While each one of these methods serves specific purposes, what determines the choice of a study design is the nature of a study and the researcher's association with the topic being studied (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The research design is a collection of all the activities that constitute the study put together as a plan of action (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Research designs consist of information on the purpose of the study and how the researcher intends to answer the study's question through a planned method of gathering data from participants, the nature of that data, who the participants will be, and how the data will be analyzed to arrive at conclusions (O'Sullivan, Rassel, & Berner, 2008).

While public policy administrators are interested in figures, such as numbers of persons affected by a program, its effectiveness, its adequacy, and how much money has or should be spent, they also concern themselves with why programs affect communities the way they do (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). Quantitative studies are, therefore, useful in public policy formulation because they provide statistics derived from numbers that show association between variables (Maxwell, 2013). Qualitative studies, on the other hand, describe participants' "events, situations, and behaviors" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 47) and provide detailed information from small samples about the context within which the phenomenon takes place (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). My study was concerned with how people see issues and not necessarily with quantities. It is from qualitative studies that

public administrators understand in depth the success or failure of programs from the human perspective.

The qualitative research method allows people to speak freely about their experiences (Janesick, 2011) and allows the researcher more spontaneity and flexibility during the study (Rudestam & Newton). Moen (2006) stated that because the qualitative enquiry aims at understanding why events take place, interviews in qualitative studies are conducted in study participants' own surroundings. Qazi (2011) observed that while the scientific or quantitative study produces measurable results, a qualitative study relies on the meanings participants attach to their lived past experiences. During interviews, participants unearth new aspects of their lives, such as relationships with other members of the community (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). I believed the choice of the qualitative design for my study would, therefore, enable participants to answer my research question in a deeper and more meaningful manner than a quantitative design would allow. In a qualitative study, the researcher does not make assumptions about a study's findings, and neither does the researcher use variables to control the study in any form (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Rather, the researcher establishes rapport with the participants to collect data full of meaning (Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Qualitative study designs are also emergent and adaptable, meaning they provide room for changes that could be necessitated by circumstances (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

The qualitative method offers the researcher a variety of theoretical traditions and orientations to choose from. These may be characterized as case studies, constructivism, ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and narrative analysis, among others

(Janesick, 2011; Patton, 2002; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). The narrative or narratology analysis is used to gather detailed narratives from in-depth interviews about an event or events in an individual's past (Patton, 2002). In the narrative study, the researcher aims at understanding participants' meaning of the phenomenon being investigated (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Because of its in-depth character, the narrative approach highlights the characteristics of the environment under which the study participant operates or operated during the phenomenon, so that the cultural aspect of that setting can be effectively used to understand what happened through a study that reads like "creative nonfiction," (Patton, 2002, p. 115), in which participants narrate their memoirs to the researcher, who uses open-ended questions. The researcher interprets the data to give meaning to the lives of the participants at the time and in the environment in which the events took place. The researcher discovers the meaning of human experience through "a narrative inside which we find a number of other stories," (Moen, 2006, p. 56).

Although the narrative form of research within the qualitative methodology is relatively new, it is becoming common (Moen, 2006) and progressively noticeable (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Rudestam and Newton (2007) traced the origins of narrative studies to life history studies that were first used by anthropologists and sociologists from the early 1900s to the 1960s, and to the works of Belenky, Clinkchy, and Taraure. Moen credited the development of the narrative method to the period between 1992 and 2002 and to Connelly and Clandinin, Goodson, Carter, Gudmundsdottir, and Heikkinen. According to Shenhav, Oshn, Ofek, and Sheafer (2014), scholars are showing "a great interest" (p. 661) in narrative research. Shenhav et al. cited

a variety of scholars (e.g. Bar-Tal & Solomon, 2006; Czarniawska, 2010; Hajer, 1993, 1996; Patterson & Monroe, 1998) as having contributed to the method's development. As cited in Creswell (2013), Czarniawaska (2004), Chase (2005), Dalute and Lightfoot (2004), Libeblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Ziber (1998), Corzatti (1993), Riessman (1993, 2008) and Elliott (2005) were some of the scholars who have contributed to the development of the narrative research method. These scholars have applied the narrative method to many areas of study, such as sociology, psychology, human development, and education, among others (Creswell, 2013).

The narrative inquiry emphasizes the importance of dialogue in discovering the human experience, where the study participant's narration is not only the subject but also the method of the study (Gilbert, 2002; Moen, 2006). In narrative studies, the stories people tell embrace the participant's life setting and are of great importance not only to the participant, but also to those who listen to the stories (Moen, 2006). When participants tell stories of their lives, they bring order to their lives (Bruner, 1990, as cited in Gilbert, 2002). The assumption made by Moen is that stories told by individuals reflect what pertains in the society, hence the stories provide an understanding of societies in the past, present, and the future (Moen, 2006). In concurring with Moen, Gilbert stated that the process of storytelling makes storytellers reflect on their lives, which also enables participants to bring orderliness to their lives even in "what can seem a meaningless situation," (Gilbert, 2002, p. 224). The narrative approach enables participants to describe their asylum experience in a manner "they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). The narrative form

places a great demand on the researcher to have a thorough understanding of the study's

participants (Creswell, 2013) so as to arrive at meaningful conclusions. Patton (2002)

identified another challenge the researcher is likely to face in a narrative study as one of

identifying the differences, or the close relationships, between the narrative study and

other methods, such as ethnographic, phenomenological, and case studies (Creswell,

1998, as cited in Moen, 2006; Patton, 2002).

The above argument justifies my choice of the narrative approach. The choice

was influenced by the belief that I would be comfortable with writing narratives.

Creswell (2013) advised that the researcher should choose the approach with which the

researcher feels most comfortable. Creswell further advised that the researcher should

first "start with the outcome" (p. 123) and choose an approach that best suits the

researcher's competence. The biographical narrative entails interviewing and observing

the participant face-to-face and later writing a biographical narrative (Creswell, 2013) of

the data.

Research Questions

In this qualitative narrative study, I attempted to explore and understand the

asylum-seeking process in the United States through the perspectives of asylum seekers.

To understand these perspectives, I asked the study participant open-ended questions on

her asylum-seeking experience. The central question of the study was: What do persons

who completed the U.S. asylum-seeking process after September 11, 2001 perceive as the

positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process?

Central Concepts or Phenomena

The study's central phenomenon was asylum-seeking in the United States. The central concepts were immigration, refugees, asylees, national security concerns driven by the fear of international terrorism, and the vulnerability of asylum seekers. The overarching concept was democracy, that is, in the study, I endeavored to find out how the actions taken by government agents who administer the asylum-seeking process affected persons who sought asylum in a democratic society.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's role in a qualitative study is to facilitate a link with the participants (Moen, 2006). Playing the dual role of observer and participant in the study, I was the research instrument who planned and implemented the research design, studied documents, interviewed and observed the participant, and interpreted study findings, which was in harmony with the advice given by Janesick (2011), Maxwell (2013), Patton (2002), and Qazi (2011). Following guidance by Janesick, I observed and used my intuition and imagination during the interview process and sought answers sometimes from nuance. I also performed house-keeping issues, such as making appointments and creating rapport with the participant, facilitating logistics, and managing field issues. I worked closely with my dissertation committee.

By its nature, qualitative research relies heavily on "subjective judgements," (Qazi, 2011, p. 13) which could lead to bias. While having lived the asylum-seeking experience could lead to bias stemming from preconceived beliefs about the phenomenon, my firsthand knowledge of the phenomenon facilitated a great

understanding of the issues. My role as a researcher, therefore, included one of not only being an observer but that of a participant as well. My role was to supplement the data collected from the only participant by giving my own side of the asylum-seeking experience in a reflective description and a self-observation narrative. The question I answered as I collected and analyzed the data was, how did my own experience of the asylum-seeking process in the United States correspond to, compare with, differ from, and offer insights into the experiences of my participant? As I prepared for fieldwork, I was conscious of the startling revelations I had unearthed in my literature review, many of which showed a great variance between what I thought I knew about the asylum-seeking experience and what the literature review had uncovered. I did not experience many of the negative aspects of the phenomenon I discovered in the literature because, once I landed on United States soil, I knew what was required of me to seek asylum. Some of the literature in Chapter 2 of this proposal shows that this is not the case with many asylum seekers. I, therefore, had little to no idea of what I would discover in the study. That being the case, I listened with an open mind to my participant.

Although I have lived in the Greater Atlanta area for nearly two decades, and my study's only participant came from the same area, I did not foresee any issues of conflict arising from personal relationships of any kind, as I did not plan to recruit a participant who was close to me.

Methodology

In this section, I outline the procedures I used in my study.

Participant Selection Logic

The participants in this study were meant to be those who were qualified to provide the data necessary to answer the research question. Trochim and Donnelly (2006) defined a study's population as that part of a community from which the researcher wants to generalize the findings of the study. My original plan was to interview 15 adults, regardless of their sex, who had experienced the asylum-seeking process after 9/11 and had already been granted asylum. Such persons would be residents of the Greater Atlanta area during the asylum-seeking process. For logistical purposes, these participants would ideally also be residents of the Greater Atlanta area during the interview stage of the study.

To recruit participants, I used purposeful sampling, also known as judgment sampling, where participants have "specific experiences" (Marshall, 1996, p. 523) that could inform a study. In purposeful or judgement sampling, the researcher identifies persons who "closely match the criterion of the study" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 107). Through a work colleague, I had, at an early stage in the study process, already identified a potential participant who, in turn, had promised to identify other potential participants. According to the Atlanta Asylum Network (n.d.), nearly 1,000 persons seek political asylum annually in the Greater Atlanta area. I approached the many asylum nonprofit organizations that operate in the Greater Atlanta area for assistance in finding participants who had become either United States permanent residents or citizens. Specifically, I asked these organizations to contact potential participants who, if they decided to participate in the study, would in turn contact me directly. I hoped then that

these persons would lead me to other persons who, according to Maxwell (2013) and

Patton (2002), could be termed as information-rich sources of data. This would have led

to a snowball effect, which is also known as chain sampling. Snowball sampling is useful

to the researcher when it is difficult to identify data-rich sources who could also identify

other sources' whereabouts (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). Whereas snowball sampling may

have the disadvantage of influencing the researcher to recruit a participant based on that

person's popularity among the information-rich population, it is an easy way of

identifying a population that would otherwise be difficult to find (O'Sullivan et al.,

2008).

In deciding who should participate in the study, researchers consider the

importance of each individual participant, setting, event and processes, and how the

importance of each one of these qualities adds value to the data needed to answer the

research question (Miles et al., 2014). While large numbers of participants may be useful

in qualitative studies "in which generalizability is an important goal" (Huberman,

1989/1993, as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p. 97), large samples are more often associated

with quantitative studies (Patton, 2002). Unlike quantitative studies, for which the sample

may be determined randomly, purposive or purposeful sampling works well for

qualitative studies, as it avoids the suppression of deviant cases (Rudestam & Newton,

2007). Purposeful sampling is appropriate in studies with small samples (Light et al.,

1990; Starnes, 1990, both as cited in Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Patton, 2002), as

such studies use information-rich (Patton, 2002), data-rich, or "most study-relevant"

(Miles et al., 2014, p. 36) sources, which provide high quality data. Despite the use of

small samples, purposeful sampling can also lead to the attainment of heterogeneity in the

sample population and still enable the researcher to collect high quality data (Guba &

Lincoln, 1989, as cited in Maxwell, 2013), as it can be adjusted during fieldwork (Miles

et al., 2014). A small sample deliberately picked through purposeful sampling can be a

good tool for supporting one's theories (Friedson, 1975, as cited in Maxwell, 2013). It is

easier to establish rapport with every participant in a small sample than to do so with a

large sample (Maxwell, 2013). While large samples could avoid variation that could

otherwise lead to validity issues, small samples have the advantage of providing

information-rich or in-depth studies (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2002).

The researcher is not bound by definite rules about qualitative study sampling

(Patton, 2002). It does not matter how many participants a researcher arrives at, for "it

depends" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 87; Patton, 2002, p. 244) on what each study necessitates,

so much so that the sample size could be "relatively small…, even single cases" (Patton,

2002, p. 244). Patton also noted that a "small number of people can be very valuable," (p.

244), and that budgetary and logistical constraints may assist a researcher determine a

sample size. For my study, I believed at the time that the use of a sample of at least 15

participants who "were privileged witnesses" (Weiss, 1994, as cited in Maxwell, 2013, p.

97), or "the experiential experts" (Rudestam & Newton 2007, p. 107) to the asylum-

seeking phenomenon would suffice. To ensure that I got the most out of the participants,

my sample size would be emergent, or subject to change. In other words, since I was to

interview the participants until such time that I had reached "a point of redundancy"

(Patton, 2002, p. 246), it would be possible that I could have end up with fewer participants than planned.

Saturation takes place when a researcher sees relationship patterns that cut across various themes and concepts which seem to satisfy the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). To illustrate, as each study participant responds to questions, patterns may emerge that will show that the responses are the same as those the researcher already has. When this happens, the researcher stops the data collection process on the grounds that the data being provided at that point in time are redundant, and further data collection would lead to saturation (Patton, 2006; Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In a study sample of 15, it is possible that 12 participants could lead to saturation.

On the other hand, however, my original proposal of a sample of 15 might not have adequately provided enough data to answer the research question, and several factors could have been responsible for that. These could include the way the questions were phrased, the sample size, or the sample choice method, among other factors. Rudestam and Newton (2007) stated that saturation may not be reached not because the participants are not giving new data, but because the researcher may be besieged by the demands of the study. Whatever the cause of the problem, if a situation had occurred where I felt I was not managing the study well, I would have taken corrective measures, such as standing aside and looking at what I was doing as if I was an outsider, and then I would have sought guidance from a colleague and from my committee. In view of the dynamics discussed above, it was possible that my study could have ended up using a bigger sample than the proposed number of at least 15 participants.

Instrumentation

As I have already stated in the section on the role of the researcher, I was the main research instrument. In qualitative study interviews, the researcher must employ critical observation skills that include spontaneity and flexibility so as to accommodate follow-up questions to prepared questions (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Due to this flexibility, the researcher may not use all their prepared questions (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). Despite the need for flexibility, however, O'Sullivan, et al. (2008) and Rudestam and Newton (2007) noted the need for standardized interviewing protocols in order to strengthen the course of the interview. Janesick (2011) characterized the research interview as a process of "communication and joint construction of meaning" (p. 100) about the phenomenon. Similarly, what comes out of a narrative interview is a result of the efforts made by both the researcher and the participant (Chase, 2005, as cited in Rudestam & Newton, 2007). My interview was guided by an interview protocol, which is attached to this proposal as Appendix A.

There are various methods through which interview data may be collected. These include face-to-face, snail mail, telephone, and the electronic media, such as emails, audio and video devices (Opdenakker, 2006; O'Sullivan et al.,2008). Using open-ended questions, my narrative study was to gather data on the perceptions of asylum seekers on the process they experienced from the time they applied for asylum to the time they were granted asylum.

While the face-to-face interview was my method of choice, where the interview was to take place in the participant's own surroundings, I had made provision that when

circumstances demanded, I would also interview participants via a convenient electronic medium, such as Skype, WhatsApp, Messenger, telephone, or any suitable medium available to both the participant and myself. I would do everything possible, however, to ensure that the face-to-face interview was the primary instrument of data collection. My plan involved ensuring that if I conducted my second interviews by telephone, I would make a recording which would be transferable to another device for safekeeping. Within the cultural context of the 21st century, the use of electronic media among scholars has become popular (Malenia, 2014).

The face-to-face interview was my data-collection method of choice because of its amenability to researcher observance of the study's participants. Janesick (2011) stated that the face-to-face interview is the most tested and "the tried and true" (p. 99) instrument among qualitative study data-collection methods. It is the most frequently used interview method by qualitative researchers (Opdenakker, 2006). Several studies cited in this proposal, (e.g. Kaibuku, 2016; Loiseau, 2016; Strouble, 2015; Tobor, 2014) successfully used the qualitative method among adult participants. From the foregoing, it is evident that adults respond well to open-ended questions. Kaibuku's phenomenological study used immigrants living in the United States as participants, while Loiseau's study used, among others, the interview method to collect data from undocumented immigrants. The frequency of the use of the face-to-face method in qualitative research indicates sufficiency of my chosen data-collection instrument that answered the study's question.

Data Collection Instruments

The interview protocol, which is attached as Appendix A to this proposal, was my data collection instrument. With the consent of the participant, I used two audio recording devices to record the face-to-face interview. To supplement the recordings, I kept handwritten notes. I stored the data collected, with duplicates and copies of the same, in hardcopy and electronic folders and files.

As explained under the research design section of this study, qualitative research is emergent (Janesick, 2011) meaning that its design makes room for "in the field, on the spot" (Patton, 2002, p. 43) decision-making. While a lot of work goes into the planning stage of a study, field experiences may pose challenges that may necessitate change, such as the number of participants that are available, and those who, for various reasons, eventually decline to participate in the study, or some participants finding themselves located far away from the scheduled place of interview. To militate against the possibility of the data a researcher collects not being enough to reach redundancy, Patton (2002) suggested that researchers should plan to interview more than the minimum sample. As it turned out, I interviewed only one participant.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

The data collection instrument described in this section outlined my desire of a procedure of choice. However, the flexibility of the qualitative design provides for change to the design even at the data collection stage (Patton, 2002). Qualitative study interviews are characterized by prepared questions that entice participants to give descriptive details, responses to follow-up questions to clarify responses, and

observations (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). The prepared questions I used provided the research data, and are shown in the interview protocol, which is attached as Appendix A.

Although narrative studies allow for written submissions by participants (Chase, 2005, as cited in Rudestam & Newton, 2007), I chose the face-to-face interview, which entailed sitting with the Participant in an environment of her own choice. During the interview, I posed prepared open-ended and follow-up questions, observed the Participant and recorded the proceedings electronically and took field notes. I also kept a diary, a tool which, according to Rudestam and Newton, is used "to record impressions, reactions, and other significant events" (p. 111) that take place during an interview.

Immediately after the interview, I started to transcribe the recordings of the interview. I personally collected the data at mutually agreed time between myself and the Participant, and at the latter's convenience, not mine. The frequency of data collection namely, the first and second interviews, was determined by the availability of the study's Participant.

During the first interview, I informed the Participant of the possibility of having a second interview to clarify data. The request for a second interview came from me, and not from the Participant, as I wanted to clarify a point. To contact the Participant for a follow-up interview, I used the Participants' chosen method of communication namely, the telephone and emails. Because participants are entitled to know the results of a study (Rudestam & Newton, 2007), I informed the Participant that if she was interested in learning about the study's findings, I would make the study results available to her through her chosen method of contact.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative studies can be intense and challenging because the researcher must dig deeper in the data to discover hidden meaning (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). According to Miles et al. (2014), deductive data coding begins before fieldwork. The study's research questions were intended to answer the "'how' and 'why'" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 292) of the asylum-seeking phenomenon. In devising these questions, I was influenced by two factors. The first was my broadened knowledge of the asylum-seeking process which I gained from the literature in Chapter 2 of this study. The second factor was the need to align these questions to Benet's (2008, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy model, which is the study's theoretical framework. It was my hope that the Participant's response to these questions would enable me to arrive at themes that would shape my data analysis process against the background of the study's theoretical framework. The data analysis process itself involved going back to the Participant to ask further questions and contrasting various responses against each other to establish patterns.

Data analysis involves coding, which Miles et al. (2014) defined as a "deep reflection about and, thus, deep analysis and interpretation of the data's meaning," (p. 72). Miles et al. also stated that data processing, from the collection to analysis stages, involves the researcher identifying "the main concepts, themes, issues and questions" (p. 124) during the entire process. Provisional coding is the starting point in coding, where the researcher determines, after field work, what themes are likely to emerge during data analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Using an array of coding methods, the researcher can use

descriptive coding to index topics, either software or hand coding, or a combination of both, to identify participants' voices, process coding to identify time and sequence in the asylum-seeking phenomenon under scrutiny, emotion coding to identify relationships that emerge among participants' stories, and values coding to identify participants' worldview of the phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014).

The coding procedure entailed reading through the data, labeling and assigning of "symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 71), or "(giving) it a name, a label" (Patton, 2002, p. 463). In my study, I came up with precodes, so as to give myself provisional guidelines. Maxwell (2013) stated that data collection should always go hand in hand with data analysis. Reading through the data leads the researcher to developing strategies for further coding (Patton, 2002). Coding enabled me to arrive at what Janesick (2011) described as "major themes, keywords" (p. 131) that further assisted me to make what Janesick referred to as "an initial list of major and minor categories" (p. 131). Maxwell (2013) categorically stated that "there is no 'cookbook or single way for doing qualitative analysis'" (p. 87). The key to getting answers to any aspect of qualitative research lies in the "it depends" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 87; Patton, 2002, p. 244) concept, which empowers the researcher to identify crucial areas that need to be attended to, in what way, and at specific times. These areas may be sample size or any activity that constitutes the study process.

Due to the negative political circumstances pertaining to immigrants at the time of the study, I interviewed only one participant. This meant that the raw data I collected was not as voluminous as was initially planned, so I used hand coding, as opposed to a

blending of the NVivo data analysis software with hand coding. While the use of

software has the advantage of speeding up the data analysis process, hand coding has the

ultimate advantage of the researcher fully understanding data. Here again, the emergent

design of the study facilitated necessary changes to the original plan.

After data collection, the researcher must ascertain confidence in conclusions

derived from the data. It is possible, at this stage, that some participants' responses could

"appear to be exceptions to the rule" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 114), or appear to be

"extreme or deviant" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 32). When this happens, the researcher must

go back to the field to verify such cases. To deal with cases that are substantially different

from other responses, or to effectively deal with any other matters that demand the

researcher visiting the field again, I informed my participant about the possibility of me

conducting a second interview.

Issues of Trustworthiness

At the end of a study, a researcher must feel that his or her findings are based on

a credible foundation. That foundation, according to Rudestam and Newton (2007), is

made possible by a good research design, which leads to the study's audience finding

trustworthiness, which is equivalent to "methodological rigor" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986;

Glesne, 1999, as cited in Patton, 2002). The four sub-sections of trustworthiness are

credibility, also known as internal validity; transferability, or external validity;

dependability, or reliability; and confirmability, which is the same as objectivity (Lincoln

& Guba, 1986, as cited in Patton, 2002).

Credibility (Internal Validity)

Many scholars have written about the concern raised by some researchers about the applicability of validity in qualitative studies (e.g. Carcary, 2009; Maxwell, 2013; Morse et al., 2016; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Validity in qualitative studies is used to refer to the creation of an instrument that measures what the study wants to measure, and not anything else (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Validity is about how effectively the research design maximizes the researcher's accessibility to the data that answers the research question (Carcary, 2009). It also refers to the credibility of the data and how that data has been interpreted (Sherer, 2010). Validity is about the measures the researcher takes to attain the truth (Amankwaa, 2016), rigor, and plausibility, so that the findings make sense to both the participant and the person who reads the research, to the extent that the product of the study is "a persuasively written account" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 313) that lacks bias. Credibility is about what I, as the instrument of the study, must do to test for accuracy by employing the methods I have adopted for my research design, as approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (Walden IRB approval no. 01-18-0274631).

To ensure validity, I used qualitative research tools that have been proved to be effective. One tool a researcher may use where the study has multiple subjects is triangulation. Triangulation involves the use of various methods and sources to investigate data or a phenomenon until the researcher finds uniformity in participant responses (Patton, 2002). To establish credibility, I followed Rudestam and Newton's (2007) advice to establish rapport with my participant and had a second interview so as to

remove what may be construed as falsifications of participants' submissions. I also checked and counterchecked data through the use of "member checks," which is a system where the researcher presents the study's data and his or her conclusions to the participants to confirm that the record and the conclusions are correct (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Other than the reviews of work that is done by the researcher's committee members, the researcher may use peer briefing, in which he or she asks peers, such as classmates or academic colleagues, to "play the devil's advocate" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 115). Using the audit trail system, I dedicated a lot of time to keeping an exhaustive journal of my work and reflected on every aspect of the study's development so as to bring about clarity, coherence, and eventually achieve saturation. By using reflexivity as a tool, I constantly reminded myself of my dual role in the study as an observer and as a research tool that must connect and reflect on all the activities in order to establish credibility. To perform all these tasks efficiently, I ensured that the transcript I worked from contained correct data, as gathered from the Participant, so that I could come up with the correct codes for analysis.

Transferability (External Validity)

While Malterud (2001) argued that "no study . . . can provide findings that are universally transferable," (p. 485), scholars of qualitative studies refer to transferability as the degree to which the methods used in a study and its findings could be useful and generalized to other studies (Amankwaa, 2016; Maxwell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Shenton, 2004). Transferability is about how the findings of one study can fit into another study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, as cited in Patton, 2002). A study, therefore, is said to have

obtained external validity when its findings "may be generalized to other cases,"

(O'Sullivan et al.,2008). The onus of generalizing the findings is on those who read the

study's report, and not on the researcher (Colorado State University, 1994-2017).

According to Amankwaa (2016), the researcher must use not just single words but

detailed descriptions to show the study's setting and environment and study participants'

attitudes.

Patton (2002) stated that the qualitative narrative must be so detailed that it should

take the reader "into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was

like to have been there," (p. 47). To assist those who will read the report in the task of

finding transferability, I interviewed my study participant with the sole purpose of

obtaining detailed descriptions of the asylum-seeking process to a point of *thick*

description (Colorado State University, 1994-2017; Miles et al., 2014; Rudestam &

Newton, 2007). To obtain thick description, I recruited a respondent who was proficient

in the English language. Another means of obtaining validation is to ensure that

participant selection is credible. While it is not possible to guarantee that purposefully

sampled participants will reflect views that are typical of a phenomenon's affected

community in any geographical area, researchers seek to pick up participants that will

reflect cultural diversity (Hannerz, 1992; Maxwell, 2011b, as cited in Maxwell, 2013).

However, as I explain in detail in Chapter 5, I did not find enough participants to reflect

diversity. Through informed consent, I ensured that my participant knew her rights.

Using the concept of prolonged engagement (Rudestam & Newton, 2007), I invested the

time that was available under the then prevailing negative political circumstances to create rapport with the Participant.

Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research is the equivalent of reliability in quantitative studies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, as cited in Golafshani, 2003). Unlike reliability in quantitative studies, dependability does not use statistics to prove reliability, but uses audit trails that ensure consistency in a study's method and process through triangulation (Hoepf, 1997, as cited in Golafshani, 2003). The audit trail entails thorough record-keeping of the study's implementation process by the researcher (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). On the other hand, triangulation, according to Rudestam and Newton, comes after the data collection stage, and often demands that the researcher must go back to his or her sources to collect more data and compare it with what has already been collected. It involves collecting data under different environments, and using diverse approaches (Maxwell, 2013). I used both the face-to-face and telephone interview methods to collect and confirm data, respectively. The repeated review and further verification of data that is characteristic of the triangulation process means that the researcher's conclusions are backed by more than one source and method (Maxwell, 2013.) Rudestam and Newton (2007) even suggested the use of "additional participants" (p. 115). In my face-to-face interview, I employed a keen observance of the Participant's body language and the setting itself to achieve triangulation.

To obtain dependability, I kept notes and recorded my study's interviews. I also transcribed the recording and showed the transcript to the Participant before I concluded data analysis, which I conducted through hand coding.

Confirmability

Confirmability is about the extent to which the findings of a study reflect participants' responses to the questions put before them, as opposed to the researcher's biases, aims, or concerns (Amankwaa, 2016). To achieve confirmability, the researcher must engage in reflexibility by observing the study as if he or she were not the researcher but an outsider (Patton, 2002). Other than employing this self-critiquing approach through the process of "member checks," I gave my participant access to my transcripts.

Intra- and Intercoder Reliability

Intra- and intercoder reliability refers to the process of randomly testing the coding of data in a study to establish the reliability of the results (Peter & Lauf, 2002). Intercoder refers to the testing of the degree of agreement among various data coders (Lavrakas, 2008). As I was the only person conducting every aspect of my study, I relied entirely on my judgement to establish reliability by observing the procedures I have outlined in this chapter. Because I was the only person conducting the study, I used intracoder reliability, which involved meticulous handling of hand coding.

Ethical Procedures

Qualitative researchers concern themselves with ethical issues because interviews "affect people" (Patton, 2002, p. 405). Before a researcher embarks on the interview process, it is necessary to obtain participants' consent to participate in the study and

inform them about what the data obtained from the study will be used for (Irwin, 2013; Patton, 2002). I obtained approval from the Walden University's Institutional Review Board, or IRB, to go ahead with the study. I adhered to the IRB's rules at every stage of the study. I sought my Participant's permission to gain access to her by telephone, text, and email and outlined the study's procedures and purpose to her. Using advice from Janesick (2011) and Patton (2002), I emphasized my participant's confidentiality and rights. According to O'Sullivan et al. (2008), participants must be informed that their participation in a study is voluntary, and that they are free to terminate their participation at any time.

The protection of the privacy of study participants includes the need for the data collected in a study to be handled with "trust and a duty of care" (Irwin, 2013, p. 293). While my study's participant was a person who had already been granted asylum, and was already a citizen of the United States, I kept in mind that at one time, she was an asylum seeker, a category of persons that is considered a vulnerable people (Kalt et al., 2013), and whose participation in the study should not harm her in any way. Patton (2002) advised researchers against deceiving participants by making them believe that because the researcher once shared their circumstances, i.e. I am a former asylum seeker, the researcher shared their beliefs, when this was not true. I avoided sounding like I shared the Participant's views on asylum-seeking. I have stored the data I collected during the interview in safe deposits, such as password-secured files, where I will be the only one who will have access to them until I destroy the data according to prevailing

IRB regulations. As the study's participant was not personally known to me, there was no conflict of interest arising from having known each other prior to the study.

Summary

    In this chapter, I outlined the methodology I used in the study on the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States on the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process. I justified the use of the narrative qualitative study method and purposeful sampling as the means of picking my participants. I also described the data collection instrument, how the data was analyzed, and how I ensured that the study obtained trustworthiness. I further stated that due to a political environment that was hostile to immigrants in the United States at the time of the study, I ended up interviewing only one participant, as opposed to the original 15 planned for face-to-face interviews. In Chapter 4, I present an analysis of the data I collected from the study's participant, using the methodology I outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this narrative study was to discover and understand the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States about the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process since September 11, 2001. The research question was: What do persons who completed the U.S. asylum-seeking process after September 11, 2001 perceive as the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process?

As I outlined the study's methodology in Chapter 3, the autographical narrative study design enabled my participant to retell her experiences in an informal setting. In this chapter, I report and discuss the hurdles I encountered in my search for participants, which led to only one participant being interviewed, and the study's demographics, which were influenced by the participant search hurdles. I also outline my data collection and data analysis methods, trustworthiness, and the results of my findings. I close the chapter with a summary of the answers to the study's questions.

Research Setting

The IRB approval to collect data came in two phases. The first approval was made on January 10, 2018. At this stage in the process, I was to interview at least 15 participants in the Greater Atlanta area of the state of Georgia on their perceptions on the asylum-seeking process after 9/11. I immediately embarked on a search for participants. The exercise involved visiting high immigrant density areas in the Greater Atlanta area, such as Clarkston, Georgia, where I randomly spoke to persons in immigrant-operated shopping areas and the Georgia State University Perimeter College campus. According to

the City of Clarkston (2018), Clarkston has the highest diversity figures in the nation, with 50% of its population of 12,700 being foreign-born and having entered the United States mainly as refugees from all parts of the world. I also placed copies of a participant recruitment flyer at these shopping areas, at select immigration nonprofit organizations, and at some immigration law offices in the Greater Atlanta area.

Using the snowball method, I met persons who gave me telephone numbers of potential participants. I called these persons and met some in person. Without exception, all the persons I met possessed a college education, sometimes holding advanced degrees. In their home countries, they held professional positions, often in the public sector, and had had negative encounters with politicians. They were politically savvy and knew the consequences of saying anything negative about the nation that had given them asylum. None of these persons were willing to participate, citing the sensitive nature of the topic. Besides, I was a stranger to them. Some of them stated that I could be an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation or of ICE, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. One of these potential participants was willing to speak to me in the strictest confidence, provided I paid him $500.00. I declined the offer. Some people I spoke to in Clarkston declined to participate in the study for two reasons. One reason was fear of possible repercussions from community leaders, while the other stemmed from religious beliefs. Several persons told me that community leaders forbade anyone from discussing their immigration status with strangers. Another person stated that Moslem women would not give an interview to a male stranger.

It was at the participant search stage in the study that I learned about the phenomenon of fear of being deported by the Trump administration among immigrants. Merely five days after assuming office, President Donald Trump issued an executive order that empowered federal authorities to remove without delay any aliens who had previously been ordered to leave the United States (White House, 2017). This resulted in immigrants living in fear of being deported (Ross, Davis, & Achenbach, 2017). Burkett and Hayes (2018) stated that since his ascendancy to the presidency of the United States in 2017, Trump has taken measures to reverse some of President Obama-era immigration policies to ensure, among other things, that some foreign nationals, including those from communities that are torn apart by warfare, are not allowed entry to the United States, and millions of unauthorized immigrants would be deported. This led to "a fear and uncertainty in the immigrant community" (Burkett & Hayes, 2018, p. 102). Loiseau (2016) noted that scholars found it "nearly impossible" (p. 145) to find study participants from undocumented immigrant communities. I discovered at this stage that it was also almost impossible to find participants for my study among legal immigrants. It was against this backdrop that persons I tried to recruit as study participants chose not to participate. By late April 2018, more than 3 months into my search, it was clear that I would not get any participants for my study in the Greater Atlanta area, so I proposed amendments to my approval.

On May 2, 2018, I received IRB approval to change my study from the perceptions of asylum seekers in the Greater Atlanta area on the asylum-seeking process to asylum seekers across the United States. The original IRB approval included both the

use of electronic devices and face-to-face interviews as data collection tools, so interviewing persons from any part of the nation would not require me to travel away from Atlanta, Georgia. The amended IRB approval also included the use of study recruitment volunteers who would distribute the participant recruitment flyer in their areas of residence. Above all, the amended approval reduced the study's sample size from 15 participants to 5.

The IRB's approval of the use of recruitment volunteers meant that I could ask persons outside Georgia to download and distribute the participant recruitment flyer on my behalf, provided the volunteers merely passed on information about potential participants but did not make appointments for me to speak to these persons. I contacted potential study volunteers across the United States by telephone, e-mail, and social media, specifically Facebook. The study volunteer pool comprised my former and current classmates at Walden University, other Walden University students, my former asylum attorney, who had moved from Georgia to California, and my former college students and fellow instructors at Chattahoochee Technical College in the Greater Atlanta, Georgia area. By mid-July 2018, four persons had volunteered to participate in the study. However, three of these potential participants withdrew from the study in early August2018, citing fear as the reason for their action. The fact that these persons neither knew each other nor lived in the same state pointed to the widespread nature of the fear of deportation immigrants lived in at the time. On August 10, 2018, however, my committee chair, with the support of my dissertation committee, advised that I could conduct a single-subject study.

Demographics

Due to former asylees' fear to speak about their asylum-seeking experiences in a hostile political climate, this narrative study used only one participant, as opposed to the original desire to use 15 participants. This factor eliminated diversity.

The Participant, who was female and in her early 50s, lived in the Greater Atlanta, Georgia area, and is originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or DRC. This meant that French, and not English, was the Participant's first language. However, the Participant expressed herself well enough in English for me to give meaning to her narration of the asylum-seeking experience. At the time of the interview, the Participant had more than a decade of work in immigration law offices. To protect her identity, I assigned her the simple identification of "the Participant." Similarly, I have avoided giving details of her arrival in the United States, or when she was granted asylum beyond that it was after 9/11. Her annual income was in excess of $100,000.

Data Collection

I used the face-to-face and the telephone interview as the two means of data collection for this study. After nearly a month of nervously awaiting confirmation, the interview with the only participant finally took place on Monday, September 3, 2018, in the Participant's home, which was her place of choice, and at her chosen time. Using the informed consent form that had been approved by the Walden University's IRB as my script, a copy of which I gave to and discussed with the Participant, I informed the Participant of her role in the study and what the study was about. I outlined the voluntary nature of the participation, the risks and benefits of being in the study and, above all, I

emphasized that I would do everything possible to conceal her identity, an issue that was a factor in the participant recruitment exercise. As advised by the IRB, her verbal consent to participate in the study sufficed. This meant that she did not have to sign the informed consent form; to conceal her identity, she did not append her signature, and I noted her relief. I also advised her that the voluntary nature of her participation also meant that she could, if she so wished, withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons for her decision.

Before recording the interview, the Participant and I spent some time talking as a means of establishing rapport. Our home countries in Africa are neighboring states, and due to warfare, political and economic strife in her country, a lot of her nationals are known to have taken refuge in my home country. Oral history also points to the possibility of her people and mine having lived in the same kingdom several centuries ago.

After we got to know each other better, we were ready for the interview, which took just over an hour. We sat at the dining table, from where I recorded the interview on two digital recorders, one, a Sony ICD-UX560 Digital Voice Recorder with built-in USB, and the other, a Lyker Digital Voice Recorder Audio Recorder 8GB. There were no disturbances during the interview, as the Participant lives alone. After the interview, I informed the Participant that it was probable I would come back for a second interview after I had studied the transcripts. She said she would see if that was feasible but stated that she was always travelling.

I started the transcription process a few hours after the interview. In my career as an editor, I had performed transcription work as a fulltime occupation. I did not have transcription equipment, but within a few days, considering that I had to go to work, I produced a verbatim report, the type Miles et al. (2014) referred to as one that has "incomplete sentences of an apparently incoherent speaker" (p. 71). I considered this type of transcript as the most authentic raw data a single-subject study should collect. I use this type of raw data as direct quotations when I report the results of this study.

After transcribing the interview, I saw the need to clarify a few issues with the Participant. I called the Participant, sent text messages and e-mails, and contacted the person who had introduced me to the Participant, asking for a second interview by phone or by any other means. I also e-mailed the interview transcript to her, asking to confirm if the transcript represented a correct record of our interview, and if the Participant had any comments to make, such as changes or additions. My committee chair assisted in that effort, and eventually, the second interview took place by telephone on Sunday, September 30, 2018, at 8:00 pm EST.

Except for the use of one participant instead of the originally suggested 15, which number was reduced to 5, there were no variations in the data collection procedure that was approved by the IRB. This was in line with the nature of qualitative studies that are emergent or subject to design change at various stages as necessitated by the issues on the ground (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I used hand coding, as opposed to using software. I started

data analysis with deductive coding, a process I conducted before data collection.

Deductive coding entailed the use of the knowledge I had already obtained from the

literature review in Chapter 2 of the study. Based on the study's questions, which were,

themselves, derived from the literature review, I came up with what Miles et al. (2014)

referred to as "a provisional 'start list' of codes" (p. 81). I knew, for instance, that from

the literature review, and from my own experience as a former asylee, asylum seekers are

likely to face financial hardships, which could lead to hunger and housing problems,

among other hurdles. However, after collecting the data, I used content analysis, a

process that necessitated a search for repeated terms in the transcripts (Patton, 2002),

even if, in the case of my study, such terms, patterns or themes were repeated by the same

participant.

After the interview, I transcribed the data from the audio recording into the

written word. As I did so, I noted the themes that came up and wrote these down on Post-

it notes. I read through the full transcript many times to come up with topics. Patton

(2002) likened the initial process of coding to "constructing an index for a book" (p.

463). I discovered that the patterns or themes in the transcript were often repeated and

interrelated, which seemed to be consistent with what Miles et al. (2014) referred to as

"intervening variables" (p. 277), while Patton called them *"recurring regularities"* (p.

465). I supplemented content analysis of the transcripts with field observations and a

second interview to arrive at a deeper understanding of the meanings behind every theme

or pattern. At this stage, I fully appreciated the advantages of hand coding, for it entails the repeated handling of raw materials, leading to a better understanding of the data. Listening to the interview recording, one sentence or a half sentence at a time, writing the Participant's words verbatim in longhand, and then typing the transcripts, meant that by the time the transcription process was over, I had not only understood the content well, but I had also started data analysis itself.

With only one participant, I did not use coded language for the participant, but referred to her only as 'the Participant'. I did not use her name anywhere in the transcript, either. I looked for what Janesick (22011) termed as "key words…indexes of behavior and belief" (p. 131) to develop codes. In the transcript, I identified nouns such as 'support,' 'culture,' 'language,' 'communication,' 'unemployment,' 'hunger,' 'housing,' etc. out of which patterns or themes emerged. I asked myself what these terms meant, and the interrelation of variables, or recurring regularities, emerged clearly from the codes. For instance, 'unemployment,' which resulted from the Participant's immigration status, meant that the Participant was impecunious, which meant that she could not afford adequate housing, she experienced hunger, and had no access to health care. A pattern emerged that clearly showed that even after the Participant was granted authority to work in the United States, she still found it hard to get a good job due to lack of communication skills in English. As I attached meaning to the codes, I asked for a second interview, which afforded me an opportunity to clarify the meaning of some of the data with the Participant.

As the Participant recalled her experiences with the asylum-seeking phenomenon, it became evident that cultural differences between her native land and the host nation was the main theme. These cultural differences led to *emotional difficulties.* Other negative themes that stemmed from the main theme of cultural differences and affected the Participant's emotional and physical wellbeing were *fear, joblessness, hunger, lack of adequate housing, the absence of healthcare provision, and the nonexistence of a social support group*, such as family and friends. Finally, the term *intimidating* came up as a major concern when the Participant discussed the terrifying nature of the asylum-seeking phenomenon.

The theme that came up as the most positive aspect of the asylum-seeking process experienced by the Participant, and which spanned across several themes, was embodied in the lessons she learned on how to cope with the hurdles she faced, and the support she received from nonprofit organizations and people who were total strangers to her. The Participant also opined that generally, she was treated fairly.

I scrutinized the themes outlined above until I attained saturation. To support my interpretation of the data, I consistently quoted directly from the transcript of the interview with the Participant. By quoting heavily, I gave a detailed and realistic lived experience of the Participant's encounter with the asylum-seeking phenomenon. To facilitate comparison and contrast in this one-subject study, I provided an autobiographical reflective narrative of my own asylum-seeking experience on the themes narrated by the Participant.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative studies involves issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Unusual circumstances occurred in this study, for fear to be interviewed was a major factor in the participant search process. No one, except one person, agreed to be interviewed. Because of the problems I had experienced with making a firm appointment with the Participant, my questioning during the interview sought to ensure that even if the Participant was not available for a second interview or member checks, the transcript would have data that answered the study question. To ensure that I understood what the Participant was saying, my line of questioning was sometimes repetitive. For instance, after discussing fear as a theme, I again raised the same theme under health care and the Participant's food situation and financial hurdles. I also used the time after the Participant had answered the last question to go over issues I felt needed clarification. However, the Participant facilitated a second interview by telephone and approved the transcript as a correct record of what she had said.

Credibility

A narrative study's credibility lies in a combination of factors. The narrative must be accurate, true and believable, and without bias. Referring to credibility as 'narrative fidelity', Czarniawska (2004) stated that the narrative story must be "established by the presence of 'good reasons'," (p. 10). Those good reasons would result from triangulation, which Rudestam and Newton (2007) defined as a means of collecting data from various informants to determine its truthfulness. To achieve credibility, the researcher must have

the necessary skills to observe nuance and give accurate interpretation of the data. Patton (2002) also attributes the attainment of a study's credibility to the researcher's strong faith in qualitative methodology. I have strong faith in the qualitative methodology, which was my method of choice for this study.

While my study had only one participant, I believe it attained credibility when, during the interview with the Participant, I asked and rephrased questions on the same subject to ensure full understanding and check for consistency and truth in the answers. I had a full understanding of what the Participant said or intended to say. The Participant also clarified some issues through the second interview and member checks.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which a study's methods and its findings could be useful and generalized to other studies (Shenton, 2004). While I had only one participant, I believe that the findings of this study could be generalized to the conditions of other persons who have experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon, as I show in the analysis of the Participant's response to study questions in comparison to my own experiences as a former asylum-seeker.

Amankwaa (2006) stated that to reach transferability, a study must give detailed descriptions of its setting, environment, and participants' attitudes. Earlier in this chapter, I described the negative political environment in the United States at the time of the study interview and the Participant's concerns about that environment. I stated that the insecurity felt by potential participants in the study resulted in a single-subject study. I also showed that the hostile political environment faced by immigrants at the time of the

study meant that the Participant was uneasy about the possibility of being identified by government authorities as the only participant in the study. By describing these characteristics pertaining to the time of the study and the attitude of its participant, I demonstrated the study's transferability.

Dependability

A qualitative study attains dependability when it can be replicated in another study, using the same methodology, which in turn attains similar results. It can be overly challenging to show dependability when a study has only one subject, and the researcher is also a participant. To avoid researcher bias, I ensured that the Participant gave responses to open-ended questions without being influenced by my own experiences. I used my own experiences of the asylum-seeking experience only to give a reflective description of my experiences of the study phenomenon away from the interview, and not during the interview. To achieve triangulation, the researcher must use several sources to authenticate evidence (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Providing my own narrative on the asylum-seeking experience to compare and contrast the only participant's evidence was the only means by which I could facilitate triangulation. I kept a record of all the actions I took during the study process so that an audit trail was available at every stage of the study. The recording of the interview and the accompanying transcript are securely stored. I also outlined the details of data collection and analysis. Using the only participant, I followed the original design details, as expounded in Chapter 3, in which I presented the study implementation strategy, the data collection method and interpretation. The Participant also gave a second interview to clarify issues after I had

reviewed the transcript, and she provided member checks by stating that the transcript was a correct record of what she had said and meant during the interview. I further used thick description to define the phenomenon. In my field notes, I used observation to note the Participant's tone and body and facial movements and expressions, respectively, to interpret the data. All these measures made the study dependable.

Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with issues of true reflection, by the researcher, of what was said by the participants (Amankwaa, 2016). Although the Participant and I shared a common history of having experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon, I used reflexibility to resist the temptation of introducing bias into the study through my own experiences of the phenomenon. With only one participant in the study, I found it necessary to get a lot of detail from the only source of data by using a repetitive and rephrased line of questioning. The Participant's confirmation of the interview transcript attained confirmability for the study. I also used substantial amounts of verbatim narratives from the transcript to demonstrate that the data came directly from the Participant.

<div align="center">

Results

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The results presented in this chapter are based on my interpretation of the data that were collected from the only study participant. To facilitate answers to the central question, which read as, "What do persons who completed the U.S. asylum-seeking process after September 11, 2001 perceive as the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process?" I posed 14 interview questions. Depending on the response, I

asked one or more follow-up questions. The introductory statement to the questions was, "Thinking about the period from the time you applied for asylum to the time you were granted asylum…"

As discussed earlier in this chapter, it was clear from the Participant's narrative that *cultural differences* was the dominant negative theme, whose offshoots were *emotional and survival challenges*, which led to *fear*. Other negative themes were *joblessness or unemployment*, which meant that the Participant faced *financial difficulties*, *inadequate housing* and *hunger*. The Participant faced *inaccessibility to health care*. The *absence of a social network* of family and friends and the *intimidating nature of the asylum interview* also came up as negative themes. The major positive theme was *nonprofit sector support*, which came from the Immigration Services section of Catholic Charities.

To facilitate a better understanding of the Participant's responses, I inserted, in her narrative, my own words in parenthesis. After discussing each theme, I briefly respond to the Participant's experiences with an autobiographical reflective description of my own experience of the asylum-seeking phenomenon.

Findings From the Most Recurring Themes

Main theme: Cultural differences caused emotional turmoil. Coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is a French-speaking African country, the Participant's first stark memory of her experience at her port of entry to the United States was her inability to communicate in English. She stated, "I had maybe 10% of English…I had to say everything in English, while someone translated for me in French."

Upon disembarking the aircraft, the Participant found out that her suitcase had been damaged during the flight, but she could not communicate effectively with anyone. This cultural difficulty resulting from poor communication hounded her throughout the asylum-seeking period and beyond. The lack of knowledge of the English language led to difficulties in integrating into the American society, and this, in turn, led to constant frustration and emotional difficulties. Put in her own words, "I have to say that emotionally, it was very difficult. When you're coming from a very different culture, including the language, the (asylum-seeking) process was very difficult, emotionally."

Not speaking the English language meant that even when the Participant was authorized to work, it was hard to get a job, and it took her a long time to learn the new language. With a small child and a baby to look after, she could not attend English classes. She explained:

> I needed to learn English. There was no way, I knew, I could use my French (to
> get a job) without learning English. So, it was no way for me trying to get a job.
> But what I did was, I was learning English at that moment for three years,
> learning English.

However, coming from a country where people speak many languages, the Participant had the advantage of having taught herself several languages before:

> Because of the kids, I couldn't do the English school. I had to find a way to do it.
> And you know, back home, no one speaks one language. In the DRC, most of us .
> . . if you divide the country by four, you have four languages. For you to be really
> professional, you can't just speak one language. For instance, we have to speak

French because it's the national language, and then we have four national

languages…Oh, French is the official language. So, going through the process of

learning a language, I've done it many times in the Congo. I had to learn Swahili,

I had to learn Lingala, I had to learn Chiluba. I think it was a good thing that I

learned. I didn't learn these languages by going to school. I learned them with

(through) (house) maids, in the street; you go to the market, and you learn. And I

thought that although English was very hard (difficult), I would do it in a different

way, but I would do it. That's how I learned English.

The pressure to speak English made the Participant come up with creative

methods of learning the new language without help from anybody. She narrated:

I was watching television, especially CNN, that repeats the news every fifteen

minutes, and at the end of the day, I knew what they had said at the beginning. I

would take a newspaper . . . and the church I was going to give me a little

dictionary at that time, a French-English dictionary, so I would translate

everything…learn English from a newspaper, from the television, I could watch

CNN. In that place (where I lived), we had a place where we could go watch TV,

and then . . . I could . . . hear people speaking in English. It was horror, but it was

the way to do it, I guess.

Later in the asylum-seeking process, the Participant experienced hardships arising

directly from her lack of knowledge of the English language when a family gave her a

room to share with her children. "The big challenge was communication. It was just very

difficult because they (the family) were not speaking English, and I wasn't speaking English. I was speaking French, and they were speaking Spanish."

The language barrier came to the fore when, during her asylum interview, she had to use an interpreter, as her interviewer, the immigration officer, did not speak a word of French. In her own words:

My English wasn't good enough to know if the translator (interpreter) was doing a good job, (but) when the officer kept saying, "Yes, yes . . ." and not repeating any questions or showing frustration because she didn't get the point, she would take notes and then come with the next question.

While the lack of knowledge of English was a source of daily frustration for the Participant, not speaking English also meant that she could not socially integrate into the American society. In a lighthearted moment, the Participant recalled how she knew very little about the American currency:

I remember, I used to give money to my son. We never used to have a lot of toys, but I used to give him money . . . the dimes and the cents. I didn't know the difference between those. To me, it was like, I could give him the cents, and then the dime, and I actually thought that the dime was less than the cent. And so, one day, I told the lady [landlady], I said, "Listen, I don't have the money, so give me one dollar and fifteen cents, and we will get the bus and go get our check at Social Services," and the lady came back to me with ten dimes and the fifteen cents. And I looked at her and said, "This is not enough!" and so, I draw like this, and she started, "No, this is a penny, this is ten . . ." and I'm looking at this and I'm

saying, "What?" I called my son and said, "Come, come!" and he brings a little

jug [piggy bank] and he had these tens in there, almost like thirty of them. [Yet]

every time I had them, I thought I needed a hundred of them to make a dollar.

And immediately, I said to myself, "I'm rich! I'm rich!" The lady was looking at

me, and we had fun. Basically, all I had was five dollars, but I screamed.

Researcher's response to cultural differences as a source of misery. Unlike the

Participant, who came from a Francophone country, I came from an Anglophone country.

My family and I did not, therefore, experience linguistic problems during the asylum-

seeking era. Before we sought asylum, my family and I had visited the United States

quite often, either on business or as tourists. However, visiting a country for a few weeks

on official or private business is one thing, and living in that country permanently is quite

another. Prior to coming to the United States, I had lived in three countries, each one on a

different continent, but all had the same traffic rules, where cars drove on the left-hand

side of the road. Although seemingly a minor issue, driving on the right-hand side of the

road posed a cultural challenge to me. I did not, therefore, face a cultural shock in the

same way the Participant experienced it.

Subtheme 1: Emotional and survival challenges as negative aspects of asylum

seeking. The cultural differences, manifesting themselves through lack of knowledge of

the English language, was not the Participant's only source of frustration. The Participant

found the entire asylum-seeking experience to be constantly characterized by emotional

issues. Two weeks after her arrival in the United States, she was so distraught that she

gave a premature delivery to her second son. She explained:

From the moment I landed, I didn't even know where to go—all I had was

Catholic Charities address. I had my son that day, the eldest one, two years old,

and expecting…What I was going through at that moment was as if I was

watching a movie. It was…I had to separate myself from the situation itself, so I

can at least breathe in an environment that was totally different from where I was

coming. It was just . . . I just needed to say, 'OK, this is your life there. This is a

moment for you to breathe just one day at a time, at least, one minute after

another one, and just to hope that it will go OK.' It took strength, it took a lot of

faith than to just think that I could survive because I was expecting my son, the

second one. So, it was this whole thing that I just don't know how I got through it.

Afraid that she could easily suffer from mental health issues, the Participant

responded that she fought hard to stay focused on her goal of gaining asylum status and

refrain from moaning about things she could not have:

It was about finding the social skills to survive in a very different setting. What

kind of skills were those? Kindness, joy, patience, and faith. These were the

things you put together and you're able to survive in that kind of environment.

They would give you something, and you're thankful. It was none of the stuff I

went to school (to learn). No one had ever trained me for anything like that. But

you develop it at that moment because you know that if you don't do it, then

you're gonna get sick, you're gonna be in trouble, you'll be totally depressed, and

I just didn't wanna be depressed. I neither had money, neither this, but I didn't

wanna be depressed. I just had to keep training myself: what can I do to survive?

The Participant further stated that despite the many challenges she faced, the asylum-seeking experience was a period of great lessons in survival:

Sometimes, I felt like you just sit there and rest, because you're crying, and you need help, but you just don't know how to say the help you really need. But at the same time, it was just a learning experience, both accepting the differences, or intellectually you put it aside and make sure you socially grow. It changes you; it shapes you differently . . . if I had just stayed away to see the challenges of that part of my life without trying to get out of the box and say this is where you're going to learn from scratch, regardless of your age, regardless of what has gone before, you have to do it. And you have to be determined to learn. Everything, you just have to learn again. So, that was my challenge: do I learn, instead of, 'Oh, I don't have food.' I made sure that my challenge was something that would allow me to grow, and to reach my goals, and to make sure I provided (for) my sons.

Looking back, every time I think about it, it's just like, wow! It makes me feel so thankful for even little things because if it wasn't just for the little things that I was encountering every single day—whether it was me at the shelter, whether it was someone say, "Hi!," getting to go and meet that attorney, getting the case done, one day after another one—every single one of those helped me stay strong and, of course, I think that's the moment I started talking to God. So, my faith had to grow. My faith had to triple. That's how I can just say that one.

Researcher's response to emotional and survival challenges. Unlike the Participant, I knew what to expect when my family arrived in the United States. We booked hotel rooms before we left our home country, and we had some idea of what to expect during the asylum-seeking period. What we did not know was the period it would take before a decision was made whether we would be granted asylum or not. I often felt that people distanced themselves from me when they discovered that although I looked like many Americans, I did not speak like them, and I was from Africa. In some cases, people told me in my face that they did not have high regard for Africans. Although my family lived with me, I was often distraught as I missed the family and friends we had left back in our native land. There were moments when, like the Participant, I cried and fought hard not to slip into emotional torment.

Subtheme 2: Fear a key negative phenomenon of the asylum-seeking era. Fear, defined as "the cognitive, or intellectual, appraisal of a danger" (Beck, 1991, p. 370), is associated with loss of something valuable. Asking her if she experienced any fear triggered visible signs of stress in the Participant, who explained that sometimes she compared her circumstances to the jail situation she experienced in her home country. She put it this way:

> The fear was beyond something I can explain. I couldn't even think about the political asylum itself, because I had to make sure that I would even survive. At some point, it felt like OK, I left the Congo in a very difficult situation, and yet I came here, I feel like I'm still in jail. I felt like, what's this, because… But I knew I wasn't in jail. It was just (that) culturally, socially, and financially, I was in

some kind of jail. And so, I just had to make sure that (in) the same way (that) I survived those difficulties back home, I had to do the same here, I had to really separate all of that, take one day at a time, take care of my two kids and then trust in Catholic Charities (the attorneys) what they were telling me, and just go for it..

The Participant's first encounter with fear started before she left her home country for the United States. But her first encounter with fear in the United States began even before she filed her asylum papers, on the first day of her stay in the country. The incident concerning her discovery, at her port of entry, that her luggage had been damaged, marked her first tearful moments, which were to become routine. In her own words:

> I started crying because I was overwhelmed. And my son, who was only two years old, started asking me, "Why are you crying?" and so, I say, "Oh, no, I'm tired," and he started crying, so I talked to him, saying, "Don't cry."

Other than the daily encounters that constituted the challenges of the asylum-seeking process, the major fear for the Participant stemmed from the possibility of her and her children being deported and sent back to her home country. She explained:

> When I met with people like Catholic Charities, they explained everything. My visitor's visa was still valid at the time, so she (my attorney) explained to me that the worst-case scenario is they deny you asylum, and you could make the decision at that time that we go before the judge, or you decide to leave and go to another country or go back to Congo.

Believing, even before she left her home country, that her case had merit and, therefore, deserved to be heard and adjudged positively, the Participant asked her attorney if she would be deported:

I told her, and I said, "Let me ask you, what do you think about that (my) story?" and she said, "Honestly, I'm so touched about your story that I don't think you will be denied. But I'm not the immigration officer. I'm listening to you as my client, and I can't give you a guarantee that on the other side, it will be the same. That's why I need you to get prepared. I need you to know what are the possibilities when you get your answers." So, yes, I had that fear in mind.

Researcher's response to fear. Like the Participant, I lived in fear, not because I thought my family would not be granted asylum. I believed I had enough documented evidence to prove my case. I had newspaper cuttings, letters and copies of press statements and memos from the government about me. I lived in fear because, by relocating to another country, I considered that socially, the family had lost so much back in my home country. One of my fears was that we would never regain our social and economic status. We had lost our homes, I had lost my senior executive position at a radio and television company, and we were facing an unknown future. Knowing that you cannot go back to your own country but live in poverty as an immigrant can be scary. Like the Participant, I too had once experienced jail time without due process just because I was a journalist. Living in a foreign country makes you feel you have no rights, even if you had no freedom of speech back in your native country. I too felt like I was in jail. I heard stories about asylum seekers in the United States being arrested and jailed for

long periods before they were deported to the very countries they had fled from. I knew

of one such case of a Zimbabwean national whom I had personally known for years.

Subtheme 3: The Participant experienced hunger. The Participant and her two-

year old child were often hungry. And as is common among parents, when there is little

food, the parents are more affected by hunger than the children, as the little that is

available is given to the children, as she narrated:

> We didn't have a lot of food, but . . . and sometimes for me, it was more
>
> important that the boys, I feed them, so they can have enough, and for me, I
>
> would just take whatever is left. We have one meal, and they . . . the baby was
>
> fine because we had milk and cereal. We had baby foods, so the baby didn't…the
>
> smallest one. My first one . . . He probably didn't have everything he wanted, but
>
> at least, he had milk and the basics. We had cheese, we had cereals. These are the
>
> things he needed. So, he had vitamins as well. So, he was OK.
>
> For me, I had just to make sure that I took care of them; they eat, and if
>
> there's anything I can eat, then I'll eat. This is a time when, am I hungry or am I
>
> not hungry? I was more making sure that I survived at that time; that nothing will
>
> take me away from the goal that I have in my head, that I needed to not only get
>
> through the asylum, but to get an employment. So, there was so much that I
>
> needed to think of. So, anything about not having food, even if I didn't have it, I
>
> did not let it become a problem or become an issue, or me to suffer because I
>
> don't have food, or I didn't have this. And so, I just didn't let that get into my

head…The church I was going to was coming and dropping some foods for us—

canned foods.

Having been born in the United States, however, the Participant's baby was an

American citizen, and he and his mother were entitled to some benefits under the state-

run Women, Infant, and Child program, WIC (Georgia Department of Public Health,

2017). This public assistance assuaged the extent of hunger the Participant's family

experienced. The program included accessibility to food stamps. At the time, the

Participant did not even try to understand where the help came from, or how and why it

was available to her. She stated:

> I'm not sure which system I went through, but after the birth, they gave the boy
>
> the WIC program. And because the other one was only two years old, as I was
>
> registering, they said, "We can register him, too." So, we were getting the WIC . .
>
> . the milk, and I could go with them [the boys] for vaccinations and stuff like that.

Researcher's response to hunger. Unlike the Participant, at no time during the

asylum-seeking period did my family experience hunger, and neither did we ever receive

public assistance. Unlike the Participant, we did not lose our savings to corrupt security

authorities at the airport— as narrated below— when we left our native land. Although

we knew about the existence of such support, we did not seek it, not only because we had

enough food, but because that would have undermined our confidence. Begging is

frowned upon in our culture.

Subtheme 4: Joblessness and underemployment a major cause of poverty. One

of the first challenges the Participant contended with was to live on handouts before she

was authorized to work in the United States. Responding to the question about her food situation, she responded:

Oh, I didn't work for a long time . . . I came on a tourist visa, so Catholic Charities told me, "You can't do anything until you get the papers." No, I never worked while I was waiting for [the papers]. In the shelter, I just survived. I didn't even have public assistance at the time. All I had was whatever they [the church] would give us.

While the Participant had saved some money for her trip to the United States, she lost most, if not all, her savings at her point of departure from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She explained:

At the airport, they [DRC government authorities] took the money. When I left the Congo, they did searching . . . it's still probably the same now, because we're so corrupt there. They wanted to make sure, "Are you going to the U.S.? You have to give all the money you have. You have a suitcase, you have to pay." In doing research, they found that I have some money. The only thing that survived was a $20.00, and because I actually gave that to my son [to carry]. So, all I had was $20.00. They took my money. And because I knew why I was leaving, and I didn't want to fight with them and start making a big noise about it, I said [to myself], we're on the way, I'm not going to make . . . I have to leave the country.

Without knowledge of the English language, it was hard for the Participant to get a good job, even when she was well qualified for it and had the right to work in the United States. She said, "My very, very first job was actually a cashier at MacDonald's."

Working at MacDonald's, though as a cashier, had a positive side, as the Participant

explained, "And the reason why I thought it was a good thing to do [working at

MacDonald's] was that I could learn English there on the street."

   Researcher's response to joblessness and underemployment as major causes of

poverty. I cannot recall how long it took us to get work permits, but it wasn't long after

we had applied for asylum. Navigating the local job market was a big challenge. I could

not get back into the news media industry, partially because many news media persons

had lost their jobs in the Greater Atlanta area a few weeks after we arrived in Atlanta. I

did not have a graduate degree then, and many employers I talked to asked for one, and

often, emphasis was on a graduate degree obtained from an American university. I

remember two specific cases. During a job interview, a potential employer wanted to

know if, as an African, I was not overwhelmed by the fast rate of doing things in the

United States, and he wondered if that would have a negative effect on my productivity in

the company. Although I took offence to his statement, as the statement informed me that

I was being profiled on the basis of my national origin, I told my interviewer that as head

of a large department, the radio and television stations I managed never failed to air

dozens of news bulletins at the appointed time daily, and that I would seek legal advice

on his statement. He apologized, and I never got the job. Yet in another job interview, I

was told that having climbed the ladder to vice president level in my native country, I

would not find a company that would offer me a job, as all VP positions were filled. The

gentleman asked me to cut my resume to size so that I would lie that I never rose to the

position of VP. I did not follow his advice, and I never got the job.

The resume, too, was a source of frustration for me. Coming from an Anglophone country, I had never heard of the term 'resume' being used to refer to a curriculum vitae, or CV, the latter being the term that is used worldwide. In my job hunt, I have never met two human resources professionals who agree on the style and structure of the resume. My interpretation of one of my major challenges, therefore, was to come up with a one-page resume that met the demands of employers but left out the fact that I was once a VP of a news media corporation. I consider the issue of the resume, as opposed to a curriculum vitae, as one phenomenon that created a deterrent to getting a job. Like the Participant, the only jobs I got during the asylum-seeking period were menial ones in customer service capacities.

Subtheme 5: Inaccessibility to healthcare. The Participant entered the country while she was expecting a baby. She attributed her premature birth of a baby boy, two weeks after her arrival in the United States, to the cultural challenges that led to fear and stress. Giving birth to an American child entitled her to health care facilities to which she otherwise would not have had access. She narrated this aspect of her experiences in this way:

> When Catholic Charities saw that I was expecting, they recommended me a
> hospital...So, I went there, and they saw me expecting, of course. They provided
> me with all the necessary exams, vitamins, and everything because I was not in
> good shape. I was really sick, so they took care of me. In the delivery [room], I
> remember, I was having a baby, they had to put a translator [interpreter] because I
> couldn't understand the doctor. The translator was actually a priest from Haiti,

and in the delivery room, they put a phone, so that he can translate for me whatever people were saying.

At the time, the Participant did not understand why, but the health care provision continued after the baby was born. The fact was, because the Participant gave birth on American soil, her baby became an American citizen. The Participant stated:

When he [the baby] was born, he had some issues. I stayed at the hospital, and everything was taken care of. We were like no money . . . For me, I was just praying that I would be OK and will need nothing, and luckily, I was fine, till I was able to get a professional job, much later, with health care and all that.

While health care facilities were available for the baby, these were not available to the Participant. The knowledge that she was not entitled to these facilities, she believed, was what strengthened her to the extent that after giving birth, she never needed to be hospitalized before she qualified for health care. She contended that:

If I did [fall ill], I probably made sure to ignore it. I probably went to get some Advil or something, and I just made sure that I had to stay strong. This is a period of my life where I can honestly say, I don't remember, honestly, whether I fell sick. You put yourself in a . . . you discipline yourself to really shut down a few things in your life. This is one of them. I don't remember being sick during that time. I don't remember. Is it because I didn't want to, or I was determined I knew I had nowhere to go if I was sick? If I did, maybe a headache, I'm pretty sure, but I don't remember anything. Going to the hospital? No. Emergency Room? No.

Researcher's response to lack of access to health care. Like the Participant, none of my family members had access to health care facilities, except through job-related insurance programs. Like the Participant, my family learned to ignore illness. However, the lack of access to health care facilities came to me more as a cultural shock than it was a part of the asylum-seeking phenomenon. Unlike any other countries I had lived in prior to my seeking asylum, there is no universal health care provision in the United States. This means that health care provision, whether for citizens or asylum seekers, is not a right. I remember visiting someone in Alabama, and I fell ill there. My guest called the ambulance, I was taken to the hospital, only to be discharged a few hours later after undergoing some examinations. While I didn't expect a free ride back home from the hospital, and ended up hiring a cab, I did not expect my bill to be in thousands of dollars for the seemingly little work the hospital had done. It came as a shock to me that the bills included one from the fire department, and another from the ambulance service, both services which, in the countries I had lived prior to my coming to the United States, are services provided freely to the public, irrespective of one's nationality. Arising from the few hours I had spent in that hospital, I received bills from several medical facilities in several states, away from Alabama. It took me several years to pay those bills, and sometimes, I had to argue with staff from offices whose bills I had already paid, as they were demanding payment again. Fortunately, I kept all my bank statements which showed the payments I had already made. My visit to the hospital, and the arguments over paid bills that were declared unpaid, informed me of how confusing and inefficient the health care industry was.

My ambulance trip to the hospital was also a stark reminder of the times we were living in, too. In my sick status, one of the Emergency Medical Team persons interrogated me in a manner that suggested he suspected me of being a terrorist. At the time, U.S. President George W. Bush had just declared a war against terrorism and against Iraq, so I understood why I was being treated in that manner. Often, I used to wonder how 9/11 would affect my asylum application.

Unlike the Participant, who got free health care provision during childbirth, I never had access to free health care services. But like the Participant, my family and I learned to ignore illness, or we simply became our own doctors by buying off-shelf medications from pharmacies and supermarkets.

Subtheme 6: Housing a big challenge. Accompanied by a young child and heavy with baby, the Participant needed good shelter from her first day in the United States. But with only $20.00 to her name, she could not afford to hire a cab to take her anywhere, let alone afford a motel room. A chance encounter with an African American woman, facilitated by the attention that was created when the Participant cried over her damaged luggage, led to a free bed on the Participant's first day in the United States. She narrated:

> So, we're [my son and I] talking in French, and this lady comes to me and says, "I just speak a little bit of French, and I wanted to ask you if everyone from your plane got off." So, she could say that in French, and I said, "I think so." And I asked her why, and she said, "Because I was waiting for my boyfriend. I came to wait for him, and he's from Ivory Coast. He speaks French." So, then, she asks me, "So, are you OK? Why are you crying?" So, I told her a little bit, I said, "No,

I just don't know . . . I need to go to this place." I give her . . . I showed her then

the piece of paper, and she said it was a Saturday, and she said, "It's closed." And

that's why she said, "Listen, you could stay maybe with me today, but tomorrow,

I'll find a place where you could go and stay."

The following day, the African American woman helped the Participant and her

child find a homeless shelter, marking the beginning of a series of home changes that

included staying with a Latino family and living in transitional housing for homeless

women. Asked how she ended up with the Latino family, and for how long she stayed in

transitional housing, she responded:

When I went to Catholic Charities, I met some other people that were also

waiting. So, basically, probably a month. About a month at the shelter, and then I

was in transitional housing . . . as that lady [the African American] was able to

help me find a place. From there, I went to live with a Spanish [Latino] family.

They gave us a room.

Again, staying with the Latino family was a result of a chance encounter. She

explained:

I think at the Catholic Charities, it was almost like it was meant for me to go to

Catholic Charities. There, in the waiting room, there will be people. They will be

talking, and sometimes, someone will come and ask, "How are you doing? Do

you want this?" and share things. And I think . . . there, I talked to a lady who also

was speaking a little bit of French. She was actually a pastor, and her daughter

married someone from France. She's the one who said to me, "Listen, if I find a

family, I'll let you know." And when she did, she did come and get me where I

was, and so we could go there.

The Participant stated that the space made available to her family of three at the

Latino family home was inadequate. She put it this way:

We had one small room, one little bed. It was just a twin bed. We didn't have a

baby bed, and we just had the one, and we shared it, the three of us. She was very

nice, and she helped me. And because we didn't have a place to cook, she could

be cooking, and we could just be eating with her.

The Participant faced challenges associated with sharing a home with strangers.

She philosophized that the period she spent at the Latino family's home was one of self-

reflection, determination, and resolve to beat the odds against her. Although the Latino

family that hosted the Participant spoke very little English and did not speak a word of

French, on hindsight, there were positive lessons to learn from the experience. The

Participant responded:

At the same time, I felt like it [living with strangers] was an amazing experience,

though it was painful. At times that I needed to ask something, I can't find the

word to say, and I had to take a piece of paper and pen to draw. So, the lady

would see, or her husband would say, "Oh, this is what you're saying!"

Sometimes we would draw things and communicate like that. This is how we

sometimes communicated, as difficult as it was. Sometimes, if I really needed

something, like I was so hungry, I couldn't even say something. It's like, "OK, it

takes too much energy, so you know what, I'm just going to rest right now.

Maybe in the evening, I'll see how I feel." So, it was very draining, very emotional.

The Participant opined that the Latino family were very helpful, to the extent that the Participant's next housing came through that family. The Participant explained:

The Spanish lady said to me, "Listen, there's a very good program, and I can take you there, and they may give you a house for two years." And then she said, "We gonna put your name on the list, and it may take too long, and it may not take, but whatever it takes, you may stay here because you have your room."

True to her hostess's word, the Participant finally found her first ever place she could call her own home. She stated:

After we stayed there [with the Latino family]—I think after 3 to 4 months—an organization dealing with housing called me for an interview. That program is for abused women. After they interviewed me, the lady said to me, "Listen, you're the one I'm gonna give it to immediately because your story is just amazing. We need to help you." So, she said to me, "There are a few people, they're about to leave, and we'll call you back." After a month, they called me back, and we had a two-bedroom apartment. And at that moment, I was able to concentrate on getting employment, after I was able to find a place for the boys.

Researcher's response to housing as a big challenge. Unlike the Participant, my family did not experience extreme housing challenges during the asylum-seeking period. We booked hotel rooms online, and when we arrived in Atlanta, through a chance meeting with a Kenyan immigrant, we rented a two-bedroom townhouse. Like the

Participant, chance meetings with fellow immigrants characterized our settling-down process. Although we had to make physiological and mental adjustments to living in a smaller space, the townhouse provided adequate shelter for people in our circumstances. It took us time to accept that it was safe to live in an ungated community, as the crime rate in Atlanta was certainly lower than what we had experienced in our native land. I remember getting up several times in the night to check if our cars had not been stolen because they were not protected by a security fence, and there were no night guards on duty. We never stayed in a shelter, and neither did we ever ask for public assistance.

Subtheme 7: Nonprofit sector support and absence of social networking.

Although not a direct result of the main theme of cultural differences, and it was not as recurrent as the other subthemes, nonprofit sector support and absence of social networking emerged as a theme Miles et al. (2014) would refer to as "'important,' 'significant'" (p. 282). Having just arrived in the United States, the Participant had neither friends, family, nor the language skills to navigate her new social environment. The absence of a social support group meant that the Participant depended mainly on Catholic Charities, the nonprofit that provided her with free immigration legal services. It was at this nonprofit that she met fellow asylum seekers who led her to finding avenues for survival. She did not know of any government programs she could turn to for support. The first act of kindness she witnessed in her new country came from a total stranger, the African American woman who gave her a bed on her first night. Without friends or family, her entire asylum-seeking period made her depend on chance meetings that led to beneficial results.

Asked if, at Catholic Charities, at immigration services offices, or anywhere she had been during the asylum-seeking process, she considered she had been treated unfairly in relation to other people, the Participant responded that she could not make any comparison, as she knew of no other persons who were in her situation closely enough to discuss such issues. Her concern, mainly, was how to survive. She responded this way:

> I didn't know very much [I didn't know many people]. At the time I was living in a shelter, I probably met one person [asylee], and only because of my legal background, I chose not to compare my case with another case. I didn't want to think about anything else but my case.

The Participant's lack of communication skills in the English language meant that even the fellow asylees at Catholic Charities from whom she could ask for support of any kind had to be French-speaking. The African American woman who gave her a bed to sleep in on her first night in the United States spoke some French. The person who connected her to the Latino family that hosted her for months spoke a little French. The first person to ever offer her a job was from Haiti, a French-speaking country. The Participant recalled that first job offer episode as follows:

> My sons and I used to go there [MacDonald's], and we would be playing, so the manager got to know us, and he said to me, "Listen, if you want . . ." He was from Haiti. He said, "If you find someone to take care of your kids at night, you can come here and work."

Following upon her response that she found someone to take care of her baby and child while she was working, I asked the Participant if she ever made friends during the asylum-seeking period, and she postulated:

They were not friends, but they were people you got to know. We are now friends because I still have some of them in my life today. Then, they were just Good Samaritans—put it that way. And they were. Because of all these people, I have learned one valuable thing, which is to share. Sometimes, people say, "I give and give," but I received so much. They were strangers, but Good Samaritans. People with really good hearts. I didn't know them, and they didn't know me. I saw all of that happening, and I learned from that. They could ask me [for] help, too. They could ask, "Could you do this for me?" and I would say, "Today, I can do it. Can you do this?" So, it's possible that we were just helping each other, without knowing who we were, exactly. Until years later, now we can call ourselves friends. Back then, for me, it was like, if this is going to help me, it's going to help me, and I'll take it. By the time I went for my asylum [interview], most of them, I had known them for months. And I knew them because of where I met them, so if anything happened, I knew I could go back there. So, I could trust them only because of where I [had] met them.

Catholic Charities played a major role in Participant's asylum-seeking. The Catholic Charities, through its Catholic Immigration Services section, is a religious nonprofit whose mission is to "provide support services that enable families to overcome barriers and achieve self-sufficiency" in the areas of counseling, education, parenting,

refugee settlement, and immigration (Catholic Charities Atlanta, 2016-2017). Asked how she found out about the organization that enabled her to obtain asylum status, the Participant stated:

> Actually, someone gave me their names and phone numbers from the Congo. I think it was a lady that I knew. She's a U.S. citizen . . . She was dating a guy that I knew. And so, sometimes we'd be talking and talking, and I think I mentioned something one day without saying much, because when you're there in the Congo, you're really afraid to say [much]. But she did mention Catholic Charities or something like that, and so, that's how I knew Catholic Charities.

Arriving almost emptyhanded at her port of entry to the United States on a weekend, the Participant believed that all she needed was to call the Catholic Services number and she would be offered accommodation while she sought asylum. While that was not to be the case, for the Catholic Charities offices were closed for the weekend, and the organization does not provide accommodation, the Participant, nonetheless, was later to find the organization to be most supportive. In responding to the question on what organizations or persons assisted her walk through the asylum-seeking process, the Participant narrated her experiences in this way:

> I worked with Catholic Charities. They really understood. First of all, they made sure they got someone who spoke French because it was important for them that they understood what I was going to say and the case they were going to take. (Although) I had someone who was translating, they [still] found me an attorney who spoke a little French, and someone who knew the situation in the DRC. She

knew a little bit about the situation there, and she knew where to get information.

I think she went through some group in Washington, DC and got a support letter

to corroborate my story on the situation in the Congo at that time. She's the one

who knew exactly . . . she really guided me very well, and I have recommended

her to a lot of people, but the list of people seeking help was very long. (Asylum

seekers) were put on the waiting list, and sometimes, time is not enough, as you

have to apply [for asylum] within a year of your entry in the U.S.. Yes, the

Catholic Charities took my case, and I had a very good experience with them.

The Participant did not incur any expenses that arose directly from the asylum-

seeking process, such as attorney or application fees payable to immigration authorities.

All these expenses were met by Catholic Charities. Because of that, she found a way to

pay back, as she narrated:

What I did, actually, I went to volunteer there after I received my asylum. For me,

it was a way to pay them back. I worked there . . . as a volunteer. I even attended

some seminar on immigration and asylum. I went there to even help them put

together a case, to arrange a few things. I went to make tea, make coffee, clean the

room. I did it after I finished [got asylum] because they had changed my life.

Researcher's response to Nonprofit sector support and absence of social

networking. My family and I share some parallels with the Participant's experiences. A

chance meeting with a total stranger led to us finding a home to rent. Like the Participant,

we too were represented by Catholic Charities' immigration attorneys. The lawyers were

very supportive, to the extent that even after she left Georgia for California, one of our

two main attorneys and I have continued to correspond. This attorney also went out of her way to play an active role in seeking study participants for this study.

I too experienced long waiting times. Because 93% of its clients are poor people (Catholic Charities Atlanta, 2016-2017), it was not always easy to even leave a telephone message for the office, or if one was left, it was never returned. The nonprofit was a very busy place.

Like the Participant, I also found it hard to make friends during my asylum-seeking period. Most of the people I met at work places were either of a very young age, in their 20s and 30s, and I was in my late 40s. Since these were people who performed menial jobs, we did not share the same social or political interests, to the extent that we saw the world from different viewpoints. I have since come to realize that it is hard to make friends in your later years, as your best friends come mainly from your days of youth. In my case, my best friends in my home country were those I met in university. Similarly, some of my closest friends now are those I met at Walden University, especially those with whom I shared the same residency cohorts.

Unlike the Participant, Catholic Charities billed my family for the services we received from them. We never received any form of assistance, material or financial, from anyone or any organization during my asylum-seeking era. The costs I incurred with Catholic Charities included discounted attorney fees, full government application fees, and work permit fees. I also paid for immigration-related medical exams, such as HIV-AIDS tests, at medical facilities.

In a process where an asylum-seeker's next meeting with an immigration officer after meeting one at the port of entry is a casual one during a photoshoot occasion for a work permit, it is difficult to know if one is being treated fairly in relation to other persons or not, especially when the asylum seeker knows of no fellow asylum seekers. My experience was that issues of immigration status are held secret among immigrants. It is difficult to know who is seeking asylum, or who is undocumented, as many immigrants are too scared to reveal their immigration status.

Subtheme 8: Asylum interview intimidating. In response to the question, what should be done to improve the asylum-seeking process, the Participant's narrative was thoughtful, emphatic, and emotional:

The interview, itself. You see, we all come from other countries, we've already gone through so much. If I just didn't talk to myself every five minutes, like, really, you don't need to look at anything else, you just need to stay with your story, stay with your story . . . Your heart beats so fast, you feel like your life is going just in front of your eyes. This is a moment which is a very, very important moment, and it is absolutely stressful because of the officer who is in front of you. They don't smile, they don't . . . And I understand they have to be very professional. They are even scary, sometimes. You look at them, it's like if you're not someone of a strong personality or strong character, you are going to fall apart even before the interview [takes place]. It's a very intimidating situation.

Recognizing the need for immigration officers to do their job namely, to ensure that only those who qualified were granted asylum, the Participant argued:

I'm not asking them [immigration officers] to give us coffee or a piece of

something when we get there, but make it like, in this process, I'm here to listen

to you, not that I'm here to get you. Basically, it's like when you look at them, it's

like, "I'm gonna get you today." It's not healthy. They should consider that

someone is seeking asylum, give me the benefit of the doubt, listen to me, instead

of like, "Today, you'll see what's gonna happen to you." And so, that's something

I'm hoping that they will make it less stressful. And sometimes, someone will

come in the room and say something to the officer, and all that makes you feel

like you're in an interrogation room, like a police station. And you know, you can

forget your thoughts; you can forget exactly what happened because it is very

much intimidating. I compare it to my naturalization process, which was like, "Hi,

how are you?" I mean, it was so nice. Even the green card process, it was much

better than asylum. Asylum was like, today, if I can cut you to pieces and put you

somewhere, I will.'

Having heard about the intimidating nature of the asylum interview before she

attended her own interview, the Participant realized the need to be both physically and

emotionally prepared for that occasion. She summed up her feelings as follows:

I remember [finding] someone to take care of my boys. I actually asked the

person to take them the night before [the interview], so that I could not just pray

very much, but also I can make sure that every single part of myself is in sync;

that my mind would be talking to my body, and what would come out of my

mouth would be exactly what needs to come [out], that nothing inside me is

falling. I just needed to make sure that when I sit there, I'm me, one person, one mind, everything completely together, because I knew that I could either get the rejection, or I could get a pass. So, I had to spiritually and emotionally prepare myself.

Despite the hostile nature of the asylum interview itself, and the anxiety that came with it, the Participant felt she was prepared to have her application approved. In her own words:

I just went there [to the interview] to present my case, and to present it clearly . . . [The immigration officer] would say, "Yes, I understand," and I could see inside her head. My English wasn't good enough to know if my translator was doing a good job when the officer kept saying, "Yes . . . OK . . . yes," and not repeating any questions or showing frustration because she didn't get the point. She would ask the next question [instead] because she had understood the previous question. You could tell that the logic of the questioning was going one after another one. So, it was good. She gave me the impression that she was understanding me, despite the fact that I had a translator.

Asked if she believed that her individual circumstances were taken into consideration during the asylum-seeking process, the Participant stated that immigration authorities believed her story, and she attributed that to her legal background:

I think my case was well-presented, in the sense that they [immigration authorities] could understand my past, present, and future fears and the persecution as well. So, with my legal background, I knew that I had to get

straight to the point when I answered questions. The officer was—at the beginning, they tend to push you a little bit and, of course, she did. But in the middle of the interview, I think she got the points I was making, one after another. I felt that we were communicating well. I knew she understood what I was saying.

Even though she was not sure if immigration authorities treated every asylum-seeker in a fair manner, the Participant believed that the asylum interviewer was fair to her, and that the decision made to grant her asylum was the right one:

Whether she [the immigration officer] was unfair [to other asylum seekers] is a little difficult for me to say because I didn't know a lot of people at that time. Only after my interview did I meet many people and I got to listen to their stories and how the interviews went. It was after my interview that I could tell if the officer [who interviewed me] was OK or not, and I concluded that during my interview, I was treated fairly.

The Participant's experience was that asylum seekers should prepare a solid, believable case, stating that:

It's not so much about the officer . . . get prepared. People will have a good story, but when they get there [at the interview], they fall apart . . . the attorney cannot redirect [improve] the story. She's there to represent and take care of everything, but she cannot answer for you. She was actually sitting there, and the translator, and then me.

The Participant narrated that before her asylum interview, her attorney sat her down and told her the truth, as opposed to giving her false hope. In the Participant's own words:

> She said, "I cannot answer for you. I just want to make sure that the way you explained to me, when you go there, you do the same." So, she did explain to me, and she said, "I know you're familiar with the court ambience and all of that atmosphere. So, it's not much of a court, but still, it's not gonna be that easy. So, you have to make sure that you answer the questions. You have to make sure that you answer the right way, the questions, because it's not just answering the questions."

Researcher's response to the intimidatory nature of the asylum interview. My experience with asylum-seeking was, in many ways, similar to the Participant's. Before I left my home country, I read about the asylum-seeking interview, and I watched a program on the asylum interview on CNN International. When the time for the asylum interview came, my attorney walked me through the process. Like the Participant's attorney, my lawyers advised me of the consequences of my application being turned down. I would have to appeal the decision to an immigration judge, and I had heard that Atlanta-based immigration judges were known to be hostile to asylum applicants. When, four years after applying for asylum, I was eventually invited to an imposing federal building downtown Atlanta for the interview, my family and I, like the Participant, felt intimidated.

Against the backdrop of mental fatigue arising from the long wait and high fees for work permits, performing menial jobs, expensive or inaccessible health care, my Catholic Charities attorney and I faced the asylum interviewer with confidence. Our confidence stemmed from the fact that my case was well-documented and was based on true, and not fictitious, events. Like the Participant, I had not slept well the previous night. I was scared of the consequences of losing my asylum application. My children had adapted well to our new environment, and I had no idea what the consequences of having to take them to another country would be.

The female interviewer had a professional demeanor without necessarily being intimidating. Like the Participant, I accepted that the officer had a duty to do what was right for the country and for my family at the same time. She had to balance those needs, and she could do that only by being fair. Being fair meant listening to the facts I had presented in my detailed application narrative and listening to what I had to say during the interview. She did not allow me to speak to my notes. I answered her repeated and rephrased questions as best I could, truthfully, and sometimes emotionally, because recalling the events that led to my sudden departure from my home country and having to do so to a stranger evoked negative emotion. It was a harrowing experience that seemed to have no ending. I cannot recall how long the interview took. I do not remember contradicting myself because, like the Participant, I stuck to the truth, as I had experienced it firsthand. It was difficult to tell from the officer's emotion-free tone of voice, or from her calm demeanor, if she believed or did not believe my story, and whether she would grant me asylum or not.

When, a few weeks later, I was informed that my asylum had been granted, I concluded that the interviewing officer had taken my individual circumstances into consideration and treated me fairly. The otherwise intimidating interview had gone well. I believe what makes the asylum interview seem intimidating is the total sum of all the negative events that take place prior to the interview, and not the interview per se.

Table 1 below illustrates the interrelationships among the themes, where cultural challenges is the overarching theme that hindered the Participant's competitiveness in the job market, leading to her inability to provide for herself and family. Table 1 does not show the positive themes of support from the nonprofit sector and the positive lessons the Participant learned from the asylum-seeking experience.
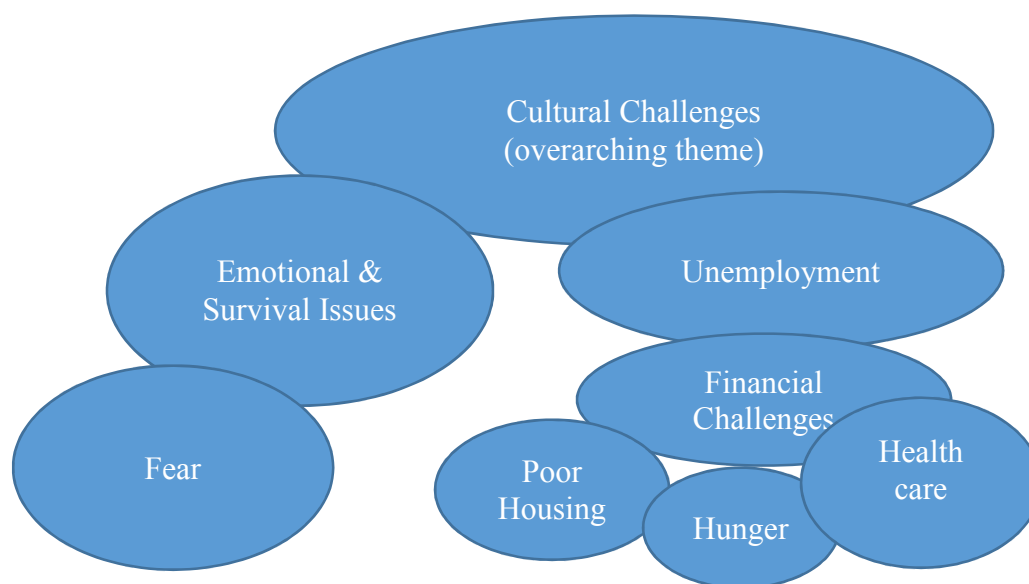

Figure 1. Interrelationships among negative themes from the interview

Summary

In this chapter, I presented the results of the study on the perceptions of asylum seekers in the United States about the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process since September 11, 2001. I reported that, due to the negative political environment pertaining to immigrants during the period of the study, only one person took part in the study. I quoted heavily from the Participant's narratives to tell the story of what she witnessed during the period she waited for adjudication of her application for asylum, and I gave an autobiographical reflective description of my own experiences of the asylum-seeking phenomenon with an emphasis on self-observation. In Chapter 5, I present my interpretation of the study's findings, make recommendations for further research, and discuss the findings' implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Asylum seekers have been described by many scholars as a vulnerable people who face many challenges, such as, but not limited to, cultural adjustments, discrimination, disease, mental health issues, poverty, legal, financial, and housing problems (Barneche, 2014; Chai et al., 2013; Kaibuku, 2016; Kalt et al., 2013; Kerwin, 2012; Piwowarczyk et al., 2008; Samaddar, 2005; Welch, 2004). The purpose of this study was to discover and understand the perspectives of asylum seekers in the United States about the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process since 9/11. To discover these perspectives, I chose a biographical narrative approach because I believed that would facilitate a vehicle for participants to give thick descriptions of their experiences of the phenomenon. I conducted the study because, after searching the body of knowledge on the asylum-seeking experience after 9/11, I concluded that despite the United States being a leading democracy in the world, the possibility exists that the country's preoccupation with the fight against international terrorism, especially since 9/11, could lead to asylum seekers being exposed to the contradictions of individual vis a vis community rights that are inherent in democratic societies. With the knowledge gained from the study, it is possible that changes in public policy that may address the challenges faced by asylum seekers could be addressed by relevant authorities.

To understand the challenges faced by both asylum seekers and those who administer the asylum-seeking process, I chose Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory as a tool that could effectively facilitate a better awareness of the

phenomenon. According to Benet (2013), the polarities of democracy theory is made up of 10 elements, which fall under the five polarity pairs of freedom and authority, justice and due process, diversity and equality, human rights and communal obligations, and participation and representation. The theory is a tool that can be used to manage, and not necessarily resolve, problems that present themselves in every walk of life as dilemmas. The literature review and the results of this study show that while asylum seekers face challenges mainly of a survival nature, immigration authorities face the challenges of administering justice against a background of the needs of the community vis a vis the rights of the individual. I believe that the polarities of democracy theory could be used to leverage the challenges and dilemmas faced by the two sides in the asylum-seeking process, the administrators and the asylum seekers. By leveraging the upsides of a problem with the downsides, a dilemma could be managed so that both sides receive the maximum possible from an insoluble problem. In this way, those who are at the receiving end of the equation suffer the least pain, and those who must inflict pain do so with utmost restraint.

While I designed the research question to discover the positive and negative aspects of the study phenomenon, the findings of my enquiry were mainly negative. The key findings showed that there were more negative than positive aspects of the asylum-seeking process in the United States. The negative aspects arose mainly from cultural differences between the host nation and my only participant's native country. These cultural differences led to emotional and survival issues, which were characterized by fear, unemployment, homelessness, hunger, inaccessibility to health care, and lack of a

social support network. The Participant's lack of economic power translated into poverty.

The three key positive findings from the study were (a) the support the Participant

received from the nonprofit sector; (b) the positive adjudication of her asylum

application, which she took to mean that authorities took into consideration her individual

circumstances; and (c) the lessons she learned from the experience. These findings seem

to support some but not all the findings in the body of literature I discussed in Chapter 2.

I also concluded that although the polarity pair of human rights and communal

obligations seems to be overarchingly relevant to the study of the United States' war

against international terrorism, out of the five pairs of the polarity of democracy theory,

the findings of this study relate primarily to the polarity pairs of freedom and authority,

justice and due process, and diversity and equality.

Interpretation of the Findings

Comparison of Findings With the Literature

The findings of this one-case study confirm, disconfirm, and extend knowledge of

the asylum-seeking phenomenon. In this study, I sought to discover what positive and/or

negative viewpoints of asylum seekers could be attributed to the asylum-seeking process

in the United States. After answering the 14 questions posed to her in a face-to-face

interview, followed by another interview over the telephone, the Participant affirmed that

cultural challenges constituted the overarching theme. The Participant confirmed what

was revealed by the literature review of this study that the asylum-seeking process is

overly challenging. This means that while the Participant experienced some positive

aspects of the asylum-seeking process, the negative characteristics by far overshadowed

the positive sides. The study's Participant suffered emotional issues that she learned to fend off for fear that she would slip into depression and other mental health conditions. This confirms findings in the literature review by many scholars (e.g. Barneche, 2014; Brane & Lee, 2013; Rothman, Farris & Poe, 2009) that due to the many challenges they face, asylum seekers suffer trauma and emotional issues. The Participant also confirmed the findings by Ray (2013) that the United States asylum-seeking process encourages persons to enter the country on falsified reasons namely, that they are visitors who intend to go back to their native countries when, in fact, they intend to apply for asylum. The Participant's frustration, which triggered fear, arose from survival issues of poor housing, unemployment, hunger, lack of health care, the absence of social network support, and the possibility of deportation if her asylum application was not successful.

The study results also showed that while the Participant did not experience all the themes uncovered by the literature review, there was little disparity, in terms of content, between the themes revealed in Chapter 2 and those presented by the study's findings. The study identified three disconfirming cases, though. The first of such cases was the Participant's awareness, or lack of ignorance, of the asylum-seeking process, the converse of which some studies (e.g. Allard, 2013; Kerwin, 2012; Nessel, 2015) stated was a major cause of negative adjudication in asylum application cases. Being a practicing attorney in her home country, the Participant had a good idea of what to expect from the asylum-seeking procedure. The second disconfirming case was that the Participant experienced neither hostility nor discrimination of any form during the asylum-seeking period. In the literature review, Brane and Lee (2013) and Lim (2013)

discovered that asylum seekers faced discrimination based on race. The third

disconfirming case concerned a cluster of subthemes that caused fear. While the

Participant experienced fear, the fear did not arise from an awareness that she could be

arrested and detained. She was, however, aware that she would be deported if the

immigration court system ruled against her application. Kalt et al. (2013) stated that some

asylum seekers were detained, exposed to violence in detention camps, and, sometimes,

separated from their families. According to Brane and Lee (2013), women were often

detained longer than men. The Participant responded that she was not aware that some

asylum seekers ended up being detained and taken away from their families. The

Participant had two children, one of them a newborn. Similarly, because she was never

arrested, the Participant never experienced nor anticipated physical violence against her.

While scholars in the literature review found that immigration authorities

suspected that asylum seekers lied about the reasons for seeking asylum (Allard, 2013;

Cheng, 2011; Hamlin, 2012; Einhorn, 2011), the Participant responded that her reasons

for seeking asylum were never questioned. I believe this could be attributed to the fact

that the Participant came from a war-torn country. The Participant responded that she was

sure that her side of the story would be well received by authorities, so her major concern

was about survival issues and getting her application approved.

Table 1 shows the negative themes and subthemes from both the literature and

from the Participant's narrative. I found that out of 17 negative themes found in the

literature, the Participant experienced only seven such afflictions.

Table 1

Literature Review Versus Study Participant Negative Themes/Subthemes

Theme	Found in literature review	Experienced by participant
Fear	✓	✓
Arrest	✓	X
Detention	✓	X
Deportation	✓	X
Depression/Anxiety/Trauma	✓	✓
Suspicion	✓	X
Hostility	✓	X
Discrimination	✓	X
Hunger	✓	✓
Unemployment/Financial/Poverty	✓	✓
Violence	✓	X
Legal Expenses	✓	X
Ignorance of asylum process/confusing	✓	X
Absence of due process	✓	X
Poor/inadequate housing	✓	✓
Lack of health care	✓	✓
Social networking	✓	✓

I dedicate the next section of this chapter to an examination of the study results and their interpretation against the background of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) theory of polarities of democracy.

Comparison of the Findings to Benet's Polarities of Democracy Theory

With 13.2% of the United States population being foreign-born (U. S. Census Bureau, n.d.), many families speak languages other than English, the language that is spoken by most Americans. The literature in Chapter 2 of this study shows that during the first decade of the 21st century, 66% of Americans were opposed to an increase in the numbers of foreign persons coming to the United States as immigrants (Iyengar et al., 2013). The majority of asylum seekers in the United States come from non-English-speaking countries (DHS Office of Immigration Services, 2011; Martin & Yankey, 2014), meaning that many immigrants face cultural challenges similar to those faced by the study's Participant. To compound this problem, immigration authorities are not compelled to provide interpreters to asylum seekers who do not speak English (Moya, 2012). The lack of understanding or competence in English could lead to the asylum-seeking process being viewed by asylum seekers as being confusing and complicated (Kerwin, 2012). Piworwarczyk et al. (2008) opined that learning how to speak English is a must for asylum seekers. It was not uncommon, therefore, that the study's Participant, who spoke only French at the time of her arrival in the United States, identified cultural differences as her major source of frustration. The success of her asylum application, her chances of finding a job, her ability to communicate with other persons, and her present

and future depended, to a large extent, on how quickly she could learn the English language. The quest to speak English and integrate into American society led to emotional challenges. This communication barrier led to frustration and a sense of alienation. For instance, when she lived with a Latino family, she sometimes avoided asking questions on survival issues, and often she found answers to her questions by chance. These revelations by the Participant confirmed what was held in the peer-reviewed literature that asylum seekers' inability to speak English posed a major source of frustration and resulted in negative adjudication of asylum applications. It would seem, therefore, that it can be generalized that cultural challenges are a major source of frustration among the majority of asylum seekers in the United States.

According to Benet (2013), the polarities of democracy theory could be used by societies "to successfully manage the polarities so as to maximize the positive aspects and minimize the negative aspects" (p. 26). Both the literature review and the results of this study demonstrate that the polarity pair of justice and due process comes into play in the asylum-seeking phenomenon. Benet (2006) argued that justice and due process are "necessary elements . . . that are essential for the attainment of democracy" (p. 140). Benet (2006) further opined that democracy must cater to the needs of "both the individual and organizational (and societal) goods" (p. 142). While this study's Participant had the backing of Catholic Charities, a nonprofit that made an interpreter available to her gratis during the entire course of her asylum-seeking process, the absence of provision that obligates immigration authorities to provide an interpreter to asylum applicants who cannot afford one could lead to negative adjudication of asylum

applications. Asylum seekers come to the United States to seek protection from violation of their human rights and fear for their lives. To asylum seekers, therefore, applications for asylum are a matter of life and death.

While asylum cases are decided upon by immigration officers, applications which are not approved by immigration officers may be adjudicated upon by immigration courts. To expect asylum seekers who do not speak English and cannot afford to hire an interpreter who meets the basic requirements of an interpreter does not guarantee such applicants any measure of justice and due process. While the upsides of the justice element of the justice and due process polarity pair in the polarities of democracy model would call for the provision of attorneys and interpreters to asylum seekers as a means of guaranteeing applicants' human rights, the downside of the polarity pair is that these resources would pose a big financial burden on the public budget. The Participant believes that in her case, justice was done when her asylum application was adjudicated favorably.

The study's results showed that based on her immigration status, the Participant was denied employment, leading to her being subjected to hunger, and living in poor housing. Being jobless also meant that she had no access to health care. The polarity pair of diversity and equality constitutes an essential tenet of a democratic society, where "the upsides of diversity include serving as a motivating force for creativity, hard work, diligence, competitiveness, and commitment to excellence," (Benet, 2006, p. 180). Benet stated that the downsides of the diversity element include, among other things, an environment that promotes oppression, poverty, "and the loss of self-esteem," (Benet,

2006, p. 181). The study Participant responded that for some time after filing her application for asylum, she had no authority to work, hence she could not show her competitiveness in a place of work. The upsides of equality do the opposite of the downside of diversity by thwarting domination and oppression, leading to "the elimination of poverty and the promotion of self-esteem," (Benet, 2006, p. 181). It is clear from the study results that the absence of the leveraging of the diversity and equality pair led to the Participant not having access to employment, adequate housing, and health care, resulting in fear, emotional and social challenges. The leveraging of the upsides of the polarity pair of diversity and equality would make asylum seekers get a sense of inclusiveness and promote fairness, creativity and innovation. Leveraging the downsides of the polarity pair of diversity and equality would reduce fear, poverty, a sense of hopelessness and resentment toward a system that denies asylum seekers the right to make a living.

Likewise, because the Participant was denied the right to make choices about whether to work or not, the polarity of freedom and authority was not leveraged well. Asylum seekers may only seek employment after immigration authorities have granted them the right to work. Suffice to say, therefore, that this restriction of freedom must be understood within the context of the element of authority within the freedom and authority polarity pair. Countries make laws to regulate human behavior, and in that process, individuals may get hurt. Asylum seekers are foreign persons who enter a country where the asylum laws must be followed. However, in the case of the diversity and equality polarity pair, leveraging the upsides and downsides of the freedom and

authority polarity pair would have reduced the Participant's suffering, while government authorities would still have the option of restricting her freedom if the asylum seeker was found to be a security risk to the country.

Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study on the perceptions of asylum seekers about the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process in the United States after 9/11 was my inability, due to the prevailing negative political climate on immigration at the time of participant recruitment, to recruit the original planned 15 participants. By using only one participant in the study, I missed an opportunity to collect volumes of data from a diverse source of participants. Collecting data from both males and females, family members and single persons, highly skilled and nonskilled participants, would probably have resulted in more discrepant cases that would have led to broadened new knowledge on the phenomenon. I had originally chosen to study the perceptions of asylum seekers in the Greater Atlanta area of the state of Georgia because, from the literature, I had learned that Atlanta has unique asylum-seeker characteristics.

Recommendations

The asylum-seeking process in the United States is an extremely challenging phenomenon. It is characterized by challenges on the part of the asylum seeker, and dilemmas on the part of those who administer it. To lessen these burdens and maximize the benefits that can be derived from the phenomenon, government authorities ought to leverage the upsides and downsides of the relevant polarity pairs of Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory. In this case, effective leveraging of the polarities or

challenges would entail maximizing the upsides and minimizing the downsides faced by both asylum seekers on the one hand, and those who administer the asylum-seeking process on the other hand.

There is need for further study of the asylum-seeking phenomenon. A mixed phenomenological study with a larger sample could unearth the number of persons that are negatively affected by the phenomenon against the current backdrops of international terrorism and anti-immigrant rhetoric from the right. Such a study would also discover how, why, and when these afflictions take place. A comparative study of how the phenomenon is managed in the United States and in some European Union countries would also provide insights into what can be done to manage the dilemmas that beleaguer this perennial global problem.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The primary finding of this study was that the Participant experienced extreme hardships arising from the cultural differences between her home country and those pertaining in the United States. The Participant did not speak English, resulting in her finding it hard to communicate with others. This cultural difference exacerbated the negative aspects of her asylum-seeking experience to a point of making her fear she might lose her sanity. Due to her immigration status, the Participant was not allowed to work, a factor which led to hunger, poor housing, and lack of health care. Most of these findings confirm the conclusions made by scholars cited in the literature review.

I believe that the findings of this study could have implications for positive social change at the individual, family, organizational, and societal levels. The problems that

were unearthed by this study could be managed by using Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013) polarities of democracy theory. Of the five pairs of the polarities of democracy theory, I believe that the six elements of the three pairs of freedom and authority, justice and due process, and diversity and equality could provide the tools required to maximize the upsides and minimize the downsides of each polarity. At the societal level, the findings of this study can be used by policymakers and operatives in the government, the nonprofit and for-profit sectors to reduce the suffering faced by asylum seekers. At the individual and family levels, current and future asylum seekers could use the findings of this study to avoid the pitfalls those who have experienced the asylum-seeking phenomenon have suffered.

To leverage the upsides and downsides of these polarities, I suggest that key stakeholders in asylum-seeking, such as nonprofits and their for-profit and individual sponsors, invest more in language and civic education for asylum seekers. Immigration authorities should expedite the issuance of work permits so that asylum seekers do not face hunger or lack of health care due to their immigration status.

The observations and recommendations for positive social change I have made in this section are based on my understanding of the data collected from the study's participant and are not derived from the findings of studies in the literature review.

Conclusion

Asylum-seeking is a global problem and seems to be here to stay. For centuries, people have found good reason to move from one place to another. International law provides for the hosting of refugees or asylum seekers on the basis of human rights

violations. The United States, which was founded by immigrants, has a long history of hosting persons who seek a safe place to start life afresh. As the current leader of the free world, where the rule of law reigns, the United States must treat asylum seekers with dignity and show the world that American democracy attracts people who seek ultimate freedom for a good reason.

This study was undertaken to record the perceptions of asylum seekers on the positive and/or negative aspects of the asylum-seeking process in the United States since 9/11. The study's results, read together with a plethora of findings of studies in the literature review, indicate that asylum seekers in the United States face setbacks that often seem insurmountable to them. Some of these persons face suspicion, arrest, detention, violence in detention camps, lack of due process, deportation, emotional challenges, separation from families, anti-immigrant views that are sometimes translated into legislation by both state assemblies and Congress, homelessness, unemployment, and hunger. I believe that the country can do better than this. Through its elected representatives, the civil society and for-profit sector, a lot could be achieved to ameliorate the asylum-seeking experience in the world's wealthiest nation. These interrelated sub-themes, analyzed through the lens of the polarities of democracy, suggest that policy makers might improve the asylum-seeking process by using the theory to better understand the impacts that the process has on the rights of asylum seekers. This may allow policy makers to develop strategies to maximize the positive aspects of the polarities of democracy pairs while minimizing the negative aspects, particularly in the pairs of freedom and authority, justice and due process, and diversity and equality.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Participant Demographic Data:

Participant #: _____

Age: _____

Gender: _____M _____F

Race: Asian_____ Black_____ Hispanic or Latino _____

Pacific Islander _____ White_____ Other _____

National Origin: _____

Primary Occupation: _____

Annual Income: _____

Year Asylum Applied For: _____

Year Asylum Granted: _____

1st Interview Date: _____/_____/_____ Time: _____

2nd Interview Date: _____/_____/_____   Time: _____

Questions:

Thinking about the period from the time you applied for asylum to the time you were

granted asylum:

1. How would you describe your asylum-seeking experience?

2. Did you feel that your individual circumstances were taken into consideration? In

what ways?

3. Did you feel that your individual circumstances were held against you? In what ways?

4. Did you think that you were treated fairly, compared to everyone else? In what ways?

5. Did you think that you and everyone else were treated un-fairly? In what ways?

6. What organizations and/or which persons assisted you to understand and walk you through the asylum-seeking procedure itself?

7. Describe the kind of fears you experienced.

8. Who did you turn to when you needed help of any kind?

9. Tell me about your employment experience.

10. Describe your financial situation.

11. What kind of health care did you have access to?

12. What was your food situation?

13. Describe your experience with housing issues.

14. What do you think should be done to improve the asylum-seeking experience?

Appendix B: The National Institutes of Health Certificate of Completion

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **KEITH NALUMANGO** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 12/19/2012.

Certification Number: 1065321.