



**For Immediate Release**

**Contact:**

Amy Molnar

201-748-8844

[journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net](mailto:journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net)

**Study Shows How Civil War Refugees Cope With the Unknown**

*Study Examines Experiences of Sudanese Refugees*

**East Lansing, MI – October 2, 2008** –A new study in the journal *Family Relations* focuses on the experiences of the Sudanese refugees who were separated from their parents during the Sudanese civil war. Often called the *Lost Boys of Sudan*, these children faced multiple traumatic events and chronic hardships. In addition to being violently expelled from their homes and having to live in displacement camps, these children also struggled with uncertainty regarding the fate of their parents and siblings. Researchers found that the children used a number of emotion-focused and problem-focused strategies in order to cope with separation and ambiguous loss (not knowing whether a loved one is dead or alive.)

The children tried not to think about their families and kept distracted by other activities, including soccer and focusing on school and education. However they tried to obtain information about their families from new arrivals to the refugee camp who were from their region of Sudan.

The authors found that a crucial aspect to survival was the support they provided each other. Within the refugee camps, peers formed alternative families while the elders encouraged the youth not to lose hope of eventually finding their parents.

“Our study is important to expanding the work on ambiguous loss to include children and for understanding resilience in children,” the authors note. “Their resilience can be explained by a combination of their personal characteristics, their relationship with their peers and elders, and the community resources available in the refugee camps. In addition, Sudanese culture that values living in harmony contributed to the relationships the youth needed to survive.”

Tom Luster, Desiree Qin, Laura Bates, Deborah J. Johnson, and Meenal Rana of Michigan State University conducted in-depth interviews with ten refugees who located surviving family members in Sudan after an average separation of 13.7 years. The interviews probed their experiences of ambiguous loss, relationships in the refugee camps, the search for family, and re-establishing relationships with family members living on another continent. The Sudanese youth discussed their feelings of sadness, loneliness, fear, worry, and frustration with not being able to learn the fate of their families.

---

## A Publication of the National Council on Family Relations

---

This study is published in the October 2008 issue of *Family Relations*. Media wishing to receive a PDF of this article may contact [journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net](mailto:journalnews@bos.blackwellpublishing.net).

To view the abstract for this article, please [click here](#).

Tom Luster is affiliated with Michigan State University and can be reached for questions at [luster@msu.edu](mailto:luster@msu.edu).



A premier, applied journal of family studies, *Family Relations* is mandatory reading for family scholars and all professionals who work with families, including: family practitioners, educators, marriage and family therapists, researchers, and social policy specialists. The journal's content emphasizes family research with implications for intervention, education, and public policy, always publishing original, innovative and interdisciplinary works with specific recommendations for practice.

Wiley-Blackwell was formed in February 2007 as a result of the acquisition of Blackwell Publishing Ltd. by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., and its merger with Wiley's Scientific, Technical, and Medical business. Together, the companies have created a global publishing business with deep strength in every major academic and professional field. Wiley-Blackwell publishes approximately 1,400 scholarly peer-reviewed journals and an extensive collection of books with global appeal. For more information on Wiley-Blackwell, please visit [www.blackwellpublishing.com](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com) or <http://interscience.wiley.com>.

###

Unsubscribe: We received your name from a reputable media service. If you would rather not receive messages from Journal News about publicity in this subject area, please [click here](#). If you would like to be removed from the media service, please contact Cision at [info.us@cision.com](mailto:info.us@cision.com).