Article

Lost and Found in Upstate New York: Exploring the Motivations of "Lost Boys" Refugees as Founders of International Nonprofit Organizations

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Abstract
This research examines engagement in diaspora philanthropy through the lens of Lost Boys of Sudan and their founding of small international nonprofit service organizations based in the United States. We seek to understand refugees' motivations to take upon themselves leadership roles in their local United States communities and in the provision of goods and services to their homeland, South Sudan. By becoming founders of international service nonprofits, Lost Boys make meaning of their experiences and are able to motivate local support in their United States communities to give to distant communities in South Sudan.

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Introduction

One does not have to look hard to find news coverage indicating the policy salience of immigrant and refugee issues across the globe. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 68.5 million people experienced forced displacement in 2017 as a result of "persecution, conflict or generalized violence" (UNHCR, 2018, p. 2). Mass atrocities continue to exacerbate the problem of forced displacement, and since 1980, about 3 million refugees have resettled in the United States (Krogstad & Radford, 2017).

Included in these resettled refugees are the Lost Boys of Sudan. In 1987, civil war drove an estimated 20,000 young children from their villages in what now is South Sudan, leaving their parents and the other family members behind. They fled, unaccompanied, to Ethiopia to escape death or induction into the Northern Sudanese Army. In 1991, the Ethiopian government then expelled the Sudanese refugees. Again, the children walked for more than a thousand miles, many of them dying before reaching the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, where they lived in small groups sharing shelter and resources. In 2000, the United States, Canada, and Australia began the resettlement of unaccompanied Sudanese refugee minors from the camp (Geltman et al., 2005).

The Lost Boys of Sudan were forcibly displaced decades ago; however, the UN Refugee Agency documents that large numbers of refugees still come from South Sudan, as it is included in the small group of countries that accounted for more than two thirds of all refugees in 2017 (including also Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Somalia) (UNHCR, 2018, p. 3). Using the experiences of refugees from South Sudan, we examine in this research diaspora philanthropy—the transfer of private donations back to one's home country (Johnson, 2007; Koff, 2017; Newland et al., 2010). Specifically, we examine small international nonprofit service organizations founded by Lost Boys of Sudan that are based in the United States, but serve communities in South Sudan. We contribute to studies about nonprofit service organizations as related to immigrants and refugees more broadly. However, whereas most research in administrative studies has been concerned with service provision by nonprofit organizations *to* immigrant and refugee populations in the global North (for a recent review see, Garkisch et al., 2017), we seek to contribute to understanding the process through which refugees themselves engage in giving behavior by establishing and leading nonprofit service organizations, organizations based in the United States, but which serve their homelands. There is limited research about how and why diaspora engage philanthropically with their homelands through nonprofit service organizations, and even

less research about the founding of such nonprofits by refugees. Our research provides an opportunity to understand refugees' motivations to take upon themselves leadership roles in their local United States communities and in the provision of goods and services to their homeland. We find that Lost Boys are also able to motivate local support in their United States communities to give to distant communities in South Sudan.

The exploratory study that follows opens questions and proposes future research about refugee diaspora and philanthropic behavior through non-profit service organizations. Although important, we are not as interested in the outcomes of service provision in South Sudan; rather, we are more atten-tive to *why* and *how* refugees, here the Lost Boys of Sudan based in the United States, emerge as philanthropists, giving to their homeland through the creation of small international nonprofit service organizations. We focus on the mechanism of these small international nonprofits,[1] characterizing them as volunteer-run organizations that provide direct allocation of dona-tions from donors in the United States for the provision of goods and services in recipient communities abroad. Our empirical analysis draws on the litera-ture about the motivations to philanthropic giving and contributes to the nascent literatures on diaspora philanthropy and giving in times of loss. Given our scope of the refugee diaspora experience, the process of meaning-making in loss illuminates the unique motivations for segments of diaspora communities to engage in philanthropy and nonprofit organizations.

Motivations to Giving

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have studied the motivations for giving and prosocial behaviors (e.g., Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011), each focusing on different questions and contexts of giving. Several reviews of this literature have been published (e.g., Bennett, 2003), most prominent of which is that of Bekkers and Wiepking (2011), who reviewed 500 articles about the motiva-tions to donate money. They highlight in their review eight key mechanisms that drive charitable giving: awareness of others' needs, having been solic-ited, cost and benefit analysis, altruism, enhancing one's reputation, psycho-logical benefits, values, and enhancing one's sense of efficacy. Social norms and witnessing other people give have also been found to influence the deci-sion to donate and donation size (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011).

Researchers have often drawn on a key idea used to explain individual giving called the "warm glow," which represents the positive emotions and connections that individuals have been shown to experience through the act of giving (Andreoni, 1990). The activation of social expectations and self-expectations, and the arousal of emotion are among the primary motivations

studied (Schwartz, 1977). Giving has been associated with experiences including gratitude, self-efficacy, and empathy toward others (Schneewind, 1996; Titmuss, 1970). Such positive emotions have been shown to both precede and follow an individual's giving. Those who give have been found to report feeling healthier than those who do not give, suggesting that health and well-being may both contribute to and result from giving (Aknin et al., 2017).

From an evolutionary lens, scholars have suggested that "prosocial behavior is essential in producing the large-scale social cooperation that allowed early human groups to thrive" (Aknin et al., 2013, p. 636). As such, motivations to philanthropic giving have been associated with kin selection. Based on this research, generosity toward one's relatives is said to constitute a means for maintaining one's genes, although this view has been challenged by the fact that individuals also frequently donate to strangers (Aknin et al., 2013).

The research on motivations to giving indeed provides a foundation to understanding why individuals engage in philanthropic behavior, highlighting a range of mechanisms that drive charitable giving and emphasizing positive emotions (i.e., the warm glow) and evolutionary rationales that seek to explain motives to give. We now hone in on understanding further the motivations to giving in the context of diaspora philanthropy and following this, we argue that drawing on the literature about giving in response to loss in particular is needed in case of refugee philanthropy.

Diaspora Philanthropy to the Homeland

We seek to further explore the motivations to giving in the context of what has been termed diaspora philanthropy. Diasporas are "ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin—their homelands" (Sheffer, 1986, p. 3). Diaspora philanthropy (or also called diaspora cooperation, see Kerlin & Manikowski, 2011) is the act of sending private donations back to one's home country (Bar Nissim, 2019; Koff, 2017; Newland et al., 2010) and includes the transfer of services and resources such as money, labor, and increasingly knowledge (Flanigan, 2017). Remittances, often in the form of money sent directly to family and friends or through intermediary organizations, in particular have emerged to be a significant part of international development and service delivery (Appe, 2017; Brinkerhoff, 2008; Mariano, 2017). Although nascent, the literature on diaspora philanthropy has tended to focus on the mechanisms that allow for the transfer of resources to the homeland and the motivations behind these transfers.

Intermediary organizations as mechanisms for diaspora philanthropy include ethnic and professional organizations, neighborhood and regional

associations, hometown associations, as well as faith-based or church-affili-
ated organizations and other types of foundations (Brinkerhoff, 2008;
Newland et al., 2010; Sidel, 2008). Some of these intermediary organizations
have gone from volunteer-based charity work to transnational professional-
ized organizations (see Brinkerhoff, 2008). In addition to the more "tradi-
tional" organizations, online platforms (Appe, 2017) and crowdfunding
(Flanigan, 2017) have provided channels for diaspora philanthropy. Research
has found that because diaspora philanthropy by individuals is often com-
prised of small and medium gifts, intermediary organizations or online plat-
forms are needed to aggregate and make impactful donations through
"collective remittances" (Kerlin & Manikowski, 2011, p. 367).

Although research is still limited, we know that motivations for diaspora
philanthropy can be both emotional and pragmatic for diaspora communities.
Diaspora philanthropy can be simply a result of having a charitable and phil-
anthropic impulse (Sidel, 2008). Additional reasons to give include not only
this impulse but also giving due to a sense of obligation. Diaspora communi-
ties might possess a sense of obligation due to relatively high income or qual-
ity of life that they have obtained in their new locations (Brinkerhoff, 2011).
In many cases, these members experience a sense of responsibility for those
left behind (Brinkerhoff, 2011; Werbner, 2002). This sense of obligation can
play out through acts of philanthropy and have connections with other moti-
vations such as an emotional longing for the homeland (Flanigan, 2017).
Obligation as a motivator in the literature overlaps with connections to a
shared identity, history, destiny, culture, and language (Brinkerhoff, 2014). It
is considered an act of "expressing diasporan identity" as a whole (Flanigan,
2017), which can be motivated by "kinship, ethnic or national obligations"
(Liberatore, 2017, p. 159). However, this too has been challenged as it
assumes one singular identity which might be unrealistic given emergent
transnational identities (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009). In addition, like with
other types of giving, diaspora giving can have religious motivations
(Brinkerhoff, 2008; Liberatore, 2017 see Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011).

Whereas the motivations above might be tied to emotional rationales,
there are several pragmatic reasons for giving identified in the literature.
Diaspora give to their homelands for status purposes (Sidel, 2008). That is,
they can be recognized and praised for their acts of giving. In addition, for
professionals who give and make it public, it might simply be "good for busi-
ness," as through their giving they garner trust in the community and generate
further business opportunities (Ghorashi & Boersma, 2009). Furthermore,
motivations are related to the desire to transfer knowledge (Sidel, 2008). This
transfer includes "knowledge and skills; cultural competencies and associ-
ated intermediary roles" that diaspora communities have come to assume

(Brinkerhoff, 2008, p. 414). Finally, diaspora engagement in philanthropy has intersected with the building of diaspora communities and political mobilization. Indeed, diaspora mobilization and organizations of many kinds emerge and "shape collective identity" (Babis, 2016). For example, Liberatore's (2017) research maps out the Somali diaspora in the United Kingdom, which mobilized and protested in 2013 due to Barclays Bank's decision to shut down accounts which hosted money transfers (Liberatore, 2017). This instance of diaspora mobilization was in reaction to threats to disrupt remittance flows and enabled the Somali diaspora to take on the identity and produce an image of themselves as a community contributing to Somali development as they mobilized and protested the shut downs (Liberatore, 2017).

To summarize, diaspora communities often maintain, in varied degrees, shared values of language, religion, and social norms. These characteristics influence and shape diaspora motivations for philanthropic giving. However, these motivations outlined in the literature do not fully explain the refugee diaspora experience. We suggest that to better understand diaspora philanthropy by refugees, we should incorporate the literature on giving in response to loss.

Giving From the Perspective of Loss

As large bodies of research have been devoted to understanding the reasons for individuals' prosocial behaviors, a subset of research aims at understanding why such prosocial behaviors are exhibited in response to disaster and loss, which we build on for this research. We draw on the notion of giving in response to loss using the construct "altruism born of suffering" (Vollhardt, 2009). Accordingly,

> The core assumption of "altruism born of suffering" is that prosocial behavior among individuals who have suffered may actually be motivated by their adverse experiences—and not (only) by universal processes that apply to the general population and have been documented in the literature on altruism and helping behavior. (Vollhardt, 2009, p. 66)

These ideas are useful for understanding both why some individuals help when they themselves have experienced loss and why people who witness others' loss can also behave philanthropically.

Altruism born of suffering is consistent with studies about the experience of empathy and its role in explaining prosocial behavior (Batson & Shaw, 1991). People's willingness to help in times of a crisis can be linked with the

degree to which the victim is perceived as similar to the donor (Bartels & Burnett, 2011). People are more likely to donate to individuals whom they perceive as members of their own group (e.g., members of the same cultural background; Zagefka & James, 2015; Zagefka et al., 2011). Similarly, the degree of familiarity with the background and culture of the affected society has also been shown to influence giving during disaster (e.g., Andrighetto et al., 2014). Specifically, people who were familiar with the history of the affected area, or visited it before the crisis, are more likely to donate (Andrighetto et al., 2014). Yet, other motivations to help in times of loss or in crises have to do with donors' perceptions of the victim's role in the disaster, such that when the disaster is perceived as preventable, victims are less likely to be helped (e.g., Zagefka et al., 2011).

Understanding philanthropic behaviors in response to personal loss requires recognizing the experience of loss. Frameworks of loss suggest the grieving process as fluid and complex and determined by grievers' environment, and by a combination of their physiological and psychological processes (Rando, 1993). In addition, cognitive coping mechanisms are present in individuals' grieving process. Grieving is prolonged and mechanisms may often not allow for a resolution, but rather an accommodation to the new life situation (Neimeyer, 2001; Silverman & Klass, 1996). The process of meaning-making constitutes a key route for understanding the philanthropic behaviors of those who have experienced personal loss. For example, documented philanthropic behaviors in response to loss include the donation of loved one's organs (Siminoff et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2013; Walker & Sque, 2016); fundraising for causes related to a loss, in particular charity events (e.g., sports events and fundraising concerts; Webber, 2004); and the establishment of foundations and philanthropic organizations to commemorate the loss (Rossetto, 2014).

Refugees and Loss

Research suggests that refugees and unaccompanied refugee minors in particular are confronted with traumatic experiences of loss in their home countries and during flight (Goldson, 2003). The Lost Boys of Sudan have been the focus of many studies in the fields of education, medicine, and psychology (e.g., Luster et al., 2008; McKinnon, 2008). The psychiatric and psychological literature has extensively documented the Lost Boys' mental health problems that resulted from the traumatic events they have encountered during their travels (Allwood et al., 2002; Derluyn et al., 2009; Goldson, 2003). These studies indicate high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),

depression, or anxiety disorders among these young refugees (Allwood et al., 2002; Derluyn et al., 2009).

As we develop here using the altruism born of suffering construct, we find that refugee hardships can serve as key motivators, driving refugees like Lost Boys to engage in philanthropic behaviors. Some research has focused on returnees to South Sudan, in particular examining "war-time displacement as a catalyst for social change" (Grabska, 2013, p. 1135). We propose that Sudanese who have not returned to live in South Sudan are also seeking opportunities to provide services and influence positive social change in their homeland. In doing that, we find that diaspora philanthropy in the form of the founding of a small international nonprofit service organization allows refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan to create a process of meaning-making for their loss.

Research Approach

Using the case of Lost Boys, our qualitative research approach aims to explore what motivates refugees to engage in philanthropic behavior for their homelands through organizations. Tenets of qualitative research emphasize interpretivism in natural settings and everyday lives (Brower et al., 2000; Ospina et al., 2018[2]). We seek to "generate explanations of relationship [through] . . . meaning construction" (Brower et al., 2000, p. 387). We chose a qualitative approach of content analysis for uncovering Lost Boys' experiences to understand the *why*, that is, the motivations, for their philanthropic giving through small international nonprofit service organizations.

We use a collective case study design (Stake, 1995). We purposively selected three organizations from a larger research project about motivations to giving to international causes[3] to examine in-depth diaspora philanthropy. That is, the selected nonprofits are theoretically useful cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994; see also Eisenhardt, 1989), following the interpretive case study methodology for selecting cases which seeks to maximize what we can learn (Stake, 1995) and "extend theory by filling conceptual categories" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 533) about diaspora philanthropy, namely, refugee giving through nonprofit organizations and in response to loss. Based on the data collected from the larger study, the selection criteria for this study included all organizations that were founded by Lost Boys refugees who resettled in upstate New York and fund projects in South Sudan. Relationships with the three organizations and interview participants were established at the start of the research project, initiated through an email or phone call. The authors then provided a written document about the overarching and specific Lost

Boys research projects prior to requesting information and interviews. All three organizations selected agreed to participate in the research study.

Under the qualitative design, data collection and analysis were often simultaneous throughout the study (Stake, 1995; see also Merriam, 1998). To enhance the credibility of our findings, we triangulated our data, collecting and analyzing data from various sources during a period of 2½ years (December 2017–May 2019) (see Ospina et al., 2018). We examined the websites and social media platforms of the nonprofits and other organizational documents which generated over 240 pages of written content during the course of the research period. We conducted in-depth interviews with the nonprofit founders ($n = 2$)[4] and selected board members ($n = 4$) which were transcribed verbatim. The selection criteria for interview participants were that they were organizational founders (in this case, the Lost Boys) or serving board members. We spoke with each of these participants for formal, in-depth interviews twice, once in 2017 and once in 2019 for a total of 12 formal, in-depth interviews across the three organizations. Interviews lasted between an hour and almost 4 hours. Interview protocols had been piloted previously among other nonprofit founders and board members, which were part of the larger study about giving to international causes (Appe & Oreg, forthcoming, see Appendix for the study's interview protocol). Before, during, and after periods of conducting formal interviews, data collection and analysis continued as we followed up with interviewees several times for clarifications and further questions via email and phone. We also provided interviewees with the option to be sent the transcriptions of the interviews. Both authors took copious field notes that served valuable to the analysis.

We conducted within-case analysis and wrote in-depth case studies for each of the cases to have deep knowledge of each case as a case on its own and confirm that we had reached data saturation. We used the ATLAS.it software to analyze written documents including organizational documents, interview transcripts and field notes, coding materials and transcripts to assign key and recurring themes. Both authors coded the data to examine patterns, the similarities, and differences, among the three cases through the stories told in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The authors compared these stories to the literatures on diaspora philanthropy and motivations to giving in times of loss. Our approach to coding was to some extent deductive (based on the literature) but also reliant on an inductive process (based on emergent themes) (Merriam, 1998). Research participants were provided with written documentation of the research in progress to be kept informed and were welcomed to comment. Both authors have been engaged in the overarching project about the motivations to give to international causes in New York State for several years and come from different

disciplines to allow for an interdisciplinary approach to understanding diaspora philanthropy through the founding of nonprofit service organizations, and more specifically through the refugee experience. The following introduces the selected organizations.

Building Minds in South Sudan

Building Minds in South Sudan founders were born in the rural village of Mayen-Abun in Twic State, South Sudan. The two founders are cousins: Sebastian Maroundit and Mathon Noi; both were less than 10 years old when war came to their village and separated them from their families. They fled Sudan to refugee camps where they were educated through the eighth grade. In 2000, they were resettled in the United States in Rochester, New York. For many years, they did not know what had happened to their families who remained in South Sudan. In 2007, they returned to South Sudan for the first time and were reunited with their surviving family members after 18 years. Sebastian and Mathon returned to Rochester, New York, with a vision to help with education projects in the village and created Building Minds in South Sudan. Its mission is "to provide educational opportunities for villagers in the Republic of South Sudan" (http://www.bmiss.org/mission). Its projects in the village of Mayen-Abun in South Sudan focus on primary school education and female empowerment. It built a new primary school in 2015 which serves over 900 students and seeks to improve quality of education through teacher training. A second school was built specifically for girls in 2018. In addition, it provides micro financing for women to start small businesses.

HOPE for Ariang Foundation

HOPE for Ariang Foundation's founder, Gabriel Bol Deng, was 10 years old when North Sudanese militia led a violent attack in 1987 on his village of Ariang, a rural area located in the state of Gogrial in the northwest region of what is now South Sudan. He fled, not knowing the fate of his parents or siblings. He made it to Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp where he completed his primary and secondary education. In 2001, he resettled in Syracuse, New York, but still did not know who in his family was alive. In 2008, he was able to reconnect with his village by returning for a visit. Once back in Syracuse, New York, he started HOPE for Ariang Foundation to contribute to education programming in Ariang. HOPE for Ariang Foundation's seeks

> to provid[e] South Sudanese with inclusive access to education, opportunities, and resources, with a special focus on women and girls—one village at a time,

and to create a sustainable model in Ariang that can be replicated to empower people in other regions of the country (https://hopeforariang.org/our-model/).

South Sudan Initiatives

Dut Leek Deng resettled in Syracuse, New York, in 2000 and is the founder of South Sudan Initiatives created in 2009. As a young child, Dut had witnessed the killing of his mother, and as other Lost Boys, did not know for some time what happened to the rest of his family in Sudan. After visiting South Sudan for the first time in 2007, he returned to Syracuse, New York, and decided to dedicate his time to creating educational and economic opportunities for women and children through South Sudan Initiatives. South Sudan Initiatives considers itself "a vehicle to assist South Sudanese orphans and widows by providing tuition assistance to the children and small business loans to widows as a method of obtaining self-sufficiency and independence" (http://www.southsudaninitiatives.org/our-mission/). It seeks to fund scholarships for children in primary and secondary grade education and provide small business loans to women in the community.

Motivations of Lost Boys' Philanthropic Giving Through Nonprofits

We find that the creation of a nonprofit service organization that is based in the United States and serves distant communities in South Sudan provides refugees like the Lost Boys of Sudan a process of meaning-making for their personal loss. As noted, the personal loss experienced by the Lost Boys led us to the notion of altruism born of suffering (Vollhardt, 2009). The hardships due to loss served as key motivators, driving philanthropic behaviors and the founding of a nonprofit service organization. By attaching their loss to giving, the Lost Boy founders were able to act on a deep sense of obligation and demonstrate their commitment to give back. In addition, the importance of education, dating back to their experiences in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya, was a driving motivation for the creation of the organizations.

A Deep Sense of Obligation

Altruism born of suffering (Vollhardt, 2009) suggests that people who suffer loss often tend to help others. As reported by the Lost Boys, for many years as they resettled they tended to distance themselves from their traumatic pasts. This shifted once becoming United States citizens and particularly

after visiting Sudan for the first time since their resettlement. Upon returning from their first visits, to what is now South Sudan, the motivation to create a nonprofit organization was described as an obligation to remember and commemorate their extended families. As the founder of South Sudan Initiatives proclaimed, "You can help you and your family first, but you cannot forget about the people back home" (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, July 17, 2017). Similarly, the founder of Building Minds in South Sudan, explains that his priorities changed once returning to South Sudan, noting the deep obligation he sensed once back in the United States: " . . . because you feel guilty if you don't do anything . . . because someone is [in] need somewhere" (Founder, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

The Lost Boys' own suffering is apparent and plays a key role in wanting to help others. The founder of South Sudan Initiatives explained how he reached out to people in his village in South Sudan and shared with them his ideas for his organization after his first visit back. The creation of the nonprofit organization became a way in which to acknowledge his past, as he explains,

> I have seen a lot. I mean a lot, I have seen women being raped in front of me. I have seen a lot of people being killed in front of me, including my own mother. I see that the only thing that [would make her] very happy is to see me helping somebody else. That would be something that she would be very proud of. (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

A Giving Back Identity

This sense of obligation naturally led to discussions about the opportunities they perceived themselves to have in the United States and to expressing a desire to give back to their homelands. Creating a nonprofit organization to give back is a way to acknowledge and give thanks for the opportunities they have been given since resettling in the United States. One founder, Dut, stated rather simply: "Somebody has saved me. Somebody helped me. It's my turn now to be able to give back" (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, May 21, 2019). He continued by noting his quality of life in Syracuse, New York, where he was the first Lost Boy in New York State to be received:

> I'm living very good here. My family is here. My kid goes to a good school. They eat good food. When they get sick we have our family doctor, which is something that you never even dream about in South Sudan. (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, May 21, 2019)

Indeed, the transition from being a Lost Boy experiencing trauma to an American citizen, who is educated and employed, raises ongoing questions about identity as reported by the Lost Boys (e.g., am I American? Sudanese?). In this sense, we find that for the founders who established international non-profit service organizations, they are motivated by a sense of obligation but also that this type of philanthropic response to loss is an outlet to explore the complex identities as both Lost Boy refugees and Americans. The Lost Boys assume a *giving back identity* which links being Sudanese to being a refugee to then an American again returning back to their homeland. Dut describes a *giving back identity* by explaining that as he extends his hand to his homeland, this further extends the American hand that was given to him (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, May 21, 2019). Indeed, the nonprofit service organizations provide a vehicle to create a *giving back identity* to reconcile the identities in the context of loss: as a refugee to an American, to now a philanthropist in their homeland.

The Importance of Education

The value they placed on education also motivated the founders to establish their nonprofit organizations. Education is perceived by all founders to be life-altering and became the central objective of their philanthropy. Sebastian further explains, "To me, education is life, education could lift [the children in the village] up from that situation and [is] the only way to transform the village" (Co-founder, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 21, 2017). For these founders, education is a means of driving social change, and this gave further meaning to the Lost Boys' personal journey. It connected their own experiences as refugees who embraced and cherished education in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya to their own current experiences as educated Americans. Organizational websites and other social media consistently highlight the commitment and meaningfulness of education. For example, Building Minds of South Sudan's website includes as part of its organizational story the value of education citing its founders' own educational beginnings in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya to then completing secondary and higher education in the United States (http://www.bmiss.org/sebastian-and-mathon).

Furthermore, Dut from South Sudan Initiatives explained the metaphorical meaning of education for Lost Boys:

> With the Lost Boys . . . we have a nickname for education. We say education is our mother and our father. Because when we left [when we] were children and refugees, in our refugee life, education had been the only thing . . . that can

bring us hope and courage for the next day. (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, May 21, 2019)

Education, he described, provided by international organizations in the refugee camp, gave them "a sense that there is tomorrow." (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, May 21, 2019)

Building schools and serving students are described as dreams of the founders throughout organizational materials. The nonprofits highlight that their schools are top-performing in South Sudan according to national testing, that they hire female teachers and in one case, a female principal, and that more girls are attending school than boys, which in previous generations would have never been the case. These inputs (in the case of the teachers) and outputs (e.g., high test scores and attendance rates) for the founders represent the importance of education and its role in transforming lives. This was explicitly referenced by all founders and the most prevalent theme across all the organization's digital and archival materials (https://hopeforariang.org/our-model/; http://www.bmiss.org/sebastian-and-mathon; http://www.southsudaninitiatives.org/about-us/).

Motivations of Local Champions in Upstate New York

To start their nonprofits, the Sebastians, Mathons, Gabriels, and Duts need to build support locally, in their cases, in upstate New York in the United States. Local support is particularly needed for nonprofits working for international causes as they tend to rely heavily on individual donations for fund development (e.g., Kerlin, 2013). All founders had at least one upstate New Yorker who was by their side, figuratively and often quite literally during our fieldwork. We call them local champions, they witness loss through the Lost Boys' stories and they have their own motivations for philanthropic giving.

The upstate New York organizations, even with missions directed at distant places, were often called "local" nonprofits by these local champions (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, May 21, 2019). Even if geographically distant, one board member explains that the local champions in Syracuse, in the case of HOPE for Ariang Foundation, have a "very deep connection" to the organization's work in South Sudan (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, May 21, 2019). The board member describes it as Gabriel, its founder, having "gone full circle": He was required to flee, resettled, advanced into higher education now with a college degree, and naturally wanted to return back to help his homeland.

Personal and Local Connections

Board members of the three organizations are made up of all upstate New Yorkers, and these local champions are people who are somehow connected to the founder; those who have in one way or another encountered the individual Lost Boy. This allowed the local champions to form personal relationships with the Lost Boy and in doing so gain awareness of need, in this case in South Sudan. Awareness of need is considered "a first prerequisite" to philanthropic giving (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011, p. 6).

By the time the Lost Boy founders became United States citizens, they each had a strong network of contacts in the respective local New York State community. Sebastian of Building Minds in South Sudan recognizes the importance of his network in New York; he talked about them as part of his family:

> My family here are those who support me, my American friends, [for example, one woman] who now [is] like a mom to me. She sponsored me when I came to the United States, took care of me, used to drive me around, taught me how to drive, and taught me a lot about the American culture . . . Otherwise [without the support] you will not make it. Since she took me from the airport she always checks on me. Every day, 16 years now, she [has] been tracking me down every day. (Co-founder, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 21, 2017)

Other encounters with to-be local champions were haphazard. South Sudan Initiatives' founder, Dut, connected with a young recent college graduate, Sabina, because they worked in the same building. Sabina's reaction was very common to other local champions' reactions to the Lost Boys' stories and visions. Sabina explained that she gets "goose bumps" every time she hears Dut's stories and described wanting to be part of Dut's dream (Board member, South Sudan Initiatives personal communication, July 17, 2017).

Judy, a Building Minds in South Sudan board member, provides another example of a local champion. She joined the efforts of Building Minds in South Sudan later in life, in her 60s. When Judy starts to tell her story of getting involved with Sudan and then Building Minds in South Sudan, it is clearly emotional. For some time, she had been involved with a volunteer sewing project to make washable, reusable cotton pads for girls in Sudan with other women locally in New York. Because of the sewing project, Judy ended up going to Sudan before ever meeting the founder of Building Minds in South Sudan, Sebastian. She explains, "I went [to Sudan], and it was unbelievable. I was living a PBS documentary . . . It was unreal . . . I cry every time I think of it" (Board member, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 21, 2017). Sebastian had heard about Judy and her trip

to Sudan through contacts and wanted her to get involved in Building Minds in South Sudan. Judy explains,

> First of all, I never thought I'd go to Sudan. You just don't. But second of all, to come back and meet someone . . . who is so amazing and to be asked to help him in such a profound way doesn't happen in life, and how can you say no? (Board member, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 21, 2017)

Like Sabina expresses about Dut's dreams for South Sudan Initiatives, Judy explains she wants to help Sebastian achieve his dream to give back to South Sudan. Even as a White, middle class, upstate New Yorker, Judy speaks like Sebastian about "our village" in South Sudan and talks passionately about Sebastian's vision:

> He started with this dream of building a school, and now to see it, I say it's a reality that has blossomed, and it's continuing to blossom, and to help, is a very exciting thing to do in your life . . . Why shouldn't we give to some place that's in such great need? And to be able to do it is something I never thought I'd be doing in my life. (Board member, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 21, 2017)

Shared Values

Indeed, the dream and vision to provide education to their homeland is consistent across all three organizations. This resonates with local champions and the local New York State community more broadly. For example, the testimonials found on Building Minds in South Sudan's website are of the volunteer and donors, not the particular recipients in South Sudan. Many of these volunteers and donors are teachers and children from schools in New York (http://www.bmiss.org/testimonials). After a visit to a local New York State school by Sebastian of Building Minds in South Sudan, one of its students commented,

> I felt very touched [by] Sebastian's story and by the story of the kids learning under the tree [in South Sudan], then learning inside but WITHOUT BOOKS! It really touched my heart . . . I want to help them and GIVE THEM BOOKS! (seventh grader, http://www.bmiss.org/testimonials, capitalized emphasis in the original, 2018)

Thus, in addition to the service provision in South Sudan, Building Minds in South Sudan has connections with local schools (now for over 7 years),

which include class visits and holding small fundraisers to support the nonprofit.

These personal connections allow for further awareness of need, and this indeed serves as a key motivator for local champions. The emphasis on education is also a key factor. Particular values promoted by nonprofit organizations can be more attractive to some donors and values can also allow a donor to signal what they want to see in their ideal world (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Bennett, 2003; Wiepking, 2010). The Lost Boys' personal stories and the values of perseverance and education were powerful tools to build local support and particularly linked to American values. As a HOPE for Ariang Foundation's board member explains about its founder, Gabriel, he touches on the American values of hard work and doing your best (see Kohls, 1984[5]). She explains, "He talks about how he had to play dead. People hear that, they get goose bumps and when they see him standing in front of them and what he has been able to accomplish" (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, July 17, 2017). The stories of the Lost Boys capture their journeys, from the horrors of being displaced and a refugee to being an educated, American citizen. Their local champions, board members, and other volunteers are drawn to these tales. The same HOPE for Ariang Foundation board member explains,

> Gabriel speaks about perseverance and he weaves this all into his life story and talks about hard work. He talks about positive attitude and . . . overcoming challenges in life. Then he talks about that through his story and he gives a lot of strong examples. He doesn't shy away from sharing the details that really tug at people's emotions and hearts because they can get a complete picture of just what he's gone through to get where he is today. He talks about very narrow escapes from death when his village was first attacked. (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

Gabriel uses the organization and the opportunity it affords him to talk to audiences to make meaning of his experiences as a refugee and build support for his nonprofit. Another board member explains the influence these stories have on audiences: "Every group that we've met with and spoken to, and every individual is just taken by [Sebastian, the founder], he's like a . . . rockstar" (Board member, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communication, July 21, 2017).

Local champions witness the suffering and loss experienced by Lost Boys as altruism born of suffering suggests. This witnessing and the personal connection that follows allows for local champions to gain awareness of need, a prime motivator for philanthropic giving. In addition, shared values are an

established motivation in the philanthropic giving literature (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011). In the cases of Lost Boys' nonprofit organizations, these shared values of perseverance and education help to motivate philanthropic giving, and despite the organizational missions in what for many is a distant, unknown South Sudan, they produce among the Lost Boys and their champions a common vision and a dream to help.

Lost Boys' Service Nonprofit Organizations as Mechanisms for Diaspora Philanthropy

Our analysis of the data finds that altruism born of suffering helps to explain the motivations of the Lost Boys (and their local champions) and the creation of a nonprofit allows for a process of meaning-making for personal loss. For the Lost Boys, the motivations are also consistent with some of the diaspora philanthropy literature, namely, the expressions of obligation and a link to forming identity. However, still these expressions in the case of Lost Boys are very personal in nature. Although some types of diaspora philanthropy are motivated by a collective identity or "political relationships with the homeland" (Safran, 2005, p. 37), we find that collective and political motivations in the cases of Lost Boys' nonprofits are not strong.

Little Collaboration Among Lost Boys' Nonprofits

Related to the political dimensions of diaspora philanthropy, all founders and local champions observed that other Lost Boy refugees are resettled near to them in New York State. However, there is not much collective activity or collaboration among them. One board member explains,

> There are a lot of Lost Boy projects and there is definitely something unique about the Lost Boys. I don't know why but most Lost Boys feel that same desire . . . to do something back in South Sudan . . . There [have] been efforts over the years to try to collaborate and get these projects together and I think some of it is just human dynamics. A lot of Lost Boys have their following of people behind them of maybe people who helped them resettle or helped them along the way and who are very passionate about helping that particular Lost Boy . . . maybe a lot of personal agendas and personal desire. (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

Indeed, we find that there is little to no collaboration with other Lost Boys geographically near in upstate New York with this type of mechanism—small international nonprofit service organizations—for diaspora philanthropy. The

board member above suggests that personal interests are likely barriers to further collaboration. We identified some informal collaboration and the sharing of ideas, but we also heard concerns about mixing funds or overburdening the supporters of the separate organizations. As a result, for the most part, this type of diaspora philanthropy is not about building a diaspora community or collective identity, rather it is personal, we suggest due to these organizations being a response to personal loss in particular.

However, there might be emergent opportunities for collective engagement by some Lost Boys' international nonprofits in the United States. This is where we found some variation in the data across the organizations. For example, South Sudan Initiatives uses its social media presence to highlight current news from South Sudan—in an effort to inform its local supporters in New York State. In addition, it uses its social media presence to, at least passively, engage with other Sudanese:

> Happy Birthday to all of the Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan who celebrate their birthdays today! As part of the refugee resettlement in the United States, the Sudanese refugees were automatically assigned January 1st as their birthday unless otherwise identified. As many Sudanese boys and girls became refugees at such a young age, they did not know their actual date of birth. All across the world, many celebrate January 1st as their official birthday. (South Sudan Initiatives, Facebook page, January 1, 2019)

With the post, the founder of South Sudan Initiatives intended to educate local supporters and also reach out to fellow Sudanese.

Humanitarian, Not Political, Organizations

As small nonprofits present in South Sudan, political activity is discouraged and founders are respectful of this by not engaging in South Sudanese politics. Sebastian explains that there is a wide distinction between a politician and a humanitarian in the South Sudanese context. This has forced him to use language very deliberately. He explains, ". . . if you talk about injustices against women, it will involve a fight with government, a fight with the community leader and [then] that means you are a politician and you are not a humanitarian anymore" (Co-founder, Building Minds in South Sudan, personal communications, July 21, 2017). The perception of being a politician, not a humanitarian, can change the nonprofit's access to deliver goods and services in South Sudan according to the founders.

However, politics did not only come up in discussions about service provision in South Sudan. Given the more recent political divisiveness in the

United States around immigration and refugee policy in particular, founders and board members reflected on the potential of the organizations' roles to be more explicit about the contributions of refugees in the United States. One board member of HOPE for Ariang Foundation explains how she has encouraged the founder, Gabriel,

> I told him, "Given the current climate in our country and the way things have changed with the [Donald Trump] administration, messages are important." [I tell him:] "You are a refugee and you [are] coming to share your story and then how you've positively contributed to this country and then have gone back to Sudan." That's what [people] need to hear, they need to hear that and they need to be encouraged that yeah, refugees are wanted here and they're welcome here and here is a refugee standing in front of me and our country is better because he's here. (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, July 17, 2017)

In addition, building on the previous section, Dut of South Sudan Initiatives acknowledges the roles beyond service provision in South Sudan that include more outreach and sharing with local upstate New York communities. Dut explains,

> As a refugee person I consider myself as a community volunteer, as a community activist, who can be able to speak on the behalf of other refugees. We are not just coming here as a burden. You know, we come here [and] we create jobs. We work, we do the jobs that Americans even don't want to do. Also, we pay taxes and [now some] are American citizens. (Founder, South Sudan Initiatives, personal communication, May 21, 2019)

Indeed, board members concurred that the stories of the Lost Boys are important "to share with upstate New York communities in light of everything going on" (Board member, HOPE for Ariang Foundation, personal communication, May 21, 2019), referring to the political debates about immigration and refugees in the last several years in the United States.

For the most part, these nonprofit service organizations did not engage in creating a collective identity, in political mobilization nor in community building practices beyond what was in the interest of their organizational missions and specific service provision in South Sudan. However, more political engagement, as noted by the founder and board member above, might evolve as the political salience of immigrant and refugee issues ensue in the United States and in other parts of the global North.

Discussion: Diaspora Philanthropy Through the Founding of Nonprofits

This article sought to explore what motivates refugees to engage in diaspora philanthropy through the creation of small international nonprofit service organizations. We further contextualize philanthropy by refugees as a response to personal loss. The motivations to giving literature has explored determinants of philanthropic giving, and within this literature, more research is emerging about specific motivations for diaspora philanthropy. These have included a charitable and philanthropic impulse, shared identity, a sense of obligation, religious provocations, opportunity to build status, the desire for knowledge transfers, and political mobilization (see Brinkerhoff, 2008, 2011; Flanigan, 2017). Our findings advance insights to these motivations through the refugee diaspora experience. In the case of the Lost Boys, their lived experiences evoke altruism born of suffering and produce a hard sense of obligation; indeed, the founding of a nonprofit organization becomes a concrete meaning-making mechanism in response to their loss and a means by which to act on their sense of obligation as diaspora. These nonprofit organizations become channels to develop a *giving back identity*, which bridges their identities as refugees, as American citizens, and as returnees to serve their homelands as philanthropists. In addition, the opportunity to gain—and the importance of—an education for the Lost Boys was a recurrent theme in all interviews and written materials (e.g., mission statements, organizational programming). The Lost Boys (and their local champions) consider educational opportunities as the primary service they provide to South Sudanese communities.

A major finding that was unexpected was the role of the local upstate New York community members in the Lost Boys' nonprofits. These local champions become part of the Lost Boys' stories and have their own philanthropic motivations. Notably White and women, they tend to be people from the local community who are moved by Lost Boys' stories and who welcomed them when they first came to the United States; teachers who taught them, and people they have met along the way in New York. Through the stories of the Lost Boys, local community members are able to witness others' loss and as is suggested by altruism born of suffering, choose to behave philanthropically. In addition, similar to the Lost Boys motivations, their champions are motivated by stories of perseverance and education. This is an important narrative to building local support in New York. These similar motivations across the Lost Boys and native New Yorkers are not

due to having the same cultural background per se (see Zagefka et al., 2011), rather, they are about shared values, that provide a framework to link personal values and organizational values, further motivating philanthropic giving (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011).

Furthermore, although these nonprofits as mechanisms for diaspora philanthropy allow diaspora community members to provide services to their homelands, they do not seek to create a robust diaspora community nor a collective identity to help the homeland. Rather, they are *personal* projects that serve the homeland and at the same time help the Lost Boys themselves create new meaning in their loss and tragic experiences as refugees. This presents the founding of a nonprofit organization and the philanthropic behavior it conjures important to the meaning-making process for these Lost Boy refugees. The founding of a nonprofit begins to build a new narrative that suggests that their loss was not in vain, but rather is now creating new opportunities in their homeland and in their communities in New York State. Although, to date, we find that the work of these nonprofits has not produced any collective action by refugee diaspora like in other types of diaspora philanthropy, these mechanisms hold promise as a way in which Lost Boys' experiences ignite prosocial behavior that not only targets the homeland and but also includes their United States communities.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Despite a rich collective case study of diaspora philanthropy by refugees through small international nonprofit service organizations, there are limitations to our study which allow for future organizational research. First, the cases were selected based on the research purpose and for what they could reveal about the phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Using only Lost Boy–founded organizations is a methodological limitation, but one that provides openings for further empirical analysis. Indeed, while the lens of Lost Boy refugees was used to explore how and why refugee diaspora engage philanthropically with their homelands through nonprofit organizations, it is only one of the many lenses to the refugee experience.

Refugees, migration, and displacement affect people coming from a multitude of countries. For example, since 2008, the majority of refugees resettled in the United States are from 10 countries, not only South Sudan but also Eritrea, Syria, Cuba, Iran, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Bhutan, Iraq, and Myanmar (Haynie, 2017). Thus, there are likely further cases of philanthropy by refugees—including the founding of small international nonprofit service organizations—that can continue to contribute to the

literature about diaspora philanthropy and giving in response to loss. Upstate New York was a resettlement site for Lost Boys of Sudan, however, other communities in the United States might find organizations started, for example, by Bhutanese or Iraqi refugees. Given the case study approach, we do not seek to generalize our findings across the range of refugee-founded non-profit organizations. However, the motivations identified in our cases—feelings of obligation, desire to give back, promotion of education, as well as personal and local connections and shared values among Lost Boys and local champions—can continue to be empirically examined and refined through the study of additional refugee experiences in philanthropy. Such comparative research is warranted about diaspora philanthropy more generally. Through refugee cases of philanthropy, we can continue to build theory about philanthropy and prosocial behavior through nonprofit organizations and in response to loss.

An additional limitation to our study is the focus on the motivations for philanthropic giving. Our data collection method and instrument did not seek to specifically measure over time the affect that these nonprofits have on local United States communities, particularly related to immigrant and refugee issues. However, this potential role for these nonprofit service organizations was present in the data. Our findings demonstrate that these nonprofit founders are celebrated in their upstate New York communities for their perseverance and accomplishments. This is an American narrative that, whether consciously or not, their local champions further propelled. This suggests a potentially more expansive role in future for these organizations. As a result, questions for future research include: Might these nonprofits serve also as venues to influence how individuals think about refugees in their United States communities? Might interaction with these organizations translate into more informed opinions about immigration policies given their current salience in the United States context? In addition to research about the actual service provision performed in South Sudan, more attention is warranted about how these international small nonprofits fit within the political landscape in the United States. In practice, our findings suggest that these international small nonprofits might in turn become greater platforms to showcase refugees in United States communities.

Conclusion

We examined diaspora philanthropy through the experiences of Lost Boy refugees and their founding of small international nonprofit service organizations. Establishing a nonprofit for these Lost Boys was a way through which they process their experiences and make meaning of their personal loss.

Philanthropic giving to their homeland by means of altruism born of suffering produced feelings of obligation, and were linked to the Lost Boys' creation of a *giving back identity*. This was alongside promoting the value of education as front and center in their nonprofit organizations. Altruism born of suffering was found to be a strong factor not only for the emergence of Lost Boys' nonprofit leadership but also that of the local champions who participated. These local champions witnessed Lost Boys' struggles and were compelled to become part of the Lost Boys' stories. As a result, they supported Lost Boys' emergent roles as active nonprofit leaders in their United States communities as well as philanthropists in their homelands.

Appendix

First Interview Protocol—2017

1. Tell us about the organization and how you got involved/Please tell us the story of the founding of the organization.
2. What role do you have in the organization?
3. Do you have a day job?
4. How have you learned nonprofit management or international development? Have you gone to specific trainings and by who/what agency?
5. What is the organization's funding model? (donations, earned income, grants, other?)
6. What are the biggest wins and challenges you have had? What are some lessons learned?
7. How do you (as a board member, volunteer, founder, etc.) motivate other people to give?
8. Were you involved in philanthropic behaviors before you established (got involved in) this organization?
9. Are you involved in other philanthropic behaviors other than this organization? What are they? What were your reasons for choosing those causes?

[If immigrant or diaspora]
10. We are interested to hear about your immigration story and experience. Please tell us about it (how old were you, significant memories, etc.)
11. How did these experiences contributed to your motivations to establish this organization?

12. How does being an immigrant to the United States influence the way in which you run this organization?
13. How do the people in your homeland react to you? How do they accept you and the organization?
14. How do the people here in upstate New York accept your organization? Do you have some examples of some local donors?
15. How did people react to your vision when you first introduced it to them (both American and immigrants)? How have you recruited board members and other volunteers?
16. What do you think are your board members and other volunteers' motivations to join you and your organization? Why do you think they choose this cause?

Second Interview Protocol—2019

1. What are some updates on the organization's projects?
2. How has the board changed over the years?
3. Can you talk more about the organizational mission?
4. How have you (as a board member, volunteer, founder, etc.) continued to motivate people to give?
5. What are examples of some of the most recent fund development efforts? Any changes in your funding model?
6. What are the more recent wins and challenges? What are some lessons learned?

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

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Notes

1. We have also called these types of organizations grassroots international nongovernmental organizations (GINGOs) as coined by Schnable (2015) (Appe & Oreg, forthcoming). Allison Schnable's research in particular has examined

small international service organizations through the lens of nonprofit theory and volunteering perspectives (Schnable, 2015) and their role as development partners (Schnable, 2016). Our research seeks to use the motivations to philanthropic giving literature and explore how a subset of these small service organizations founded by refugees contributes to further understanding about diaspora philanthropy and also philanthropy itself as a response to personal loss.

2. In reporting our qualitative research approach, we draw on recommendations from Ospina et al. (2018) and Hendren et al. (2018), which provide good guidelines and suggestions for the credible reporting of qualitative research. In addition, we use Brower's et al. (2000) "Assessment Guidelines for Qualitative Studies," and we consulted both the COREQ (COnsolidated criteria for REporting Qualitative research) and CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) checklists to include relevant information in the explanation of our research approach.

3. The overarching research study uses a database of organizations created from the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities that included nonprofit organizations in the United States coded as working in international relief, international development, and international human rights (codes Q30-39 and Q70-71). We identified 147 nonprofit organizations in the 48 countries of upstate New York whose missions were international aid and development related. Among the 147 organizations, 105 have websites and/or Facebook pages and appear to be active. We have interviewed people in over 50 of these organizations at this writing with a standardized interview protocol. Of the 50 organizations, three organizations were started by Lost Boys included in this study.

4. One of the founders, Gabriel of HOPE for Ariang Foundation, was in South Sudan during the period of fieldwork; therefore, we did not directly speak with him, and for this organization, we relied on organizational documents and multiple in-depth interviews with two active board members.

5. Kohls (1984) describes American values as including "the belief that [people, i.e., Americans] can do anything and the belief that any change is good—together with an American belief in the virtue of hard work and the belief that each individual has a responsibility to do the best he or she can do" (p. 2). These are tenets at the core of the American identity and particularly tie to the values of education. In addition, Kohls (1984) argues that Americans take seriously the idea of self and acting for one's self.

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