

Conflict Discourse among Sudanese Dinka Refugees: Implications for Cross-Cultural Analysis and Resolution

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Abstract: *This 1-year ethnographic research, situated in a conflict, social construction, and social ecological theoretical framework, utilized the Hymes' S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model and field notes to document the verbal and nonverbal conflict discourse, as well as the presence of Dinka cultural attributes, within four specific social contexts: home, church, community meetings, and memorial services. Emerging themes included Speaking "Like a Dinka," Dinka women and role conflict, tribalism and ethnic conflict, Dinka and economic hardship, and Dinka and face behaviors. Discussion includes the practical impact of this research on an interpersonal, organizational, community, and intercultural level for conflict analysis and resolution professionals.*

We have the memory of yesterday. We have the reality of today and we hold the hope of tomorrow. (Sudanese Dinka Elder, Jacksonville, Florida)

1. Introduction

Conflict analysis and communication professionals, including mediators, negotiators, peacekeepers, and mental health therapists, are in a distinctive role to assist eastern cultures through conflict analysis, resolution, and transformation approaches. Due to migration, protracted civil wars, and the increasing search by political refugees for safety outside of their country of origin, there is a rising necessity for the development of these unique cross-cultural techniques. Although culture frequently binds these groups through a shared history of trauma, family, and identity, culture is also considered dynamic and is significantly

affected by the influence of the social constructions and contexts in which it exists. Moreover, culture and the verbal and non-verbal expression of conflict are deeply interconnected, further establishing an important role for innovative research in understanding the various approaches and realities among refugee groups who have resettled in the United States.

All known languages include terms and phrases which describe various types of conflict actions and feelings and these are frequently framed by the diverse contexts and settings in which they occur (Carbaugh et al., 2006). Within the manifestation of verbal and non-verbal communication lie cultural representations of a distinct community through the expression of meanings, symbols, premises, and rules. Language, dialogue, and speech are not only considered a medium to the interaction itself but also serve to shape and ultimately constitute the social life within a particular culture (Philipsen, 1992). It is through the determination of these communication patterns within a particular culture which allows for the expansion of a multi-faceted conflict analysis frame of reference. In addition, the inclusion of the specific contexts in which conflict communication occurs further enhances the ability to understand the presence of cultural change and movement on both a macro and micro level (Oetzel et al., 2006).

One of the more recurrent cross-cultural misunderstandings occurs between Africans and Americans with regard to communicating the meaning and expression of conflict. In addition to the differences between these collectivistic and individualistic cultures, there are also dramatic disparities in shared patterns and themes of communication, underlying beliefs, and traditional philosophies of life that serve to ultimately shape identity and ethnicity. Chung and Ting-Toomey (1999) explained that ethnic identity is frequently molded by the norms of the socialization process, creating diverse experiences and changes in communicative expression over a lifetime. Traumatic social events such as forced displacement and genocide throughout the history of Africa are among only a few of the issues which have impacted the development of various ethnic identities (Deng, 1995). For African political refugees, particularly the Sudanese Dinka resettling in the

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United States, these prior experiences as well as their transnational family status have undoubtedly been integral in creating their multiple perceptions and realities of conflict within the context of a new place and time.

Due to the presence of three government approved refugee resettlement agencies in the area, a few hundred Sudanese from several tribal groups began to resettle in 2001 in the Northeast Florida region, specifically Jacksonville (Hecht, 2005). At present, it is estimated that approximately 500 to 600 Sudanese refugees reside in Jacksonville, however, the Florida Department of Children and Families does not differentiate between the various tribal and ethnic groups in their statistics (Florida Department of Children and Families, Refugee Services, 2006). However, according to World Relief, a Jacksonville Refugee Resettlement agency, approximately 75 to 80 percent of the Sudanese refugees in this area originate from the Dinka tribe in the Southern Sudan and these numbers are only expected to increase as additional family members receive asylum (Svihel, 2006).

As a highly collectivistic culture, the norms, values, and the experience of trauma, have frequently shaped how Dinka tribal members communicate and approach conflict situations on a multitude of levels. The significant presence of this unique African community, my close physical proximity to Jacksonville, and the opportunity to learn about conflict from the Dinka provided clear justification for conducting this original and important research.

2. Conceptual Framework and Review of the Literature

This study utilized two theoretical and conceptual frameworks: social constructionism and social ecology to examine conflict discourse among the Sudanese Dinka refugees in Jacksonville, Florida. Berger and Luckmann (1966), building upon the work of Durkheim, developed social construction theory to explain the manner in which human beings subjectively interpret varying meanings and realities in the context of everyday life. These multiple

“realities” and interpretations then become the knowledge that sociologists seek to understand in order to define dimensions of culture. These foundations of this knowledge can be discovered in many aspects of human life. Berger and Luckmann (1966) further argued that one such essential element was through language and speech which is capable of transmitting symbolism and meaning through patterns and themes, allowing for insight into these multiple realities and creation of identities depending on the social context. Moreover, these scholars (1966) considered man as living within a “web of human relationships” that is further defined by the social structures and historical institutions in which they exist.

Conflict and communication researchers have advocated in the last five years for the application of a social ecological framework in qualitative data collection and analysis. Single level research often overestimates the local effects on conflict and underestimates the cross level effects of cultural, historical, and societal factors (Rousseau & House, 1994). Thus, Oetzel et al. (2006) emphasized Bronfenbrenner’s (1977, 1979) social ecological framework as it intersects environmental influences on conflict into four levels for analysis: Micro (face-to-face interaction in specific settings-interpersonal conflict), meso (interrelationships among various micro-systems-organizational conflict), exo (forces within the larger social system-community conflict), and macro (cultural beliefs and values-intercultural/international conflict). McLeroy et al. (1988) also noted that the social ecological model allows for the viewing of patterns (such as conflict communication) through multiple levels and across various conflict contexts. Oetzel et al. (2006) further argued that there is an important role of context in understanding conflict communication, the possibilities of integrative systems approaches, the blurring of essentialized categories, and the presence of change and movement on both macro and micro levels of conflict analysis.

Culture creates an additional layer of complexity in the study of conflict communication due to the differences in historical, political, and spiritual factors. The majority of research on intercultural and cross-cultural conflict behavior has utilized Western/individualistic conceptualizations of

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conflict and conflict styles in an etic manner (Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda, 1996; Gabrielidis, Stephen, Ybarra, Dos Santos Pearson & Villareal, 1997; Oetzel et al., 2001; Ohbuchi, Fukushima, & Tedeschi, 1999). However, Oetzel et al. (2006) argued that the use of the emic perspective is crucial to incorporate non-western perspectives for more effective resolution approaches. These authors (2006) further emphasized the identification of specific symbols and cultural attitudes that have been shaped by the variables of history, particularly if this involved violence, in order to move toward constructive conflict resolution.

Dell Hymes (1974) is largely credited with the development of the method and approach of the ethnography of communication. Previously identified under the umbrella of sociolinguistics as the “ethnography of speaking” by Hymes in 1962, this technique is based upon three primary assumptions: (a) communication is systematically patterned and needs to be studied on its own and for its own sake; (b) the systematicity is intimately linked with social life and needs to be studied as such; and (c) the nature of the communication itself is culture-specific therefore cross-culturally diverse (Carbaugh, 1990).

There have been over 200 ethnography of communication studies conducted since its conception. Many researchers and scholars have utilized this approach to study various aspects within communication, including culture, conflict, gender differences, meanings, and codes (Hymes, 1962; Bailey, 2000; Basso, 1996; Covarrubias, 2002; Fitch, 1998; Hymes, 1996; Katriel, 2004; Philipsen, 1992; Samuels, 2001; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Sherzer, 1987; Tannen, 1984, 1986; and Urban, 1991). Moreover, Saville-Troike (1982) further explained that for anthropology, the ethnography of communication extends understandings of cultural systems to language, at the same time relating it to social organization, role-relationships, values and beliefs, shared patterns of knowledge, and the study of cultural maintenance and change.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to document, analyze, and identify themes and patterns of conflict discourse within the Sudanese Dinka community in Jacksonville, Florida. Given that culture is frequently conveyed through the verbal and non-verbal actions associated with communication and language, this research included a variety of social contexts (home, community meetings, church, and memorial services) for comparison and contrast. The S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G model was utilized as the primary methodological foundation to collect and analyze a series of speech events and speech acts within Dinka cultural and social interactions.

4. Method

4.1 Rationale for Using the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. Model

The ethnography of communication and the use of the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model (a mnemonic), as developed by Hymes (1974), has provided researchers the ability to study many different types of discourse as a series of speech events and acts within a cultural context. These include, but are not limited to, place, naming, silence, time, identity, personhood, face, voice, and relationships. Philipsen (1992) expanded the work of Hymes' through the assumptive foundation that speaking and communication within any culture is a considered a structured process that can be documented to determine representations and distinctions. Philipsen (1997) added the concept of speech codes to determine locally and culturally constructed resources, pattern, and meanings in language. This dissertation study incorporated the methodological work of both of these scholars to document, analyze, and identify patterns in conflict discourse among Dinka refugees across several contexts in Jacksonville as they provide the ability for comprehensive findings.

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4.2 Data Collection

Participant-observation, field notes, and the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model were utilized to record the verbal and non-verbal conflict discourse among the Sudanese Dinka refugees within four specific contexts. Complementary study one addressed the following three research questions: RQ1: Utilizing the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model, how is conflict expressed through verbal discourse in the following four contexts among Sudanese Dinka refugees? RQ1(a): Home; RQ1(b): Church; RQ1(c): Community Meetings; and RQ1(d): Memorial/Funeral Services; and RQ2: Utilizing the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model, how is conflict expressed through non-verbal discourse in the following four contexts among Sudanese Dinka refugees? RQ2(a): Home; RQ2(b): Church; RQ2(c): Community Meetings; and RQ2(d): Memorial/Funeral Services. RQ3: What aspects of Dinka culture are present to assist with conflict analysis?

4.3 Study Participants

The study participants included approximately 350 single or married men and women ages 18 years of age or older; refugees who originated from the Dinka tribe of the Southern Sudan in Africa; and all possessed the proficiency and capacity to speak and comprehend English. In addition, all of the study participants are multi-lingual and also speak Dinka, Arabic, Swahili, Nuer, and several other African dialects. All are political refugees who have been granted asylum in the United States and have resettled in Jacksonville, Florida.

4.4 Description of Four Contexts/Study Settings

To address the research questions, four specific settings and contexts were selected. The first was in the home setting was specifically chosen for this study as it allowed me as a researcher to observe and participate within the family system in their natural environment. Often, these

homes consisted of one or two bedroom apartments in lower socioeconomic neighborhoods.

The second setting was in the Sudanese church. Although some of the Dinka do attend mainstream organized churches, there are two distinct Sudanese churches in Jacksonville. One church is attended by Sudanese refugees and immigrants from a variety of tribes and the primary language spoken during this service is Juba Arabic. The other church is comprised of the Lost Boys of the Sudan, who primarily originate from the Dinka tribe, and the spoken language is Dinka. Although the majority of the Sudanese refugees are proficient in the English language, worshipping in their tribal languages provides an excellent opportunity to maintain their cultural customs and values.

The third setting for this study is community meetings. The majority of these meetings were held at a local facility, such as the American Legion or at a local rented hall. These meetings were comprised primarily of Sudanese Dinka from the Bor region of the Sudan although at times Sudanese Arabs and other tribal groups were also represented. When several tribes and ethnic groups attended these meetings, the social dynamics had a tendency to change and conflict openly expressed.

The fourth setting for this study included memorial and funeral services which occurred either at the American Legion or at a church. The services I attended were held in remembrance of Dr. John Garang on the one year anniversary of his death and for one other Sudanese family member who resided in the Sudan or the Kakuma Refugee camp.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Review of Field Notes and S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. Model

The notes compiled utilizing the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model to gain additional interpretation of verbal and non-verbal conflict discourse were reviewed for consistency and focused analysis. The information gathered within these four separate contexts were compared and contrasted to gain a

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general overview of conflict communication and cultural characteristics and approaches of the Sudanese Dinka.

5. 2 Analytic Coding

Next, qualitative analytic coding of the field notes, including open and focused, was utilized. Emerson et al. (1995) define open coding as “reading through the field notes line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied or disparate” (p. 143). Emerson et al. (1995) also defined focused coding to include “fine-grained, line-by-line analysis based on topics that have been identified as of particular interest” (p. 143). Furthermore, the S.P.E.A.K.I.N.G. model notes were also coded based on the similarities and differences of each context. In the results chapter, each letter of the mnemonic is utilized to examine the series of speech events and speech acts within four cultural contexts.

5.3 Phase Three: Identification of Themes and Patterns

An important and on-going procedure in data analysis following analytic coding is the re-reading, re-reviewing, and re-experiencing of the all written information in order to ensure that all themes, patterns, and variations have been identified. In this process, “an ethnographer gains fresh insights in her own understanding and interpretation of people and events by reviewing a completed set of notes” (Emerson et al., 1995: p. 145). Wolcott (1994) further recommended the search for common and recurring themes in the data in order to draw connections between the culture sharing group and the larger theoretical framework.

6. Findings and Interpretations

Speaking “Like a Dinka”

While this research identified five major patterns, Speaking “Like a Dinka” effectively encompasses the other four significant themes, however, it was important to also emphasize and discuss these separately to provide a more comprehensive perspective and understanding of this particular culture. Although there are several cultural attributes present to describe the verbal and nonverbal methods and manner of relating and speaking among the Dinka in Jacksonville, the first I have addressed is language and code-switching.

Language

It is essential to begin with a discussion of language as the basic component in any speech event in order to develop a global picture of the “personhood” or what it “looks like” to be a “Dinka” living in Jacksonville, Florida. During several participant observations, the Dinka refugees appeared to share a tacit understanding regarding the use of a specific language or dialect and this varied by contexts or settings within the community. Although the majority of Dinka have become fluent in English as a second or third, and sometimes fourth, language, they have also maintained their first language in Arabic and/or Dinka and frequently utilize these during cultural and conflict discourse. In addition, a significant number of the Dinka also speak Kiswahili although its use in the community is limited. Depending on which native language is used, the Dinka express their connection to each other with shared constructed meanings, identities, and histories. In general, those Dinka who predominantly speak Arabic originate from the northern provinces of the Southern Sudan or have had significant influence by the Arab culture, whether through living in Khartoum, the Arab dominated capital, or assimilation. In contrast, the Dinka who predominantly speak the Dinka dialect originate from the lower portion of the Southern Sudan and have not experienced assimilation into the Arab culture or have rejected the use of the Arab language due to

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long-term conflict. This will also be discussed further in the section regarding tribalism.

The identification of which specific language(s) was predominantly spoken across the four settings assisted in the development of a general overview of what it is to speak “like a Dinka” as well as the social norms and rules which govern this behavior. This is of particular importance for cross-cultural analysis and resolution professionals as it provides a foundation in understanding the use of native language(s) as central to Dinka identity and expressions of conflict. The presence or lack of presence of their native language in these contexts also served the following: as an indicator of the level of assimilation; as culture, historical, and ethnicity maintenance as refugees resettling in Jacksonville; and as a basis for understanding code switching in multilingual settings.

Another vital factor in language is the use or nonuse of a formal versus an informal manner of presentation, as well as the verbal and nonverbal meanings that are attached. The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics (Richards, Platt & Weber, 1987) defined “formal speech” as “the type of speech used in situations when the speaker is very careful about pronunciation and choice of words and sentence structure. This type of speech may be used, for example, at official functions, and in debates and ceremonies” (p. 109). In contrast, informal speech is considered more “casual” and the use of jargon or slang is more prominent. In addition, nonverbals can be presented in a formal or informal manner.

There were distinctive and differential patterns across the four contexts that assisted in the creation of unique speech situations. As Hymes’ (1989) explained “Within a community one readily detects many situations associated with (or marked by the absence of) speech” (p. 51). Likewise, Philipsen (1992) argued that speech denotes more than the transmission of information, but also a difference, across groups, in what gets done.

Across the four contexts, there were also patterns of the use of numerous languages utilized in a single event, with the exception of one church episode in which only Dinka was spoken. However, the use of formal speech was observed in both church settings as well as memorial

services. Moreover, Dinka social norms and rules for appropriate behavior were more clearly expressed through verbal and nonverbal discourse in these formal settings. In contrast, there was the presence of informal speech in the home setting and during community services which indicated slightly more relaxed cultural role expectations and norms. It is imperative to further explore the specific nuances of these cultural behaviors in order to comprehend the complexity of the manner in which the Dinka relate to others in their own community and their environment. These cultural norms include the verbal and nonverbal expressions and representations of the sense of time; honor and respect; power; silence; speaking “like a Dinka man”; and speaking “like a Dinka woman.” Each will be addressed separately.

Time

For the Sudanese Dinka, like many other African cultures, the sense and interpretation of time is quite different than that of Americans. In general, the Dinka will arrive later, sometimes an hour or more, than a scheduled time. This more casual sense of time is typical in the villages of the Southern Sudan. However, this difference in the United States has actually created conflict for many in terms of employment and other commitments. When I attended any of the Sudanese events in Jacksonville, I also observed on several occasions that the sense of time was different for several of the Dinka.

Honor and Respect

There were several reoccurring cultural behaviors which demonstrated a sense of honor and respect within the verbal and nonverbal discourse among the members of this culture. I observed these aspects not only across the four contexts, but also in additional interactions with this community over this 1-year ethnographic study. One of these behaviors is the use of titles of distinction. These titles, in turn, become a significant part of an individual’s identity and place in the cultural community.

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For the Dinka, an elder, a parent, or an individual who has significantly provided assistance to the refugees in Jacksonville is often denoted this symbol of honor and respect. In verbal discourse, this title is typically expressed through the use of “Momma” and this is placed before a woman’s first name. Dinka men are not addressed by a similar title such as “Papa,” however, are distinguished by other methods. There are, however, a few American, non-Dinka individuals in the Jacksonville community who have “earned” this title through consistent acts of kindness and assistance for the Dinka refugees. This requires a significant amount of time and dedication to the Sudanese community but more importantly, an establishment of trust.

Another important title or recognition in the Dinka community is given to a minister or pastor. When a Dinka man is referred to as “Pastor” there is a high expectation of honor and respect from others in their cultural group and this is frequently expressed through specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Like the title of “Momma,” the term “Pastor” is also placed in front of a person’s first name. However, no Dinka women, to my knowledge, have been given this title in their community in Jacksonville. In addition, the nonverbal gestures of respect toward the pastor included limited verbal and nonverbal interruptions when the pastor spoke, with the exception of words of praise in response, such as “alleluia” and the raising of hands high in the air as a symbol of agreement. I observed this aspect on several occasions as indicated in the following field note.

In addition to these verbal expressions of respect though titles, there were several examples of nonverbal cues within discourse that demonstrate this important aspect. This included the use of space and distance among the Dinka as they relate with others inside their culture. I noted distinct patterns of cultural social norms and rules regarding these attributes across all four contexts as well as during other community observations.

For Dinka families, regardless of context, the method and manner of demonstrating honor and respect through space and distance was expressed through the restraint of affectionate physical touch in front of others. While children

frequently touched or were held by their parent(s), this was very different for couples. In contrast to American or Western norms, a Dinka couple display respect and honor for each other and their culture by refraining from physical contact (hugging, touching, holding hands, or kissing) in the presence of others in their home or in public places. This is strictly adhered to among the Dinka in Jacksonville.

The use of space and distance is also central in how the elder men and women were shown respect by younger Dinka individuals in the community. In the Southern Sudan, it is common for the elder Dinka men to sit in the front of any event, followed by the younger men behind them, then the elder women who attend to the care of the children, with the younger women typically preparing food to serve (S. Svihel, personal communication, June 29, 2007). Although in the United States, the configuration of this space and distance has been modified among the Dinka due to assimilation, there is still the presence of the cultural norms of honor and respect for the elders in the community.

Eye Contact

Unlike American or Western cultures, direct eye contact for the Dinka between men and women is not considered appropriate for any reason within their community. This is a very strict cultural social norm, however, with their resettlement in Jacksonville, there has been some acceptance and practice of direct eye contact between Dinka men and American women as long as the overarching and accepted norm. This does not appear to be the consistent pattern among the Dinka men and women.

Gestures

The use of gestures in the Dinka community is also an important and essential form of nonverbal discourse which demonstrates respect and honor among all the Dinka. One of these unique gestures is the handshake. While I am accustomed as an American to expressing acknowledgement of an individual with a firm handshake, I experienced a different form of this gesture the first few times I met several

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Dinka individuals in Jacksonville. This handshake consists of an extension of the hand and the Dinka will slap the palm of your hand with their palm prior to shaking the hand. It is typically rapid motion and is utilized by both the younger men and women as well as the elders. Moreover, this nonverbal gesture is considered an informal manner of a respectful and friendly acknowledgement for both Dinka men and women; however if this involves an elder, the handshake is more firm. I noted this gesture throughout this ethnographic study and in virtually all contexts and settings.

Another interesting and noteworthy gesture utilized among the Dinka, in particular men, is a modified hug that serves as respectful greeting. According to cultural norms, men are allowed to touch each other, but not women, and this is accomplished through a very short, tap on the shoulder.

As a collectivistic culture, the Dinka also express their gratitude more publicly to those individuals, both within and outside of their community, who have positively assisted them in some manner. Typically, this predominantly nonverbal gesture of gratefulness and respect occurs in the form of a Sudanese community party in which the Dinka come together, the younger women have prepared Sudanese food, and a celebration occurs in which the community as a whole demonstrates their thankfulness. The provision of assistance to even one Dinka individual is viewed as caring for the entire Sudanese Dinka community and therefore it is recognized publicly. This is in contrast to the individualistic manner of simply expressing thanks verbally or through a gesture of a card or gift.

Silence

The use of the silence in nonverbal discourse within this culture has two varied yet important meanings in understanding ways of relating among the Dinka. The first, and perhaps the most common, is the use of silence as nonverbal sign of respect when spoken directly to by a male of female elder. For the younger men and women, even if they disagree with what the elders are verbally expressing,

silence is expected rather than open disagreement as this is viewed strictly as disrespectful under social norms.

The second meaning of silence as a nonverbal aspect of Dinka discourse can be viewed as a purposeful expression of dislike, particularly if a Dinka individual does not agree with what is verbally being shared. There was a pattern in this research of the use of silence when an American would address a Dinka individual in a direct and stern tone. Some of the Dinka would also eventually choose to stop talking to the American friend to demonstrate the depth of disagreement and dislike. This has created at times a level of conflict between a few in the Dinka community and some of the American individuals who have volunteered their time, guidance, and financial support to assist with assimilation. This conflict appears to be significantly based in distinct cultural differences between Western and Eastern conflict management approaches.

Power

The expression of power in the verbal and nonverbal discourse among the Dinka also presented some interesting findings for this study. As previously established, there are distinct power differentials between the elders and the younger Dinka, as well between the men and women. This hierarchy defines the level of respect required as well as the value placed upon individuals. For the Dinka, an elder not only represents the most powerful person in the community but also the values, history, and importance of the culture itself. Moreover, when the Dinka honor their elders, they are honoring their history. Likewise, if an elder male is also a military leader, it is expected that he receive the greatest amount of respect and honor. In this case, all younger men and women are expected to exercise all previously discussed cultural verbal and nonverbal behaviors toward the elder with the power. The expression of power which is present between Dinka men and women will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

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Speaking “Like a Dinka Man”

Given the unique differences between the sexes in this culture, it is also imperative to discuss the specific nature and personae of what it means to speak “Like a Dinka man.” As established in previous discussion, the men in the Dinka culture are considered on many levels to have more “value” than their women counterparts. Upon birth, boys are celebrated as they are considered the future of the family as well as the culture. As the young Dinka boys become men in the Sudan, they are expected to marry and continue the family lineage through the birth of many children with typically more than one wife. Moreover, in the Dinka villages, the young men are taken to visit the elders to learn the social norms and rules of the culture. This is practiced religiously in the Sudan (S. Svihel, personal communication, June 29, 2007). However, for the Dinka men in Jacksonville, there have been considerable changes in their manner of relating and speaking.

To be a Dinka man is to be viewed and perceived as powerful. This first begins with the outward appearance of power through the wearing of a suit or military uniform. With the influence of Dr. John Garang as a significant Dinka military leader, the need to look “sharp and smart” is essential in this community. Another aspect and manner of relating among the Dinka men in Jacksonville is the use of verbally communicating with each other in a ritualistic manner separate from their wives. At the majority of Dinka and Sudanese events, the men sit on one side of the room together and the women on the other. This is considered an important time for the men to discuss important family or community issues, or simply to enjoy each other’s company through fellowship and bonding. When this occurs, the women do not interrupt or speak to their spouses as it would be viewed as disrespectful. As a non-Dinka guest, I also became aware of the cultural norm for women to allow this space and distance for the men to talk among themselves.

Power for Dinka men can also be found in their traditional role in the home. A Dinka man is expected to make the important decisions for his wife and his children, however, he generally participates in little to none of the

actual childcare. This is not viewed as a traditional Dinka male role, although more men who have resettled in Jacksonville with their families have been required to provide more assistance in the home if their spouses need to work for economic reasons.

Dinka men in Jacksonville are expected to be the leaders, whether political or in religious matters, in the community. In the Sudan, Dinka men have typically served in the role of clan, tribal or community leaders (Deng, 1972). "Traditionally, the Dinka political system functioned through lineages, and this system centered on the Paramount Chief, his subordinate chiefs, and elders. Political leadership is considered divine and is traced through religious legends that are continually retold to reinforce contemporary structure. A Dinka Chief is not a ruler in the Western sense, but a spiritual leader whose words express divine enlightenment and wisdom and from the point of consensus and reconciliation" (pp. 111-112).

Another major influence of Dr. John Garang was his extensive educational background. For Dinka men, particularly many of the younger men known as the Lost Boys, the attainment of education is essential to their personae. Several of these men share the goal to receive their college degree and then return to the Southern Sudan to assist with rebuilding this area or serve as military leaders. To achieve the respect that Garang received as a leader would be the ultimate perception of power for several of these young men.

It is important to discuss some of the cultural changes that have occurred among the young Dinka men since resettling in Jacksonville. These changes have been a direct result of the acculturation process and the embracing of Western values by several of these men, however, it has created conflict with the Dinka elders and within the community itself. As previously mentioned, the young men are required to meet on a weekly basis with the Dinka elders in the Sudan, however, this has not been occurring as frequently as defined by cultural social rules. In addition, this movement away from the collective structure of the Dinka culture toward more individualistic choices has led some of the elders to question the future.

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The cultural rules for marriage are not absent for the Dinka man. The unmarried and typically young Dinka living in Jacksonville is still required under the social norms to return to the Sudan to marry a Dinka woman. This marriage must first be approved by the elders, the families, and a dowry of cattle paid to the bride's father. The man must then travel to the Sudan to get married and his wife will need to remain there until she is approved to migrate to the United States, which could take many years. There may be a consummation of the marriage and the man will be required (as a political refugee) to return to Jacksonville and may learn that he is going to be a father. However, due to the economic requirements of education and living expenses, many of these men are choosing to forego this cultural ritual of marriage and children, which in turn is serving to create conflict with the elders and change certain aspects of this profoundly familial culture.

Speaking "Like a Dinka Woman"

Sex and gender role expectations within the Dinka culture have existed for hundreds of years. According to Deng (1972), the Dinka have traditionally been described as a significantly patriarchal culture in which there are different and defined customs, rules, and behaviors for men and women. Deng explained that in traditional southern Sudan "The socialization of a Dinka girl differs markedly than that of a Dinka boy. While she is also expected to identify more with her father than with her mother, it is realized that she is closer to her mother than a son is. It is through her mother that she learns to be a wife and a mother. Since she will marry and leave to further the interests of another lineage, her role within her agnatic group is limited. Her main contribution is to attract bride wealth which her brothers and other male relatives will use for their own marriages. Yet, the Dinka speak of her as "a slave" to be "sold" and "a stranger" who will "leave" her own kin group for another" (Deng, p. 56).

Although the Dinka women who have resettled in Jacksonville, Florida have experienced dramatic changes in sex and gender definitions since Deng's research, there are

some distinct verbal and nonverbal cultural behaviors that have remained in place.

Perhaps the most central is the expectations of a Dinka woman as a wife and a mother. However, there is a distinction between the social rules and respect for the younger women and the older women, especially grandmothers. While the mothers are expected to give birth to several children, the grandmothers are to be the primary caregiver and this is viewed as a more valued role. The younger, married Dinka women are to focus upon serving their husbands, the other men in the community, the children, then for the elder women. The women in their twenties and thirties are to complete the main work of cooking and cleaning, particularly for celebrations, parties, funerals, and weddings. It has been understood in this culture that the women rarely say no to these duties. However, conflict has increased in the family system due to some of the Dinka women making the individual choice to live more like American women and this has resulted in an increasing divorce rate in this community.

As a wife, a good appearance is essential for a Dinka woman. The majority of the women wear dresses and in some tribes, they are more respected if they wear the full African dress. In contrast, the single, divorced, or teenage women are allowed to dress in more casual pants or American clothing, including jeans.

Given the respect for the male pastor in the Dinka culture, his wife is also held in high esteem, although more as an expectation of perfection. The pastor's wife is not 'allowed' to make mistakes or choices with negative consequences as she will be discredited by the other Dinka women. In some ways, they do not consider her 'human' and this can be very challenging and stressful.

Like the men, the Dinka women in Jacksonville also use verbal communication with each other in a ritualistic manner when they are separate from their husbands. As previously noted, the men and women sit on different sides of the room. In addition to being a cultural expectation, the women enjoy this time together for fellowship and bonding and a chance to share.

It is also vital to discuss some of the cultural changes that have occurred among the Dinka women since

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resettling in Jacksonville. Like the men, these changes have taken place for Dinka women during acculturation and through the incorporation of Western and individualistic values. The influence of the American lifestyle and the freedom of American women have been difficult for some of the Dinka women who seek similar independence from the expectations of their cultural norms, resulting in a complicated dichotomy. For the Dinka women who have had to work outside of the home for economic sustainability for the family, this has not necessarily increased their value or level of respect with their husbands or in their community. In addition, attempting to maintain and adhere to their social, cultural, and gender norms has created significant conflict for many for many of these women.

7. Gender Role Conflict and Dinka Women

The second major theme or pattern identified in verbal and nonverbal cultural discourse across the four social contexts is the presence of this gender role conflict for Dinka women. It has been established that while many of the Dinka women do closely follow their cultural rules, there is also the presence of an external and internal conflict between what is expected and their verbal and nonverbal behavior.

8. Tribalism and Ethnic Conflict

The third major theme or pattern identified in cultural discourse across the four social contexts is the presence of tribalism and ethnic conflict, which is often emphasized by war and militarized identities. Deng (1972) clarified the importance of the military in the lives of young Dinka men and the impact this experience has on their identity and approach to conflict:

It all begins with their militancy. Even their constructive roles have destructive implications. Their activities are usually competitive, and sooner or later this brings conflict. Perhaps the best way of showing the degree to which the activities of youth are institutionally integrated,

controlled, or esthetically sublimated- yet manifested in ways that spill into provocation and aggressiveness—is through the role of war-songs and war dances. (Deng, p. 77).

Given the substantial and long-term history of civil war between the Dinka, the Arab Muslims, and other Nilotic tribal groups, I was not surprised by this finding in the Jacksonville Sudanese community. Deng (1995) described these types of conflicts as frequently bounded by identity. He further defined identity as “a concept of how people define themselves and are defined by others on the bases of race, ethnicity, culture, language, and religion. One’s personal identification may be in sharp conflict with what one actually is by the application of established standards” (Deng, p. 387). However, while there have been significant attempts and actions by various Sudanese elders and leaders to bring unity and peace to the Sudanese community, tribal and ethnic conflict still remains and was reoccurring across the four contexts

9. Dinka and Economic Hardship

The fourth major theme or pattern identified in verbal and nonverbal cultural discourse across the four social contexts is the presence of conflict involving the Dinka and economic hardship. As previously established, with migration and arrival in the United States, the Dinka typically experience a decline in social status and an increase in economic instability (Abusharaf, 2002). Few of the Dinka have transferable employment skills and the majority lack the required educational or language abilities to obtain both short and long-term financial stability in the United States. In addition, the loss of a collectivistic family structure has created significant barriers for many of the Dinka refugees in Jacksonville, who have had to build new emotional and financial support systems in order to survive. Moreover, the presence of economic hardship and conflict within Dinka cultural verbal and nonverbal discourse was present across all four social contexts as well as in other observations during the 1 year of field work.

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Dinka and Face Behaviors

According to Ting-Toomey and Takai (2006), while face and facework are universal phenomenon, how we “frame’ or interpret the situated meaning of face and how we enact facework differ from one cultural community to the next. The concept of face is about identity respect and other identity consideration issues within and beyond the actual encounter episode. Face is tied to the emotional significance and estimated calculations that we attach to our own social self-worth and that of other’s social self-worth. It is therefore a precious identity resource in communication because it can be threatened, enhanced, undermined, and bargained over—on both emotional reactive level and cognitive appraisal level. (p. 701).

This study further demonstrated a fifth main theme, the presence of face loss as well as face saving behaviors among the Dinka within the four different contexts. For the Dinka, face not only includes cultural identity, it also includes the sex/gender role differences as men and women, their family, the pride in their role in the SPLA, and the importance of their Nilotic languages and customs.

Specific Dinka Verbal and Nonverbal Cultural Attributes

In order to gain a comprehensive overview of Dinka verbal and nonverbal cultural discourse, it is essential to provide a guide in the form of a table which summarizes these behaviors as identified and discussed in this research. For conflict analysis and resolution professionals, the first step in evaluating the presence of conflict is understanding the various social norms and rules specific to any culture as well for the men and women in the community.

Speaking “Like A Dinka” Across Conflict Discourse and Contexts

This research effectively identified numerous aspects and variables in Dinka conflict discourse across the four specific contexts. This information not only provides insight into the variances of Dinka conflict discourse but also the

impact of the different settings on its presence and proliferation. It is therefore vital to provide a summary in table format to holistically capture these findings in order to describe the notion of “Speaking Like A Dinka” to establish a useful overview of these findings for conflict analysis and resolution professionals. This is presented in following table.

Speaking Like a Dinka Across Conflict Discourse and Contexts

Context or Setting	Dinka Verbal Conflict Discourse	Dinka Nonverbal Conflict Discourse
Home	Men verbally maintain custom to have “more than one wife in order to have as many children as possible” although not possible in the U.S. Dinka verbal recognition of tribal differences and conflict as Dinka have “little interaction with those from the Arab and Nuer tribes.” English and Dinka Spoken	Women are expected to perform all household and childcare related duties in the home; No physical touch between men and women in the presence of others; Men do not typically physically assist with meal preparation or chores; Women expected not to be employed outside of the home Dinka expected to send financial support (money) to family members in the Sudan or other countries, despite economic hardships in the U.S Physical and material surroundings and possessions indicative of economic hardships and lower socioeconomic status
Church	Verbal recognition of differences between the Dinka in the two	Women in Arabic church more involved than women in Dinka

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<p>churches as “the men and women who attend the Arabic church have lived more with the influence of the North (Sudan) and have more education while the Dinka church relies on old (South) ways and customs...”</p> <p>English and Arabic Spoken In Arabic Church; Dinka only Spoken in Dinka church</p>	<p>church in the service through song and prayer; male pastors given the greatest nonverbal respect from congregation(s) in both church settings</p> <p>Strict behavioral and social norm expectations for women and men in Dinka church; More relaxed social norms in Arabic church</p>
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Community Meetings

<p>English, Dinka, and Arabic Spoken</p> <p>Verbal recognition of the need to work together as a “Sudanese community” regardless of tribe</p>	<p>Distinct applauding in agreement with statement to welcome all Sudanese to the meeting, while some (particular men) sat silently, many with their arms crossed in disagreement of unity</p> <p>Men expected to be served their meal first, followed by the women and children; Women and children sat together, separately from the men; Women maintain childcare duties in this context</p>
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Memorial Services

<p>Open and frequent verbal recognition of Dr. John Garang in the history of the civil war involving the southern Sudanese</p> <p>Verbal use of war songs and tribal identification chants</p>	<p>All the women and younger children sat together on one side of the hall and all the men and older teenage boys sat together on the other side of the hall. Women spend most of the prior evening preparing the</p>
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prevalent in this setting	traditional Sudanese food for memorial services.
Men will openly and verbally chastise women for not following social and cultural norms	Family role expectations for women continue beyond death or termination of relationship. Women expected to serve in the role of hostess at this service and wear black or traditional African dress (depending on age)
English, Dinka, and Arabic Spoken	

10. Implications for Future Research

There are many implications in this study which are applicable for future research. I have effectively identified emerging themes of gender/sex role conflict, the spread of ethnic conflict and tribalism, economic and language conflicts, and validated the impact of identity, trauma, and transnationalism on Dinka conflict discourse. However, there are additional areas that need to be explored, particularly for conflict resolution practice. One area for future research is the actual application of the appreciative inquiry model along with the three culture specific factors as discussed in this research. While it would be interesting to see future research conducted specifically with the Dinka utilizing this approach, any non-Western refugee group resettling in the United States may indeed benefit and I encourage conflict resolution practitioners to consider this technique.

Another area for future research is to examine the implications of the spread of ethnic conflict and tribalism for training, as well as social service and law enforcement organizations. In particular, this research serves to inform these areas by establishing the varying communication dynamics and potential conflicts which can exist when political refugees from a culture of violence resettle in the United States. There has been minimal research completed

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on how these issues can impact not only how the conflict is effectively managed but also how to provide comprehensive instruction for those professionals who work directly with these populations. Moreover, law enforcement and social services agencies can begin to more deeply examine and integrate these important cultural factors into their instructional training to better prepare officers and employees to work within culturally specific boundaries.

There are also other areas in which this research can inform conflict resolution practice. For practitioners who work specifically with women's issues, especially those in the violence prevention and intervention arena, this study may assist with future research on Dinka women and their coping strengths and struggles. On a larger scale, this study demonstrates the importance of recognizing the role of power in relationships and within community hierarchies and its influence on conflict. Likewise, for refugee resettlement agencies, this study can assist in future research on identifying potential areas for economic and language assistance. As more African refugees from a wide range of countries migrate to the United States, there will not only need to be a reexamination of culturally relevant conflict analysis and resolution practices, but also continued studies of how conflict communication deeply affects how we derive sound theory in our important work.

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