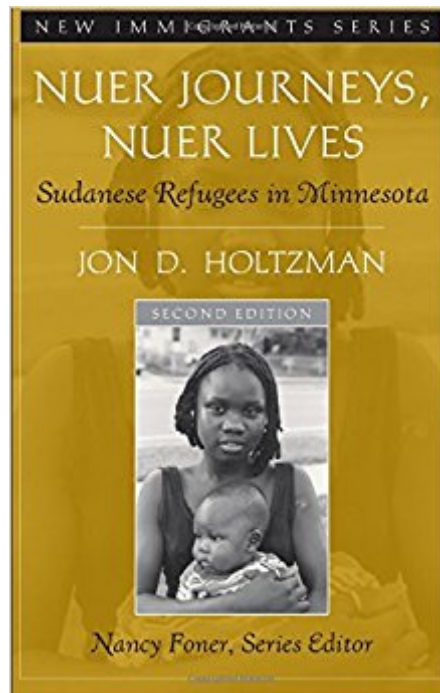




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# Nuer Journeys, Nuer Lives: Sudanese Refugees In Minnesota



## Synopsis

This book examines contemporary migration to the United States through a surprising and compelling case study - the Nuer of Sudan, whose traditional life represents one of the most important case studies in the history of anthropology. It provides an opportunity to examine issues of current importance within anthropology, such as social change, transnationalism, displacement, and diaspora in an easy to understand manner. In understanding the experiences of the Nuer, students will not only gain insights into the world refugee problem and the role of immigration in the United States, they will also learn about the features of Nuer life which are considered a standard part of the anthropology curriculum. The book juxtaposes elements of Nuer culture which are well-known within anthropology and featured in most anthropology textbooks with new developments arising from the immigration of many other Nuer to the U.S. in the 1990s as refugees from civil war in southern Sudan. Consequently, this book will fit well within existing anthropology curricula, while providing an important update on descriptions of traditional life.

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## Customer Reviews

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Jon D. Holtzman, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis  
Nancy Foner, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York

Sorry for the atrocious pun, but I'm hoping to entice people to consider this insightful and concise (134 pages) examination of the way immigration to America really works in our day and age. I picked the book up because I have family connections to Minneapolis, but the situation of the Nuer is very comparable to that of other immigrants to other American cities. The Nuer are pastoralists from southern Sudan. Their language is Nilotic and they are closely related to the Dinka. As the second largest ethnic group in their region, they number at least a million people. The Nuer are probably better known to most students of anthropology than any other ethnic group in Africa, due to the very influential studies of them by E.E. Evans-Pritchard, beginning with field work in the 1930s and continuing into the 1950s. Africa has changed dramatically and often violently since those years, but Nuer life at home has maintained many constants, including poverty and a daily routine of cultivation and animal husbandry. Evans-Pritchard described a culture in which cattle were the center of most social interactions and of self-recognition. Needless to say, the Nuer who have fled the Sudan and landed in Minneapolis have not been able to bring their cattle, and thus their culture, along. At the time of Jon Holtzman's study, "several hundred" Nuer families were living in Minnesota, with others scattered in various cities of the USA. Since kinship networks were not and could not be transferred to America, most of the Nuer are essentially strangers to each other, and a tight, isolated, self-sufficient community has not developed. Rather, most Nuer have found themselves in a situation of anomie, with most of their focus on material survival. Unlike some immigrant groups, the Nuer did not leave much behind in terms of material goods. In the Sudan, their material possessions were minimal and utilitarian, aside from cattle. Hence, in Minneapolis, they have readily accepted the clothing and furniture and material accoutrements of the American Way, though chiefly

in second-hand and shabby forms. "Gender, Generation, and Family Change" is the title of chapter five of Holtzman's study. The title almost tells the story, and it's the familiar story of crises inside the immigrant's most precious alliance, his own family. In their Sudanese homeland, Holtzman writes, "children and adults tend to operate in very different spheres." This pattern has continued in America. While small children spend MORE time indoors with their parents here than in Africa, Nuer parents are uncomfortable with American notions of adult supervision and discipline. Most of the Nuer who came to America were themselves quite young, so at the time of Holtzman's writing, there were few teenagers, most of the kids were small, and education in American terms was just beginning to become an issue. Already, I suspect, much has changed. There has been a dispersal of Nuer families from Minneapolis to less costly living places, small children have become American teenagers, and, as invariably occurs, further immigration has followed the familial grooves cut by the earliest arrivals. Holtzman spends a lot of his time describing the interactions of the Nuer with their hosts and neighbors, some unpleasant and edgy but many remarkably generous and tolerant. Familiar stuff, really, to any reader whose parents or grandparents were immigrants with stories to tell. Minnesota is a culture where churches serve not only individual but also communitarian needs, and Holtzman describes the earnest efforts of various Christian denominations to include and inculcate the Nuer. It's mostly an admirable effort. Economic inclusion of the Nuer has been more problematic, even in the church context. Holtzman touchingly describes the efforts of one church to hold together a Nuer "congregation" by providing transportation; the effort collapsed when there just wasn't money in the coffers to purchase a van. Almost all Nuer have spent some time on public welfare, but fortunately for them, unskilled jobs are numerous in Minneapolis, especially in meat packing and other food processing industries. Thus employment is surprisingly high. And what does a Nuer want first with his American paycheck? A car, of course! The car opens better employment opportunities, but it also provides self-esteem and status. The Nuer come to the automobile, however, with little experience and no mechanical training. The cheap used car they buy tend to break down fairly quickly in the harsh Minnesota climate, to the mystification of their owners. As one Nuer told Holtzman, "the car is a bad cow!" What importance does Nuer immigration have for America at large? So far, the Nuer presence has been small, but their story is multiplied by the experiences of numerous other immigrant groups from lands dissimilar to the United States in every way. The Nuer have been lucky in meeting a generally positive and open response from the old immigrant stock of Minnesota. Immigration is a "hot button" throughout the United States, however. A tightly focused case study such as this can shed more light and less heat on the issue.

Pretty good book, does a pretty good job of bridging the gap between journalistic and research styles of writing. Insightful and seems like the author made good relationships with the Nuer. Four stars because I know this book won't appeal to everyone.

It turned out how I expected it to be.

This is part of a series written to format for the publisher by experts. It is an easy read, and very informative.

I usually hate text books but I loved this one! Keep it when your course is over or if you aren't even taking a class you HAVE to buy this book for, read it!

Excellent condition. Fast shipping just in time before class started. Some markings in the book, but the notes ended up being helpful. Great price compared to my school and other local bookstores. Would definitely buy from again!

The book was in great condition! Nothing was written in it nor highlighted and it seemed pretty new. I got exactly what I was told I was going to get: a book in great condition; plus cheaper than buying it at the bookstore.

I didnt care for the story/documentary. Some parts were kinda funny. I needed for an anthro class. I had no desire to learn about african tribesmen/women coming to the US.

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