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An Exploratory Study of Resilience in Refugee Post-Secondary Students

by

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Abstract

Refugees are faced with a variety of challenges throughout the migration journey. One unique refugee population that has been neglected in the body of research is post-secondary refugee students. World University Services of Canada (WUSC) annually sponsors 70 refugee students to attend Canadian post-secondary schools. It is reasonable to expect that students under this program may experience a number of resettlement challenges especially when they are expected to excel academically soon after arriving in the country. Yet, it is remarkable that 85% of WUSC sponsored students graduate with a Bachelor's degree (WUSC, 2007). The ecological-transactional model of resilience was utilized to understand the multifaceted nature of resilience in this refugee population. Using a qualitative case study method, four WUSC sponsored post-secondary refugee students living across Canada were interviewed. Results revealed unique migration trajectories and pre- and post-migration challenges for this population that differed from other immigrant groups. Furthermore, the results suggest that resilience is cultivated by the interactions between family, community, and educational supports as well as policies and cultural beliefs that enhance one's ability to cope. These salient findings inform the need to reform post-secondary institutions, non-profit organizations, and government policies in order to foster successful resettlement for post-secondary refugee students in Canada.

peak of the academic spectrum. Last, but definitely not least, to my amazing wife, Amelia, who has sacrificed so much to help me achieve my goals. There are no words to thank her for her unconditional love and patience along with her willingness and *resilience* to move across the country (twice!).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, individuals have migrated from one country to another to discover new lands, cultures, and facilitate trade. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2006), migration is a phenomenon that contributes to the trend of globalization. In 2011, Canada was the ninth highest receiving country of refugees (UNHCR, 2012). Canada's commitment to immigration has brought ethnic and cultural diversity to communities as well as a larger workforce to the country. Yet, many issues arise surrounding newcomers' wellbeing including problems with finding affordable housing, continuing education, and comprehensive health care coverage (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2005). The largest migrant group entering Canada is economic immigrants who are assumed to have the means to be financially autonomous. The second largest group is the family reunification immigrant who enters Canada under the responsibility of a family member. The final group is made up of refugees who enter Canada to find asylum from persecution in their home countries (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2012a). Research with child and adult refugee populations has flourished in the past twenty years with regards to resettlement issues including education (Kanu, 2008), employment (Bach & Carroll-Seguin, 1986), acculturation (Berry, 2006), and social integration (Ehrensaft & Tousignant, 2006). However, one unique population of refugee migrants that has been neglected in the literature is post-secondary refugee students. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore

the experiences of refugee students entering Canada to attend universities and colleges and to examine how they have overcome pre- and post-migration challenges. This study informs educators and multicultural counsellors of some of the difficulties that post-secondary refugee students are faced with when they enter Canada as well as protective factors that may support their successful integration into Canadian society. Protective factors are recognized as resources that enhance refugee adaptive outcomes (Glanz, Lewis, & Rimer, 1997).

Overview of Dissertation

The remainder of the introduction provides an overview of Canada's immigration and refugee categories, the role of World University Services of Canada (WUSC), the conceptualization of a post-secondary refugee student in this study, the researcher's positioning, the research problem, the purpose of the research study, and the research questions. This introduction is followed by a critical review and integration of the research literature on migrations trends, refugee experiences, and resilience with an emphasis on refugees who are young adults. Following the literature review is the methodology chapter, which provides an outline of the philosophical worldview and theoretical assumptions that situate this qualitative study, the use of a qualitative case study method and design, the study's evaluation criteria, and the significance of this study. The results are presented in two chapters after the methodology section. The first results chapter is a narrative analysis of the four participants' lived experiences while the second results chapter presents a thematic analysis of the main themes that emerged from the four interviews. Finally, the discussion chapter highlights

significant findings in light of the theoretical models used in this study as well as in the context of the current seminal research literature.

Canada's Immigration Categories

There exist many different groups in societies that migrate to various countries under different contexts including, but not limited to (a) immigrants, (b) sojourners, and (c) refugees (Berry, 2006). Immigrants voluntarily move to another country and gain permanent or temporary residence in order to find better employment or education opportunities (Berry, 2006). According to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act of Canada (IRPA) (2001), there are three categories of immigrants. The Government of Canada uses the classification to correspond with the country's provisions for family reunification, economic development interests, and humanitarian goals. The first is the family reunification category whereby a foreign national may be selected on the basis of their relationship as the spouse, common-law partner, child, parent, or other prescribed family member of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident (IRPA, 2001). The family member who is a Canadian citizen or permanent resident is expected to support their foreign family members with the basic needs of shelter, food, healthcare, and integration into society. The sponsored family cannot apply for government financial assistance (IRPA, 2001). In 2011, 34.6% of 131,229 permanent residents came to Canada under the family reunification category (CIC, 2012a).

Economic immigration is the second category, which describes a foreign national who may be selected on the basis of their ability to become economically

established in Canada (IRPA, 2001). In 2011, 49% of permanent residents entered Canada under the economic immigration category (CIC, 2012a). Canada recently placed an emphasis on primarily accepting skilled workers under this category (CIC, 2013). In an attempt to tighten immigration qualifications and to select applicants based on skills to satisfy labour shortages, the Canadian government implemented stricter guidelines on May 4th, 2013 (CIC, 2013). By definition, a skilled worker must have a valid offer of employment for a minimal of one year or have been accepted into a PhD program by a recognized Canadian post-secondary institution. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2013) also stipulated that a person entering under this designation must be in the skilled trades, be in a managerial position, or be in a professional occupation (for a list of these occupations, please see the National Occupational Classification, 2011). Other factors for adjudication include education level, age, work experience, fluency in English or French, and adaptability (CIC, 2013). Finally, applicants must display the ability to be financially autonomous for themselves and their dependents (CIC, 2013).

Another group of migrants as categorized by the Canadian government are sojourners, who move to another country for work or education who will eventually return home or be posted in another country (Berry, 2006). Sojourners are expected to be financially autonomous. In 2011, Canada had approximately 190,842 sojourners with Ontario having the largest proportion at 35.3% (CIC, 2012b). As such, sojourners are temporary migrants (not immigrants seeking permanent residence) in the country for a variety of purposes (e.g., international

students, diplomats, business executives, aid workers or guest workers). In some regions, sojourners make up a substantial proportion of the resident population especially in the Gulf State regions where they rely on foreign workers. Thus, sojourners may hold substantial power in their country of residence or very little power depending on their type of work (Berry, 2006).

The final category is the refugee (IRPA, 2001). The IRPA (2001) defines a refugee as a "foreign national, inside or outside Canada, who under the IRPA is a Convention refugee or is a person in similar circumstances" (p. 11). It further takes into account that a refugee is an individual who is forced to leave his or her country of origin based on a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" (United Nations, 1951, p. 16). Refugees often involuntarily leave their homes with little preparation and may live transiently for years with the uncertainty of finding a stable home environment (CIC, 2008). In 2011, 11.2% of permanent residents entering Canada were under the refugee classification (CIC, 2012a).

Canadian Refugee Categories

Out of the three classes of immigrants as outlined by IRPA (2001), the refugee class is faced with the most adversity during their pre- and post-migration process. In addition to the above definition of refugees, the United Nations (1951) defines a refugee as someone:

> Living outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his or her

former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (p. 16)

CIC (2008) divides refugees into three classes: (a) Convention Refugees Abroad, (b) Country of Asylum, and (c) Source Country. The Convention Refugee Abroad class pertains to anyone who is outside of their home country, or the country where they normally live, and cannot return to that country because of a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, political opinion, nationality, or membership in a social group (CIC, 2008). Within this category, Canada relies on the UNHCR and private sponsorship groups to identify and refer this class of refugees to be resettled in Canada. The UNHCR identifies refugees to be resettled in Canada when there is no other solution or no effective protection available to them. A Canadian visa officer then decides whether the person identified meets the requirements of Canada's Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program. If so, the person will be admitted into Canada (CIC, 2008).

The Country of Asylum class of refugees is for people in refugee-like situations who do not qualify as Convention refugees (CIC, 2008). Individuals fit within this category if, (a) they are outside their home country or the country where they normally live, (b) have been and continue to be, seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict, or have suffered massive violations of human rights, (c) cannot find an adequate solution to their situation within a reasonable period of time, and (d) will be privately sponsored or have the funds required to support themselves and their dependents (CIC, 2008). Canada relies mainly on private sponsorship groups to identify and refer refugees who meet the criteria of the Country of Asylum Class. Similar to the Convention

Refugees Abroad class, individuals within this category will also need to meet with a Canadian visa officer for adjudication.

The final category of refugees is the Source Country class (CIC, 2008). Individuals are classified in this group if they, (a) live in a country that has been named a source country of refugees, (b) live in their home country, (c) have been, and continue to be, seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict, (d) have lost the right of freedom of expression, the right of dissent or the right to engage in trade union activity, and have been detained or imprisoned as a result, (e) fear persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, (f) cannot find an adequate solution to the situation within a reasonable period of time, and (g) will be assisted by the Government of Canada, be privately sponsored or have the funds needed to support themselves and their dependents after they arrive in Canada (CIC, 2008). According to the CIC (2008), in unusual cases, people can apply directly for resettlement in Canada through the Source Country Class at which point they will meet with a Canadian visa officer for adjudication.

Reasons for Migration

According to Berry, Segall, and Kagitçibasi (1997), reasons for immigration can be explained by three overarching factors: (a) voluntariness, (b) permanence, and (c) mobility. All three factors contribute to Canada's plural society, which is defined as "people of many cultural backgrounds coming to live together in a diverse society" (Berry et al., 1997, p. 8). Plural societies are characterized by dominant and non-dominant groups that are based on their

relative power in society (Berry et al., 1997). Individuals entering Canada under the family reunification and economic immigration categories often do so voluntarily in search of better job and education opportunities for themselves and their families with the intent on becoming permanent residents (Martin, 2007). They are assumed to be able to financially provide for themselves during the transition period. However, this is a misguided assumption that overgeneralizes the characteristics of these two immigrant classes. Although a small number of immigrants have the resources to flourish in the new country, the majority of immigrants who enter developed countries under voluntary status are at an economic disadvantage (Martin, 2007). The single best determinant of individual earnings in industrial countries is the years of education of an individual (Martin, 2007). For most immigrants entering Canada, the years of education is reflected by a pyramid shape where a few well-educated persons are at the top of the pyramid while a mass of workers with less than a secondary school diploma are at the bottom. These individuals need to compete for jobs with native-born individuals in the industrialized countries where 60% of the population hold a secondary school certificate and 25% with a college degree (Martin, 2007). This competition makes it much more difficult for immigrants to obtain jobs than their native-born counterparts. Although job attainment is one of the highest concerns for immigrants, other adjustment issues may also hinder social integration such as learning a new language and adopting new cultural norms (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

Voluntary migration is often characterized by pull factors such as educational and occupational opportunities as well as security for one's family (Lucassen & Lucassen 2010). In contrast, involuntary migration experienced by refugees is typically attributed to push factors in the country of origin such as fear of political persecution, war, and threats to safety (Ager, 2010). A number of refugees remain mobile years after migration as push and pull factors (from asylum country and country of origin, respectively) may allow eventual repatriation to their home countries, which will be discussed below (UNHCR, 2006a). These different variables for migration drastically impact an individual's immigration experience and subsequently affects the degree to which a person adapts to Western society (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001).

World University Services of Canada – Student Refugee Program

WUSC is a non-profit, non-governmental organization whose aim is to foster human development through education (WUSC, 2011a). WUSC consists of a network of individuals and post-secondary institutions who believe that all peoples are entitled to the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to a more equitable world (WUSC, 2011a). WUSC has a unique connection with Canada's colleges and universities by organizing volunteering overseas activities as well as supporting students fleeing war or persecution in developing countries through the Student Refugee Program (SRP) (WUSC, 2011a). In 2007, WUSC reported that 85% of its refugee students graduated from undergraduate studies, which is a highly significant number given the many personal, cultural, and academic challenges that come with their migration trajectory.

Only WUSC (2011b) has collected unpublished statistics regarding post-secondary refugee students' countries of origin. According to this recent compilation, 551 post-secondary refugee students have entered Canada in the last ten years. The largest source country was Sudan (31.2%) followed by Somalia (16.9%), Ethiopia (10.3%), Rwanda (9.1%), Democratic Republic of Congo (8.2%), Burma/Myanmar (7.6%), Burundi (7.3%) and Afghanistan (4.2%). Eritrea, Bhutan, Iran, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Uganda all contributed less than 2% of the incoming students. In SRP's 32-year history, the source countries of students have varied depending on conflicts and the political environment of asylum countries.

Post-Secondary Refugee Students

Post-secondary refugee students are individuals who attend universities and colleges under permanent resident or refugee status in their post-migration country. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, post-secondary refugee students refer to students who are sponsored by WUSC's Student Refugee Program. This program is one of its kind around the world and little is known about the resettlement challenges and successes faced by this group of students. Unlike other refugees who decide to return to school after resettlement in Canada, or students who resettle with family members, WUSC's refugee students are unaccompanied teenagers or young adults who are expected to excel in their academics days after their arrival into Canada. Moreover, after the students' first year of studies, they are expected to be self-sufficient in their personal and academic expenses. Given their rapid resettlement timelines, it is expected that

WUSC's post-secondary refugee students will experience risk and protective factors different from other refugee populations. Concurrently, they are also a refugee group who appear to find success given their high graduation rate from post-secondary education.

Researcher's Positioning

My long-term interest in working with children, adolescents, and young adults led to my training as an educator, counsellor, and recent doctoral studies. However, I was drawn to research involving adolescent refugee students when I traveled to Bhandipur, Nepal as a volunteer Science and English teacher in 2007. I taught at the reputed Notre Dame School (NDS), which is a secondary school organized by two Catholic nuns. Through private donations, NDS was able to provide full scholarships to 12 Bhutanese secondary student refugees shortly after I arrived. These students were recruited from the Khudunabari refugee camp and were given full tuition, free residence, school uniforms, and meals. While teaching in Bhandipur, I also became a mentor for these 12 students. For two months, I visited the students to help them with their homework and to provide mentoring support. Throughout our conversations, the students shared their life stories. Some no longer knew if their families were alive while others believed their families were eating slightly more food in the refugee camp, because they had been able to pass on their ration cards. Concurrently, there were those who missed their families dearly and became physically ill and emotionally distraught. Another group of students seemed incessantly happy and enthusiastic about their new living environments even though they were separated from their families. I

became fascinated by these individual differences. It was interesting to observe how each individual successfully coped with their new environments either through their studies, finding social support through peers, or writing in a journal each morning. Most of the students believed they would become engineers or doctors. Currently, a number of the NDS refugee graduates are studying in universities around the world.

As both an educator and counselling psychology student, I am interested in understanding resilience in ethnic minority students. The current literature is inundated with research that emphasizes variables contributing to the problems of newcomer students underachieving in the classroom setting. In contrast, few research articles comment beyond the risk factors to examine how these new ethnic minority students persevere through obstacles. This doctoral dissertation is an opportunity to integrate my refugee mentoring experience with my passion for education and counselling psychology. From the counselling psychology perspective, multicultural counselling (MC) encourages therapists to account for cultural factors that impact therapy outcomes when working with ethnic minority populations (Atkinson, Bui, & Mori, 2001). As a therapist, I am interested in MC and the current study contributes to MC paradigms by acquiring an in-depth understanding of the cultural challenges post-secondary refugee students are faced with and the protective factors that contribute to resilient outcomes.

The Research Problem

Previous research conducted with refugees has mainly focused on the challenges and risk factors faced by the child and adult populations (Derluyn,

Mels, & Broekaert, 2008; Thabet & Vostanis, 2000). Post-secondary refugee

students can be conceptualized as a combination of both groups. The majority of

incoming post-secondary refugee students are between the ages of 17 and 25,

which places them within the late adolescent to young adult range (WUSC, 2007).

At seventeen years of age, students are not far removed from the trauma and

forced migration experienced during childhood and adolescence (Mitchell, 2000).

The resettlement process can be confusing and chaotic with many obstructions.

Resilience, the ability to achieve positive adaptation despite exposure to

significant adversity, is required to persist through resettlement challenges

(Montgomery, 2010). Risk and protective factors influencing resiliency can differ

across individuals while the accessibility of community resources may also be a

determinant for resiliency (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

Although research in refugee resilience has been conducted with adults and

adolescents, it is unclear how unaccompanied post-secondary refugee students

find the resilience to succeed in Canadian universities and colleges. These

students need to adapt to a foreign environment given their unique pre- and post-

migration experiences. There is currently a dearth of literature identifying the pre-

and post-migration challenges of post-secondary refugee students. Furthermore,

no research has been conducted to identify the risk and protective factors that

contribute to the resilience of unaccompanied post-secondary refugee students

who come through government sponsored programs. The students' migration

trajectory differs from other refugee populations since the unaccompanied

students start university-level education days after their arrival, live for free on

campus, and tuition is covered by WUSC for their first year of study. However, the latter supports are no longer available during the students' subsequent years of study. Finally, there is no research highlighting the educational, peer, and community supports that these post-secondary students may utilize as protective factors to enhance resilience.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the pre- and post-migration experiences of post-secondary refugee students. Using a qualitative case study research design, the study aimed to answer two questions: (a) what are the pre-and post-migration challenges experienced by government sponsored refugee students in post-secondary institutions? and (b) what are the protective factors used by these students that contribute to their resilience given the many risk factors of relocation? The objectives were to: (a) document the pre-migration experiences of post-secondary refugee students while in their native country and in refugee camps, (b) document the risk factors that have been faced in their post-migration country and communities (i.e., Canada) that challenges resilience, (c) identify the various institutional, community, cultural, and personal protective factors that these post-secondary refugee students have used to help in their adaptation to Canada, and (d) identify policy and practice recommendations that may enhance refugee students' settlement and education experience in Canada.

Conclusion

This exploratory investigation into the experiences of WUSC sponsored post-secondary refugee students provided an opportunity to capture the pre-and

post migration barriers encountered by them while amplifying the strategies and

attributes that that help them overcome challenges while living in Canada.

Concurrently, implications to both refugee students and institutions were

examined. The following literature review examines and integrates research most

relevant to this topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review discusses Canadian immigration trends, the potential

challenges experienced by post-secondary refugee students, WUSC's role in

helping post-secondary refugee students enter Canada, current resilience

paradigms, and examples of resilient behaviours from young refugees.

International Refugee Migration Trends

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there

were 214 million total migrants worldwide in 2011. It was further estimated that

in 2011, there were 15.2 million refugees around the world (IOM, 2012) and that

10.4 million of these refugees will have been through the responsibility of the

UNHCR (UNHCR, 2012). When refugees flee their country of origin to a place of

asylum, most do not travel far to enter a refugee camp (Reyes, 1999; UNHCR,

2010). The largest refugee camps are in neighbouring countries where existing

civil strife is occurring such as Pakistan, Iran, Syria, and Kenya (Reyes, 1999;

UNHCR, 2010).

The migration of refugees depends on two factors, the receiving country

and the source region. The receiving country must adjudicate applications and set

quotas for the number of refugees they allow into their country each year.

Between 2010 and 2011, an estimated 876,100 asylum applications were recorded

from 171 countries or territories (UNHCR, 2012). South Africa was the single

largest recipient of new asylum claims at 107,000 applications while the United

States was second at 76,000 applications (UNHCR, 2012). France, Germany,

Italy, Sweden, Belgium, and the United Kingdom placed third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth for the number of asylum applications received with 52,100, 45,700, 30,300, 30,000, 25,000, and 24,000 applications, respectively (UNHCR, 2012). Canada was ninth with 23,500 asylum applications received (UNHCR, 2012). These top nine receiving countries accounted for 80% of all asylum claims received (UNHCR, 2012).

Source countries also provide a significant indicator into the migratory movement of refugees. Slightly over one-third of all asylum claims were submitted by individuals from Asia (34.7%) followed by Africa (25.9%), Middle East (16.7%), Europe (15%), and the Americas (7.8%) (UNHCR, 2012). With over 2.6 million refugee claims lodged in 2011, Afghanistan was the largest source country of asylum-seekers followed by Iraq (1.4 million claims), Somalia (1 million claims), Sudan (500,000 claims), Democratic Republic of Congo (491,500 claims), and Myanmar (414.600 claims) (UNHCR, 2012). Unfortunately, none of the UNHCR refugee camps or the receiving countries currently keeps a record of refugees attending post-secondary schools.

Canadian Refugee Migration Trends

As one of the top ten resettlement countries for refugees, Canada helped to resettle 23,311 refugees in 2011 (CIC, 2012c). Hungary, China, Columbia, and Pakistan were the four highest source countries of refugees migrating to Canada 2011 (CIC, 2012c).

Prior to entering Canada, government-sponsored refugees are assigned to resettle in a specific Canadian city. Destination determination depends on the

provinces' financial resources to support refugees, the provinces' level of certainty that the refugee will thrive in their new setting, and the need for skilled workers in particular regions. In contrast, privately sponsored refugees often resettle in vicinities that are in close proximity to their sponsors (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). Of the 23,311 refugee claimants entering Canada in 2011, the largest population of refugees resettled in Ontario (68.2%) followed by Quebec (17.9%), British Columbia (4.7%), and Alberta (3.1%) (CIC, 2012c). The initial relocation of government-sponsored refugees is a tiring and challenging process. As one Afghan refugee reported, when he was arbitrarily placed in Newfoundland, he experienced immense loneliness, isolation, and cultural and language deprivation (Simich, 2003).

Other statistics such as age and gender of refugee claimants help to further understand the demographics of those entering Canada. In 2011, over 6,800 (46.3%) refugees between the ages of 24 to 44 entered Canada, which represents the largest incoming age group (CIC, 2012c). Furthermore, 4,900 (19.6%) refugee claimants were between 0 and 14 as well as 14 and 24 years of age (CIC, 2012c). Finally, 3,071 (12.1%) claimants were between 45 and 64 years old and 593 (2.3%) claimants were older than 65 years of age. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012c), 13,816 males and 11,495 females entered Canada under refugee status.

Although the Canadian government attempts to redistribute government-sponsored refugees across Canada, a large proportion ultimately move to urban centres in an attempt to reintegrate into a similar cultural group (Schedler &

Glastra, 2000; Simich, 2003; Winland, 1992). Simich (2003) reported that within

one year after settling in Canada, 1,700 refugees moved from the Prairies and

Atlantic Provinces to Ontario. It is speculated that during this secondary

migration, refugees seek greater social support which may be associated with

refugee resilience. For example, Simich (2003) found that refugees who moved

closer to family and social support networks had greater emotional and material

stability throughout the long resettlement process. Canadian metropolitan cities

are also perceived to have more educational and employment opportunities along

with cultural supports for immigrants (Hou, 2007). Participants in Hou's (2007)

study reported their dissatisfaction with community services in smaller cities and

chose to move to urban settings. Unlike other refugee groups, post-secondary

refugee students do not have the option for secondary migration. Moreover,

compared to students in smaller cities, post-secondary refugee students in larger

metropolitan cities may have an easier time adjusting to their new environments

given the greater number of support services.

Government Assisted and Privately Sponsored Refugees

Refugees face a further threat of permanence in a country since they often

live in limbo until the receiving country adjudicates their claims (Berry, 2006). By

definition, individuals who live in limbo are those who are recognized by

Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board, but they are unable to acquire

permanent residency due to the lack of identity documents required by Canada's

Immigration Act (Goodwin-Gill & Kumin, 2000). Living in limbo also describes

individuals who are waiting for the decision of their refugee applications. In

Canada, people who are denied permanent resident status are protected from immediate removal, but they remain in Canada in a state of uncertainty for years without prospect of any resolution (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2005). Within Canada, there are two types of refugee applications: (a) government-assisted refugees and (b) privately sponsored refugees. To be considered as government-assisted refugees, they must fit within one of the three previously mentioned refugee classes. In addition, individuals must demonstrate an ability to re-establish their lives in Canada (CIC, 2010b). For example, to demonstrate this ability, refugees may display their entrepreneurship or ingenuity of creating a private small business in the refugee camps. The Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program gives Canadians and permanent residents an opportunity to get involved and help settle refugees in Canada (CIC, 2010b). Sponsors commit to providing financial settlement assistance to refugees for one year or until they can support themselves financially. The assistance includes accommodation, clothing, and food. Sponsors also provide emotional assistance during the sponsorship period (CIC, 2010b). All refugees must pass medical and security screenings before they are admitted into Canada.

WUSC's Student Refugee Program and Post-Secondary Institutions

Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2001) guidelines, post-secondary refugee students fall within the Convention Refugees Abroad class within the Refugee migrant category. Since 1978, over 1,200 post-secondary government sponsored refugee students have entered Canada through the SRP under permanent resident status and attended Canadian universities and colleges

(WUSC, 2011c). This section will discuss the statistics and application for WUSC's Student Refugee Program as well as speculate regarding reasons refugees may be motivated to apply to such a program.

Statistics from the SRP. Statistics regarding post-secondary refugee students are sparse. No major international or federal agency currently collects statistics on young adult or adult refugees pursuing post-secondary education in Canada or around the world. The only agency that has previously kept and currently keeps statistics for refugee post-secondary students is the World University of Services of Canada. Since 1978, over 1,200 refugee post-secondary students have entered Canada through the WUSC program and attended Canadian universities and colleges. To date, all major universities and colleges throughout Canada have an agreement with WUSC to accept a minimum of one refugee student per year. During the 2010-2011 academic year[1], WUSC helped 69 refugee students into Canada (WUSC, 2011c). Most universities and colleges accepted one refugee student with the exception of University of Toronto (7), University of British Columbia (4), University of Saskatchewan (3), University of Victoria (3) while Dalhousie University, Université Laval, Champlain Regional College, Brock University, McMaster University, Trent University, University of Ottawa, University of Guelph, University of Waterloo, York University, University of Winnipeg, and University of Regina all accepted two students (WUSC, 2011c). WUSC has recognized that only 25% of all post-secondary students entering their program are females and WUSC has initiated the "Shine a Light" campaign,

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[1] In a conversation with WUSC in December 2012, they stated that they have not compiled any updated data into a distributable document.

which is a task force encouraging more young women to apply to the program (WUSC, 2007). One measure that has been taken to counteract this trend is the SRP lowering its academic standards for female refugees to apply to the program. For example, where the criteria states that a student must achieve an A in mathematics, the female standard will be lowered to a B. The director of the SRP program speculated that this statistic is a result of the low female enrollment within the refugee camp secondary schools. Once girls reach the age of puberty, they are expected to complete chores around the home and take care of younger siblings. According to Hatoss and Huijser (2010), Sudanese refugee women who have resettled in Australia are also discouraged from accessing education. This qualitative study reported inequitable treatment of women by the men. Therefore, women were expected to take care of the children and this meant giving up their hopes of receiving an education while the men are expected to be breadwinners (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010). Cultural norms and expectations play a major role in the construction of the family. Therefore, talking to WUSC's post-secondary refugee female students may bring an insightful perspective regarding the challenges and coping strategies they use in Canada.

The Student Refugee Program application process. According to the SRP Director (M. Manks, personal communication, July 2, 2011), there is an elaborate application process for refugees who hope to enter Canada as a post-secondary student. All applicants must be between the ages of 17 to 25, single, and not have dependents. The rationale for the specified age group is to ensure that the program remains a youth partnership program. There is no record of how

long the students have lived in refugee camps. For example, students from the

Dadaab camp in Kenya may have been born in the camp since it has been in

existence since the early 1990's. Applicants must also be recognized refugees

under the UNHCR for a minimum of three years. According to WUSC, the three-

year stipulation helps to deter individuals who only register in refugee camps to

apply for the SRP. Students are primarily ranked with regards to their academic

performance in the UNHCR schools. Other attributes assessed include a display

of self-sufficiency such as demonstrating initiative within the camps. Finally,

WUSC estimates that about 50% of students in the camps are separated from their

families while the other 50% have family in the camps. There is no student

screening for past trauma.

At the present time, the majority of refugee students are primarily

recruited from camps in Kenya and Malawi since they are two of the more

relatively stable camps around the world. The SRP has Windle Trust Kenya, an

education advocacy group, as a partner within the Dadaab refugee camp that helps

to adjudicate the participants. WUSC has a branch office in Malawi that helps

with SRP recruitment. Windle Trust Kenya and WUSC provide additional English

classes, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) tutorials, and assistance

with completing Canadian immigration documents for applicants. The Canadian

government also asks WUSC to accept a number of refugees from certain

countries for political reasons. Once students have been chosen, they are

interviewed for their future goals and preferred field of study. Placement in a

Canadian post-secondary institution depends on the school's academic and

TOEFL requirements. Schools are chosen for students who meet the academic criteria. On rare occasions, students will also be placed in a city where they have family members.

When students arrive in Canada, WUSC and the post-secondary institution cover the cost of tuition for only the first year and post-secondary institutions will provide food and residence for that year. Beyond the first year, post-secondary institutions are responsible for assisting students with tuition, textbooks, food, and residence. Some schools have a student levy that subsidizes certain necessities such as tuition and residence while other schools do not provide any assistance. Furthermore, students are expected to repay the travel loans subsidized by the Canadian government. According to the financial records of all partnering post-secondary institutions, 100% of Atlantic campuses, 93% in the West and Prairies campuses, and 50% in Ontario and Quebec campuses have student levies (SRP Finances, 2011). These varied statistics illustrate the potential challenges faced by refugee post-secondary students from years two to four of their undergraduate studies. Many of the students need to find part-time jobs to pay for on- or off-campus rent, food, textbooks, tuition, and other necessities. As a last resource, students may ask for a loan from the government for the remaining years of undergraduate studies (SRP Finances, 2011).

Students' motivation for applying to the SRP. Although there is no current research involving refugees and the motivation to study abroad, a growing research area into *migrant personality* may explain the motivating factors for students to study overseas. Migrant personality is a personality dimension that

appears to help describe individual differences in decisions about migration (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). The migrant personality is defined as "a willingness or a desire to geographically relocate whenever it appears that opportunities might be better in another region" (Frieze, Hansen, & Boneva, 2006, p. 170). Personality characteristics that are closely tied with migrant personality are motivation and achievement. For example, international students with higher levels of motivation were more likely to study abroad and to achieve academic success (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007). A strong migrant personality combined with push factors such as economic or educational opportunities lead people to migrate from one region to another (Paulauskaitė, Šeibokaitė, & Endriulaitienė, 2011). In contrast, those with a low migrant personality combined with high values placed on pull factors such as family and friends will more likely stay in a region regardless of better opportunities for personal growth elsewhere (Frieze et al., 2006).

The international student literature exemplifies the migrant personality construct. One of the highest student migrant groups is the Chinese population (Chirkov et al., 2007). Chirkov and colleagues (2007) studied Chinese students in Canada and Belgium to examine whether or not self-motivation with regard to studying abroad would predict students' autonomy in academic motivation and social adaptation. In a sample of 119 students, the authors found that these students had higher levels of motivation and this led them to their decision to study abroad. Students with high levels of motivation were also higher achievers than those with lower levels of motivation (Chirkov et al., 2007). However, this

motivation to study abroad and to achieve high grades was not related to adjustment to a new country. In a follow up study by Chirkov, Safdar, de Guzman, and Playford (2008), a longitudinal design was utilized to assess motivation's role on adjustment levels in a new country. Seventy-two students were surveyed in Canadian universities during the first and second semesters and the results indicated that students who felt more autonomous about their decision to study in Canada were happier, healthier, and more successful during their stay. These students were proactive in finding social groups, going to the gym, and took more risks by interacting with others outside of their cultural groups (Chirkov et al., 2008). Perhaps migrant personality is associated with post-secondary refugee students' resilience to move elsewhere for education when provided with the opportunity. Their motivation and autonomy to find education opportunities has led them to study abroad and successfully socialize with others in the community.

Unaccompanied Refugee Minors and Young Adults

According to the UNHCR (1994), an unaccompanied minor is someone under the age of 18 "who is separated from both parents and [is] not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible to do so" (p. 21). Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2010b) considers children under the age of 18 not accompanied by a member of the Family Class to be unaccompanied while the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2001) defines them as children under the age of 18 years who are alone in Canada without their parents or anyone who purports to be a family member. Between 1999 and 2002, 3,689

unaccompanied minors claimed refugee status in Canada (Ali, Taraban, & Gill, 2003). Out of this total, 2,258 unaccompanied minors claimed refugee status in Ontario, 899 in Québec, and 139 in British Columba/Yukon (Ali et al., 2003). In 2002, 972 unaccompanied minor boys and 858 unaccompanied minor girls filed for refugee status in Canada (Ali et al., 2003). Furthermore, in the same year, 369 of unaccompanied minors claiming refugee status in Canada were between 0 to 4 years of age, 533 between 5 and 10 years of age, 536 between 11 and 15 years of age, and 392 between 16 and 17 years of age (Ali et al., 2003).

Currently, there is no literature on the unique aspects of post-secondary refugee students entering their new countries as unaccompanied minors or young adults. Therefore, a focus will be given to research evaluating the impact of unaccompanied adolescent refugees. Unaccompanied adolescent refugees (i.e., ages eleven to seventeen) are an important risk group for the development of mental health problems (Derluyn, Mels, & Broekaert, 2008; Thabet & Vostanis, 2000). A number of studies have stressed the importance of parents as a major source of support to children in adverse situations, and have identified separation from family members as an important threat to the mental health of refugee adolescents (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998; Bean, Derluyn, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Broekaert, & Spinhoven, 2007; Sourander, 1998). Various reasons can be identified to speculate why separated refugee minors are more likely to develop psychological distress: (a) the lack of social support necessary to cope with the stresses inherent in migration (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998), (b) the deprivation of emotional relationships and the loss of familiar environment (Bean et al.,

2007), (c) their increased exposure to trauma before or during the flight (Huemer,

Karnik, Voelkl-Kernstock, Granditsch, Plattner, Friedrich, & Steiner, 2011), and

(d) their lack of social and economic resources (Derluyn et al., 2008). These same

explanations may also explain the development of psychological distress for post-

secondary refugee students. As mentioned previously, during the pre- and post-

migration period, children and youths may experience a number of traumatic

events such as sniper fire, shortage of water, food, and shelter, clothing

deprivation, sexual exploitation, and physical abuse (Husain, Nair, Holcomb,

Reid, Vargas, & Nair, 1998). Combine these events with the deprivation of

emotional support and the lack of economic resources, unaccompanied refugee

adolescents have a higher propensity of developing a number of mental health

problems (Derluyn et al., 2008). Females tend to show more emotional distress

such as clinically elevated anxiety and depression levels (Seglam, Oppedal, &

Raeder, 2011). Separation from parents is also indicative of more post-traumatic

stress intrusions, avoidance behaviours, and hyperarousal symptoms (Derluyn et

al., 2008). Other reports have indicated that unaccompanied refugee youths

display a higher incidence of somatization, suicide attempts, and transitory

psychotic episodes (Ressler, Boothbay, & Steinbock, 1988). With regard to

behavioural problems at home and in the classroom, adolescent refugee youths

living in foster care were found to engage in higher levels of high-risk activities

and exhibited symptoms of conduct disorder (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007).

     Unaccompanied adolescent refugees are all fundamentally characterized

by a sense of loss (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). This loss may be in the form of

one's home, belongings, friends, family, school, cultural identity, values and

habits, and status (Berman, 2001). This population is also affected by war,

physical or sexual maltreatment, death of a loved one, traumatizing journey to the

host country, and dangerous traveling and living circumstances in the host country

(Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1998; Barrett, Moore, & Sonderegger, 2000; Hyman,

Beiser, & Vu, 1996). Finally, unaccompanied minors may experience

unfamiliarity with new languages, social services, habits and customs, and other

new environmental changes (Geltman, Augustyn, Barnett, Klass, & Groves,

2000). Even previous goals and ambitions are halted in their new country, because

many adolescent refugees are uncertain if they will stay in the host country or be

moved elsewhere (Derluyn & Broekaert, 2007). Other findings have suggested

that unaccompanied refugee adolescents have difficulty with developmental

milestones such as identity formation especially when they enter a new country

without the guidance of parents (Derluyn, Broekaert, Schuyten, & De

Temmerman, 2004). These adolescents mature and become independent at a rapid

rate, which requires enormous resilience. It has been observed that even if parents

and previous caregivers are not with the unaccompanied minors in their new

country, refugee adolescents remain loyal to them (Derluyn et al., 2004).

Separated young adults have reported frequent incidents of racism, social

exclusion, and marginalization that collectively have a negative effect on their

health, wellbeing, education, and development (Ali et al., 2003). The majority of

SRP students live with family in refugee camps before coming to Canada.

Therefore, learning to be independent and adapting to a new culture may be a new

endeavour, and they may face similar challenges to those encountered by unaccompanied adolescent refugees.

The Refugee Migration Pathway – Challenges Faced by Refugee Students

The most common refugee migration pathway involves six stages: (a) Pre-departure Stage, (b) Flight Stage, (c) First Asylum Stage, (d) Claimant stage, (e) Settlement Stage, and (f) Adaptation Stage (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). Stages one to three and four to six are designated as the pre-migration and post-migration periods, respectively. Currently, there is no literature on post-secondary refugee students' experiences through each migration stage. More research needs to be conducted to understand and compare their journeys with the experience of non-student refugees. Consequently, the following review will focus on the literature relating to unaccompanied adolescent and young adults.

The pre-migration period – Pre-departure Stage. The Pre-departure Stage consists of previously stable lives and the conflicts that disrupt this stability (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). This is the stage when most traumatic events occur including wars, famines, ethnic cleansing, deliberate torture, and imprisonment. As socio-political conflicts worsen, three forms of violence are often witnessed: (a) cultural annihilation, (b) deprivation of food, shelter, or interpersonal contact, and (c) brutal public humiliation (Mollica, 2006).

In 1998, 80% of war victims were reported to be children and women and that 32% of children developed posttraumatic stress (Husain et al., 1998). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fourth Edition – Revised (DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000), the

criteria for PTSD in children include: (a) experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, (b) response of intense fear, helplessness, horror, disorganized, or agitated behaviour, (c) persistent re-experiencing through recollections of the event which can be manifested through play, (d) avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, (e) persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), and (f) the disturbance causes significant distress in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. From this statistic, it is conceivable that many current post-secondary refugee students were once direct victims of war. Of the 719 participants in Husain and colleagues' (1998) study, 85% of children and adolescents experienced direct or indirect sniper fire, 74% experienced food or clothing deprivation, 66% had lost a member of his or her family, 29% reported shortage of water, and 10% reported lack of shelter. The loss of a family member and deprivation of food, water, and shelter had the most adverse effects on children's mental wellbeing whereby increasing the symptoms of avoidance, hyper vigilance, and posttraumatic stress (Husain et al., 1998).

Flight Stage. The Flight Stage illustrates refugees' dire conditions in their country that prompt them to flee. An individual or family recognizes a high level of personal risk and urgently decides to relocate to ensure continued survival (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). During their flight, individuals and families often leave behind their possessions and they make use of any type of transport to escape their aggressors (Merali, 2008). The flight stage offers the highest risk of children and adolescents being separated from their parents or caregivers as a result of the

disorganized chaos and injuries (Adepoju, 2010; Münz, 2010). Ultimately,

unaccompanied children and adolescents may fall prey to their aggressors during

this stage and be subjected to sexual and physical assault and other forms of

trauma similar to that of the Pre-departure Stage (Mollica, 2006). Pérez-Sales

(2010) studied the evolving identity of an adolescent who was separated from her

family during an escape from Columbian guerilla groups. This fifteen-year-old

female was captured by individuals who sexually abused her. The girl

subsequently developed posttraumatic stress symptoms along with extreme

shame, which hindered her from receiving help until she was in her twenties and

attending a post-secondary school (Pérez-Sales, 2010). As demonstrated by this

example, there may be similar post-secondary refugee students in Canada who

continue to struggle with the psychological trauma of war.

Another consequence during the Flight Stage is the recruitment of child

soldiers (Boothby & Knudson, 2000; Dickson-Gómez, 2003; Vindevogel,

Coppens, Derluyn, De Schryver, Loots, & Broekaert, 2011). In 2004, there was an

estimated 300,000 children and adolescents actively participating in 36 conflicts

in Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and the former Soviet Union (Child

Soldiers Global Report, 2008). This statistic suggests that there may be current

post-secondary refugee students who were once child soldiers. In such unstable

environments, children and adolescents are vulnerable to forced or "voluntary"

recruitment to armed groups. The risk for recruitment escalates for children and

adolescents who are separated from family members or parents or caretakers may

be killed, leaving children and adolescents alone and unprotected (Dickson-

Gómez, 2003). Others may be attracted by the perceived economic benefits of joining war groups and they lack the maturity to make sound decisions of this magnitude. The retrospective qualitative study of twenty young men conducted by Dickson-Gómez (2003) revealed that all of them, as child soldiers, were forced to watch mutilations and murders of their family members and neighbours before participating in similar torture practices towards others. The few child soldiers who survive may be reunified with family members occurring years later in refugee camps (Dickson-Gómez, 2003). All twenty of the participants interviewed recalled experiencing posttraumatic stress symptoms, resentment for joining guerilla groups, and profound insecurity (Dickson-Gómez, 2003).

First Asylum Stage. The First Asylum Stage begins when the individual arrives at a refugee camp or at a place of temporary safety (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). The camps are often situated in neighbouring countries and are still in close proximity to violence. Ever since the attack on the United States on September 11th, 2001, the average length of time refugees spend in a refugee camp has increased by ten years to seventeen years (Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee, 2007). Refugee camps tend to be crowded areas with limited food, water, and healthcare supplies, which can result in malnourishment and contraction of various illnesses (Kostelny & Wessells, 2004; Merali, 2008). For refugee youth arriving in refugee camps, it can be a time of rehabilitation or continued violence. In a UNHCR (2004) report, many youth associated their living conditions with violence and death. Many kids suffered from illnesses due to poor hygiene, lack of nutritious meals, and poor water

quality in the camps. Furthermore, prevalence for substance abuse to deal with trauma was high among adolescents in the camps (UNHCR, 2004). Moreover, it was evidenced that youth participated in help-seeking behaviours with each other such as acting as a herd to provide comfort and safety for each other (UNHCR, 2004). Perhaps children who operate in groups cope better with challenges and show greater resilience than children who are isolated.

For some youth living in refugee camps, they may be given the opportunity to continue their disrupted education in refugee camp schools (Affolter & Findlay, 2002; UNHCR, 1996; UNHCR, 2004). Although these efforts are well intended, LeBlanc and Waters (2005) reported that the quality of education in refugee camps is often inconsistent and culturally insensitive. For example, mathematics textbooks used in the Mozambican camps are from the old Soviet curriculum, and sample questions held no resemblance to the Malawian refugee students' culture (LeBlanc & Waters, 2005). Furthermore, teachers in refugee camps may not be formally trained and funding models did not account for high quality education (LeBlanc & Waters, 2005). A recent study suggested that the quality of refugee camp education varies among camps and this appears to be determined by the strength of the leadership in the camps as well as the policy set forth by the aid agencies (Mareng, 2010). One avenue for adolescents to leave the refugee camps is to achieve high grades in the camp schools and to learn English. High achieving students in the Dadaab and Malawi camps are often encouraged to apply to WUSC's Student Refugee Program. For the majority of refugees applying for asylum abroad, they need to navigate complex immigration

documents on their own without any third party help whereas students applying to the SRP have help from organizations such as WUSC. Leaving the refugee camp is a daunting task for most refugees as most will have lost identifying documents during the Flight Stage or looters will have stolen their documents within the camps (Mollica, 2006; Prendes-Lintel, 2001).

      The post-migration period – The Claimant Stage. The Claimant Stage documents the arrival of refugees at the destination country where they wish to apply for refugee status (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). Refugees may also live in limbo during this migration stage. It was reported by the UNHCR (2004) that approximately 13,000 to 64,000 unaccompanied minors sought asylum across 18 different nations each year between 2000 and 2003. The adjudication process can continue for a period of up to a few years. During this time, refugees remain in limbo and may have limited access to healthcare, educational programs, employment opportunities, and social welfare resources (Lacroix, 2004; Rousseau, Crépeau, Foxen, & Houle, 2002). The risk of deportation during this stage is very real as 54% of refugee claims filed across various countries where refugees are seeking asylum end up being rejected (UNHCR, 2005). This is often a time of high stress for refugees while living in limbo. In 2009, 251,500 refugees were deported to their home countries, which was the lowest number in recent years (UNHCR, 2010). This is attributed to the war in Afghanistan since many refugees cannot return to a country that is still ravaged by war (UNHCR, 2005). Therefore, individuals continue to live in limbo until the violence in their home country has subsided (UNHCR, 2005).

Unaccompanied minors are most vulnerable to exploitation and mental health issues (Fekete, 2005; Di Chio, 2009). Unresolved traumatic experiences promote the likelihood of depression and severe apathy. Girls are at high risk for being recruited into prostitution while young males face the dangers of entering gangs for economic reasons and to acquire a sense of belonging (Fekete, 2005). Even though the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) explicitly states that in any forced deportation situations involving children, the principle of the best interests of the child would be upheld, many countries do not consider this principle. In 2004, a fifteen-year-old female in Sweden who feared deportation became depressed and anxious about flying and returning to her home country. She was placed in hand and foot cuffs for the entire flight while in plain sight of other civilians on the same flight (Fekete, 2005). This humiliation of refugee minors only exacerbates the already fragile state of mind that they are in given that their security will also be threatened when they return to their home countries.

The expedited claimant process for post-secondary refugee students helps them skip the process of living in limbo. However, post-secondary refugee students beginning their studies in Canada may encounter early acculturation challenges similar to those identified in the literature.

Acculturation. Acculturation is defined as "the changes that arise following 'contact' between individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds" (Sam, 2006, p. 11). The acculturation process begins once post-secondary refugee students arrive in Canada and are faced with a new culture,

language, climate, and values (11 Million, 2008). These changes can cause *culture shock*, which are the challenges people are faced with when adjusting to a new culture that differs markedly from their own (Pedersen, 1995). The idea of belonging encompasses one's personal involvement in a social system that makes one feel indispensable and integral to that social system (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne, & Early, 1996).

Pre-migration trauma also impacts refugees' adaptation and acculturation to their new environments and such effects are significantly elevated with existing post-migration stressors (Erickson Dávanzo, Frye, & Froman, 1994; Lindencrona, Ekblad, & Hauff, 2008; Spasojevic, Heffer, & Snyder, 2000). Pre-migration trauma is commonly associated with alienation from social groups in the new country, perceived discrimination from other ethnic groups, and perceived threat and humiliation from individuals who are native to their new country (Lindencrona et al., 2008). These results also indicate that refugees who experience pre-migration trauma are at higher risk of developing common mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress (Lindencrona et al., 2008). It is suggested that severe trauma has the capacity to alter worldviews, which may act as a mediator of posttraumatic stress (Lindencrona et al., 2008). Samarasinghe and Arvidsson (2002) have also postulated that the break-up of a family system also contributes to post-migration stress for the lone refugee individual who has migrated to a new country. These feelings of despair and guilt hinder the refugee's ability to enjoy social relationships with others in their new communities and subsequently slow the

acculturation process. Consequently, refugee youth coming from separated families have the propensity to develop anxiety and adjustment disorders (Wilmsen, 2011). Post-secondary refugee students experience very similar circumstances such as experiencing pre-migration atrocities and leaving a family behind for personal ambitions, which may curtail their adaptation and acculturation in the new country.

During the early acculturation process, refugees decide how much they will interact with other cultural or ethnic groups that exist in their new community and how much of the new cultural values they will incorporate into their lives (Berry, 2003). Evidence shows that groups of people in contact with distinctly different cultural practices and beliefs have greater difficulties in experiencing acculturation. In contrast, groups of people in contact who have similar cultural practices and beliefs experience an acculturation process that is relatively free of stress and optimizes successful adaptation and in establishing harmonious relationships (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Berry (2006) outlines six cultural dimensions in a plural society that impact acculturation: (a) diversity, (b) equality, (c) conformity, (d) wealth, (e) space, and (f) time (see Berry, 2006). Cultural distance between two co-existing groups makes it more difficult for them to adapt to each other. In a region of intercultural relations, one of the most powerful factors affecting mutual attitudes is the degree of similarity of the two groups. Groups of people have various acculturation strategies (Berry, 2006). These strategies consist of two components – *attitudes* and *behaviours* that are displayed in daily intercultural encounters.

When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures, the *assimilation strategy* is defined. In contrast, the *separation strategy* occurs when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture while avoiding interactions with others. *Integration* exists when there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture and having daily interactions with other groups. Finally, when there is little possibility of cultural maintenance and little interest in having relations with others, then *marginalization* is defined (Berry, 2006). Multiculturalism and integration are the intended goal of Canadian society; yet, many individual and societal barriers hinder this process. During the claimant stage, post-secondary refugee students are inundated with a new language, climate, and culture. It is a time when students may begin to negotiate with themselves and decide which acculturation strategy to endorse that will best help them overcome challenges.

Settlement Stage. The Settlement Stage describes the acceptance of the refugee's status as a permanent resident in the newly entered country and usually encompasses the first three years after arrival in the safe country (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). A number of tasks need to be accomplished during this stage to maintain an equitable standard of living. Post-secondary refugee students probably experience similar challenges as their non-student refugee counterparts including cultural, language, and employment difficulties during the settlement stage (Arches, Darlington-Hope, Gerson, Gibson, Habana-Hafner, & Kiang, 2000).

Cultural challenges. When refugee youth arrive in a new country, their self-identity is immediately challenged by the bombardment of new cultural

norms. Macaskill and Petrie (2000) identified five areas of concern for refugees: (a) transition to a new style of education, (b) difficulties with learning English, (c) peer support group, (d) bullying, and (e) sustaining their culture and language. For post-secondary refugee students arriving in North America, challenges include negotiating race and ethnic relations with other ethnically diverse students as well as English language problems (Ali et al., 2003; Kanu, 2008). This is a pertinent issue since North American statistics show increasingly more diverse immigrant and refugee populations in post-secondary schools (Szelenyi & Chang, 2002). Ideally, the unfamiliarity of other cultures and the English language provides refugee students the opportunity for personal growth and individual understanding and competence with respect to community cohesiveness (Shadduck-Hernandez, 2006). However, students are also at risk for racial and ethnic bullying, social exclusion, and marginalization all of which can have negative effects on their health, wellbeing, education, and development (Ali et al., 2003; Wong & Gillis, 2010). Macaskill and Petrie (2000) in Scotland documented multiple cases of racial harassment and abuse faced by unaccompanied refugee adolescents. A fourteen-year-old girl remarked that after two months of resettling, other teens at school started to throw stones at her and call her names due to her ethnicity.

Language and academic challenges. For immigrant and refugee students, English language proficiency is often the first obstacle hampering the acculturation process (Matsuda, 2006). English Language Learners (ELLs) require opportunities to interact with English speakers in ways that support their use of language in social and academic settings (Smith, Edelsky, & Faltis, 2009).

Without the oral language skills for competent communication, learning a new culture is difficult. Kanno and Varghese (2010) identified challenges in the areas of academic reading and writing among ELL refugee students who were transitioning to university. Moreover, the stigma of being non-native English speakers resulted in lower self-esteem (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). However, many students reported that extra time would help their performance in the classroom. In their home countries, these students were high achievers, but moving to a new country and learning a new language made them feel inadequate. Students also commented that they were motivated to work hard and become proficient in English while seizing the opportunity to study in North America (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). Refugee students face additional academic challenges such as academic cultural dissonance, academic gaps due to disrupted schooling, and a fast-paced curriculum (Kanu, 2008).

Learning models in post-secondary education continue to ignore the culture, knowledge, and experiences of non-European communities and use Euro-centric pedagogical models (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2003; Carter, 2011). With the many diverse lived experiences of refugees, it is difficult to strictly use one English teaching model and expect all ELLs to learn at the same rate. Modifications to lesson plans and the allowance for learners to construct their own meanings to lessons are agents of rapid English learning (Bassler, 1990; De Costa, 2010). For example, in a study of twelve Iraqi adolescent refugees, a culturally relevant curriculum including conforming to their cultural norms, values, and beliefs yielded a faster rate of

English language learning (Nykiel-Herbert, 2010). WUSC sponsored post-secondary refugee students likely experience many of these challenges, but they may also be highly motivated to succeed. When high school refugee students were placed in academic streams that were beyond their education level, behaviours such as not attending classes, alcohol and drug use, and an increase in mood and anxiety symptoms were observed (Sattler & Hoge, 2006). Many refugee students also decide to quit school as a result of failing achievement levels and a negative experience with their social environment (Dei & Rummens, 2012).

   Employment and financial challenges. WUSC sponsored post-secondary refugee students are required to find jobs when their first year of undergraduate education is completed and many of their protective resources are taken away. Such a transition suggests that there may be a "secondary Settlement Stage" for post-secondary refugee students when many of their first year resources are taken away and they need to be autonomous for the rest of their undergraduate education. The issues of refugees finding appropriate employment have been studied extensively (Bach & Carroll-Seguin, 1986; Strand, 1984; Potocky-Tripodi, 2003). The most difficult period for refugees to find work is within their first year of arrival. However, employment steadily increases relative to their length of stay in the new country (Strand, 1984). Furthermore, Strand (1984) found that refugees who enrolled in ELL courses were more likely to find employment. Seminal findings from this study suggest that post-secondary refugee students may have difficulties finding employment after their first year of

studies. However, students who utilize employment resources on campus may find it easier to obtain jobs.

Language discrimination, constrained working hours, and immigration status may also hinder post-secondary refugee students' employment opportunities especially when they are in competition with native language speaking students. In their study of refugee employment, Majka and Mullan (1992) found employers who deemed applicants to be more 'westernized' during interviews had a greater probability of being employed. For example, even when a job applicant was highly skilled, their perceived language accents gave the impression of incompetence (Majka & Mullan, 1992). These issues of prejudice and discrimination often lead refugees to become underemployed without the prospect for future professional advancement (Kissoon, 2010; Yost & Lucas, 2002). Adjustment issues may also affect employment (Yost & Lucas 2002). When refugees enter a new country, many experience a loss of status and expectations. Underemployment, shift in gender roles, and loss of customs and friends all contribute to poor resettling adjustments. These losses alter the sense of self-worth, which creates anxiety (Yost & Lucas, 2002). A direct consequence of the above employment challenges is poverty. Research by Penrose (2002) found that 95% of young adult refugees in the United Kingdom could not afford shoes or clothes while 85% experienced hunger.

Adaptation Stage. The migration pathway ends with the Adaptation Stage (Prendes-Lintel, 2001), which addresses the period after three years of arrival in the safe country. It is a period of making long-term adjustments to life in

a new society. Many refugee students enter Canada with a sense of excitement, yet some refugees also regard the opportunity as a mixed blessing. Many do not have the academic supports at home to be successful and are separated from family (Kanu, 2008). Refugees in this stage often face the challenge of maintaining their basic religious and/or cultural identity while adapting to new cultural practices (Merali, 2008). As refugees attempt to establish themselves in the host society, they face challenges and decisions that may have a prolonged impact on their lives (Connor, Tyers, Modood, & Hillage, 2004). For example, many Canadian refugees face barriers in applying for government sponsored education loans, bursaries, and scholarships (Stevenson & Wilcott, 2007). Without financial stability, post-secondary refugee students can face the risk of not completing their academic studies and find themselves in constant search for affordable housing in unsafe inner-city communities.

Other adaptation challenges exist for adolescent and young adult refugees entering Canada especially when sequential trauma bombards them (Deen, 2002; Enns & Carter, 2009; Kanu, 2008). Sequential trauma is defined as problems in adaptation to a different culture accompanied by the recurring experiences of discrimination and racism. For example, Enns and Carter's (2009) study in Edmonton, Calgary, and Winnipeg demonstrated that the lack of safety in a new community drastically hindered cultural adaptation. Concurrently, recurring experiences of language and racial discrimination by landlords resulted in refugees constantly in search for affordable housing (Enns & Carter, 2009). Given that WUSC sponsored post-secondary refugee students need to find their own

affordable housing after the first year of undergraduate studies, they may also face the same problematic issues as their non-student counterparts.

Refugees continue to find a balance between upholding their religious and cultural values while potentially incorporating new ones. For post-secondary refugee students, their adaptation adjustments may consist of helping their families enter Canada (M. Manks, personal communication, July 2, 2011). However, the students negotiate this process independent of any help from the government, school personnel, or WUSC. Although most refugee students decide to stay in Canada, there are those who also need to decide whether or not to repatriate to their home country rather than apply for permanent residency in Canada (M. Manks, personal communication, July 2, 2011).

Collecting repatriation statistics is daunting task given that refugees return home at varying periods of their lives and no definitive record is kept by any government that states an individual has left their adopted country for their home country. The most recent comprehensive repatriation statistics involve an archival collection of data by the UNHCR in 2006. Between the period of 1980 and 2004, the largest returns include the repatriation of more than 3.4 million refugees to Afghanistan and the return of over a million refugees to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Meanwhile, in Africa, talks between the Sudanese government and the rebel Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement have triggered a spontaneous return home of nearly half a million refugees and internally displaced people in Southern Sudan (UNHCR, 2010). A more recent, but less detailed study, has indicated that most refugees return to their original countries after fleeing to a neighbouring refugee

camp (UNHCR, 2011). These statistics suggests that the cessation of hostilities often prompts the large-scale repatriation of refugees. However, security implications are often similar to those posed by the initial exodus since many countries continue to struggle with unstable governments, residual conflicts, and continued social divisions (UNHCR, 2010). Returnees may face renewed violence, human rights abuse, or extreme poverty.

Those who choose to return home are individuals who are the most educated and perhaps those who are now financially established in their resettled country (Black & Gent, 2006). The pull factors for repatriation of refugees often include reuniting with family as a result of loneliness in the resettled country and the memories of the wonderful times they had back home (Iaria, 2012). Concurrently, families that have had a challenging time adapting to a new country's cultural norms will also repatriate to their home countries (Iaria, 2012). People who have skills to offer their home country's government will also choose to repatriate. For example, individuals who have money to invest in the country's economy, obtained higher education in politics, or speak multiple languages can easily find employment with a high salary in their home countries (Black & Gent, 2006). In contrast, refugees who have children will frequently choose to stay in the resettled country, especially if the children are older (Iaria, 2012). Older children do not have a connection with their parents' homeland and prefer to stay in the culture and country that is familiar to them. To reconcile the debate of staying in the resettled country or to return home, many refugees will gain their citizenship in the resettled country before returning home. Therefore, they will

always have a place to go to if the repatriation becomes difficult (Iaria, 2012).

After years of conflict, a country often looks unrecognizable when refugees return

home while cultural customs may have changed after years of reform. Finally,

after years of living in a developed country, returning refugees may find the lower

standard of living to be problematic (Black & Gent, 2006).

Theoretical Frameworks of Resilience

The current study examines resilience in the context of post-secondary

students. Past studies have too often only investigated challenges of refugees

while neglecting coping strategies and protective factors that help refugees

overcome difficulties. Theoretical models of resilience established over the past

several decades have guided the study of resilience in its entirety. Although the

protective factors for refugee resilience are not a widely researched area, it is

beneficial to discuss these paradigms in relation to protective factors operating to

promote resilient outcomes in the refugee population.

Three popular theoretical models of resilience include: (a) triarchic theory

(Garmezy, 1985; Werner & Smith, 1993), (b) ecological-transactional model

(Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993), and (c) structural-organizational model (Egeland,

Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993). An emerging fourth model of resilience, the

posttraumatic growth model, specifically focuses on resilience after experiences

of trauma (Tedeschi, 1999). A common theme across all four paradigms is an

emphasis on multiple levels of influence on an individual's adjustment and

recognition that factors such as adult support may influence the resilience of

youths encountering adversity.

The triarchic theory established by Garmezy (1985) identifies three broad levels of protective processes encompassing the individual, family, and community levels (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Attributes of the individual consist of (but are not limited to) intellectual ability, creativity, optimism, sociable temperament, sense of self-worth, self-esteem, or self-efficacy. Family attributes include parent-child attachment, warmth, and nurturance, security, supervision, or consistent discipline. Finally, community circumstances consist of caring and support from other adults or strong community integration (Flynn, Ghazal, Legault, Vandermeulen, & Petrick, 2004).

The ecological-transactional model, which was influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological theory, is conceptualized as consisting of three interdependent levels: (a) the microsystem, (b) the exosystem, and (c) the macrosystem (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998). The microsystem includes factors within the family while the exosystem includes aspects of the individual's community (e.g., school, workplace, church, etc.) that contribute to the occurrence of resilience. The macrosystem is comprised of the beliefs, values, and policies of the culture that contribute to the occurrence of resilience. For example, Markus and Kitayama (1991) postulated that East Asian and North American cultures are associated with interdependent and independent cultures, respectively. Within interdependent cultures, individuals orient towards interrelatedness with others to avoid conflict. Individuals in interdependent cultures often judge the self in light of how others judge them. In contrast, an independent culture promotes individualistic socialization and individuals focus on self-needs, wants, and ideas.

An individual from this culture judges the self through the confirmation of one's internal attributes. Therefore, it is speculated that the collectivistic nature of interdependent cultures fosters a helping community while individuals in independent cultures need more self-reliance to overcome adversity (Wong, 2009). Over time, an individual's resilience is strongly shaped by transactions between the individual and these contextual levels (Luthar et al., 2000).

The structural-organizational perspective of resilience is characterized by a series of reorganizations among and within various behavioural systems such as cognitive, affective, and social systems (Egeland, et al., 1993). These reorganizations are hierarchically differentiated so that successful behavioural resolutions to conflicts are integrated into more complex modes of functioning in the future (Cicchetti & Schneider-Rosen, 1986; Egeland et al., 1993).

Posttraumatic growth is the tendency on the part of individuals to report important changes in perception of self, philosophy of life, and relationships with others in the aftermath of events that are considered traumatic in the extreme (Edmonds & Hooker, 1992). Many kinds of traumas have acted as precursors for these changes including bereavement (Hogan, Morse & Tason, 1996) and chronic illnesses and disabilities (Tennen, Affleck, Urrows, Higgins, & Mendola, 1992). Changes are usually seen as growth even in the most ominous circumstances and it tends to strengthen individuals rather than debilitate them (Bussey & Wise, 2007). Evidence varies as to whether posttraumatic growth is related to severity of trauma as the perceived impact appears more significant to growth than the trauma's exact nature (Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006). One key to the

transformation process includes the ability for the survivor of violence to detach from events that characterized the traumatic experience (Bayer-Topilsky, Itzhaky, Dekel, & Marmor, 2013). This type of disengagement allows the opportunity for rumination on one's thoughts, emotions, and beliefs from a safe distance and provides the path for examination of the past. For battered women, Lev-Wiesel and Amir (2003) noted that breaking attachment to a violent perpetrator might be of utmost value to this process. The growth experienced in this renewal process may subsequently inform individuals' decision making, perception of possibilities, and appreciation for life, self-efficacy, and the value of choice (Anderson, Danis & Havig, 2011). Perhaps this developing area of research is related to post-secondary refugee students' perception of their past struggles, which has led them to a renewed outlook and self-efficacy for bettering personal opportunities.

Issues Around Resilience

The term *resilience* contains many variable definitions depending on the research context. In many ways, the task of defining resilience is especially important in research that proposes to recruit resilient participants (Luthar & Brown, 2007). Researchers within this area of study needs to be sure of exactly what features resilient youth possess that make them stand apart from individuals who are non-resilient (Luthar, 2003). With the enormous amount of existing literature focusing on resilience across various contexts, there is no universal definition of resilience. As such, there are several dominant definitions that are frequently altered to fit the characteristics of an investigation (Luthar, 2003).

Indeed, resilience is a dynamic process that combines the complexities of different types of experienced adversities, human development, the environment, and unique personality characteristics (Luthar et al., 2000). Taken together, formal resiliency research is argued to be in its infancy considering that posttraumatic stress disorder research did not hit its stride until the mid-1960's with soldiers returning from the Korean War and subsequently the past two decade's global conflicts (Hollister-Wagner, Foshee, & Jackson, 2001). Regardless, considerable progress has been made in defining resilience in the past decade. This progress is demonstrated by the agreement that resilience is a two-dimensional phenomenon. It is generally established that a person is resilient if two critical conditions are met: (a) exposure to a significant threat or severe adversity, and (b) the achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental process (Gewirtz, Forgatch, & Wieling, 2008; Luthar et al., 2000; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Rutter, 2006). Although this definition may be vague, the two conditions are the foundations of resilience research and a person should not be considered resilient until both conditions are met simultaneously.

A second coalescing conceptualization of resilience is Masten's (2007) argument that the definition of resilience describes three kinds of phenomena: (a) a high risk group overcoming the odds, (b) positive adaptation is sustained despite stress or the occurrence of adverse experiences, and (c) recovering from trauma after experiencing an intensely stressful event (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Masten, 2007). The third criterion for Masten's (2007) conceptualization of resilience is most scrutinized since the use of "recovery" is arbitrary in itself. To

reconcile this ambiguity, Masten noted that individuals might not necessarily recover from trauma, but experience positive transformation such that "adaptive functioning is actually better than it was before the experience" (Masten, 2007, p. 923). Therefore, researchers can further define the four models of resilience based on the relative positive adaptation despite a person's experience of adversity. Resilience is inferred when a person does substantially better than expected in relation to the events experienced that would suggest major risk of maladjustment or subsequent psychosocial problems (Kaufman, Cook, Arny, Jones, & Pittinsky, 1994; Luthar, 2003; Rutter, 2001).

Working Definition of Resilience

Given that resilience is studied globally, cross-cultural differences in the conceptualization of this construct must be addressed. Resilience researchers have recently identified the Euro-centricity of resilience research (Boyden & Mann, 2005; Ungar, 2005). Studies of resilience and positive adaptation must be conducted with sensitivity shown to the context and culture of those being studied (Ungar, 2006). When comparing factors of resilience between a Canadian teenage mother and a Tanzanian teenage mother, it was observed that the Canadian mother valued teachers and education as part of her adaptive process while the Tanzanian mother valued the community resources to start her own small business as a means of survival. Since 50% of Tanzanian girls do not study beyond grade six, it makes sense to promote entrepreneurial skills (Ungar, 2008). It is evident that context is crucial when considering the working definition of resilience.

Michael Ungar's (2008) work with adolescents and cross-cultural resilience has proposed that aspects of resilience exert differing amounts of influence on a child's life depending on the specific culture and context in which resilience is realized. Ungar (2008) goes on to postulate that tensions between individuals and their cultures and contexts are resolved in ways that reflect specific relationships between aspects of resilience. Therefore, resilience is not a fixed trait and is considered as a variable quality that derives from a process of repeated interactions between a person and features of the surrounding context in a person's life (Ungar, 2008). For post-secondary refugee students, this may mean that a supportive university environment is required for academic success. It is important to understand that the issue of cross-cultural resilience is one of resources rather than categorical judgments about what is and is not successful adaptation under stress. A thorough understanding of the context in which the resources to nurture resilience need to be found for successful coping strategies (Ungar, 2008).

There has yet to be a coherent definition of resilience that captures the dual focus of the individual and the individual's ecology and how the two must be accounted for when determining the criteria for judging outcomes and discerning processes associated with resilience. For the purpose of this investigation, the term resilience will encompass both the individual and the multicultural environment. Therefore, resilience refers to patterns of positive adaptation within a context of significant psychological and/or environmental adversity (Masten & Obradovic, 2006). Positive adaptation is the capacity of individuals to navigate

their way to health-sustaining resources and a condition of the individual's

community and culture to provide these resources in culturally meaningful ways

(Ungar, 2008). Using this definition, resilience is both a process of the person's

navigation towards supports and the individual's capacity to negotiate for

resources on their own terms. Navigation refers to an adolescent's capacity to

seek help as well as utilizing the assistance to its fullest potential (Ungar, 2008).

For post-secondary refugee students, this is a fitting definition since their pre-

migration experience is one of survival within the refugee camps and resettlement

in an unfamiliar environment. As WUSC stated, each applicant must have

displayed autonomy, which requires self-navigation to find resources as well as

the knowledge that there are community supports that will help them along the

way.

The current discussion will focus on resilience during adolescence. Since

WUSC noted that the SRP application takes one to two years to complete, the

majority of lived experiences for applicants will have occurred during

adolescence. Resilient individuals display positive mental health, social

competence, and self-esteem (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy, &

Ramirez, 1999). Many types of adversity experienced by refugee adolescents

include maltreatment, war, poverty, and illnesses have been well studied (Masten

& Powell, 2003). However, little is known about the unique population of post-

secondary refugee students. While early studies of resilience have focused their

attention on individual risk factors, it is apparent that risk factors co-occur with

one another (Garmezy & Masten, 1994). Therefore, a sequence of stressful events has cumulative effects in the lives of adolescents.

The Ecological-Transactional Model of Refugee Resilience

The current discussion focusing on unaccompanied post-secondary refugee students is best represented by the ecological-transactional model of resilience. Within the current context, resilience is a multiplicity of psychological characteristics that are shaped by the ecological interplay of relational, social, and cultural frameworks (Harney, 2007; Harvey, 2007). The psychological study of resilience in the aftermath of trauma and migration has a shorter history than other areas of resilience research (Mitchell, 2000). However, personal resources, culture, and community are heavily dependent on each other and are cross-culturally relevant (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The ecological-transactional model highlights how resilience is studied within social contexts often asking the question, within what contexts do particular processes cultivate resilience for particular people? (Harney, 2007). Since there is currently no literature describing the resilience of post-secondary refugee students, the micro-, exo-, and macrosystems of the model can be adequately described within the context and experiences of the adolescent and young adult refugee population.

The microsystem focuses on an individual's personal resources for resilience, which is often fostered in childhood through family interactions and parental upbringing. Biological, genetic, and family factors such as general good health and above-average intellectual skills serve as protective factors (Nielsen & Hansson, 2007). Personality characteristics including an easy or good-natured

temperament (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), positive self-esteem (Bell, 2001),

self-worth (Davey, Eaker & Walters, 2003), an internal locus of control (Dumont

& Provost, 1999), the ability to be self-reflective (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1997),

and self-reliance (Cowen, Wyman, & Work, 1996) are frequently cited as

fostering resilience. These characteristics serve to encourage the development of

interpersonal relationships and provide adolescents with the confidence to cope

with difficult situations. It was reported that refugee Vietnamese adolescents who

had fewer family disruptions and demonstrated strong relationships with both

their mother and father were more resilient to previous trauma (King, King, Foy,

Keane, & Fairbank, 1999). Constant communication between parents and their

children helped with healthy emotional expression, collaborative problem solving,

and the preservation of high self-esteem, which fostered resilience (Montgomery,

2010; Walsh, 2003). Unaccompanied refugee youths may possess similar resilient

resettlement outcomes through a supportive social worker who helps them

connect with other refugee youths in the community (Goodman, Liang, Helms,

Latta, Sparks, & Weintraub, 2004). Such results implicate the importance of

attachment and self-perceived competence in resilient adolescents (Masten et al.,

1990). Resilient individuals were significantly less likely to engage in self-blame

than their non-resilient counterparts indicating that their level of self-worth was

also higher (Diehl & Hay, 2010). Diehl and Hay (2010) surveyed 239 young men

(aged 18 to 25) and found that individuals with a lower level of self-worth had

more difficulty dealing with stress, displayed more negative affect on stressful

days. Interestingly, internal locus of control and self-efficacy has been identified

in the literature as resilient qualities indicating the importance of perceived control in adolescents' own wellbeing (Bernard, 2004).

The exosystem of the ecological-transactional model encompasses the influence of the community. Protective factors include opportunities for education, employment, and extracurricular activities to promote the healthy development of adolescents (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). Strong evidence has shown that adolescents who demonstrate healthy adaptation despite exposure to adversity benefit from the use of external support systems, such as participation in extracurricular activities, a positive education environment, and involvement in a religious community (Egeland et al., 1993). Research focusing on resilience also suggests that a close and supportive relationship with adults and mentors such as teachers, coaches, counsellors, and neighbours is important in enabling competence (Walsh, 2003). Pre-migration trauma brings a level of insecurity even when refugees have moved to a new country. An individual's sense of safety can be shaken or restored on a community level (Harney, 2007). For example, refugees living in a poverty-stricken inner-city community may feel neglected, threatened, and discriminated against due to their refugee status and ethnicity. However, community resources such as cultural and religious groups, education workshops, student mentors and other non-profit organizations that bring a community together tend to promote resilience for individuals (Harvey, Mondesir, & Aldrich, 2007; Schweitzer, Greenslade, & Kagee, 2007).

Finally, the macrosystem dictates that a refugee's cultural values and beliefs are imperative for resilience. These beliefs may be shaped by policies and

guidelines of larger organizations such as a country's mandate for public

education or universal healthcare. The effects of larger principles defined by the

macrosystem have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other

systems. This interplay between systems is exemplified through the Sudanese

youth living in Winnipeg. Adolescents whose parents understood the importance

of education were more hopeful and continued practicing their cultural norms.

Consequently, these adolescents were more likely to be more resilient over time

while living in the Prairie city (Magro, 2009). From this example, the

macrosystem (i.e., societal belief in education, religion, and hope) influences the

exosystem (i.e., involvement in the school and religious community), and also

impacts the microsystem (i.e., parents' understanding that their children should

receive an education). Cultural values are often grounded in an individual's

upbringing by their elders. Thus, without the guidance of previous teachers and

religious leaders, individuals may not have the enthusiasm to pursue education or

to continue practicing their religious norms.

Factors Promoting Refugee Resilience

Research on refugees and coping has demonstrated that a host of factors

may influence the presence or absence of resilience including: (a) social and

environmental supports, (b) family, (c) the role of education, and (d) individual

personality traits and religious practices (Ackerman, Brown, & Izard, 2003; Kanu,

2008; Montgomery, 2010). The majority of existing literature on refugees'

resilience focuses on the strategies used by specific ethnic groups. This is perhaps

a result of each culture having its own specific methods of facilitating or impeding

resilience (Ehrensaft & Tousignant, 2006). Emotional support is of utmost importance for unaccompanied youth. It was reported that youth living independently or living in a foster home with little emotional support were significantly more susceptible to posttraumatic stress while those living with a supportive foster family had lower levels of posttraumatic stress (Hodes, Jagdev, Chandra, & Cuniff, 2008).

Pre- and post-migration social factors play a significant role in an adolescent's development of resilience (Ackerman et al., 2003). A recent American study evaluated Project SHIFA, a multi-tiered program for refugee youth including prevention and community resilience building (Ellis, Miller, Abdi, Barrett, Blood, & Betancourt, 2012). Given the improvements of mental health for at-risk refugee youth, this program demonstrated the importance of community involvement for facilitating resilience. Other community social support services have proven to be worthwhile in helping refugees cope during the post-migration period. Young adult refugees in the United States have noted the importance of having available resettlement agencies help with housing, medical, employment, education, cultural, and language assistance (Sossou, Craig, Ogren, & Schnak, 2008; Williams & Hampton, 2005). Through these agencies, refugees were able to meet other individuals in similar situations and bond with the resettlement worker and other refugees (Williams & Hampton, 2005). Moreover, refugees often sought support from their own ethnic community groups. For example, Sudanese refugees living in Australia found support from others in the Sudanese community (Schweitzer et al., 2007). Finally, several

communities in the United States have also created community group resources including soccer clubs, games clubs, drama clubs, and cultural dances to help refugees overcome a sense of loss in their new environments, which has helped refugees connect with other refugees (Luster, Qin, Bates, Johnson, & Rana, 2009). According to the three dimensional model for counselling ethnic minorities, a counselling psychologist's role has extended beyond the traditional therapist (Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993). For example, psychologists are frequently advocating for marginalized clients so that they can receive social services in their new country. Psychologists may also facilitate a connection between their clients with various cultural groups so that refugees are able to meet and bond with others in similar situations (Atkinson et al., 1993).

The family plays an integral role in a young refugee's level of resilience. Refugees in a recent study constantly emphasized the importance of family and described how the safety and survival of family members was the single factor that kept them alive through pre- and post-migration challenges (Sossou et al., 2008). Even if the family member was absent, the practice of spiritually believing the person was psychologically present also provided a source of strength for refugees (Boss, 2006). It was also evident that adolescent refugees often used family members as role models to persist through difficult times. The length of a father's education and work status helped young refugees remain hopeful whereas low levels of education for both mother and father were associated with more psychological problems (Murad, Joung, Verhulst, Mackenbach, & Crijnen, 2004). Parents' educational levels might be an indication of resources in the family that

could serve to promote resilience. The process by which the family communicates their traumatic experiences also determines an individual's resilience (Weine et al., 2004). Adolescents who create meaning in family stories of trauma through effective parental communication were observed to be more resilient and trusting of others. Rebuilding trust through communication was identified as one of the family processes through which families managed difficulties arising as a consequence of traumatic experiences. Therefore, counsellors practicing with refugee families need to encourage family members to positively interact with each other that will bring the potential of serving as an indirect way to address more complex resettlement issues (Wycoff, Tinagon, & Dickson, 2011). For resilient youth who were separated from their parents and families, it was important to create a new social group that resembled a family (Luster et al., 2009). This strategy included making friends with other youths who had been separated from their families and becoming friends with trustworthy adults (Luster et al., 2009). Playing with a close group of friends helped to distract them from the emotional anguish of being separated from family. Moreover, having a trusted group of friends provided an outlet for their internalized sadness, worries, and anxiety (Luster et al., 2009). Elder caretakers also acted as parental figures who provided encouragement, advice, and support to help cope with difficult life events (Luster et al., 2009).

Refugee students who excelled the most in the classroom were those who had supportive teachers. For example, in a Manitoba community with a large refugee population, teachers expressed great interest in the academic success of

their African refugee students (Kanu, 2008). Many teachers arrived at school early in the morning to make themselves available for extra help, using their own money to buy culturally appropriate books and other curriculum resources, and attending training workshops on war-affected refugee students. As a result, these teachers acted as counsellors to show students how to survive in Canadian society. Teachers showed students how to go grocery shopping, visit the doctor, dress appropriately for the cold weather, and taught them the basic standards of hygiene (Kanu, 2008). Through these initiatives, refugee students felt supported by the teachers and school became an important social network for resilience development (Kanu, 2008). Within the post-secondary school setting, there is no documentation of refugee students visit counselling centres on campus. However, if refugee students choose to visit a therapist on campus, the degree of acculturation is important to the client-therapist match (Cheatham et al., 2002). A counsellor of the same ethnic origin yet highly acculturated may be ineffective in the therapy process. Therefore, an emphasis should be placed on culturally responsive therapeutic practices rather than finding a therapist from the same ethnic background as the refugee student.

The final factor that influences the development of resilience is based on an individual's character traits, temperament, and religious practices. Personal attitudes and beliefs were reported as important contributors to adolescent refugees' resilience (Schweitzer et al., 2007). During the post-migration period, 13 Sudanese refugees were asked to describe their experience of coping through the Pre-migration Stage, Flight Stage, and Post-migration stage. These refugees

stated that their attitudes to stay strong helped them through adversity. Many did not allow themselves to give up despite the many challenges that faced them. Individuals reportedly used religious practices and social support to stay hopeful during hardships (Sossou et al., 2008). For example, Bosnian refugees stated that a belief in a higher power such as God provided them with strength to persist through difficult post-migration events (Sossou et al., 2008). Each individual used prayers "as [their] own thing…since it is something that is inside of [you] that [you] can feel" (Sossou et al., 2008, p. 378). Some other refugees employed the strategy of comparing their own situations with others (Schweitzer et al., 2007). For example, during the post-migration period, refugees compared themselves to others who were less fortunate and thereby allowed them to gain perspective and to cope with their personal difficulties. The comparison of themselves to others allowed refugees to feel hope for the future. Each comparison reminded them that they had survived through worse experiences (Schweitzer et al., 2007). Other research with African adolescent refugees has suggested that individuals with a high level of sociability and an easy temperament formed social groups with other adolescents and adults more readily than youths who were inhibited (Lustig et al., 2004). Open-mindedness was another personality factor that promoted resilience in a new culture. For example, refugees who adapted to changing gender roles in western society had a more resilient family life than refugees who strived to continue living in a patriarchal society (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002; Nilsson, Brown, Russell, & Khamphakdy-Brown, 2008). Open-mindedness also led to faster language acquisition in a new country (Noels, Pon, & Clement, 1996).

Although learning a new language can be a major source of stress, those who attended English courses and took risks to speak with others in English were found to have higher levels of self-esteem, greater opportunities for furthering their education and career, and larger social networks (Poppitt & Frey, 2007; Taylor & Doherty, 2005). When individuals have difficulty finding personal resources to adapt, culturally sensitive counsellors may use strength-based strategies to help clients focus on their strengths, skills, and talents (Goodman et al., 2004). By doing so, counsellors will aid in helping refugee clients see themselves as competent, powerful individuals with the capacity to adapt to their new environment.

Conclusion

The current literature review outlined the recent trends in international refugee migration, the challenges refugees face during the migration journey, and factors that promote refugee resilience. With the largest incoming group of refugees between 24 and 44 years of age, it is speculated that an increasing number of refugees will enroll in post-secondary education to further their education (CIC, 2012c). The Canadian migration trends also demonstrate variance in the migration path through which they enter the country. Nonetheless, most migrating refugees will have experienced conflict at some point. The literature does not identify the type of community post-secondary refugees thrive within. Perhaps refugees living on campus with people close in age promote resilience similar to refugees living in an ethnic community. The current literature mirrors society's fascination with trauma and challenges facing young migrating refugees.

As a result, there is a deficiency in resilience research that neglects to inform coping experiences of young refugees. Therefore, the WUSC refugee post-secondary student population is an exemplary group that has found success despite all the potential migration challenges. This population has significant propensity to promote novel education and health policies by building upon existing resilience paradigms. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the pre- and post-migration experiences of post-secondary refugee students. The study aimed to answer two questions: (a) what are the pre-and post-migration challenges experienced by government sponsored refugee students in post-secondary institutions? and (b) what are the protective factors used by these students that contribute to their resilience given the many risk factors of relocation? The following chapter outlines the qualitative case study methodology used to examine this study's questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to capture how my study was completed through the use of a qualitative case study methodology. An overview of qualitative methodology is provided, along with a thorough description of participant selection and recruitment, data collection procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations, and methodological rigour.

Qualitative Research Paradigm/Worldview

There are numerous approaches to conduct qualitative research. According to Creswell (2007), the researcher's underlying assumptions or theoretical perspectives on the nature of reality and knowledge guides a study's design and implementation. Therefore, it is important to expose these assumptions at the onset and to consider them throughout the research process by using reflexive practices (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Paradigms underlying qualitative research are based on the utility and persuasiveness of the research findings rather than searching for an absolute truth or conclusion (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The rich and descriptive stories from student refugees have the propensity to generate more questions about resilience for future research. Five integral assumptions guide a researcher's beliefs when choosing a paradigm: (a) Ontological, (b) Epistemological, (c) Axiological, (d) Rhetorical, and (e) Methodological (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Ontological assumptions. Ontological assumptions reflect a particular stance on the nature of reality that researchers make when they choose qualitative

research. After this choice is made, paradigms or worldviews shape the research (Creswell, 2007). Each worldview is "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). For the purpose of this study, I took a social constructivist worldview. This worldview assumes that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Often, subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically, which are formed through interactions with others and through cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives. In other words, reality is socially constructed. Ontologically, the social constructivist worldview assumes ontological relativism rather than ontological realism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Crotty (1998), realities are local and specific in nature and can be shared across groups and cultures. The social constructivist worldview should be evaluated on the sophistication of the information gathered rather than on the basis of their absolute truth (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this light, reality depends on individuals' subjective meanings directed toward certain objects or things. Rather than starting with a theory, inquirers generate a theory or pattern of meaning. Therefore, the goal of research through the social constructive paradigm is to rely on the participants' views of the situation and recognize that these perspectives are shaped by personal meanings and experiences (Creswell, 2007).

This worldview reflected my assumptions about the reality of post-secondary refugee students. For example, refugees living through violent conflicts, spending years in refugee camps, and journeying through the migration pathway leaves individuals with varied interpretations of their experiences as they interact with the complexities of their changing environments. Each resettling

post-secondary refugee student may have very different experiences in Canada given that they are sent to various cities – some of which have more resources that foster resilience (Hou, 2007). Furthermore, each student's diverse pre-migration experiences in their countries of origin and of survival in refugee camps may play an integral role in the strategies used to promote resilience in a new country. The social constructivist paradigm assumes that the refugee students' subjective experience is what can be known rather than concentrating on the collection of facts about an experience in their lives.

Epistemological and methodological assumptions. Epistemology is defined as one's understanding of "how the researcher knows what she or he knows" (Creswell, 2007, p. 16), which is integral to a study's theoretical perspective and methodology. The current study was based on a constructivist paradigm that entails several assumptions that are distinct from other paradigms including: (a) a recognition of multiple meanings of experiences, (b) meanings are derived from interaction between researcher and participant, and (c) a recognition that the researcher's background shapes the interpretation of participants' experiences. Social constructivist epistemology assumes that individuals inherently seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and develop subjective meanings of their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Such meanings are multiple, which leads the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing the meaning into a few categories or ideas (Creswell, 2007; Ponterotto & Greiger, 2007). For example, when working in school systems, there are many complex variables that guide a teacher's perception of

refugee students (Roxas, 2011). Roxas' (2011) qualitative research illustrated that

teachers with previous training in multicultural pedagogy were more likely to play

an active role in acquiring an understanding of a student's cultural background. In

contrast, teachers without such training were observed to be avoidant in their

interactions with refugee students and unintentionally created divisions between

native and refugee students (Roxas, 2011). As an educator, researcher, and

therapist, my multicultural training and lived experiences influenced my

constructivist interpretation of Roxas' study. I may believe that teachers who did

not attend to cultural differences were providing a disservice to refugee students.

However, I also recognize that these teachers may have their own subjective

interpretations of their behavioural choices. Another epistemological assumption

of constructivism is that meaning is elucidated through the interaction between the

researcher and participants (Creswell, 2007). Thus, the constructivist researcher

often addresses "the process of interaction among individuals" (Creswell, 2007, p.

21). Questions are more open-ended so that the researcher can listen carefully to

what the participants say or do in their lives, and how interactions with others

shape their experiences. Researchers abiding by the constructivist worldview also

recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation as they position

themselves in the personal, cultural, or historical experiences of their participants

(Creswell, 2007). This collaborative process allows researchers to expose and

transform their understandings of the topic of inquiry, thus allowing for new

interpretations and information to emerge through consensus and dialogue with

the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Through this co-construction, the

researcher strives to acquire a more informed and sophisticated evaluation of the participants' experiences. This approach is especially important when inquiring about factors that have contributed to the resilience of resettling post-secondary refugee students. Students' perspectives of their unique migration pathway, their education history, and their resettling challenges have not been acknowledged in the literature, which made it even more critical for me to allow for an unbiased exploration of their personal experiences. By allowing the post-secondary refugee students' voices to be heard, there was a search for learning that enhanced my understanding of the challenges and successes when coping with a new country's environment and education system.

Axiological and rhetorical assumptions. With regards to the axiological and rhetorical assumptions, I was aware that my background, biases, and autobiography shaped the interpretation of the gathered information. Thus, I positioned myself in the research to acknowledge how my interpretation flowed from personal, cultural, and historical experiences, which shaped the outcome of the inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). As a first generation Canadian, I witnessed my parents overcome the challenges of underemployment, discrimination in the workplace, and upgrading their education. We were lucky to have relatives and family friends already in Canada who helped to care for my sister and me. Toronto also has a large Chinese community, which helped the adaptation process. Fortunately for my family, my parents are well educated and speak English fluently, which I believe has helped them successfully acculturate to Canadian customs. My family's experience may not be typical of all migrating

families entering Canada and I was cognizant of these biases that shape my interpretation of the refugee experience. My experiences of volunteering and mentoring secondary refugee students in Nepal also shaped my bias. Other refugees from various camps around the world have different experiences from those living in the Nepal camp. This provided a salient opportunity for me to write the findings from an even more personal perspective and revealed a renewed outlook into the lives of post-secondary refugee students in developed countries.

Methodological Framework

A qualitative case study methodology was utilized for the current investigation of post-secondary refugee students' migration experiences. Stake (1995) commented that a case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied. Qualitative case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a person, a community, an organization, a program, or a policy) (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1998). A bounded system distinguishes those who are within the case and those who are not (Yin, 2009). Researchers draw clear boundaries surrounding the research issue, which will allow for the collection of meaningful characteristics of real life events and processes (Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) asserts that researchers who study cases "like to hear [participants'] stories…we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn" (p. 1). Proponents of the qualitative case study approach argue that it is as a strategy for inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). This approach is useful when a researcher has little control over events and when the focus is a phenomenon taking place within a specified context (Yin, 2009). Although researchers may be tempted to try and gather as much information as they can about a phenomenon to generate a comprehensive understanding, this is not feasible for obvious reasons (i.e., pragmatics, time and financial constraints). It must be clear where the case begins and ends.

The qualitative case study approach was deemed appropriate given that the objective of this study was to explore post-secondary refugee students' resilience, which is consistent with the constructivist perspective that subjective experiences are created in lived historical and social contexts (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; White, Drew, & Hay, 2009). Furthermore, the case study approach allows researchers to seek a deeper and richer understanding of the context being studied while developing historical explanations that may be generalized to other events (Anaf, Drummond, & Sheppard, 2007; George & Bennett, 2004). Given that the nature of the current study explored the migration and settlement challenges and resilience of post-secondary refugee students, the qualitative case study approach provided an interpretive framework to understand the students' process and experiences (Whitfield, 2011). Furthermore, the qualitative case study method has been identified as an appropriate method of studying resilience in at-risk groups. According to Teram and Ungar (2009), studies on cross-cultural resilience have moved away from focusing on the capacity for individuals to cope with adverse life circumstances and towards a focus on the interactions between individuals

and their environments. Therefore, a case study was appropriate in studying resilience in real-life contexts.

Many earlier social science researchers did not believe that a single case topic was sufficient to establish it as a research method (Yin, 2009). However, case studies provide far greater attention to context, underlying processes, interactions between individuals with others and their environment, and applicability to studying groups – all of which were well suited to the current study's framework and questions (Stake, 1995). Moreover, these factors were consistent with the social constructivist worldview whereby social interactions help to determine one's perceived reality.

Stake (1995) defines three types of case studies: (a) the intrinsic case study, (b) the instrumental case study, and (c) the collective case study. The *intrinsic case study* is used when the researcher has an intrinsic interest and wants a better understanding of a case (Stake, 1995; Whitfield, 2011). In this scenario, a researcher may need to use a case study design to learn more about a particular case, and not to learn about other cases or about some general problem (Stake, 1995). The *instrumental case study* is used when a researcher wants to examine and provide insight into an issue in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Whitfield, 2011). As Stake noted, the instrumental case study choice is made to advance understanding of that other interest (Stake. 1995). When a researcher chooses to use more than one case study to study a phenomenon within an instrumental case study framework, this is called a *collective case study* (Stake. 1995; Whitfield, 2011). The collective case study is

used to predict and replicate similar results across settings or to predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The current investigation followed the instrumental single case study model by studying a unique group – WUSC sponsored post-secondary refugee students and their resilience and challenges in the migration process. Individual students made up the case unit. A distinct characteristic of instrumental case study is its ability to focus on both the particular issue (i.e., refugee migration experience) and the general phenomenon (i.e., the development of resilience amidst migration challenges) (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, the current investigation is holistic in nature. This differs from the single case embedded units approach, which only focuses on one phenomenon in a single setting (Stake, 1995). By using this paradigm, the current study achieved a better understanding of the factors that supported and challenged refugee students' development of resilience.

According to Stake (1995), the knowledge gained from qualitative case studies is more concrete, contextual, and can be generalized to a reader's experiences. Therefore, the information collected may be used to develop future theories, influence policy, and inform future research (Merriam, 2009). This study gathered information regarding post-secondary refugee students' pre- and post-migration experiences and protective factors that fostered resilience. These shared experiences will help resettlement workers, counsellors, and post-secondary educators understand refugee student challenges and find new services that will guide students toward successfully adapting in their new environments.

Participant Selection and Recruitment

According to Patton (2002), "Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources" (p. 184). In choosing which case unit to study, preference is given to select participants that displayed different perspectives on the problem, process, or events a researcher wants to portray (Creswell, 2007).

Sampling. Through maintaining a small sample, researchers are able to focus on "information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 2002, p. 230). This approach allows researchers to provide a detailed and thorough understanding of the topic at hand (Patton, 2002). Data was collected from two male *and* two female post-secondary refugee students who met the following criteria as determined by each campus' WUSC group and by the principal investigator of the study: (a) entered a Canadian post-secondary school through WUSC's Student Refugee Program, (b) 17 to 25 years of age at the time of migration, (c) completed first year of undergraduate studies and must be in year two or greater of academic studies, and (d) either currently under refugee status as recognized by the CIC or previously entered Canada under such a status. The criterion related to age reflected the application guidelines of WUSC's Student Refugee Program (WUSC, 2007). The age criterion also assumed that the participants would not be far removed from their adolescent experiences in the Pre-departure, Flight, and First Asylum refugee stages – therefore allowing a shorter timeframe for reflection on these experiences. The criterion regarding the completion of first year undergraduate studies served two purposes, (a) ensured that participants had

the opportunity to live a full year in Canada and potentially experienced some of the resettlement issues as newcomers, and (b) ensured that all post-secondary refugee students were completing their second year of studies without the financial aid of WUSC and their respective post-secondary institutions, thereby allowing the representation of diverse experiences in relation to financing education.

Participants were formally recruited through the Student Refugee Program on campuses across Canada. The presidents of thirty on-campus WUSC groups across Canada were contacted by email for their cooperation (please see Appendix A). The WUSC students groups, via the WUSC presidents, emailed a copy of the recruitment letter that was sent to their post-secondary refugee students (please see Appendix B). The WUSC presidents were asked to screen for students who regularly attended class, were not on academic probation, and were part of one or more social groups.

Sample size. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative researchers often focus on attaining data with greater depth rather than breadth (Patton, 2002). As such, a smaller sample size is both acceptable and encouraged (Patton, 2002). Eight post-secondary refugee students responded to the email from their WUSC presidents, including six individuals in Alberta, one in Ontario, and one in Nova Scotia. I personally met with each interested participant in person or conducted email conversations to further explain the study and to answer any questions they had for me. After the initial conversation, three participants decided to withdraw their participation and never returned the Demographics document (Appendix C)

and the 'timeline' activity (Appendix D). Therefore, five participants remained in

the study all of whom returned the Demographics document and the 'timeline

activity.' I subsequently chose four post-secondary refugee student participants

for the interview based on their current geographic location and diversity of pre-

and post-migration experiences. For the participant who was not chosen for the

interview, it was explained to him that the study gave preference to participants

who were living in different regions of Canada rather than having multiple

participants from one location. It was also explained to him that one of the study's

aims was to recruit an equal number of female and male participants.

Furthermore, the second year student-participant was informed that the study gave

preference to senior level students in their third and fourth years of study since

they had one additional year of living in Canada. This participant was reinforced

that he displayed many resilient traits and if he had any questions about this study,

he could contact my academic supervisor or myself. Finally, this participant was

provided with a list of community-based multicultural counselling resources as

well as a remuneration for participating in the initial portion of the study. The

participant indicated that he understood the explanations, was gracious in

accepting this news, and thanked the principal investigator for the opportunity to

participate in the first part of the study.

Demographics of sample. After informed consent was gathered from the

participants, the Demographics form was distributed to the participants. The four

final participants who were interviewed ranged from 24 to 25 years old and were

in their third or fourth years of post-secondary education in Alberta, Ontario, or

Nova Scotia. The two males are originally from Somalia while the two females

are from Rwanda. The Demographics form also asked the participants to select a

pseudonym that would be used for the remainder of the study.

Data Collection Procedures

  Interview activities. In order to involve participants with a wide range of

experiences, the current study consisted of two data collection activities. The first

activity helped to screen for variability in participant demographics while the

second activity consisted of a formal semi-structured interview.

  Activity one – 'Timeline.' Qualitative case studies typically rely on

multiple sources of data (Stake, 1995). One of the challenges of acquiring the

most valuable information in research interviews is creating conditions in which

the participants best recall, reflect, and analyze significant life experiences

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985; McLeod, 2001). In order to assess the variability and

diversity of pre- and post-migration experiences, the 'timeline' activity was given

to participants along with the Demographics form after the participants provided

informed consent to participate in the study. The 'timeline' activity also asked

participants to list various resources that helped them cope with the challenges in

Canada. A secondary role of the 'timeline activity' was to: (a) facilitate the

participant's recollection and reflection of life events and (2) to capture salient

experiences that participants are willing to talk about in the interview. Providing a

pre-interview activity is also a strategy for facilitating rapport (Ellis, 2006). In

creating the activity, the main temporal periods were mapped onto three of

Prendes-Lintel's (2001) stages of refugee migration trajectory starting from the

Pre-departure Stage to the First Asylum Stage and to the Settlement Stage. Within each of these stages, the participants were asked to list their age and the number of years that they had lived within the specific migration stages, refugee camps/locations they resided, memorable experiences from their home country and the refugee camps/locations, the challenges they faced when they moved to Canada, and the methods employed to cope with the challenges they faced in Canada. Each participant returned their 'timeline' activity prior to the interview, which gave me the opportunity to review the pre- and post-migration experiences of each participant and the strategies they employed to cope with the post-migration challenges. By reviewing the responses in the 'timeline' activity, I was prepared to ask the participants to either elaborate or clarify various experiences that were significant to them.

Activity two – Case Study interviews. One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview (Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2009), the researcher has two jobs throughout the semi-structured interview process: (a) to follow one's own line of query as reflected by the case study protocol, and (b) to ask the conversational questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of your line of inquiry. The goal of the interview is to create a safe and open dialogue whereby the participant may authentically discuss his or her experiences and meanings (Ellis, 2006). Open-ended questions posing a "how" question is better for eliciting rich descriptions of participants' experiences and interpretations without limiting their responses (Becker, 1998). The interview may take place over an extended period of time, not just a single sitting (Yin, 2009).

Prior to the interviews, participants were also asked to bring an object, picture, or photograph that symbolized their resilience. The current interviews elicited a natural conversation facilitating reflective practices and authentic discussion of the pre-migration and resettlement challenges and the factors contributing to refugee resilience. The following questions were used to guide the semi-structured interviews:

1. Pre-Migration Experiences

    - Using the information on the timeline, can you please describe your life when you lived in your home country prior to moving to a refugee camp and other countries?

    - Please walk me through your daily routine when you lived in your home country.

    - Can you please describe the conflicts that resulted in your fleeing your country?

    - What were some of the challenges you encountered during the conflict?

    - When did you or your family know that it was no longer safe to stay in your country?

    - How did you make your way to the refugee camp and what were the challenges that you came across along the way?

    - Using the information on the timeline, how did you adapt to life in a refugee camp? What were some of the good experiences and challenges that you faced in the camps?

- Please walk me through your daily routine in a refugee camp.

- How did you hear about the Student Refugee Program? What were the most important factors for applying to post-secondary schooling in Canada?

- How positive and negative feelings and thoughts came to you when you found out you were accepted into a Canadian school? What preparations did you make to leave the refugee camp and go to Canada?

2. Post-migration Experiences in Canada

   - What were your first impressions of Canada when you arrived (e.g., the people, customs, climate, etc.)?

   - Using the information from the timeline, what challenges did you come across during your first year of living in Canada? How did you attempt to overcome each of these challenges?

   - After completing your first year of undergraduate studies, were there other challenges that you were faced with? If so, how did you attempt to overcome each of those particular challenges? Personal attributes?

   - Were there any on-campus or community resources that you found useful in overcoming challenges? If so, how did they help you?

     - *Probing question:* Examples of resources might be student counselling, resettlement agencies, professors, student mentors, religious groups, and community

cultural groups. How did the resources such as these help

you overcome challenges?

o Using the information from the timeline, what are some

of the ways you have coped?

• If you could change the system to make it easier for new SRP

students, what would be some of the changes that you would

suggest to your school or government?

• Where do you see yourself five years from now? What do you

hope to be doing at that point in time?

Procedure. Direct contact was made with the participants when they

emailed me expressing their interest in participating in the study. With the

participants who lived in Alberta, I met with each of them in person and provided

them with a further description of my study, the purpose of the study, and their

level of involvement. The informed consent form (please see Appendix E),

Demographics form, and the 'timeline' activity were given to these participants in

person. With the participants in Ontario and Nova Scotia, we communicated

through email conversations and discussed the same details as per the participants

in Alberta who had direct contact with me. With the participants who I

communicated with electronically, I gathered informed consent electronically

while the Demographics form and 'timeline' activity were distributed over email.

The contents of the informed consent were verbally explained to all participants.

Both the Demographics form and the 'timeline' activity were returned prior to the

interview, which provided me the opportunity to screen the participants based on

their experiences. I based my final selection of interviewees (JK, Eyotta, Esther, and Ade) on the following criteria: a) Gender b) length of time living in Canada, and c) location of post-migration Canadian city. Two males and two females were interviewed since female students only represent 25% of the SRP's incoming class each year (WUSC, 2007). Each participant invited to the interview was in either their third or fourth year of undergraduate studies. The longer length of time in Canada meant that they had more experiences of coping with challenges in Canada through their first few years in the country. Finally, the study a recruited participants across Canada and examined how experiences would differ from each other depending on the resettlement location. Table 1 illustrates the demographic of the four participants who were interviewed.

Table 1

Summary of Participants' Demographic Information

Participant	JK	Esther	Eyotta	Ade
Age	25	24	24	25
Country of Origin	Somalia	Rwanda	Rwanda	Somalia
Final Refugee Camp Location	Kenya	Malawi	Malawi	Kenya
Resettlement Province	Alberta	Ontario	Alberta	Nova Scotia
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male
Year of Study	3rd	4th	4th	3rd

Throughout the interview, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the purpose of the study. Prior to the interviews, participants were asked to bring an artifact such as an object, picture, or photograph that symbolized their resilience. Participants were encouraged to speak about the artifacts and photographs brought to the interviews and to describe its significance to the migration process. JK and Eyotta, both of whom lived in Alberta, were interviewed in person while Esther (in Ontario) and Ade (in Nova Scotia) were interviewed using Skype videoconference. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted between two hours and two hours and thirty minutes. Interviews using Skype were also audio-recorded. Member checks were conducted two months after the initial interview with each participant after the initial interview was transcribed and analyzed. Notes were taken during the member check conversations and were not audio-recorded. At the completion of the study, each participant was provided with a list of community counselling resources specializing in multicultural counselling as well as $30 as remuneration for their participation. It is important to note that none of the students required an interpreter.

Additional Data

  Documents. Documentary information is relevant in every qualitative case study topic (Yin, 2009). Systematic searches for relevant documents are important in any data collection plan as they can help corroborate and augment evidence from other sources as well as make inferences to further a case study investigation (Yin, 2009). Documentation review for the current investigation

began while preparing the literature review and included a public record search of all statistics regarding refugee migration (see Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010a, 2010b, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), conversations with the Director of WUSC's Student Refugee Program, and review of demographic records of refugee students sponsored by WUSC. Other documentations included the examination of up-to-date research after data collection was completed and an updated in depth analyses of WUSC's collected data and internal SRP reports.

Data Transcription and Analyses

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed with the audiotape to ensure accuracy. In qualitative case study research, data collection and analysis are concurrent (Stake, 1998). Since case study method does not adhere to a specific method of data analysis and I was cognizant of the emergent nature of qualitative research, I used narrative analysis and thematic analysis to make sense of the formal interview data.

Narrative analysis. A narrative analysis was used to interpret each participant's stories in a historical context (Creswell, 2007). The analysis followed a modified version of Crossley's (2007) model for narrative analysis, and I also included Mishler's (1997) emphasis on the social context as a function of socially constructed experiences. The events described by participants in this study unfolded in a chronological order with multiple turning points and epiphanies. Each participant had his or her own story to share; therefore, narrative analysis was the best technique for each within-case analysis. The narrative analysis began with participants sharing their migration stories. The semi-

structured interviews were guided by the Timeline activity where participants identified important life events during their pre- and post-migration journeys. These vital life events were subsequently expanded upon during the interviews. After the interviews were transcribed and I became familiar with the transcripts, I analyzed the data and re-arranged the events into chronological order to emphasize the life course (Crossley, 2007). These reconstructed biographies then underwent a secondary analysis to determine important factors that shaped the participants' lives with respect to their challenges and coping resources that enhanced resilience (Creswell, 2007). These within-case themes drew a map and exposed the emerging themes for the subsequent between-case thematic analysis. Finally, the participants' social contexts were embedded into the analysis to underscore any significant social influences that may have enhanced their resilience (Murray, 2003).

The results from the narrative analysis were weaved together to form a coherent story (Crossley, 2000). Each participant's story was written to describe the themes of his or her life history and emphasized the turning points and climaxes (Murray, 2003). Furthermore, the participant introductions highlighted: (a) the processes in the individuals' lives that influenced the interpretation of their challenges and resilience, (b) the different contexts that relate to these life experiences, and (c) the unique features of their lives (Creswell, 2007). After the within-case narrative analysis, a between-case thematic analysis was utilized to illustrate the shared experiences among the participants. After the narrative and

thematic analyses were completed, the results were shared with the participants (i.e., member checks) who reflected further on their stories.

Thematic analysis. A thematic analysis refers to "the recovering of a theme or themes that are embodied in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework, I became familiar with the data by transcribing all of the interviews and reading the transcripts several times. As per Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, I also made initial notes regarding sections of the data that I felt were important and recorded initial ideas about potential themes within the data.

The second step of thematic analysis was to code the data contained in each transcript (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding was completed on Atlas.ti 6.2 computer software. Coding allowed me to link data to abstract ideas and to identify the common thread between them. A line-by-line coding technique was used, which required me to pay attention to specific words and segments of the data. As Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, I provided an equal amount of attention to all data items, coding for "as many potential themes as possible" (p. 89). All data relevant to the research question was coded and many shared matching codes. Subsequently, codes were compared between transcripts and changes were made to the description of the codes as needed (Richards & Morse, 2007).

The third step of thematic analysis is to group the codes together to form themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this process, I created themes and sub-

themes that emerged during the coding exercise. In order to complete this phase, I sorted each of these codes into respective themes, utilizing my pre-existing notes. I organized all the data in the computer software, where it was easily determined which codes were associated with which themes. At the finalization of step three, my initial thematic map housed four macro themes, seventeen primary themes, each associated with one of the macro themes, and forty subthemes, each associated with one of the primary themes.

The fourth step of thematic analysis involved reviewing and refining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There are two levels of analyses. The first required reviewing the codes for a specific theme and evaluating all the data extracted to form a coherent pattern. At this point, the researcher also readjusts the location of any codes that do not appear to fit within a given theme. The second level involved re-reading all the interviews and determining whether or not the themes were reflective of the data gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To complete this process, I reviewed the data from each theme and made refinements where needed, while collapsing or removing themes that were unsupported or lacked differentiation. I also removed themes that were not relevant to the research question. This code-level refinement allowed for a developed thematic map housing four macro themes, twelve primary themes, and thirteen subthemes. For the current study, it was not necessary for all four participants to exhibit identical experiences in order to qualify for a theme since the participants' experiences were also dispersed within subthemes of a specific theme.

During the final two steps of data analysis, each theme is defined and named (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes were thoroughly reviewed within the themes and the researcher identified the primary story encapsulated by each in the context of the larger story as told by the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes were then shared with the participants as member checks for their input for accuracy. The final step entails writing of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Results of the interviews were evaluated in light of the document review and literature on resilience and pre-and post-migration settlement and education experiences of refugee youth and young adults.

Ethical Considerations

The present study was reviewed by and received ethical clearance from the University of Alberta Human Research Ethics Board and was completed in accordance with the policies outlined by this board. The current study ensured that the principle of *primum non nocere* (first do no harm) was upheld with post-secondary refugee students (Liamputtong, 2010). Harm could take various meanings in different cultural and ethnic contexts, so I made certain that the research practices would not adversely impact the participants. Conducting research might also lead to unintentional danger to the participants. Participants may have to deal with the consequences of our research actions as well as the publication of our research findings (Sin, 2005). Therefore, voluntariness of participation was a criterion for ethical research with human beings (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council

of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1998).

A letter of information was distributed by the WUSC on-campus presidents to each potential participant. Within the letter of information and during the consent process, participants were notified that they have the right to choose whether they would be involved in the study. All participants were made aware of the nature of the study at the initial contact through a face-to-face conversation, telephone conversation, or email conversation. During this conversation, the participants were verbally informed that they have the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time and the researcher will not initiate any follow-up contacts with participants who decline study involvement at any stage of the research process. The letter of information and verbal conversations also reminded participants that their involvement in this project would not impact their enrolment at their current post-secondary institution and that there was no penalty for withdrawing at any point throughout the research process. Participants were also encouraged to ask any questions regarding the study at any point during their participation. After reviewing this form and prior to the collection of any data, written consent was acquired from each participant.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the removal of all identifying information from the data and the researcher notes. As suggested by Liamputtong (2010), anonymity was also ensured through the use of self-selected pseudonyms in all documents related to the study so that readers could not identify the participants. No interpreters were required for this study as all

participants displayed substantial spoken English competency. The present study was considered minimally harmful to the participants involved. Participants could potentially recall traumatic experiences during the pre-migration period and it was possible that some participants may experience emotional distress due to the impact of these experiences on themselves and their families. The informed consent form conveyed this possibility to the participants and the researcher had a list of free counselling services, which was distributed to each participant. To create this list, I collaborated with each campus' WUSC coordinator and student counselling services to find culturally sensitive counselling centres (please see Appendix F).

Methodological Rigour

The following standards to evaluate methodological rigour were used throughout the present study: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility. For this study, I used triangulation, member checks, and journaling/supervision as methods to ensure the trustworthiness of my research findings. A major strength of qualitative case study collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence to develop converging lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009). In qualitative case studies, this process is called triangulation (Stake, 1995). For the current qualitative case study, data triangulation was used via document and 'timeline' reviews, semi-structured interviews (which include reflection on timelines and artifacts) and member checks. Member checks, which involved providing participants with preliminary results for feedback, were used

to ensure accurate representation and interpretation of the collected information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). Credibility was also maintained by an ongoing practice of journaling. This research journal was used to track my decision-making processes, rationale for data interpretations, and for clarifying personal biases from my axiological assumptions as recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). The journal also helped monitor my understanding of the knowledge gathered from existing literature with the collected data. Personal reflections from the journal and the collected data were discussed with my dissertation supervisor. Denzin (1984) describes this supervision process as *investigator triangulation* where the principle investigator asks others for their interpretation of the same phenomenon. Therefore, my perceptions of post-secondary refugee students' resilience were confirmed or refuted by my supervisor's interpretations.

Transferability. Transferability is defined as the reader's ability to transfer the findings to their own practice and to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mayan, 2011). The findings of this study provided recommendations for counsellors, educators, and programs that have a vested interest in helping refugee students transition to Canada. Furthermore, lessons learned about protective factors leading to resilience were generalized to the greater refugee population. Although the objective of the current study was not to necessarily generalize the findings, one can speculate that the information collected ultimately informed research and practice with the refugee population. Using the qualitative case study method, a detailed comparison was observed between various aspects of refugee

students' risk and protective factors with those described in existing mental health and refugee literature (Gromm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000). This comparison exposed the relationship that certain experiences of the post-secondary refugee student population are a microcosm of the larger refugee population.

Dependability and confirmability. Creating a case study database helps to effectively organize information of a study. Qualitative case study documentation for organizing data has much to borrow from other research methods. Documentation commonly consists of two separate collections: (a) the data or evidentiary base, and (b) the report of the investigator (Yin, 2009). A well-constructed database helped my supervisor and me review the evidence. Strategies for database documentation in the current study included: (a) case study notes, (b) case study documents, (c) narratives, and (d) maintaining a chain of evidence.

For the current study, case study notes consisted of field notes and personal memos stored electronically. Field notes are observational records that are detailed, nonjudgmental, and concrete descriptions of what has been observed (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Recorded observations allowed the discovery of recurring patterns of behaviours and relationships. Analytic themes through field notes helped to explain behaviour and relationships over a long time or in a variety of settings. After all, observation is a fundamental and highly important technique in qualitative inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Investigators can observe interviewees' body language and affect in addition to the words in an interview. Strategies for managing case notes followed Marshall and Rossman's (2006) formatted description, which allowed for my insights as I took field notes.

Another type of qualitative case study note is the memo or journal (Yin, 2009). Writing notes, reflective memos, thoughts, and insights throughout the research process helped to generate unusual insights that moved the analysis from the mundane to the creative as suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2006).

To increase the organization of information in a qualitative case study, a chain of evidence was maintained (Yin, 2009). This strategy allowed external observers to follow the derivation of any evidence from initial research questions to case study conclusions (please see Appendix G). The external observer could trace the steps in either direction. No original data should be lost that may compromise the case study itself. Since these objectives were achieved, this qualitative case study also established credibility (Yin, 2009). Therefore, sufficient citation to the relevant portions of the case study database was made, actual evidence were revealed, and the circumstances were consistent with the specific procedures and questions contained in the case study protocol (Yin, 2009).

Conclusion

The current qualitative case study examined the experiences of post-secondary refugee students' migratory challenges and resilience in the context of WUSC sponsored individuals. Data collection through archival document review and semi-structured interviews illustrated the students' pre- and post-migration challenges and help identify protective factors that have helped this population's adaptation to Canada. A number of processes were utilized to ensure credibility

and dependability of this study including the rigorous use of triangulation,

member checks, and journaling.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS: PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS

In the present study, semi-structured interviews were completed with four WUSC-sponsored post-secondary refugee students living across Canada. During these interviews, the participants discussed their pre-migration challenges, experiences in refugee camps, post-migration challenges, and coping strategies for all of these stages of migration. While the scope of these experiences was distinctive for each participant, aspects of their stories overlapped. This chapter is focused on providing an overview of the refugee camps that the participants came from and where their respective families continue to reside as well as the education system within these camps. The introductions also describe each participant with particular attention to their unique pre-migration and post-migration experiences along with the coping strategies used to overcome their challenges. Please see Figure 1 for an accompanying map displaying the major destinations of each participant during their pre-migration journey.

Hagadera Refugee Camp

The Hagadera refugee camp is one of three camps that are situated in the North Eastern Dadaab region of Kenya. The other two camps in Dadaab are the Ifo and Dagahaley camps. When amalgamated, the three camps are regarded as the largest refugee camp in the world covering 50 square kilometers and are within an 18-kilometer radius of Dadaab town. Hagadera was created by the UNHCR in the early 1990's for refugees escaping the civil war in Somalia between the Barre regime and clan-based dissident groups who opposed his power
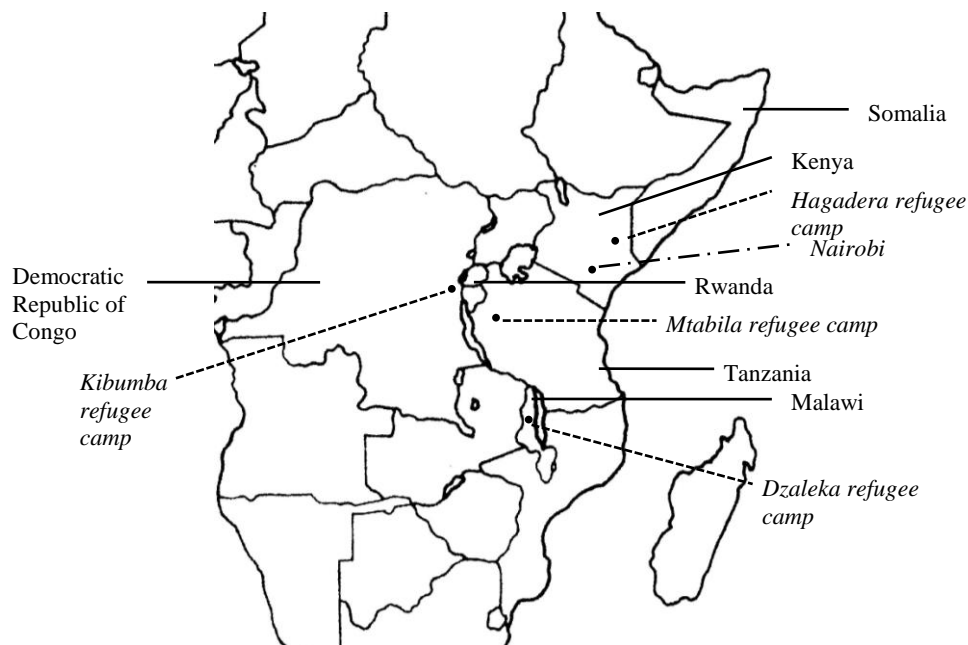
Figure 1. Map of East Africa with locations of relevant destinations for each participant.

(Lacey, 2006). As instability in the East African region increased in 1991, the

Hagadera camp, along with its sister camps began to accept refugees from other

countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Ninety-percent

of the camp's population consists of Somalia's ethnic minority groups such as the

Bantu (Salmio, 2009). Although it is regarded as the largest camp in the world,

the triad of camps has endured various challenges throughout its history. In order

to create the camps, the Kenyan government deforested a large region of the

Dadaab. This has forced residents of the camp to venture out of the camps in

search of firewood and water, which left women and girls vulnerable to violence

as they journeyed to and from the camps (Howden, 2011). In 2011, the East

Africa drought caused a dramatic surge in the Hagadera camp's population and

over 1,000 people per day were arriving in need of assistance. It is expected that

the number of refugees in the camps will decrease as rainfall in 2012 has

surpassed expectations (Gettleman, 2012).

The education system within the Hagadera camp consists of 19 primary

schools and six fee-paying secondary schools. There is no opportunity for post-

secondary education in the camp (Borderless Higher Education for Refugees,

2012). According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2011), 43 percent of

children attend primary schools while only 12 percent attend secondary schools.

The secondary schools are monitored by the Kenyan government and use the

Kenyan education curriculum. Overall, education is denied to most of the 90,739

children who live in the camp (UNHCR, 2011). After grade eight, students write

an exam to determine if they can be placed in secondary schools. In Dadaab,

education is the most underfunded sector in humanitarian aid despite being

classified as a fundamental human right (UNHCR, 2011). According to a recent

report by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO,

2011), only two percent of humanitarian aid is spent on education. This creates an

obstacle in the quality of education since classrooms lack laboratory equipment

for science classes and they achieve poorly on the practical component of the

secondary school entrance examinations (UNHCR, 2011). Two participants in this

study, JK and Ade, lived in the Hagadera refugee camp prior to arriving in

Canada.

JK: The Student with a Magnetic Personality

From my first impressions, JK was a charismatic and enthusiastic 25-year-

old third year male student. He came to Canada three years prior to our meeting

directly from the Hagadera Refugee Camp. JK is an Economics major who wants to eventually complete a Masters degree in the same academic field. With this degree, he hopes to "return to Somalia to help the community and humanity at large." JK is the eldest of nine siblings. Originally from Somalia, his family has lived in the refugee camp for sixteen years, living what he described as "a simple life with tents, simple structures, and houses made of trees that are stuck together." The description of his own life in the camp also reflected that of a typical young person including making many friends while following a routine of going to school and completing chores:

> I had to wake up at 5 am to go to Qur'anic school. People go to school early so that they can memorize. Then I come home and my mother was there with breakfast, so we ate breakfast, took a shower, and then went to regular school. School would last from 8 am to 1 pm. After regular school, we went back to Qur'anic school until 4 pm. So then at 4 pm, we came home and I used to help my parents fetch water from the taps. There was also my sister who was second to me who also did chores. I used to help my sister with sweeping and cleaning the house.

Throughout the interview, JK mentioned the importance of his family as a source of influence in his Islamic beliefs and his pursuit of an education – both of which were important coping strategies to enhance his resilience.

Pre-migration experiences. With what appeared to be a remarkable memory, JK told stories of his childhood living in rural Somalia in the southwest province of Gedo:

> My parents were pastoralists who kept animals like camels, sheep, and cows. We moved from place to place to look for water and pasture for animals. We were not close to any town, so we took milk to the towns and sold the milk to buy some necessities to cook meals. Everything was very peaceful. Sometimes there was not a lot of water, so we would stay inside and play in the house or under the shade of trees.

JK often spent days playing and learning how to rear goats from his parents since it was expected that he would also become a pastoralist:

> There was no school system in the rural areas at the time, so I never went to school. When you are six or seven years old, parents start to teach their kids how to look after the goats, and at ten years old, you look after the camels. So they were teaching me how to rear goats and that was their way of introducing me to become a pastoralist.

As the civil war erupted in 1992, rural civilians were "robbed of their food and animals," which was their only sources of income. As pastoralists, walking was the primary means of their transportation, which exposed families to the danger of being captured. JK's family walked for days towards Kenya without his father who had to "escape into the forest and hide to avoid capture." Luckily for the family, JK's father found another route to the refugee camp. At the time JK was seven years old and he remembers witnessing animals and children being left behind during the arduous journey to Kenya, and he feared that his mother might be forced to do the same thing with him if he could not keep up. Contrary to this belief, JK's mother often slowed down to help, protect, and wait for him:

> I even feared that my parents may leave me, because people were fleeing for their safety. Sometimes animals were just left behind, but I was a young child. I didn't know that my parents loved me that much that they would never leave me. I was seeing animals getting left behind, so I say, "Okay, if you don't walk well, your parents may also leave you." So I had to pretend I can walk well, while I had a big problem with my knee…but my parents were with me every time, because of their love and they were taking care of me.

Refugee camp experience. Shortly after the long journey to the Hagadera Camp, JK's younger brother "developed cancer, was paralyzed lying down all the time, and eventually passed away." According to JK, the exhausting walk, lack of

medical support in the camp, malnutrition, and poor water quality contributed to

his brother's death:

> Everyone was dehydrated, because of the lack of water. I was suffering from malnutrition. There was sickness everywhere in the refugee camp. I had diarrhea all the time and my younger brother who was carried by the camel during our walk to the camp got cancer. He didn't get any medicine, because at the time, there were no doctors.

Once in the camp, JK's father reunited with his family and became a stalwart

figure in the family's survival. Without much money, JK remembers his father

risking his life to re-enter Somalia in order to collect and sell their camels so that

the family could purchase necessities in the camp. Extra money was always

invested into the children's education by purchasing books and pencils:

> My father started a small business by using intermediaries to buy sugar from big stores outside of the camps and reselling the sugar in the camps. At that time, there was no sugar in the camps, but it is very important for tea and our traditional foods. When he started making a profit, life got a little easier and they were able to send me to school.

> With "no good life in the refugee camp," JK's parents enrolled him into

the camp's Qur'an school when he was seven years old. JK's inquisitive

disposition led him to ask his parents to also send him to the UNHCR sponsored

school for a formal education:

> I've never heard of school before. I saw other kids in the neighbourhood who were going to school after the Qur'anic school, so I requested from my parents to take me to the school and they agreed. They made sure I would continue studying the Qur'an. School was the most interesting thing I had in my life. Ever since I started school, I was so interested in it that I hated to stay home on days when we did not have school.

Although JK's parents had very little formal education, they supported him

through school without hesitation. He excelled through every subject and

genuinely enjoyed learning. When the Student Refugee Program (SRP)

opportunity appeared, JK knew that pursuing post-secondary education was his

one chance to leave the camp for a "better life":

> There was no motivation to stay in the refugee camp, because you have good grades, there is still no job in the refugee camp. Everyone sits around and does nothing all day. There's nothing more to do after high school. There is a tradition when you are a man to help the parents. So there was this thing in me to have to help my parents out. With no job in the camp, the only way to help my parents was to get a scholarship, keep studying, and hope to create a good future for me and my family.

Even though JK was rejected twice from the SRP, he took those opportunities to

volunteer in the camps and to network with non-profit agencies to improve his

skills. JK constantly believed in his potential and was hopeful that he would one

day pursue post-secondary education in Canada. When JK was finally accepted

into a Canadian university, he recalled it as "the happiest day of [his] life."

Post-migration challenges. When JK entered Canada as a refugee

student in 2009, he was twenty-two years old. Once he stepped beyond the gates

of the camp, life became very complex. According to JK, "it was like an ant being

dropped into the Indian Ocean." For example, the reliance on technology in many

aspects of life was a culture shock:

> In the refugee camp, everything's simple. The most technology we see in the camp is the car. The airplane was very shocking to me …things like that was very overwhelming. Because I'm refugee background, I didn't know anything. The buildings, the technology, everything was different. So that was the overwhelming issues. I didn't know that if I go into an elevator, what am I going through?

Furthermore, JK was stunned by the cultural dress of females in Canada. In

Muslim culture, women were required to cover their skin. Accompanying these

cultural challenges were weather and food challenges:

> I was not getting used to some kinds of food. I don't eat pork, so I had to be suspicious about food. I couldn't buy meat, because some might contain pork. I also had weather phobia, because even when it was warm here, it was still cold for me. I looked at my friends who wear t-shirt even though it was cold. I could not withstand the weather.

Finally, JK found school to be very difficult when he came to Canada. He also learned that religious discrimination existed even though Canada promoted freedom of speech and multicultural beliefs:

> Sometimes, I thought about dropping out of school, because it was so hard and fast. I would say, "I can't do this, this is too different!" Profs spoke with a Canadian accent, PowerPoint was hard to follow, and I couldn't understand the books. I also had a manager at my first job and he never allowed me to pray during my break. He didn't understand that I was from a different culture.

Displays of post-migration resilience. In order to alleviate these challenges, JK was always willing to ask others for help:

> When I came here, the SRP Committee was the only people I knew. They connected me to the other Somali friends in the community so that they could teach me where to go for Halal meat and where to go for Friday prayer. I lived with an Ethiopian roommate who taught me how to make rice and sauces to go with my meats, because my mother and sister back in the camp did all the cooking.

JK socialized with friends from the Somali community and "[they] all go to pray in the university gym every Friday afternoon." He also approached professors and "made friends in the class to help with coursework and exam studying." JK joined the WUSC executive committee to help select future SRP students. Moreover, JK discussed his concerns with an employer about his praying rituals. However, when he realized that his employer would not accommodate his needs, he "walked away and resigned from the job." JK's subsequent jobs included dishwashing at a restaurant and becoming a security guard, which was "the perfect job, because

there was time to pray." According to JK, he learned to adapt to the weather, by "using the Internet Google to find out the what the weather is outside and the directions to new places. It's just a normal way of adjusting." JK's willingness to engage in the once foreign technology helped him adapt in Canada.

Today, JK continues to work at his part-time job so that he can send money home and enhance his family's living conditions in the Hagadera camp. JK brought the Qur'an to the interview and explained that the Qur'an symbolizes his strength to succeed in Canada:

> The Qur'an tells me that I will always be tested in life. My religion instills in me good behaviours like patience, determination, strong faith, hard work, and rising to challenges. If I can live by God's commandments, I believe that I will one day live a happy life after my time on this earth. This faith in me has made me strong and at the end of every challenge, there is a relief.

Through JK's migration story, he exemplified these core values of the Qur'an, which has helped him persevere through the migration challenges.

Ade: A Self-Advocate in a Rural Setting

My first impression of Ade was that he was a hardworking and energetic college student from Somalia who is passionate about his country's political landscape. Ade is a 25-year-old male who is in his third year of Biology and Plant Sciences studies. He plans to complete a Masters degree after his undergraduate studies. With this degree, he "hopes to return to Somalia to help the people there and to see [his] family." Ade came to Canada 2.5 years ago from the Hagadera Refugee Camp. He lived in the Hagadera camp for seventeen years beginning at the age of five. Ade is the middle child of six other siblings. The life he described in the refugee camps reflected that of a typical young person including hanging

out with friends, going to school, completing chores, and having ambitious

dreams for the future:

> For me as a kid in the camp, I never had any challenges. I went to the Qur'anic school to learn how to write Arabic and to study the language. Then I started going to UNHCR schools. It was a very tight schedule. If we were in normal school during the day, then we were at the religious school at night. I worked hard, got good marks, and finished school. But then you realize that there is nothing in the camps! It's like an open prison. You want to leave the camp to explore and to find a good job, but you cannot leave the camp.

Throughout the interview, Ade displayed a devotion to his family, his hunger to

leave the refugee camp, and the influence of education and Islamic practices on

his life.

Pre-migration experiences. I noticed that Ade spoke confidently about

his recollection of childhood experiences. Ade's incredible memory painted a

vivid story of his time in Somalia. His parents were pastoralists in the rural

southern province of Middle Juba:

> My parents were pastoralists and we had goats, camels, and cows. We were in a peaceful land. There was nothing going on. We had a happy life. My parents had their own source of income and we had our own food. The government used to help us relocate when there was no water. I never went to school in Somalia…there was no such thing in rural areas. I usually just played with other kids in the area…and my parents would teach me how to take care of the food so it wouldn't go bad in the heat.

As the civil war in Somalia progressed in 1992, Ade described his family

fleeing "with a flock of other families, so that [they] would have safety in

numbers" from the guerilla militia. The family walked for months in the

southwestern Somali forests to avoid gunfire on the main roads. Ade's family

relied on animals during their flight to the camp:

> We were lucky to have animals. You can travel with them, ride them, and move them into the forests. Even though we were hungry, we never starved, because we could eat the animals and drink the milk from them too. Because we were pastoralists, we knew how to keep the food and meat, so it didn't go bad. We also sold some of our animals for supplies like oil for kerosene lamps.

During this journey, Ade remembers stumbling upon a dead body – an image that he has not forgotten. From Ade's perspective, anyone who had a gun, had power:

> During that time, if you have a gun, you are a strong man – you can survive and you can take things away from other people. Anyone who had a gun thought that they could do anything they want. Whenever I see this survival or struggle for existence in biology books, I think, "What the hell? We had to go through that and human lives were taken away!"

Throughout the pre-migration journey, Ade experienced malnutrition, dehydration, a sense of helplessness, and fear:

> In the forest, you didn't have enough resource for food. It was not a balanced diet. There were always looters or people stealing animals from us, which was a very big problem. We became very malnourished, because of all the walking and not getting good food. I was always worried for my mom and dad. I would think, "would my dad be okay tomorrow night when he goes somewhere to look for food?" I sometimes would not go to bed until he came back. You always heard horrible stories like, "Mr. X was killed yesterday when he went to fetch water."

During their flight, Ade's parents shielded the children from exposure to violence by steering the family away from the main roads used by the militia to attack civilians.

Refugee camp experiences. When Ade reached the Hagadera refugee camp in Kenya, he felt a sense of safety and adapted quickly to the camp's living situation, even though food was occasionally scarce:

> For me, it's not hard to adapt, because I was a kid. I needed a rest from all the long journeys. I was tired of walking and when I came to the camp, I could get rest and water. I was a kid, so wherever you find yourself, you can usually adapt. I never had any challenges in the camp at first. I never

had a choice. If I was fifteen or seventeen years old who knew what was going on in this camp, I probably will never have stayed there, because you were in confinement.

Although his parents had very limited education, they quickly enrolled Ade and his siblings into the camp's Qur'an school and subsequently into the UNHCR sponsored school. On many nights, Ade had to complete his homework beside a kerosene lamp, because there was no electricity in his tent. There were no employment opportunities for Ade's parents and his father had difficulty starting a business, but they always felt fortunate for their children's education:

My dad tried to start a business, but he couldn't maintain it, so he was not feeling responsible for the family. My family stayed in the camp for the little education that we received. I was going to religious school and I was going to normal school, so I was getting all kinds of education in Arabic and English. My parents were happy with that, but they were not really happy. There was a lack of income and no movement.

Ade enjoyed school in the camp, but realized that there was no freedom in the refugee camp:

The government of Kenya doesn't allow us to go out of the camps. The camp is only 30-kilometers…so you can't get out of that 30-kilometer radius. That was the worst. I would ask, "What's going on? I can't move, I can't go travel, I can't go to Kenyan school?" I can't visit Nairobi and discover the city of the country. So we are all in this confinement.

The refugee camp also had few opportunities for high school graduates. Ade made many friends in the Hagadera refugee camp. His friends were a source of school support and information sharing. He likened his friends to the Internet where, "Information would be shared amongst friends from jobs, to scholarship, to life issues."

Ade was not able to gain acceptance into the SRP for three consecutive years and he felt discouraged with the process:

> A lot of people apply to this scholarship and the whole system has maybe ten positions…so what they do is try to eliminate you using a series of tests. I always got to the interview stage and I was always unsuccessful. I thought, "These people aren't fair!" I finished school in 2005 and they were taking someone in 2007. For three years I was wasting my time. I just wanted to go to university anywhere and I tried Nairobi and Somalia, but was also unsuccessful. I felt like giving up at the time and I still feel bad about it up until now.

However, through the encouragement of his parents and teachers, he applied one last time and was accepted in the SRP. Post-secondary education was important to Ade and constantly received encouragement from his family and mentors to not give up. Ade was patient, relentless, and continued to work hard and volunteer with community agencies in the refugee camp. Once accepted into the SRP, he no longer felt confined and was happy at the prospect of helping his family after he finishes his degree, "like they helped [him] when [he] was young."

Post-migration challenges. Ade left the Hagadera refugee camp for Canada at the age of twenty-two in 2009. Ade was accepted into a college in a town of 20,000 people that is forty minutes away from a mid-size Canadian city in the Maritimes. Initially, there were very few challenges while resettling in Canada:

> For the first year, tuition was paid for and I had no financial difficulties at that time. I was a WUSC member and I volunteered everywhere whenever people needed help. I remember having people help me during move-in day at the residence, and so I also volunteered to help other people moving in after me. I was also a member of the International Students' Association. It was great!

Ade recalled having to get used to how females dressed in Canada. According to Muslim culture, women are supposed to cover all exposed parts of their body in public. Therefore, it was shocking for Ade to see females in Canada wearing

sleeveless shirts, skirts, and shorts. Ade also had to adapt to the weather, the rural

surroundings, and the food:

> I bought a jacket, gloves, hat, and all the protective clothing needed. Whenever I go outside, I dress for the weather. What I realized is even when the sun is outside, it's still cold! The sun and the weather are kind of cheeky. There were cultural differences. I used to go to the mosque, but there was no mosque here that was within walking distance. The cafeteria never had any international cuisine. They always serve pork and beef, which I don't eat, so for the first two months I always had to ask what kind of meat it is. It was frustrating.

> After his first year, more challenges occurred for Ade. One of the biggest

challenges was the lack of a public transportation system in his town. Without

mobility, he has found it difficult to find employment in this town as most student

part-time jobs were in the industrial areas located in the suburbs. Without a job

and without a scholarship or stipend in his second year, managing his finances

became difficult. As a result, Ade had to find affordable housing:

> In a small town, I couldn't get anyone to share an apartment with me. That was my biggest problem. Without a roommate, an apartment is very expensive. I moved from one house to another looking for an apartment to live. So I moved four times in one year until I found the place where I am living now.

His roommates often left in the middle of a semester and he could not afford to

pay an entire apartment's rent. Finally, Ade was frustrated with his school's

WUSC community. According to Ade, the group provided no support and he had

to "rely on myself":

> The moment they took me from the airport, that's it! No more! Imagine you, Andrew, taken from Canada and taken to another new country and then you are given support for one year and then you're told to go handle yourself without checking on your progress.

Displays of post-migration resilience. Given Ade's many challenges

after his first year in Canada, I believe that he has shown immense resilience and

to continue his studies. Ade has learned to use technology to help him adapt to the

weather. Rather than being fooled by the winter sun, Ade "[goes] to Google to

check the temperature so that [he] can dress appropriately for the weather."

From my perspective, one of Ade's greatest strengths is his ability to

network, socialize, and make friends:

> The Chinese students all cook Chinese cuisine. They would cook rice, so I
> would eat rice. For the mosque, one of the members of the SRP group was
> a faculty member. She told me that there is a mosque in the town and that
> she would find out more information. She asked some friends in the
> faculty who were from Pakistan and they told me it's five kilometers from
> the school. She brought be there.

Ade also found a friend who owns the house he lives in, so there is stability in

knowing that his roommate will not suddenly leave. With Ade's social aptitude,

he also advocates for his needs. He obtained a research assistant job as a result of

his persistence in pursuing a professor and proactively providing his resume and

learning about this professor's research. Ade also acquired a manufacturing job in

a similar manner:

> One of my jobs was working in a factory. I went on Google to find it. I
> prepared my résumé and I filled in a form and submitted the application. I
> never heard back from them, so I went there to talk to the manager. She's
> a nice woman and she gave me an interview. So I went there to meet with
> the executive. I never waited for anyone to assist me.

Ade is currently advocating for changes to his school's SRP guidelines so that

future students will not endure the challenges that he has experienced:

> I've adapted to this community as much as possible. There are student
> services at this college and I've gone to that office to talk to them about
> the financial and housing challenges I have been experiencing. I talked to

the administration, the vice-president of the college and say, " Hey, I'm experiencing these problems, could you lower my tuition cost?" This school has been with the SRP since 1975 and nothing has changed to help refugee students with financial difficulties.

In response to my request, Ade shared a pen and his family as symbols of

his resilience. The pen symbolized Ade's ambition of completing his studies, and

it was an important tool in education and problem solving:

I used to like writing…whenever you're writing an exam, you have to write with a pen. Whenever you're trying to figure out something, you have to write with a pen, so I think the pen is my strength. Also, some people are trying to solve problems back home and saying that the pen is mightier than the violence and the guns.

Ade's parents also continue to support him through his time in Canada. They are

patient with his studies and encourage him to complete his education. Even when

Ade's parents tell him not to worry about them, he feels the "responsibility to

continue working to send money home." Ade's story exemplifies independence

and resilience despite the lack of support from his school and the challenges of

living in a Canadian small town.

Dzaleka Refugee Camp

The Dzaleka refugee camp is situated in Malawi. The refugee camp was

established by the UNHCR in 1994, in response to the wave of forcibly displaced

people fleeing genocide, violence, and wars in Burundi, Rwanda, and the

Democratic Republic of Congo. Its largest population in 1994 was Rwandans

fleeing the civil war between two ethnic groups, the Hutus and the Tutsis. Prior to

becoming a refugee camp, the Dzaleka facility had served as a political prison.

The camp's present population is between eleven to twelve thousand refugees,

most of whom are women and children. Many of them spent years in refugee

camps in the DRC, Zambia, and Tanzania before arriving in Dzaleka. Some of the

children, adolescents, and young adults have lived their entire lives in UNHCR

refugee camps. Besides the aforementioned countries, Dzaleka is also host to

refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. These refugees are presumed to be

heading to South Africa where they hope to acquire asylum and begin rebuilding

their lives. The United Nations estimates that 60% of the Ethiopians and 80% of

the Somalis headed to South Africa pass through Dzaleka refugee camp. Most

spend only a few months in Dzaleka before continuing southwards (IAFR.org,

2012).

The UNHCR schools in the Dzaleka camp is partnered with the Jesuit

Refugee Service (JRS), a non-profit organization that focuses on bringing

education to young refugees. The Dzaleka refugee camp consists of one primary

school that has an enrollment of 1,179 students (616 boys and 564 girls). The

school contains a pre-school and grades one through eight. As a sign of

community solidarity, the camp school has 153 Malawian students who cannot

afford education in their communities (UNHCR, 2006b). Only a modest number

of children progress beyond the primary level of education meaning that on

average 36 of the 46 students attend secondary schools in adjacent towns. This

number may not appear to be impressive when compared to the standards of

education in developed countries, but this percentage is better than all of the other

refugee camps in Africa (UNHCR, 2006b). The Dzaleka refugee camp school has

the reputation of hiring the most motivated teachers among the UNHCR

sponsored schools. They are reputed to be very demanding of their students and

teachers volunteer their time to run extracurricular activities after school for the students (UNHCR 2006). Once the students graduate from grade eight, they can achieve various scholarships provided by JRS to attend boarding high schools in neighbouring towns. The remaining two participants in the study, Eyotta and Esther, spent substantial time in the Dzaleka refugee camp prior to arriving in Canada, and both their families continue to reside in the camp.

Eyotta: The Journey Towards Independence

My first impression of Eyotta was that of a soft-spoken and compassionate 24-year-old fourth year female student who came to Canada four years ago from the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Eyotta is a Psychology major who is planning on expanding her studies to include Social Work and wants "to become a social worker in the future." Eyotta commented that she did not have a good memory for the events that happened in Rwanda prior to her family's escape. However, as she told her story, I noticed that she was able to vividly describe her adolescent and teenage experiences, "I am the eldest of four siblings. I don't remember too much about my time in Rwanda, but I know in 1994, I was seven-years-old…I guess I was in grade two when we left because of the civil war." When asked about her family's ethnic background, she opted to not answer the question.

Initially, a "supportive extended family, [her] parents' employability in the DRC camp, and financial savings helped [Eyotta's] family flee the violence in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)." However, as her family migrated from DRC to Kenya, and eventually to Malawi, they would experience multiple losses. Her family lived in the Dzaleka camp for eight years. Six years

prior to arriving in Dzaleka, Eyotta's family rarely found stability as they moved

from one East African country to another:

> It wasn't stable at all. After living in the DRC camp for a little while, the violence started again. Then in Kenya, it was something else. There was barely any food and there were no jobs for my parents. Food and housing was expensive. We were adjusting all the time since we moved from house to house to find cheaper places to live. It was not good until we moved to Malawi.

Yet, amidst the many challenges of migration, Eyotta attributes strong family

support for education and Christianity as her main sources of strength and

resilience.

Pre-migration experiences. With a smile, Eyotta spoke fondly of her

childhood. Her family lived in a big house on a gated property in Gitarama, the

second largest city in Rwanda:

> At that time, it was just my brother and me. We had a big-gated house. We were not usually allowed to go outside the gates. We had a maid at home who took care of us and made breakfast for us every morning. On weekends, we always had gatherings with aunts, uncles, and grandparents. It was a lot of fun. When we went to school, I had a chance to play with the other children. My father is a mechanical engineer. He was self-employed and owned a garage for cars. My mom was a pharmacist. She used to work at the university hospital.

As civil unrest escalated in Gitarama, Eyotta and her younger brother were

sent to her grandparents' rural farm where she had fond memories in a peaceful

setting – without the knowledge of what was happening in her country:

> My parents sent my brother and me to my grandparents' farm to live for one or two months. They lived very far away in a village, so it was safer there. It was fun. My grandma let us do all the kids stuff and let us run around. My dad and mom would come to visit us on weekends. When the conflict grew and the war was getting closer to the village, my parents picked us up from the farm and we fled Rwanda and go to the Rwanda-DRC border. When the war got closer, we could hear gunfire in the evening.

As the family walked across the crowded border, Eyotta's father was separated

from the family:

> When we got to the border, so many people were crossing the border. My mom was holding my hands and my brother's hand and we started walking across the bridge. Somehow we got separated from my father. We stayed two or three months on our own before my father joined us again. We knew at that time he didn't know where we were. He knew we had crossed the bridge, so it would be easy to come and look for us.

Once in DRC, Eyotta's grandparents rented a small house for the extended family

and Eyotta went to a local school for a few months. Upon reuniting with his

family, Eyotta's father and her uncle were both able to find employment:

> I remember my uncle found a job…as a driver for UNHCR, so he would earn money and we stayed at the house that we were renting. And later on, my dad also found a job. There was a radio [station] in the DRC, so he worked for the radio [station] and my uncle was working too, so we were better off.

> **Refugee camp experiences.** As civil unrest worsened in the DRC in

1996, Eyotta was forced to discontinue school and the family was once again on

the run to the Kibumba refugee camp, which primarily hosted Rwandans who fled

their country in 1994:

> The war in the DRC was scary. Even our landlord left the country, so we left the area too. At night, we could hear gunfire and grenades. We joined some other relatives in the [Kibumba] refugee camp on the border of DRC and Rwanda. My aunt had little food in the camp and there was no sugar to put in the porridge. All of us stayed in a tiny tent, which was very difficult when you compare to our old house where we had a lot of bedrooms. We also had to go fetch water from the well and help my mother care for my newborn brother.

Although Eyotta continued to go to the UNHCR sponsored school, she

remembers daily fighting and bullying among classmates, which made learning

difficult. Furthermore, school was difficult since Eyotta did not speak Swahili or

French at the time. Nonetheless, her family always ensured that the children received an education.

After two months of living in the Kibumba refugee camp, escalating violence forced refugees to leave for Kenya. The humanitarian relief efforts were complicated in Kibumba by the presence of government officials who carried out the 1994 genocide residing in the refugee camp. They used the Kibumba camp to launch attacks across the border against the new government in Rwanda (Umutesi, 2004). It was no longer safe for people living in the Kibumba camp. Eyotta's immediate family paid for a short flight to Kenya while her extended family was unable to catch the last flight out of DRC. As a result, her relatives had to walk to the next closest country of asylum:

> My grandma had to die as a result of too much walking and her feet were so swollen…and my aunt died as well, because she was so hungry and they didn't have enough food and they chose to just pass away and her husband passed away as well.

Eyotta and her family experienced significant losses as there were no longer extended family members for socio-emotional and financial support. "Even though neighbours become your closest friends and kind of like your relatives, deep down, you know that you used to have relatives who would visit during the holidays." Her parents could not find jobs, rent was expensive in Nairobi, and the family had to move multiple times to find affordable housing. Given these challenges, Eyotta and her siblings attended school everyday that was "built by an NGO and the parents who wanted their children to go to school. If you didn't help build the school, you paid a small fee for your kids to attend school." Eyotta's mother sold hand-made crafts to church goers while her father stood in line daily

to pick up rations for the family. On days when no rations were available, "we just had nothing to eat for dinner."

When the standard of living in Nairobi became too high, Eyotta's family decided to move again:

> We realized life was just too hard. We had to live day by day and we had no idea what would happen tomorrow. At first we went back to Rwanda, but it was still not safe, so we left after two months. We heard about Malawi having a better refugee camp. We thought about going to the refugee camp in Kenya, but we heard it was very hot. There were floods and scorpions, so we decided to go to Malawi. This was in 2000, so we stayed there for eight years.

Eyotta's father helped the UNHCR in the Dzaleka camp with odd jobs to earn an income, while Eyotta and her siblings went to the UNHCR sponsored school. With no school in the camp beyond grade eight, Eyotta studied hard and earned a scholarship to a reputed boarding school in the neighbouring city. Her ultimate goal was to leave the refugee camp to "make something of [her]self." She wanted opportunities for a better future and the SRP program was her way to find a fulfilling job, which was not possible in the camp. On her first try, Eyotta was accepted in the SRP program. It was "the happiest day of [her] life."

Post-migration challenges. Eyotta arrived in Canada when she was twenty years old in 2008. Her arrival in Canada yielded a life changing experience:

> Oh my gosh! I was very scared to be on my own. My parents were not with me anymore to guide me with what to do and where to go. I was scared to take the bus to go anywhere. It was overwhelming to be in a class with 300 other students. I was so scared. It was just my nature to be in the background to not ask many questions. I always just hoped somebody would come up to me and help me. The most challenging thing for me was being scared of getting lost or not having friends. School was so hard for me. I used to think I was very smart, but ever since I got here,

the professors go so fast when they're talking and you have to do so much reading on your own. I was not used to this.

Interestingly, Eyotta noticed that professors often used anecdotes and cultural references in lectures that she did not understand. She would leave lectures "confused and concerned" about her lack of understanding. Eyotta stated that she was "very shy to go ask the professors questions and thought they wouldn't understand [her] accent or know what [she's] talking about." It took Eyotta much longer to understand the course material. However, as with all of the other countries Eyotta had lived in, it was only a matter of "two months when [she] learned to take risks to adapt to Canadian society."

Displays of post-migration resilience. Despite Eyotta's post-migration challenges, she stepped outside of her comfort zone to advocate for herself and to ask for help from peers, strangers, and bus drivers. "I built up courage to talk to the person beside me in class, 'Hi, I missed last class, did you study?'" She joined clubs such as the International Students' Association and WUSC:

> People at these clubs were very helpful and referred job advertisements to me. So far, I have worked at a call centre and as a food server and cashier at the arena. People here are very nice. They give me more hours when I ask for it and I send a lot of the money back to my family in Malawi. I build more confidence each time I talk to people and ask questions. I've also been volunteering at the hospital and at a multicultural organization that helps new immigrants.

Eyotta has been very grateful to her resettled community for welcoming and helping her adapt to Canadian culture. Eyotta also serendipitously found her long lost aunt and cousins in her host city. They have also helped her adapt to Canada:

> My cousins taught be snowboarding and skating on weekends, so when it snows now, I get very excited to go outside and do those winter sports. When I feel down, I also have my aunt to talk to now. She's like a second

mother to me. My aunt is awesome…she's amazing. She helps me a lot. When I talk to her, it's like talking to my mom…there is so much alike.

As a devout Christian, Eyotta brought a cherished bible to the interview as a symbol of her strength and resilience:

My father gave me this important spiritual gift when I was a teenager when my mother had complications giving birth to my younger brother. I carry this bible wherever I go. God gives me the strength to work hard and to find success even in very difficult situations. It gives me the memories of when I was a child and we would read and sing verses as a family and my father would always lead the bible sessions. It was the most important give he has ever given to me. When I don't go to work, I try to go to church or take the time to pray at home.

Esther: Discovering the Silver Linings Amidst Challenges

My first impression of Esther was that she is a well-spoken and enthusiastic twenty-four year old fourth year female university student in Central-Northern Ontario. She came to Canada four years ago from the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Esther is a Biology and Chemistry student who is planning to enroll in a post-graduate Bachelor of Education program to become a teacher. Originally from Rwanda, her family lived in three separate refugee camps. "We lived two years in [DRC's] Kibumba camp and [Tanzania's] Mtabila refugee camp, and eight years in the Dzaleka refugee camp." When asked of her ethnic background in Rwanda, Esther opted not to answer this question. Education played an integral part of Esther's life:

My father was a teacher and my mom is a nurse, so they had to go to school for that. We were very luck that my parents were educated, because these skills helped us when we were in the different refugee camps.

From an early age, Esther's parents supported her by teaching her important life skills such as being responsible for her own actions and

volunteerism. She is the second oldest of four siblings. As exemplified in Esther's

upbringing, Christianity was and is still an important component of her life, which

she attributes to guiding her family's migration journey.

Pre-migration experiences. Esther lived in Rwanda for seven years in

the suburbs of Kigali, Rwanda's capital city. She regarded her time in Rwanda as

"amazing" with many family gatherings, evening family time, and playing with

friends. Although the family had a maid, Esther and her older sister still had

responsibilities around the home:

> We had a maid at home, but her main job was to take care of us when both
> mom and dad were at work. Since I was young, my parents never let us be
> lazy. We still had to wake up and know how to do our beds and to help
> around the house. Part of my culture is to train young girls to help around
> the house, because when you are six or seven, you are supposed to be able
> to do it.

Esther was also very motivated to go to school from an early age:

> Before I even started kindergarten, my parents said that I hated staying at
> home. When everyone was leaving the house to go to school or work, I
> asked, "Why should I stay at home?" My parents had to enroll me into
> kindergarten. Usually the kids have to be three-years-old to be in
> kindergarten, but my parents begged the teachers to allow me to be in their
> class even thought I was not qualified yet. I really had fun going to school
> at a young age. We left Rwanda after I completed grade one.

As civil unrest began in 1994, Esther's family proactively left the country

for DRC avoiding much of the violent conflict:

> My family and my relatives always used to get together on weekends. For
> the kids, any family gathering was fun. My cousins were here, so we
> didn't care what the parents were talking about. It made sense for the
> parents to talk about leaving the country. When we left our house, we went
> with our extended family until we were in the DRC. So while we were
> leaving Rwanda by bus to the DRC border, we had a lot of help from aunts
> and uncles, but once we got to the camp, we all separated.

After two years in the Kibumba camp, Esther's family left for Tanzania as

political upheaval spanning the DRC and Rwanda border made it unsafe to stay in

the camp. "All of a sudden one day, my parents parents said, 'we are leaving and

we have to sell everything we have.' We paid for bus ride to Tanzania's [Mtabila]

refugee camp." However, Esther's extended family did not make the trip and

opted to return to an unstable Rwanda. She was resigned to the idea that she

would probably "never see [her] grandparents again." The Mtabila refugee camp

is located in southwestern Tanzania and was primarily host to Burundi refugees

(UNHCR, 2012a). Tanzania has remained peaceful and stable while most of its

neighbours have suffered civil conflicts, so the Mtabila camp has seen a steady

influx of refugees in the past fifteen years. Access to asylum is declining as the

government is growing reluctant to process new asylum applications as the camp

is planning to close in 2013 (UNHCR, 2012b):

> The [Mtabila] refugee camp was horrible. My parents had nothing to do
> even though they were trained to help people. We always just sat at home
> and it was very difficult for everybody. Aid agencies at the camp were not
> helping people's social conditions. My parents tried to sell stuff to get
> some money, but they are not business people, so that didn't last long.

Therefore, the family decided to move to the Dzaleka refugee camp after two

years in Mtabila. By this time, Esther was eleven years old.

Refugee camp experience. During her two years in the Kibumba camp,

Esther remembers her parents' support and constant guidance, which helped them

survive:

> We all lived in a tent, which is very different from a house. I don't have
> my own room anymore. They gave us portions of food per month, but it
> was just never enough. My parents always gave the kids the food first and
> then ate whatever was leftover. My mom volunteered with the Red Cross

as a nurse, because many people were dying due to diseases while my dad
volunteered as a teacher.

Although the family struggled through every challenge together, Esther's parents

participated in initiatives that made camp life bearable. These activities helped the

parents maintain their self-identities while the children continued receiving an

education. Esther "grew up fast in the camps since [she] had to cook, take care of

[her] newborn sister, and fetch water every day."

While migrating from one refugee camp to another camp, there was an

abundance of interrupted schooling. According to Esther, Mtabila was the

toughest camp to reside. For two years, Esther's parents could not find jobs and

there was no school for the children. As noted previously, there was a sense of

loss as life became boring and purposeless:

> The UNHCR gives people food every month…but it's like telling a
> person, "Sit here and I'll feed you." A person who has always been
> active, who has always acted to get what they need, created their
> own fate, to go out and get their own money to buy stuff…and then
> you tell the same person, "Oh, I don't want you to do anything.
> Just stay in this compacted area and I will feed you." It's not good.

To pass the time, Esther's father dedicated his efforts to homeschooling the

children. As Esther matured, she also understood the stigma of being a refugee.

From her perspective, Tanzanians did not like refugees and she experienced,

"anger, hatred, and taunting" from them, which prompted the family to leave for

another camp.

Esther's family instantly saw a positive change in the Dzaleka refugee

camp:

> The UNHCR people welcomed us and gave us a house to live in again.
> After we get registered in the camp, they gave us pots, blankets,

mattresses, and food. Since we had six people in our family, they gave us six plates…they give you enough to use. We met some people who my parents knew from Rwanda…so those people helped us adapt as well.

After two years when Esther was fourteen years old, the Malawian government found out that her parents had employable skills, which created job opportunities for them:

My parents were allowed to apply for jobs outside of the camp and my parents could leave the camp for the day to go to work. During that time, Malawi was in need of nurses, so my mom took some more courses to improve her English and she as able to get a job. At the same time, the UNHCR sponsored schools hired my father as a teacher. You're still labeled as a refugee when you leave the camp…the label will never leave you.

Initially, Esther continued her schooling at the Dzaleka refugee camp where she learned English before enrolling in a boarding school for grades ten and eleven. Esther constantly focused on the positives of her life and the gifts that "God has given [her]." This self-reflective nature motivated her to work hard and apply for the SRP. According to Esther, she pursued a post-secondary education "to become somebody." She believed that education would give her an opportunity to "find a stable life and a good job, so that [she] could help [her] family."

Post-migration challenges. Esther was accepted on her first attempt into the SRP when she was twenty years old in 2008. Even though Esther appeared to me as a very competent English speaker, one of her first challenges in Canada was the language barrier:

At that time when I first came, my English is not really that good, because different people speak with different accents. So I remember my first day of class, I went to my Math class and I could not hear anything and was like, "Oh my goodness, I thought they speak English…am I speaking

English?" The accent makes a huge difference. With time, I was able to get used to it.

She also realized that her grades would not be as high as they were in Malawi since university moved at a much faster pace and required a lot of independent studying. It was challenging for Esther to adapt to a new academic system and frustration occasionally set in along with fleeting thoughts of quitting.

Furthermore, Esther found the food to be different:

I cooked for myself a lot, but before I knew where to get groceries, I ate French fries and chicken for two weeks. Everything tasted different…the meat tasted different, but at least I was able to buy rice and beans when I first came.

Finally, the number of female smokers in Canada surprised Esther:

In terms of dressing, it wasn't much different from back home. Maybe back home we wore more skirts than here, but one thing that really shocked me is the smoking. Oh my goodness, it's like seeing ladies my mom's age smoking. It shocked me. I was like, "how do people do that? Why?"

It took Esther some time to get used to the climate. She found Canada to be cold. Whenever it snowed, she did not want to go outside:

On the first snow day…I thought it was so beautiful. But until you are outside, you're like, "it's really really cold in this place." You're cold to the bones and you just don't want to go outside. You don't want to do anything. I'm not sure how to explain this, but it's like you're done with your freedom. Every time you think about going outside, you have to dress really warm.

Finally, Esther experienced employment challenges during her first year in Canada. As a refugee student, she did not have the work experience that many of her native Canadian students had. Although she was a volunteer teacher in Malawi, "no one knows where Malawi is." Furthermore, lack of interviewing

experience made it challenging for her to express herself to the best of her abilities during job interviews.

Displays of post-migration resilience. Compared to the other three participants, Esther had one advantage when migrating to Canada:

> I have a sister who is two years older than me and she came to Canada through the Student Refugee Program. She studied in a university in the same province as me right now. She's now done and she's a nurse. The SRP tries to put you close to family if it's not the same university, so my university is not too far from her. She pushed me out of my comfort zone to try new foods when she came to visit me.

Esther's university friends and the WUSC group also taught her how to go grocery shopping. Her friends adopted her into their families by inviting her to family dinners, which was "very warm and welcoming and felt like home" for Esther.

Esther displayed an immense amount of hope and gratefulness, which she attributed to her upbringing:

> All these things that we have passed through in my life, I left my home country at a young age…even though I didn't fully know what was going on, but I could still see it in my parents' eyes that everything was not alright. I'm the only one that can ruin my life right now. I can succeed if I want to. It's having the power to control your life. That is why…I control it to go in a positive way so I can be successful. I can be somebody for myself in life.

Esther expressed much gratitude for the opportunity to live in Canada. Compared to where she came from, she is very grateful for the Canadian government's sponsorship:

> I really appreciate the SRP committee at my school. I know every school's SRP committee is different, but mine has really made me comfortable. I appreciate what I've been given. The Canadian government doesn't have to help us, so I see this opportunity to go to school as a privilege. I need to

try and show them that I appreciate it by contributing to Canada, so I hope one day I can give back by becoming a teacher for students here.

Esther feels that she is "no longer discriminated as a refugee," which has given her strength to believe that she has the "same chance as anybody else to succeed." Unique from her peers in this study, Esther is not only keen on giving back to her family, but she is also enthusiastic about giving back to the society that has given her supports to move forward with her life.

Esther regarded God and family as her symbols of strength and resilience. "God is the spirit that has opened doors for me when it seemed like so many doors were closed, but out of nowhere, there is a door that has opened for me to go through." As a display of appreciation for her parents' support, Esther always budgets accordingly so that she has some money to send home to her parents to support their standard of living in the Malawi Refugee Camp. She has also recently helped one of "[her] younger sisters apply to WUSC since she is finishing high school." Esther hopes to help her family migrate to Canada in the near future.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS: SUMMARY OF THEMES

While the anecdotes exemplified each participant's distinctive stories, certain aspects of the participants' collective experiences overlapped, allowing for similarities to be noted. These similarities are encompassed among a series of *themes*. The themes highlight two time periods for the participants, the *Pre-migration* and *Post-migration* periods. The post-migration period encompassed the Claimant Stage, Settlement Stage, and Adaptation Stage, all of which took place in Canada. Each time period outlines the challenges faced by the participants and the resources they used to cope with the challenges. Four macro themes help organize the time periods: (a) *Pre-migration Challenges,* (b) *Pre-migration Coping Resources,* (c) *Post-migration Challenges,* and (d) *Post-migration Coping Resources.* Taken together, twelve themes were embodied within the four macro themes (please see Table 2). The titles of these themes attempt to capture the participants' experiences by incorporating terms used during the interviews. Accompanying subthemes were generated to further describe various themes.

Pre-Migration Challenges

Using Prendes-Lintel's (2001) refugee migration pathway model, the pre-migration period for the current results included the Pre-departure Stage, Flight Stage, and the First Asylum Stage. Therefore, the results within the pre-migration period covered these three main stages prior coming to Canada. For some of the participants, there were multiple Flight and First Asylum Stages, because of

Table 2

Summary of Themes During the Two Migration Periods

Descriptors	Pre-Migration Period	Post-Migration Period
Challenges	Identity Changes Among Family Members	Learning to Learn in Canadian Universities
	Struggling with Physical and Psychological Malnourishment	Learning to be All Alone in Canada
	Witnessing Violence: "It's Bad If a Kid Sees Someone Dead"	Navigating Cultural Differences
Coping Resources	Creating and Maintaining Social Supports	Social Supports Help Canada Feel Like Home
	Hanging Onto Family Values	Reciprocating Family Supports
	Hope Allows for the Abnormal to Become Normal	Using Childhood Lessons to Open New Doors

migration from one refugee camp to the next. Hence, in contrast to Prendes-Lintel's (2001) model, the refugee migration pathway for this study's population is non-linear in nature. Participants noted unique challenges during the pre-migration stage of their migration journeys, as noted in the following themes: (a) *Identity Changes Among Family Members, (b) Struggling with Physical and Psychological Malnourishment,* and (c) *Witnessing Violence: "It's Bad If a Kid Sees Someone Dead."* The two former themes encompassed two subthemes each to further accurately describe the challenges faced by the participants and their families.

Identity changes among family members. This theme describes the family challenges during migration with specific attention to identity changes brought on by unemployment and multiple losses. It was apparent that the family was an integral component of every participant's life and therefore any changes in roles and family structure was difficult. The civil conflicts produced economic challenges even in countries that hosted refugee camps, and since resources for bartering and purchasing refugee camp materials were reduced, families suffered financial hardships. As a result, family members were forced to find work outside of their expertise, and both women and men needed to acquire jobs to sustain their family's wellbeing. On occasion, fathers were separated from the family in an attempt to elude capture and to continue providing sustenance for the family. The following two sections further describe the subthemes that included *Employment Despair* and *Family Separation*.

Employment despair. This subtheme refers to the parents' difficulties in finding employment, their identity shifts as a result of being unemployed, and the gender role changes when both parents attained work. The participants described a sense of despair among their parents since most of them were forced to obtain jobs outside of their expert knowledge and many frequently were left unemployed. Adapting to refugee camp life created problems when searching for jobs, which produced financial challenges for the families. As JK illustrated, the lack of employment also impacted each parent's identity as the financial provider of the family:

> There was no good life in the refugee camp in the beginning. There was no clothing and no good shelter system, but my parents worked hard to help

us get used to these things. When my father left the camp to sell animals for money, my mother took this money and sat in the alleys with a weigh scale and bought wheat flour from people. Then she would take this flour in big sacs and sell them to big stores for profit so that we could buy sugar. She had to learn these business skills.

As the families relied on their immediate savings to maintain an adequate lifestyle, many realized that without employment, these savings would eventually expire. Finances were sparse and the participants witnessed their parents struggle with entrepreneurial projects in the refugee camps such as setting up a small business to sell merchandise to camp dwellers. As exemplified by JK, the participants also observed their parents' lose their self-owned businesses in the camps:

> Somali people are more like business people. Even pastoralists have entrepreneurial skills in mind, so my father tried to grow the business to sell sugar since sugar was cut off at the refugee camp in 1994. But then my father didn't have the best business skills to continue the business, so he abandoned the business.

There was never a certainty of employment in the camps. The consequences of unemployment were not only a strain on the family's finances, but it also negatively impacted the self-esteem and personal identities of the fathers. Husbands who were once the breadwinners no longer had jobs to support the family. For example, Ade described witnessing his father struggle with the loss of his identity as the family's provider:

> My family once felt like people who were independent of other people who never asked others for anything. And then in the camps, my dad and mom were free to just do nothing. My dad tried to start business…but he couldn't maintain it, so he was feeling not responsible for his family. If your kid asks you for something, you cannot get it for him, because he doesn't have the income. So that was horrible for my dad.

Financial difficulties contributed to role changes in other family members as well.

Even when the fathers were employed, their wages were so sparse that their wives

needed to find employment to supplement the family's income. Esther described

her family's strategy to sustain their finances:

> My mom was in charge of selling everything that we had in the camp. It
> was like having a yard sale, selling every single thing like our plates and
> chairs. We did that in the DRC and in Tanzania, because those camps were
> so bad at providing people resources. Selling things made sure that we had
> enough money just in case things got worse like when we had to pay for a
> bus ride from the DRC to Tanzania.

This adaptive change altered the mother's role in the nuclear family. The jobs

that women frequently sought after were those that allowed them to work from

home while taking care of the children and the household. For example, Eyotta

described witnessing her mother learning new skills to help the family:

> My mom started making arts and crafts. She made some decorations and
> she would go to the parishes and the sisters and the fathers would buy
> them so that's what she was doing. She was sewing napkins for the tables
> for the decorations. She made enough money from that. She would go to
> the parishes to beg for food…she used to go to some houses and wash
> their clothes and clean the houses.

Family separation. As documented in the literature, family separation is a

common occurrence during war and this subtheme emphasized voluntary and

involuntary paternal and extended family separation. All of the participants'

fathers often involuntarily and voluntarily separated from their families to avoid

being captured and to find resources for the family's survival. Ade, JK, and

Eyotta described the "militia preying on men" as new recruits for their armies, so

"it was like the [fathers] didn't have a choice, but to leave their families and

hide." This separation resulted in the fathers finding alternate routes to the refugee

camps and they would steadfastly search for their families once they entered the

camps. For example, JK described witnessing his father involuntarily separate

from the family to keep everyone safe from harm while his mother learned tasks

that were traditionally held by males:

> We just took one camel out of the four camels…to carry my youngest
> sibling, some food, and the rest of us had to walk on foot. My father didn't
> go with us. My father had to run away for his safety, and join other people.
> We just lost each other. We just lost our father. We didn't know if he got
> killed or not. So it was my mother who was doing all the work. I learned
> that my father was hiding in the bush for one month without coming
> home. He was living in a remote coastal area. He would only come out at
> night to collect tools and catch fish in the Indian Ocean for food. When we
> lost our father, my mother was doing all the work. She was driving the
> camel while we were walking to the refugee camp and learning to tie the
> rope on [the camel's] neck and pull the rope so that camel follows you
> while you walk.

At times, fathers also voluntarily separated themselves from the family and risked

their lives to support their families. This risk-taking behaviour was unsettling for

the families since the father would leave the family for months without any

communication, but it was also recognized as a necessity to sustain the family's

livelihood and wellbeing, as described by JK:

> My mother was very sick at that time. So when my father saw this kind of
> situation, he went back to Somalia. He said, "I will either get killed or get
> one of my camels." We left our camels back in Somalia. So my father
> went there out of no fear and he said, "I can't look at this kind of situation
> for my family." So he went back to Somalia and got one of our camels. He
> drove it to Kenya and sold it, so we got some money.

All participants spoke of grandparents, uncles and aunts being forcibly

separated as many families traveled with extended family members as a support

network. The extended family was a vital support for their individual wellbeing.

Extended family members helped to take care of the young children and financial

resources were shared amongst everyone in the extended family. However, as the

wars raged on, the likelihood of losing uncles, aunts, and grandparents through

death or separation increased. As demonstrated by Eyotta, life was more difficult

when extended family members were separated:

> There were planes that take people and fly them from DRC to Kenya when the civil war got worse in DRC. My dad gave half the money to the pilot to take us first to Kenya and then he would be paid the other half when he goes to pick up my other relatives, but the pilot never returned. It was just my parents, my siblings, and me so we had to rely on ourselves now. We had a hard time adjusting and realized how much help my grandparents, my uncles, and my aunts with taking care of us and how much easier it was when we could share money.

Esther further explained how both parents worked to sustain the family's

livelihood and the children took on adult responsibilities to maintain the

household:

> You grow up and now you don't have anybody helping so it's just us. My older sister and I learned how to cook at that young age and I would stay with my younger sister, because she was a year or two only. Of course, we would rather go somewhere else than to do house chores, but we were raised in a way where everyone contributes to family right? So we learned to be responsible, we grew up fast. That's how I can put it.

Struggling with physical and psychological malnourishment. The

participants discussed at length their physical and mental health concerns during

the multiple Flight and Asylum Stages. Participants described being malnourished

as a result of food and water deprivation. Similarly, they experienced

psychological "malnourishment" as a result of threats to psychological safety.

These are further described under the subthemes, *Malnutrition* and *Mental Health*

Risks.

Malnutrition. As described by the participants, malnutrition meant that they had very little to eat and drink during the flight stage. Each participant, including Esther, compared their diets before and after arriving to the refugee camps:

> I remember at family gatherings…it was like having a feast when everyone came together. We never went to bed hungry. In the refugee camp, they put fifty families in one area and another family in another area. In each area, you receive only so much food and you're just waiting to be fed everyday. We really didn't have that much to eat and it was mostly just rice, so everyone was malnourished.

Before migration, JK and Ade's families owned animals to source milk and protein while other families had the financial resource to purchase food for daily consumption. JK endured the grueling walk to the Hagadera refugee camp in Kenya and experienced nights when his family only shared a little bit food:

> There was no food, because we left the animals. Without animals, we didn't get any milk and my youngest siblings were crying for food all the time. I was dehydrated…everyone was dehydrated, because there was a lack of clean water, even when we got to the refugee camp. I was suffering from malnutrition and when I first got to the camp. I always had diarrhea.

However, participants noted how their parents never neglected the children and ensured that they had the chance to eat before the parents did. During the flight to the refugee camps, the majority of refugees suffered from malnutrition, as noted by Ade:

> Hunger was one of the problems. You didn't have enough resource for food. A balanced diet was not available. Maybe animals were taken away by some looters, so those families had a lot of problems. They used to live on little food. Food was a problem. That was our main journey. We became very malnourished because of walking and not getting good food. Yeah, so that was another challenge.

Life in the refugee camps was not any better. During the establishment of a

refugee camp, food rations were poorly managed and nutritious foods were not

available. As JK described the situation, malnourishment in the refugee camp was

a common occurrence as a result of inadequately balanced diets:

> We were all malnourished. There was no health nutrition system in the refugee camps. When we first go to the camp, there were no doctors or nurses to help people recover from malnutrition. So we were just given to us were rice, wheat flour, oil, some salt, and those things. None of those foods was getting us back to normal.

> Families that fled from one camp to the next did not fare any better than

families who settled in one refugee camp. Families that intermittently lived

outside of camps found food to be expensive in large cities. Eyotta illustrated her

family's challenge of finding food within the refugee camps and also in her

adopted country of Kenya during her formative adolescent years:

> In Nairobi, we had a hard time with food scarcity. Everything was so expensive there. We did not have food at all. Because now it was just me and my parents and we had to depend or rely on ourselves. I remember that at some point, we just have nothing to eat for dinner. Sometimes we would just go to church early on Sunday, and they gave you flour…so we just get the flour. We'd get food from the church most of the time, but if you didn't wake up early enough to line up for the food, you wouldn't have anything to eat. That was very tough.

Esther and Eyotta heard about the struggles of their relatives after being separated

from their family. That is, they heard stories about grandparents, aunts, and uncles

who walked for days without food and eventually succumbed to malnutrition and

died.

Mental health risks. The participants all mentioned instances of

psychological challenges that resulted from the war including distress due to a

lack of safety, ongoing intimidation, and general humiliating experiences. The

participants witnessed neighbours, peers, and individuals in their home countries

and in the refugee camps become overwhelmed by these risk factors and

eventually "gave up on life." Similar to the other participants, Ade remembered

feeling unsafe and had a general sense of fear for himself and his family:

> I remember seeing militia coming to burn down people's houses. They put flames on your house and on your property. They loot away what you have. It was kind of crazy. The militia knows that if they kill your animals or burn down the barn where you stored your food, you have no more food source and you don't have any transport to take your food. Many people died of hunger this way, because you can't access your food and you just give up. It's sort of crazy, because they don't kill you directly, but they take away everything else from you. It's kind of like torture.

The participants frequently heard screaming, shouting, and gunfire reflecting the

general environment of terror. Eyotta spoke about militia who frequently

approached her house to search for individuals and intimidate her family into

submitting to their demands:

> There would be people who would come to your house and say, "we want to search your house." I remember one time when I was still in the house, there were so many people who came to search the house and it was only me and my brother and the maid who was home at that time, and then we called my dad and came home right away. So it was those kinds of incidents that made my parents decide to send us away. I guess when we left, it got worse and worse and they also heard the news that everybody was fleeing.

Interestingly, another risk to mental health wellbeing is bullying among

children within the camp schools. Within the refugee camps, bullying was a

problem for the children attending schools. With very little structure within the

camps, the participants witnessed bullying by their peers at school and in the

camp communities. New students in every camp school appeared to go through a

type of initiation before being accepted in the classroom. JK described a typical

bullying event at school:

> There was bullying of other children who were maybe 8, 9, 10 years old…they would be told, "those people are your enemies, you have to fight them." So these big boys would come and fight you and call you names. I remember another boy just trying to bully me and calling me some names that were invented, and were being used to say to each other at that time. So there's this boy who was just bullying me, saying some things to me…sometimes hitting me.

Physically smaller children had to learn to stand up against more dominating

individuals in the camps as described by Eyotta:

> I remember the kids in the camp used to fight a lot! That's one reason I didn't want to go to the camp school [in DRC]. Fights would just all of a sudden break out. I remember even my cousin who had four older brothers say to me, "I'm going to beat you up." Kids were not so friendly even when you go to fetch water. I used to get scared of everybody, but I started to learn how to survive. You have to be strong and firm and say, "no, no, no, I was here before you!" Sometimes you still back away if it's a guy and he's strong, so you back away and let him get the water first.

> Finally, participants observed family members losing their sense of self-

worth within the camps. Before arriving in the camps, fathers and mothers led

productive lives as pastoralists or professionals. However, that was lost when

families entered the refugee camps. Once productive adults became stagnant

individuals who depended on others for food and water. An overall sense of

humiliation and helplessness created more stress, as individuals could not adapt to

this new slower paced life with nothing to do. Esther illustrated a refugee camp

life that no longer had purpose:

> It was really hard and this time, my parents, even my mom couldn't find a job… we still had monthly portion of food. The UNHCR gives people food every month. That was still there, but it's like telling a person, "Sit here and I'll feed you." A person who has always been active, who has always acted to get what they need, created their own fate, to go out and

get their own money to buy stuff, and work and earn their money and then you tell the same person, "Oh you know what? I don't want you to do anything. Just stay in this compacted area and I will feed you." You can imagine that, it's still not good.

Witnessing violence: "It's bad if a kid sees someone dead." This theme refers to the participants' childhood recollections of violence that they witnessed including its associated consequences in the context of their pre-migration experiences. The participants and their families were all internally displaced persons who fled from militia often hiding in rural regions of the country until reaching a refugee camp. Despite their young age, the participants described in detail vivid memories of their exposure to violence and their parents' attempt to protect them. JK provided insight into his recollection of the various types of violence that he experienced during his flight from Somalia:

> So we just had to move on foot, and then sometimes the enemy that was chasing after the people was reaching the people and killing them, taking away their belongings. Things like rape, robberies, killings, all of them were happening at that time. So those are some of the things I remember just from my childhood experience.

With all of these atrocities being witnessed by the participants, parents often attempted to shield their children's eyes from the horrors of war. Ade indicated that when possible, "the men protected the women and children as they walked through forests" to stay hidden from danger. Furthermore, JK recalls hearing "shouting, shattering of household goods, and women screaming," which was scary for him. For Eyotta, it was the scariest at night since she "remember[s] hearing gunfire and seeing the ammunition light up the night sky." As mentioned by Ade, the daily violence along their flight route created fear among family members and children:

> When I was a kid, my mom used to take care of my psychology. It's bad if a kid sees someone dead. There were three or four times when we were in between militia, and I saw a lot of death as a kid…my mom used to, whenever there was an incident, she never took me there or she tried to block my eyes from seeing the incidents. She keeps me away from those bad things, to keep my psychology good. I saw three dead men. I remember clearly. My mother often inspected my body for any wounds.

As illustrated by the participants, violence also caused instability in refugee camps as families had to flee the camps. The Rwandese refugees, including Eyotta, exemplified the challenges of interrupted schooling as a result of ongoing conflict:

> I think we stayed for one year at [DRC] without going to school. The area didn't have a school. Even when we started school one year later, I didn't like going. We had to learn French and we didn't speak Swahili. After that, the fighting started again, so we had to stop school. When we ended up in the [DRC] refugee camp, you had to get used to the system again and the kids at the camp school used to fight a lot… I went to school for one week then left. It was not a good place to learn.

Although Eyotta and Esther received periods of stable education in Rwanda and the DRC, school was interrupted by violence and families had to leave their homes with little notice. Depending on the journey, education was not guaranteed in the family's next destination and participants would stay for months in various refugee camps without any education. As illustrated by Esther, the violence in the Kibumba refugee camp resulted in children losing their education and parents lacking purpose in their lives:

> The fact that we were not allowed to go to school at the beginning is one that really hit me in a different way… I mean, it's really hard to stay home all day. But when you just wake up and you totally have no plan, okay, nothing! Imagine how boring that is. We just couldn't go to school, so we spent a lot of time at home and we stayed there for two years. So with the whole thing of not being able to go to school, I just miss one year or two years, but eventually I always went back to school or maybe repeat the same class.

Pre-Migration Coping Resources

Participants frequently recalled overcoming significant challenges that signified the emergence of resilience at an early age. As I analyzed each participant's data, it was apparent that acquiring a supportive social network was integral for positive adaptation despite ongoing challenges in their lives. Alongside this social support was the importance of learning family values from parents, which guided them to overcome obstacles. Finally, the participants all spoke about an internal sense of hopefulness and the belief that they could adapt to any challenging circumstances, as long as they had their support systems intact. Therefore, the participants shared common themes of pre-migration coping resources, which included: (a) *Creating and Maintaining Social Supports,* (b) *Hanging Onto Family Values,* and (c) *Hope Allows for the Abnormal to Become Normal*.

Creating and maintaining social supports. Each of the participants and their families displayed a propensity for social adeptness with friends, neighbours, religious groups, and community agencies in the refugee camps. According to the participants, including JK, creating and maintaining a network of friends and community acquaintances was an important aspect of living in the refugee camps:

> When you finish school, there is nothing for you to do. Absolutely nothing! So when you try for these scholarships, it's important for you to show that you are volunteering and working in the community. I always kept in touch with people from Windle Trust Kenya and I started to work with them. They gave me a job as a child education assistant. I was assisting girls' education, because girls' education is so poor there. I helped with homework, regular lessons, so that they could do [better] in school. This also helped me buy clothes. The more I work with Windle Trust Kenya, the more people trust me. I remember writing a research

paper for the scholarship, but I didn't have a computer. I had to beg people for a computer from the aid agency, so they tell me, "come tomorrow when nobody is in the office and use the computer." That's how I was able to do my work.

For some of the participants, growing up in the same camp meant that they were with the same social group for many years. This cohort seemed to function as a cohesive unit as participants described groups of friends who sat together in classrooms, cooperating on homework, and playing together in the camps. For example, Ade described how technology helped with information sharing among social networks:

> During my time in high school, mobile phones came out…so immediately information passed through between us. If a guy sees a job opportunity or scholarships, that information would be passed on. The information shared amongst us from jobs to scholarship issues to life issues…if one of us gets sick, you can say, "Hey, X is sick today, so what can we do? Maybe we can add up something and take him to a pharmacy and buy him some drugs."

Participants and their parents also built interdependent relationships with their camp neighbours who became trusted friends. The neighbours shared resources such as food and tools and "showed new refugees around in the camp." When the parents did not have a job, they formed support groups to help each other survive the stagnant lifestyle in the camps. Esther and the other participants noticed that their parents' ability to advocate for themselves and openness to meet new people helped them become productive in the camps:

> Many people knew each other and you try to find out, "Who's my neighbour?" "Oh, what did you do back in Rwanda?" "Oh, I was a teacher." "Oh, I was a teacher too!" So then people decide to form a teaching group to teach their own children. I think I was getting into grade two, so I remember going to someone's house and meeting all the grade two children. So the person who was once a teacher continues teaching.

Finally, religious and school communities in the camps along with aid agencies were important resources for coping with life in the refugee camps. Non-profit agencies frequently provided food for families and built schools to support education efforts in the refugee camps. Social support was also accessed though organized activities run by school- or faith-based groups. For example, Eyotta's parents used school-based groups to keep the children safe:

> When we were going to school in Kenya, if you didn't have money to take the bus you had a one-hour walk that was not safe, because you had to cut through forests and stuff. But we had other neighbours who were going to the same school and they have the same problems as us, which means some of them didn't have the money and so in the early morning, we'd ask, "Who's walking?" There was always a group of us with some parents who met up to walk to school and back home after school.

The participants also commented on the importance of becoming acquainted with community aid agencies. It was the hope that these agencies would subsequently hire them for menial work. These agencies often created a limited number of jobs for skilled refugees such as simple repair jobs or helping to drive agency personnel around the camps. For months, Eyotta's family survived on the income earned by her father and uncle from camp employment:

> My dad worked at the radio [station]. I think he was also a driver for the radio station and my uncle used to work for UNHCR…carrying goods from one camp to another. I remember my uncle was in electrical engineering. He was an electrical engineer, so some people would bring him like, like part-time jobs. They'll bring him like computers, TV's, and call him to go fix the electricity at some place.

Religious communities also bonded over each family's struggles. When individuals from the church or the mosque knew that a family needed help, they would recruit people to help distribute financial resources and other types of

support to families that were in need. Esther and her family's journey exemplified this type of support:

> The agencies didn't really want people to leave a camp to go to another country, but my family really could not live in the Tanzania camp anymore. We got some help from church members in Tanzania to help us find tickets onto the inter-city buses. We left at night with the help from people from the church to get us to another country.

Hanging onto family values. The family was a very important component of each participant's life. Despite the many challenges faced by participants, family influence, support, and encouragement propelled them to continue striving for an education and to lead productive lives. Therefore, the family system constantly provided moral support for their children to "never give up" while embodying the values of *Education as the Key to Success*, *Religious Guidance,* and a strong *Work Ethic*.

Education as the key to success. Each of the participants continued their education in the refugee camps and in Canada as a result of their parents' early support and encouragement as well as their personal determination to attend school. The Somali participants who never received an education in their country of origin had parents who were briefly introduced to literacy and numeracy when the country tried to offer free education. According to Ade, this introduction was vital to his parents' support for his personal education:

> There used to be mobile schools in the mid-1970's and rural people got to learn to write the language. University students were given contracts to teach in the villages. So my mom learned how to read and write our language using these mobile schools. The campaign was cut later by the government when the literacy rate went up. I think my parents saw the value of learning to read and write, so they always pushed me and my siblings to go to school.

The Somali participants' initial attendance at the refugee camps' religious schools cultivated into an interest in mainstream school. The participants' parents frequently saved money to help them buy books, pencils, and pay school fees even though money was a scarce resource. For example, Esther described her parents' appreciation for education despite their financial challenges:

> That is what inspires me a lot – the value that my family gives to education – so even though they did not earn a lot, but they still had to pay for our school fees. Primary school until grade eight is free in Malawi, but when you start grade nine, you have to still pay, so my parents had to pay for us.

Even when parents were unhappy with their personal situations in the camp, they carefully thought about their children's wellbeing before migrating to other camps. The parents' primary concern was always the children's education and prospects for a better future. According to Ade, without education, his parents would have had little hope within the refugee camps:

> What made my family stay at the camp was the little education that we had. They were happy that we were getting an education. I was going to religious school. I was going to the normal school, so I was kind of getting all education. I was learning Arabic language, I was getting English language. I was learning in school in the system that was set up in the refugee camp…they were happy in that way, but they were not really happy – the lack of income, the lack of movement, they were not happy with that.

Each participant also appeared to have a personal drive to acquire an education. When asked more about this innate drive, the participants described the drive as a symbol of gratitude towards their parents' support for education. As exemplified by JK, all of the participants reflected upon their parents' sacrifices in their lives in order to shape them into who they are today:

To my parents who give me the moral support despite going through all these life challenges. They prepared me for school, every morning prepared for me food to eat, bought me pencils and books for school, and encouraged me to pursue an education…there's all these factors that took part in the way I am today.

Religious guidance. Each participant's families were devoutly religious.

The families used religion to shape their moral values, seek guidance, and bond

with the community. Participants from Somalia practiced Islam while the

participants from Rwanda practiced Christianity. The participants' religious

upbringing shaped their morals, value systems, and provided a positive outlook

towards life even though they were faced with many adversities. For example, JK

described the importance of learning about his religion before moving to

mainstream schools:

My father first took me to the Qur'an school and this is the direction in the life of all Muslim children. First, they have to be taken to Qur'an school, they have to learn something about the religion, and then after that they can go to school. My family valued this so much. I even had to promise them that I would continue at the Qur'an school before they let me go to the UNHCR school.

Other families used daily prayers to look for guidance from God and to thank God

for their health and family. According to Esther, God and prayers helped bond the

family and guide their actions while civil strife escalated in Rwanda:

Something significant in my family is praying time. We have our devotion in the morning and devotion in the evening, so we enjoy those moments that bring us together…My family has always been close to God, so we put Him first …maybe it was the prayer that guided us to leave the place before the fighting started.

After the fighting began and the families moved to refugee camps, there were no

churches or mosques. However, the families' religious devotion provided them

with the resources to continue practicing their beliefs. As described by Eyotta,

even when there were no religious institutions in the camps, "families always came together in a tent to pray." This was a symbol of community strength and the power of religion to congregate families and enhance resilience:

> On Wednesday evenings, we have a mid-week prayer session. On Friday night…the Sabbath has started. And to us, we keep the Sabbath by not doing anything, so we look forward to the Sabbath. It's a day that you don't do anything…and most of the afternoon, I spend with family or friends…and so my family has always been close to God.

The family's daily promotion of faith and prayer instilled the idea that life is full of challenges. These challenges were perceived as purposeful "tests from a divine power that would examine one's worth." Therefore, the participants frequently found it important to pursue these challenges with hard work and a positive attitude. It was believed that this "hard work would lead to a better life" for the family.

Work ethic. The participants frequently recalled observing their parents' strong work ethic, which was introduced to the participants at an early age and cultivated during their years in the refugee camps. Regardless of the families' whereabouts, the parents constantly displayed a commitment to the family through hard work and persistence. According to JK, his parents had a very strict schedule they adhered to as pastoralists:

> Everyone went to sleep by 8:30 pm, because we would have to wake up around 4 am to start the day and take care of the animals. First thing my parents had to do was pray in the morning. After that, they fed all the animals and then the camels had to be milked…then they came and fed us breakfast with the milk. After that, my parents had to go check on all the animals like the goats that had to go grazing. After lunch, everyone took a nap because it was so hot. At 4 pm, it was dinner time and my parents would feed us dinner, give us a bath, and we would go to sleep. It was this type of schedule everyday, so I learned very early to be responsible with my time.

When the families lived in their home countries and the refugee camps, parents

always worked diligently to acquire an income in order to provide for the family.

The sense of responsibility was passed down to the children while they were still

young. Eyotta's early observations demonstrated her parents' responsibility for

the family:

> I remember when I was a kid, umm, on weekends, my mom would be
> home, and my dad will of course be at work. He's self-employed. My dad
> worked every single day except on Sundays…sometimes we would sleep
> early and we wouldn't even get to see him because he worked late. I
> remember my mom saying that.

This type of work ethic was fostered at home as parents ensured that their children

would grow up to be responsible young people. Even if the families had

additional help at home, parents continued to encourage their children to take

responsibility for themselves. For example, Esther noted that her parents often

taught her life skills when she was a young child living in Rwanda:

> We still had to wake up and know how to do our beds and needed to do
> the little stuff around the house…that is the way they train a young child.
> They train you to know what to do in the house. They show you how to do
> the dishes and you watch them cook, even for young children…you still
> have to know how to do these things when you grow up.

These selfless and practical skills were transferred to life in the refugee camps. As

the participants grew into adolescence, they all took an active role in the family

such as helping to cook, fetch water, taking care of siblings, and cleaning. The

early guidance provided by parents and the demonstration of a strong work ethic

provided participants with the knowledge that they could overcome many

challenges. Esther recalled her responsibilities in the refugee camp in order to

sustain her family's livelihood:

Sometimes there wouldn't be water so you have to travel a good hour. Sometimes we would not find time to go play, because we have to do all these things and in our family, we were raised in a way where everyone contributes in the family. So my chore was to go get some water everyday. I couldn't really go to play even though I wanted to, because everyone else is waiting for me to go get water. Sometimes, I had to help my mom with my younger sister or help to cook because she was busy with other things around the camp.

Hope allows for the abnormal to become normal. This theme refers to the participants' ability to adapt by maintaining a hopeful outlook by patiently learning new coping skills, relying on the family for support, and striving for post-secondary education. Despite recognizing their complex situations as in the words of one participant as "abnormal," a hopeful outlook helped to bring some degree of normalcy. A hopeful outlook also appeared to assist with adapting to challenging circumstances. Wherever their parents decided to settle, the participants were able to adapt to the adverse circumstances. According to Ade, as a young child, he was often unaware of the underlying complexities of war:

I was a kid, wherever you find yourself, you can usually adapt. So that's where I found myself and that's where I lived. I never had a choice…if I was older, then maybe I would have never entered the camp. I remember seeing friends who escaped the camp and went to Nairobi, but they were arrested. I could not have been in that confinement for a long time.

The participants also learned that time were an important variable in adaptation. When the participants initially lived in the refugee camps, life was difficult. Yet, as each day wore on, they learned to be resourceful. Everyone in the camps were in the same situation and it was "useless to whine" about their challenges. As exemplified by JK, a positive attitude encompassing hope helped in her adaptability:

> Life became normal…abnormal becomes normal just 'cause of the situation. So we kind of got used to living in that environment, because that is what everyone around us lived in. You just have to embrace the situation and appreciate what you have. We have to remember that we have life and some people had lost lives. And many people died …but God still protected us through this hardship.

Hope and adaptability was also cultivated in the family. Each participant came from an intact nuclear family. Family members supported each other through challenges and believed that "better days would be in [their] future." As long as family members could lean onto each other for support in the camps, there was hope that life would improve and they would be able to cope. According to Eyotta, having family support was the most important coping resource:

> The togetherness is what keeps you going. You cry together. If there's no food, you know you're starving together. If there's food, even if it's like one person's portion, you share. I remember there were some days where there wasn't enough food and our parents sacrificed for us…that togetherness, just staying together proved to us a lot. It made us strong. It made us conquer the hardships.

Out of all the struggles during flight and in the refugee camp, the SRP program was a tangible sign of hope that each participant strived towards as they progressed through secondary school. Every participant described their happiness when they achieved the scholarship to study in Canada. The prospect of higher education through the SRP was the ultimate sign for hope that they were no longer confined in the camps. As described by Esther, all of her parents' sacrifices culminated in her accomplishment by gaining admittance into the Student Refugee Program:

> Out of being hopeless and being accepted to go to SRP to come and do my education in Canada, I saw it as a door to my dream. It's something to be happy about. Even though I am going to be far from my family, I saw it as, "Oh, maybe after I graduate, by God's grace, I can bring my family here."

> You just have to think ahead and not complain. I was just happy. I was coming to a new country, meeting new people, I don't know what to expect, but I know I can do it!

Post-Migration Challenges

Similar to the pre-migration phase of each participant's journey, the post-migration phase also encompassed a variety of challenges for the refugee students. The post-migration period for the current study included challenges and opportunities encountered during the Settlement Stage, and Adaptation Stage after their arrival to Canada (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). Interestingly, the participants did not make reference to challenges during the Claimant Stage. The participants discussed a number of shared experiences, which were categorized into three themes: (a) *Learning to Learn in Canadian Universities,"* (b) *Learning to be All Alone in Canada,* and (c) *Navigating Cultural Differences.* The latter theme encompassed two subthemes to further elaborate on the challenges faced by participants and their families.

Learning to learn in Canadian universities. This theme refers to the academic difficulties that the participants experienced during early acculturation and settlement including, differentiated forms of achievement evaluations, language barriers, and pedagogy. Essentially, the participants described having to become learners in a Canadian school context. Upon arriving in Canada, the participants were expected to immediately begin their post-secondary education. This rapid transition of using the English language everyday and adapting to large size lectures was an instant problem for them. Although students were given English tutoring and Canadian cultural lessons prior to leaving the refugee camps,

the participants, including Ade, found the Canadian post-secondary school system

to be overwhelmingly complex:

> Oh man, there are so many different programs in school. When you finish
> school in the camps, you think there are only so many programs like
> Science, Math, or Engineering. I used to be in Math, but it got so hard
> here. So I go to the academic counselling office and they start telling me
> all these different programs or how I can mix and match programs. I was
> so confused. I had to sit down for one week to figure it all out. That's how
> I am in Biology and Plant Sciences now.

Differentiated forms of evaluations included exams, labs, assignments, and

applying critical thinking skills rather than relying on rote memory was different

from the pedagogy back in the refugee camps. The UNHCR schools only graded

participants on their performance on tests and exams. JK vividly described his

experience in a science class:

> I was in this chemistry course…there were materials that we had never
> seen. I didn't know the equipment and the way the profs were explaining
> things was also different…and then the assignments, there are no
> assignments back home. You're just given a lesson and you have to
> prepare for a main exam. So there were assignments and you had to meet
> deadlines every time. Sometimes I couldn't meet some deadlines.

Although the participants learned English in the refugee camps, passed

their TOEFL exams, completed interviews in English, and received English

tutoring, having to use English on a daily basis was challenging. Consequently,

participants exerted a great deal of effort to interpret the professor's words rather

than attending to the lecture material. For example, Eyotta indicated a variety of

language barriers within the classroom setting:

> Some of the profs were Canadian and the accent was so different than
> what I got used to back home. I couldn't understand what the prof was
> talking about. So I was just sitting and looking at those PowerPoint things
> there and I couldn't understand whatever he was saying. I couldn't
> understand from the book…and then I couldn't understand the accent of

students. Even if I ask question to students, the student may not even understand the way I was talking or I may not understand him or her. Sometimes the student asks the prof some questions…maybe this question is very important, but I did not even understand what they were saying…I couldn't understand the accent.

Participants also reported being confused during lectures as a result of the speed at which the professors spoke. As illustrated by Esther, this confusion was also compounded by the professor's use of North American cultural references:

Sometimes he would just make jokes…talk about a movie, and then I'll be lost for 5 to 10 minutes still thinking, "What did he just talk about?" He would make a reference trying to explain stuff, but then he'll use a movie, maybe a cartoon you watch as a kid, and you have no idea what he is talking about.

School became so difficult for the participants that three out of the four of them reported having fleeting thoughts of "dropping out of school" during their initial days of attending their respective post-secondary classes. Students learned to redefine academic success by "lowering [personal] expectations" of their achievement levels.

Learning to be all alone in Canada. When the participants came to Canada, they experienced a variety of challenges with respect to the changes of living on their own including loneliness and financial difficulties. As already established, prior to coming to Canada, all of the participants lived with their families in the refugee camps and spoke admiringly of their parents' resilience. Upon the participants' arrival to Canada, the WUSC representatives picked them up from the airport and then they were dropped off at the residence where they lived. All of the participants reported feeling lonely and isolated after having lived

their entire lives within a supportive family structure. According to Esther, the

first few months was very difficult:

> The loneliness, living far from the family, it was really hard, because I got
> here two weeks before school started in August, and there's hardly
> anybody in the residence. I was all alone in Canada. Students are not yet
> here…I was always here by myself in the whole residence. And by then I
> did not even have a phone yet. So I couldn't even call my family. It was
> just lonely. The fact that I'm in a [new] place and I don't know anybody.

Loneliness continues to be felt during the holidays when they have no immediate

family members to spend their time. Eyotta exemplified this experience:

> My aunt and cousins are here, but they still don't compare to having my
> actual family during the holidays. It's sometimes sad when I see my
> friends all go home or talk about seeing their grandparents for Christmas
> or Easter, because I don't get to do that. Right now, I will talk to them
> using the Internet over the holidays if they are able to have access to it in
> the camp.

> After the first year of university, all of the participants experienced

financial difficulties. The universities and colleges expected their SRP students to

become increasingly financially independent. As a result of this expectation,

students had to find part-time employment. Students who had difficulties finding

a job experienced immense financial challenges. Similar to the experiences of the

other participants, JK applied for bank loans and government financial assistance:

> Since the school paid for my tuition in the first year, I only applied for a
> small student loan in my first year. But for my second year until now, I
> had to apply for more. I didn't have any savings, so it became difficult. I
> had to go to the bank to apply for a loan and I applied for more
> government assistance and they gave me about $5,000. I mean,
> sometimes, I could live with what I had, but I also send money home to
> my parents, so I needed more. It's easier now with the part-time jobs.

Like JK, all of the participants believed that this newfound independence

translated to sending money home to help their parents. If they did not send

money home, the participants felt that they were "not responsible family

members." A consequence of these financial difficulties included problems with

finding affordable housing. Two of the participants found themselves living with

roommates, who when they could not afford rent, would "suddenly move out."

According to Ade, these types of incidences caused him to move multiple times

within the school year in a rural educational setting that did not have many

choices for housing:

> Housing in this small town is hard. It's hard to get friends who are all
> students. Students are mobile and dynamic. They are moving every day.
> You can't predict them and what I needed was someone who stayed here
> for 3 years. I couldn't get such a person. Everyone was dynamic, they
> came today, they move out, they came today, they move out. I was
> frustrated with that. I talked to my friend from China and he told me that
> we can't sign a lease. If we sign a one-year contract you don't know how
> you will end up. So we ran away from the contract. In this town, there
> aren't employment opportunities.

Navigating cultural differences. This theme refers to the challenge of

encountering cultural differences. The participants identified their awareness of

the cultural disparities that impacted employment and lifestyle. These difficulties

were classified into two subthemes including *Employment Challenges* and

Lifestyle Anomalies.

Employment challenges. Participants experienced significant challenges

looking for part-time employment and maintaining job security due to their lack

of work experience and discrimination from employers, respectively. While in the

refugee camps, menial and volunteer jobs were easy to find for students

graduating from secondary school. In most circumstances, such jobs were

acquired through networking with people who you knew in the camp community.

However, participants such as Esther, quickly learned that finding a job was different in Canada:

> Back in the camps, we just got volunteering jobs with computer lessons and stuff at a primary school. We never had to apply for jobs. People knew each other and if they saw skills in you, you got the job. Now, you have to apply to everything with people who you don't know. I never had any real job before…just volunteering. It's hard, because even in the interview, you cannot speak to any of your work experiences.

The participants indicated that they had never written a résumé or a cover letter before. Furthermore, the participants never envisioned the employment process to be highly competitive. They had never attended a job interview and did not know how to act in these interviews. As demonstrated by Eyotta, not having any work experience placed her at a disadvantage when looking for jobs:

> I never wrote a résumé before, so I had to learn from other people how to write one. When people look at your résumé, what you write down is to help them think if you are qualified for the position or not. So I had not had any job. I had volunteering in the camps…Even though that was on my résumé that I volunteered, it's like, nobody knows where Malawi is. When we get here, you have no job experience. You have nobody to call for reference and that stuff. It was hard. It was hard in a way expressing myself during the interviews.

The two participants who were Muslim experienced discrimination in the workplace. As devout Muslims, they prayed five times per day with each prayer lasting approximately five minutes. However, the participants learned that employers at local businesses did not accept the idea that their employees were asking for breaks to pray. As a country that encouraged diverse cultural practices, JK was surprised that he was told not to pray at work:

> He's a manager…He must have read about different cultures…He was against the idea. I was not stopping the service. I was working and when my prayer comes, I would tell him this is my break now. I'm going to go for 15 minutes break, so I used 5 minutes to pray. I used to pray in the

office and he hated the idea. I don't know why they hated it, so I meet with the manager and he said, "We are against this idea of you praying." I told him, "My friend, this is freedom, this is a freedom that everyone has, a freedom to pray, a freedom to practice any religion." Then he said, "No, you can't pray in the workplace." Am I inconveniencing anything? I'm just using my break to pray. If you don't want me to pray in the office, I will go out and pray. Anyway, he was against the idea so he told me, "You can't postpone your break for your prayer."

Lifestyle anomalies. Even though the participants were given tutorials of Canadian culture, nothing could prepare them for the lifestyle changes and challenges they experienced when they entered Canada. Such challenges included the steep learning curve of adapting to new technologies, acclimatizing to cultural dress in Canada, and experiencing the cold winters. For JK, someone who had never been on an airplane, it was a frightening journey:

> Everything was overwhelming to me. I have never taken an airplane before. It was so shocking to me. You look at an airplane and it's just a metal cylinder and you don't think it should be flying in the air. I didn't know anything…I'm of refugee background, so even elevators and buses were overwhelming. I didn't know that if I go into an elevator, what am I supposed to do? I had to ask people every time. That was very overwhelming.

According to Esther, the technology in Canada made living easier, but it took time to learn how to use all the appliances:

> I don't know if you were born here or raised here, but you take granted the fact that you wake up and you just go in the shower and there's hot water. If you have fire, you can make breakfast in two minutes and you're out of the house. It's like all those things that people are raised with and it's just there. But until you have been to another place where it takes you twenty minutes to make fire with firewood, takes you 30 minutes to warm the water to go shower, you don't understand it. So I never knew how to turn on a shower, so I have to ask somebody how to use it. My roommate taught me how to use the stove too!

> Understanding the cultural dress of Canadians was also an initial challenge for the participants. For the Muslim participants, they were "shocked" by the way

females dressed in Canada. In the primarily Muslim refugee camps, women wore

burkas, which is a traditional clothing worn by women that does not reveal any

skin. As described by Ade, "seeing girls in shorts, tank tops, and sandals was a

scandalous and unexpected experience":

> Where I come from and according to my Islamic beliefs, women are
> supposed to cover themselves like, just the face and the two hands should
> be the bare parts. But women were just dressing the way they like here. I
> had a negative feeling towards that. I was saying, "Oh my God! What's
> happening here?"

Determining and appropriately dressing for the outdoor winter temperatures was

more complicated for the participants than expected. They quickly learned that

sunshine was not an indicator of warmer temperature. The participants had never

had to put on "so many layers of clothing to cover every bit of exposed skin."

Even after dressing for the cold temperatures, participants did not know how to

behave with all the layers of clothing. For example, JK described his first winter

experience:

> So I took my big big jacket, a heavy jacket, cover my head and myself and
> went to class. So when I went to class, some people…whether they have
> thick clothing or not, they just take it off right? But I didn't know you
> could take off your clothing. So I just sat in class with this big thing and
> then it was very hot, so I was saying, "Oh my God, how are you going to
> get out of this class? How are you going to stand for like 50 minutes
> here?" I was sweating all over. After I got home, my roommate told me I
> should take off my jacket when I go inside the classroom. I even had to
> learn that!

Post-Migration Coping Resources

Even though participants faced many challenges in Canada, they used

coping resources to help them overcome these problems, which signified

resilience during young adulthood. As I analyzed the collected data, the coping

strategies used were similar to the resources participants had developed as adolescents while living in their home countries and refugee camps. First, acquiring social support was important for positive adaptation. Second, continued support and encouragement from their families still living in the refugee camps was a constant motivator for the participants to study hard. Finally, following the family values that were established when the participants were young children helped to guide participants' wellbeing in Canada – especially when the obstacles appeared to be insurmountable. Therefore, the participants shared common themes of post-migration coping resources, which included: (a) *Social Supports Help Canada Feel Like Home*, (b) *Reciprocating Family Supports,* and (c) *Using Childhood Lessons to Open New Doors*.

Social supports help Canada feel like home. Similar to the importance of engaging with their immediate camp communities to build social networks, participants initiated those same skills to forge new social relationships in Canada. Social support came from a variety of outlets such as one's ethnic community, on-campus school groups (i.e., WUSC), and friends from school and the community. For all of the participants, the on-campus community was an initial support system that helped them branch into other social support groups. For example, JK was introduced to his ethnic community through the on-campus WUSC club, which helped him adapt quicker to Canadian society:

> The SRP committees when I came here were the only people I knew. What they first did was to connect me to the other Somali friends in the community so that other Somali friends could teach me where to go for Halal meat and for Friday prayer. So friends helped me a lot and then the SRP committees also helped me. Attending the SRP meetings also helped

me make new friends and now I am even on the committee that chooses future SRP students to the [school].

Since the participants needed to find a job after the first year, the WUSC clubs were a helpful resource. According to Eyotta, the WUSC members helped her with job applications and shared with her information that they gathered in the community about jobs around campus:

> It was first difficult for knowing how to find a job and how to work on a résumé, but the WUSC people, if you just ask anybody, they will help you. They'll say, "Oh, there's this place to look for jobs, you just do this and this." They'll show you how to write a cover letter, search for jobs online or talk to the WUSC coordinator. I just went to him and he's like, "Are you looking for a job? I heard about this and this and this," so he's the one who found me the job at the call centre. A member also helped me with my interview skills.

> Friends were also made within and beyond the campus community. The

participants made friends with others in class and at mosques or churches. It was evident that the participants, like Ade, were not shy about talking to acquaintances who helped them adjust to their new environments:

> I talked to my international friends a lot…mostly Chinese friends. They helped teach me how to cook some simple meals and I shared a house with some of them for half of my second year. When I was looking for a place to live again, I just always talk to my friends and tried networking. My friends finally pointed out to me the guy who I'm living with today...so through networking, I found him. It's good now, because the guy owns the house and we get along.

Friends provided moral support and acted as a second family for the participants. As illustrated by Esther, family was an important part of her life, so having friends who symbolically represented a family in Canada was a significant resource:

> My church family has helped me so much. I'm just thankful for everybody who comes into my life. So many times, I sit down and say, "Wow, they

lift me up." I have a group of friends from church. They understood my background and all the things that I have gone through when you come to a new country. Everyone took their time to work through it. I had them help me adjust, which helped a lot. Everybody had the opportunity to invite me to their families. I miss my family…but the people here were so warm and welcoming…Canada feels like home.

Reciprocating family supports. Although the participants were far apart from their families, the family of origin continued to play important support roles in their lives. In turn, the participants provided financial supports to their families while studying in Canada. For all of the participants, families continued to provide moral support for their children studying abroad while some of the participants had relatives living in their resettled city. Participants considered both types of support vital for successful resettlement. Therefore, two subthemes that emerged were *Ongoing Family Encouragement* and *Being Responsible for the Family*.

Ongoing family encouragement. Even in Canada, ongoing family support from the refugee camps and from within Canada continued to push the participants towards success despite many resettlement challenges. The parents placed few demands on their children while they studied in Canada. For example, Ade continues to try to speak to his parents as often as possible and conversations always end with his parents' words of encouragement:

> What keeps me going are my parents. They obviously carried and supported me to go away. They say, "Hey man, you know you have to get your education!" That keeps me driving. I remember them saying, "You have to study." I talk to them now and they say, "Don't even support us, if you cannot find a job. Just study hard and finish your education."

Parents also allowed their children to find their own paths in Canada. There was no pressure placed on the participants to finish their education quickly so that they

could help the family with finances. The parents gestured their support to their

children in whatever way they could even though they had very little money in the

refugee camps. This was exemplified by JK's parents:

> My parents played a role. They gave me the time, they never told me,
> "Hey, go out and work for me. You're my son." Instead, they say, "Hey,
> go to school. If we get money, we will give you. You know we will be
> okay with just a little money. Don't do it for us. Do it for yourself. Just go
> learn." So that force was also behind me – my parents.

Two of the participants were fortunate enough to have extended family members

relatively close to the city where they were studying. According to Esther and

Eyotta, family members could be overbearing, but they provided a "safety net" for

the participants. Esther commented that her sister who lived two hours away

sometimes acted like her mother and encouraged her to be independent in Canada:

> She used to say, "You have to read things, you need to do this," so she
> would be pushing me to do things and I would not be comfortable doing it.
> I would be shy. What if I do it in a wrong way? She would always call me,
> "Oh, so how did you do?" "Did you catch the bus and go do groceries by
> yourself?" Those kinds of things pushed me to become independent.

> ***Being responsible for the family.*** This subtheme refers to the importance

of participants reciprocating the years of parental support, recognizing their

privileged opportunity to be in Canada, and learning to budget so that they had

money to send home. As responsible adults and family members, every

participant strongly valued taking care of their families even when they were far

off in another country. For example, Eyotta felt a sense of family responsibility

once she found her independence:

> Being able to go to school and work gives me self-confidence. I'm so
> proud of myself and I want to make my parents proud too. I like working
> because it makes me feel proud. I'm able to get the money to help my
> parents. My sister is going to high school in Malawi, so I want to save

money for her so if she gets good grades I can help her pay for a good boarding school.

The participants continued to strive for success in Canada in hopes of one day providing a better life for their families. As illustrated by JK, there was a sense of reciprocity since his parents sacrificed their livelihoods to support his education:

I studied for all these years, 12 years in both elementary and high school. Then this was a tradition when a man is like at the age of 18…he has to be the one helping the parents. So there was this thing in me that I have to help my parents out. I either have to get a scholarship in Canada or get a job to help them out and send them money.

The participants also discussed their privileged position of leaving the refugee camp to study in Canada. The students supported their families, because they felt guilty that they were no longer struggling together in the refugee camp and could not be there in person to help their parents'. According to Ade, the only way he knew how to help were to send home money so that his family had food and other necessities:

They're there. I have to support them. If I get extra money, I can support them. They are in a refugee camp and their income is very limited. So they say, "Oh, don't send us anything or don't support us at all. Go ahead with your education." That's what they told me, but I'm kind of feeling guilty not supporting them. When I was there, although I had few wages, I used to share with them. I need to continue supporting them.

Finally, the participants learned to be independent in Canada. They acquired budgeting skills that included partitioning money towards rent, food, and family. As demonstrated by Esther, she appeared to form a new self-identity as a caregiver who could contribute to the family and be proud of her accomplishments:

It has come to me that I can be independent again. I know how to budget my money. I earn this much and this goes to rent, this I have to

save…sometimes I just want to help a bit with my sister's schooling. My parents tell us, "You don't have to." But I've been with them, I've lived with them, I know sometimes we go through hard times, so the fact that I can contribute, I'm so happy with that.

Using childhood lessons to open new doors. After many years of observing and learning from their parents, the participants took ownership of the values and practices that were passed down. This theme refers to the participants' use of these family values to open new doors to cope with challenges while attending university in Canada. Two prominent values described by the participants were *Religious Beliefs* and *Work Ethic and Determination*.

Religious beliefs. All of the participants spoke extensively about the importance of religion in their lives and how their parents fostered religion as symbols of resilience. The participants strongly believed that a divine power guided their journey to Canada to receive an education. Even when faced with overwhelming challenges in Canada and no family members could help them, the participants constantly turned to religion to help them overcome these difficulties. Eyotta described her personal belief in religion as she matured:

> After we fled, my dad became so involved with the church he would just come home and read the bible. I guess I matured and was able to decide what I want for myself. I had the choice to believe in religion or not. But I realized that I must be in my position today, because of my hard work and some luck. Maybe God has given me this luck. This helped me realize that God has been helping us the whole time…and helped me come to Canada.

When asked to bring an artifact to the interview that symbolized their resilience, three out of the four participants brought the Qur'an or the Bible. The Qur'an and the Bible were spiritual symbols that guided the participants towards decisions

that ultimately benefited their lives during the pre-migration and post-migration

phases. Esther described the important role that religion played in her life:

> God is my strength. I've come to the position where there were so many doors that seemed closed, but out of nowhere, there is a door that has opened for me to go through. I cannot say that there is a specific thing other than a Bible…but to me, it's not just about a specific object. My overall strength is my family and God who have helped me open new doors.

The participants used religion to rationalize their existence and struggles so that

they had goals and ambitions to strive towards even when they were overwhelmed

with challenges. Participants, such as JK, promised himself to never give up in

difficult times, to continue working hard, and to keep a strong faith in God – all of

which would lead to success:

> God says in the religion, "There will always be challenges. These challenges can only be overcome by patience. You always have to work very hard." Unless you work hard, nothing is going to come to you. There will always be inequality in this world, some people will always be poor and others will be rich. Those who work very hard with a strong faith in God, then God may open doors for them. I was always very patient. I was always practicing my religion the way it was commanded, and out of nowhere these doors just opened itself. There's always this belief that out of patience, determination, and effort, always something good would come.

When the participants first arrived in Canada, they were far away from their

primary support networks including their families and closest friends. For

example, Eyotta's first several days in Canada were very lonely, so she decided to

use her faith as a coping resource:

> I've always been a Christian and I like to pray. When it gets very very tough for me, I ask myself, "Who's going to help me?" and I always turn to my religion. When I got here, I found a church on a street close to the school and a bus would come and pick up students and take them to church and brought them back. So when things were tough in my first

year, I always take the bus and go pray…I go to the church as soon as I got here.

Work ethic and determination. This subtheme refers to the hard work, willful determination, and self-reflective characteristics that the participants embodied in order to achieve success in their refugee camp schools and in Canada. Families and communities modeled a strong work ethic to provide for each other during pre-migration, and this work ethic was internalized for the participants. This was exemplified in achieving the Student Refugee Program scholarships and none of them wanted to waste the opportunity. By trusting in their own scholastic abilities and adhering to their motivation, the participants believed that they were in control of their own lives. Eyotta reflected on her perseverance:

> First of all, I'm so thankful that I have this opportunity to study here. Compared to the lives that I was living before, this is a change for the better. I know that when many of us come, we have no jobs, nobody to call for a reference, and no work experience. But it gets a little bit easier. School is difficult, but you have to adjust the way you think. I've come so far, I've worked so hard, so if I just keep continue working hard, good things will happen.

The participants were grateful for the privilege to leave the refugee camps and to study in Canada. For example, Esther was ecstatic that her hard work fueled the opportunity to continue her education abroad:

> I'm thankful, because you see it as a privilege. After all the sacrifices and hard work, you've been given this chance. Out of being hopeless or finishing out of high school and not doing anything, you are given hope to actually living your dream, because I've always wanted to be a teacher since I was two…so being accepted to go to SRP to come and do my education in Canada, I saw it as a door to my dream.

Participants also exhibited strong determination to adapt to life in Canada, especially since they were now on their own in a new country. As they had learned growing up, a strong will to accomplish goals gave them opportunities that they otherwise would not have come across. Therefore, as long as they kept encouraging themselves to work hard and stay determined, there was the possibility that life would go towards a positive direction. Ade exemplified this determination and fortitude to succeed:

> I'm a very determined person. If I stick my mind to do something, I have to get it done to my satisfaction. All these things that we have passed through in my life, I left my home country at a young age…I could still see it in my parents' eyes that everything was not alright. Now that I have this chance to be in Canada, I'm the only one that can ruin my life right now. I can succeed if I want to…it's having the power to actually control your life. That is why I can control it to go in a positive way so I can be successful. All those things keep me going.

Finally, the participants engaged in self-reflective practices that motivated them to look towards their futures. Every participant described goals and ambitions that they will be striving towards after their undergraduate studies. Given the participants' personal histories of setbacks and triumphs, they were determined to focus on the positive aspects of their experiences rather than concentrating on their previous hardships. The participants knew that they were privileged to study in Canada and they are working hard with the dream of one day giving back to society and their families. This future goal was described by JK:

> I know I'm going to do my Masters in Economics. I'm critical of how the aid agency sometimes do things. I have the hope of helping my community and humanity at large. This is my aim in the future. What I'm aiming at is helping people…through my knowledge. That might be going back to my home country or working in other African countries where

there are problems. So I'd like to work hard to extend my education to not only focus on my people, but just bring hope to humanity at large.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine resilience and the pre- and post-migration experiences of post-secondary refugee students. Using a qualitative case study design, the study answered two questions: (a) what are the pre-and post-migration challenges experienced by government sponsored post-secondary students? and (b) what protective factors contribute to these students' resilience given the many risk factors of relocation? Themes and subthemes highlighted the significant hazards associated with exposure to war violence, the challenges of resettling in a foreign country, and the importance of family values, community support, and personal hope in coping with these difficulties. This chapter integrates and discusses current findings within the context of the refugee migration journey (Prendes-Lintel, 2001), the ecological-transactional model of resilience (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998), and literature on refugee adaptation and mental health. Throughout the discussion, there are comparisons between refugee post-secondary students, government-sponsored refugees, and international students that are based on the results and existing literature (please see Figure 2). Implications are addressed with emphasis on educational, counselling, and programming supports for resettling refugee students. Finally, limitations and future directions for research are discussed.

Risks and Challenges as an Agent for the Development of Resilience

The current study on post-secondary refugee resilience is best conceptualized using the ecological-transactional model of resilience (Lynch &

Post-secondary refugee students

Government-sponsored refugees

Send remittances home

Begin school immediately after coming to Canada

Scholarship for 1st year

Repaying government loans

Claimant stage in camps

Overall family adjustment

Finding family support (i.e., daycares)

Long hours and shift work

Career development challenges

Academic language challenges

Parental support

Language, housing, and employment challenges

Community support

Monetary support from family

Have the option of coming to Canada well before school begins

International students

Figure 2. A comparison between post-secondary refugee students, government-sponsored refugees, and international students based on the current study.

Cicchetti, 1998). This model consists of the micro-, exo-, and macrosystems,

which encompass a multiplicity of psychological characteristics that are shaped

by the ecological interplay of relational, social, and cultural frameworks,

respectively (Harney, 2007; Harvey, 2007; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998). The

ecological-transactional model highlights how resilience is studied within social

contexts and facilitates a deeper understanding of the contexts that cultivate

resilience in people (Harney, 2007). Consistent with the ecological-transactional

model, the results revealed resources for the development of resilience at the

micro-, exo-, and macrosystems (Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998). Also consistent with

the model, all levels of resilience were interrelated and the development of

resilience at one level often coincided with the development of resilience at an

adjacent level (please see Figure 3). Therefore, the ecological-transactional model

was an ideal paradigm for this study with post-secondary refugee students and the

sections below illustrate the unique social interactions that fostered the

development of resilience before and after migration.
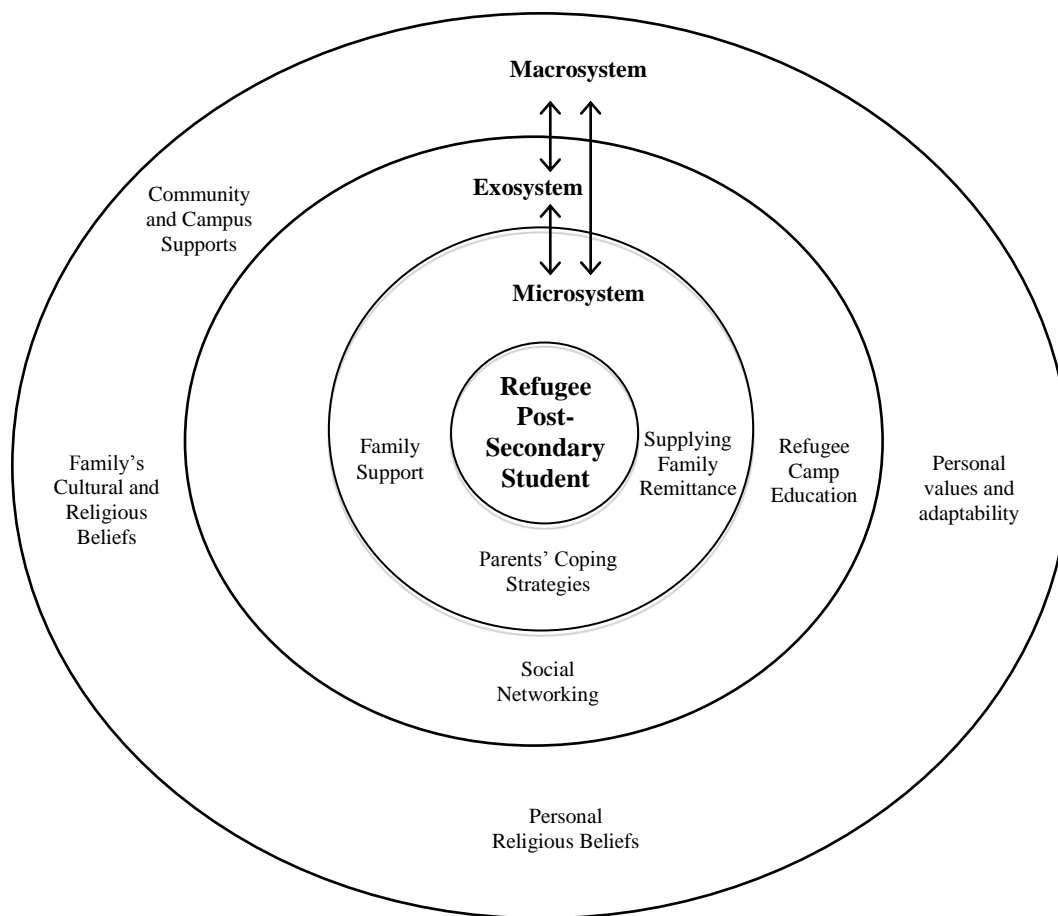
Figure 3. Influences on participants' resilience at the micro-, exo-, and macrosystem levels.

Parental Value of Education as a Key Component to Resilience

A major contribution of the case study method is its ability to unpack the intricacies of a phenomenon (Stake, 1998). For the current study, the case study unpacked the interrelationships of resilience at all three levels of the ecological-transactional model. One of the most salient examples of resilience was the parents' persistence to provide an education for their children. Education was disrupted at various stages of the pre-migration period and it was necessary for parents to devise strategies to ensure that the children continued their schooling. Disrupted schooling created a ripple effect for the development of resilience in each participant. By observing their parents' persistence to seek out educational opportunities for them, the participants learned that family support and education were vital components to their current success. This support subsequently fostered altruism toward their parents and communities, which was also a source of resilience.

Resilience at the microsystem level was developed by the parents' emphasis on education and constant encouragement to study and pursue post-secondary schooling. This microsystem support was complemented by an exosystem that was marked by the availability of community schooling in the refugee camps where the families resided. School created structure and routine for the participants. School also fostered the opportunity for children to learn how to create their own social networks. Furthermore, despite frequent moves, the parents never allowed education gaps to be too far apart by diligently searching for schools that would provide their children with potential future opportunities.

By the time they reached high school, the participants had well-established goals and motivation to pursue a prestigious scholarship such as WUSC's Student Refugee Program. The parents' search for education always led to a refugee camp within a country that had established educational policies. For example, the participants noted that Kenya and Malawi had agreements to provide educational supports, such as teachers and books, to refugee camp schools. Existing educational structures in these countries are macrosystem supports that coincide with the parent' search for educational opportunities for their children and existing refugee camp schools. Therefore, in this case, parental, community, and policy supports cultivated educational resilience. Educational resilience is defined as individuals having successful outcomes in school despite adversities in life (Wang, Haertel, & Wahlberg, 1994). In a study with Sudanese refugee adolescents in a UNHCR camp, it was reported that students with the best academic achievement also had parents who were the most supportive with regard to their children's education (Rana, Qin, Bates, Luster, & Saltarelli, 2011). Rana and colleagues (2011) also emphasized that the school's environment played an integral role in promoting resilience. Therefore, parental support in combination with schools fostering a positive attitude, appropriate curriculum, and extracurricular activities served as protective factors for students who otherwise were educationally at-risk.

Similar to many international students' experiences (Bodycott & Lai, 2012; Kanno & Harklau, 2012), the current participants' parental and family support continued even when they migrated to Canada for educational

opportunities. The parents provided continual encouragement to study diligently and to fulfill their goals of completing post-secondary education through moral rather than monetary support. Without this family support, research focusing on the unaccompanied refugee adolescent population has suggested that youth are at a significantly greater risk of developing conduct problems and depression (Oppedal & Idsoe, 2012; Thabet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2004). Therefore, family connectedness is a primary protective factor against traumatic experiences (Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993). An intact nuclear family may explain the lack of mental health problems in this study's participants, despite their exposure to traumatic events. According to Raftopoulos and Bates (2011), families that have a strong bond also have an inherent knowledge that family members will constantly support each other regardless of their proximity. At a microsystem level, the participants demonstrated a strong connection with their families and no longer required their physical presence for support. However, in contrast with the majority of international student experiences where most of the monetary support is channeled unilaterally from parent to child, the refugee post-secondary students felt the need to reciprocate financial support. The participants described the importance of helping their parents within the refugee camps as well as giving back to the community. In order to send money back to the refugee camps, the participants searched for exosystem resources such as WUSC to access part-time jobs. According to van Hear (2003), sending remittances to family members has the propensity to affect social change such as helping families move to nicer

dwellings and facilitating the start of family business to reconfigure the local economies (van Hear, 2003).

As evidenced by the participants, the micro- and exosystems worked in concert to influence the development of a macrosystem value: altruism. The participants' shared value of altruism went beyond helping their families and appeared to be a protective factor for them in Canada. This macrosystem principle gave the participants a goal to strive towards that was for the greater good of society. Two of the participants' goals are to return to their home countries to alleviate the troubled political landscapes while another participant hopes to give back to her resettled community as a teacher. Perhaps attaining work that contributes to the advancement of a community gives meaning and a sense of self-worth while resettling in a foreign environment. Extrapolating from research conducted by Svensson (2009), the participants' identities from the current study may be constructed by their experiences of living in underprivileged environments. Svensson (2009) demonstrated that social workers who grew up in inner-city communities often chose to work in underserved neighbourhoods, since their identities were shaped by their belief that they were being moral and ethical people.

Protection From Violence and Multiple Flights Leading to Resilience

The participants from this study had tremendously different experiences compared to most international students completing post-secondary education in Canada. Remarkably, after witnessing violence in their villages and in their journeys to the refugee camps, Ade and JK did not develop posttraumatic stress. It

is even more impressive that Esther and Eyotta, both of whom encountered multiple flights, did not develop mental health disorders as a result of their transient migrations. That is, children and adolescents have the propensity to develop mental health problems such as posttraumatic stress, depression, and anxiety during the flight stage (Drury & Williams, 2012; Oppedal & Idsoe, 2012; Seglam, Oppedal, Raeder, 2011). With every flight from adversity, there were many associated risks such as the physically grueling journeys to the next destination, further exposure to violence, and malnourishment. Therefore, one would have expected the participants in this study to report experiences that are reflected in the literature. Despite the multiple flight stages and exposure to violence, none of the four participants reported developing any mental health concerns. Based on their personal narratives, all of the participants appeared to have experienced family cohesion, secure bonding, low parental trauma levels, supportive parenting styles, and religious guidance from parents – all of which are microsystem level resources that may have helped them cope with flight adversities. The participants observed their parents' determination to take calculated risks such as JK's father return to Somalia to sell camels and Ade's father's entrepreneurial spirit to start a small business. These anecdotes exemplify Miller and Rasmussen's (2010) position that the social conditions and daily environment that children live within, including the home, are salient determinants of resilience despite exposure to war-related violence.

The passing down of religion from one generation to the next also mitigated the development of mental health illnesses after witnessing violence and

living a transient lifestyle. Religion, a microsystem level resource cultivated by parents, was also a shared value among groups of people at the macrosystem level. The participants often spoke about the family and community praying for guidance even when faced with overwhelming challenges in refugee camps. Ade and JK commented on the importance of attending to religion-based schools. These religious schools that were set up in the camp communities are salient examples of exosystem level resources. Religious coping demonstrates the significant interactions at all three levels of ecological-transactional model. Recent studies on religion in adolescence have explored the importance of religion as a coping resource (Fox, 2012; Gunnestad & Thwala, 2011; Raftopoulos & Bates, 2011). Refugee children and adolescents observed their parents' use of religion as an instrument to find meaning and motivation amidst their challenges (Gunnestad & Thwala, 2011). Through these daily observations at the microsystem level, children's meaning of spirituality was established as a macrosystem value. Thus, religion was observed as a shared symbol of optimism and guidance for coping with adversity (Gunnestad & Thwala, 2011).

The participants' narratives also suggested that they learned to take controlled risks and used religion as a coping resource during their first few years in Canada. Concurrently, exosystem resources such as mosques and churches in the resettling community supported the participants' religious practices and beliefs. For example, Eyotta's commitment to her religion propelled her to seek out a church by talking to people in her first year class even though she reported being initially reticent to make friends. The interactions between their trust in God

and a personal motivation to succeed provided a sense of control and the belief

that they would make optimal decisions in their lives (Raghallaigh, 2011).

Regardless of the chosen path, the unaccompanied students recruited by

Raghallaigh (2011) believed that God facilitated their internal locus of control.

Some of the most pertinent findings have suggested that resettling refugees

exhibit attitudes and behaviours portraying an external locus of control and a

sense of learned helplessness (Lerner, Kertes, Zilber, 2005; Young, 2001). Young

(2001) suggested that refugees who merely relied on personal coping resources,

such as religion, often reported a heightened external locus of control. In contrast,

the participants from the current study demonstrated a strong internal locus of

control. Rather than only relying on their belief in a divine power, the participants

also utilized a dedicated work ethic and existing community groups to cope with

resettlement challenges.

Coping With Lifestyle Changes in the Refugee Camps and in Canada

One of the most difficult challenges for families in a refugee camp is the

change in lifestyle (Prendes-Lintel, 2001). As witnessed by the participants in the

refugee camps, parents who were once productive citizens were reduced to

stagnant individuals dependent on others for their survival. This experience

created a change in self-identity for the fathers and mothers, which was initially

experienced as humiliating and impacting self-worth. Ade and JK described their

fathers, who were once breadwinners, becoming dormant and finding it

challenging to provide for the family in the refugee camps. Yet, these fathers still

acquired relative success by ensuring that there was food and education for their

children. Mothers, who were primarily caregivers and homemakers in their countries of origin, undertook additional menial jobs within the refugee camps. Role changes are examples of microsystem level adaptations that were necessary for families to continue functioning as optimal units and to sustain a stream of income. The families' successful adaptations to role changes were largely based in their abilities to network and interact with others in the community.

Networking in the camps was an essential skill to maintain the family's livelihood. This ability was cultivated at the microsystem level from parents along with the exosystem community structures to support its development. The participants learned to create social supports at an early age through community resources such as school and from observing their parents function within social groups. The results from this study demonstrated the parents' ingenuity in creating social networks in the camps to start a small business, find jobs, or to establish a community school for their children. By observing their parents, each participant appeared to display a prosocial attitude towards networking in the refugee camps in order to form altruistic social groups that helped them gain employment in the camps and acquire educational scholarships. Factors that contributed to group formation are two-fold: (a) modeling their parents' behaviour of successfully creating groups to support the family and (b) an inherent ability to socialize with others (Poppitt & Frey, 2007; Taylor & Doherty, 2005). Previous research has indicated that families that were sociable with others were more likely to overcome adversities in refugee camps (Oppedal, Røysamb, & Sam, 2004; Porter, Hampshire, Kyei, Adjaloo, Rapoo, & Kilpatrick, 2008). Creating

social networks played a crucial role in achieving positive wellbeing, and these relationships were nurtured when individuals came from the same ethnic background, spoke a common language, and exhibited mutual interests and goals (Porter et al., 2008). Refuting literature has reported that creating social groups was not a significant coping resource for refugee youth (Hek, 2007). However, Hek's (2007) study primarily examined unaccompanied refugee youth who did not have parents to nurture such an important social skill. By learning from their parents, the participants' ability to network and socialize with others gradually evolved into a macrosystem value that has enhanced their resilience. Taken together, these results are similar to the argument that the two most important factors for the development of resilience in children who have experienced war are their family and social environments (i.e., micro- and exosystems, respectively) (Punamäki. Qouta, Miller, & El-Sarraj, 2011). Perhaps resilient parenting styles promote flexible problem solving skills, competent emotion regulation, safety, and hope despite the threats during war (Dachyshyn, 2008; Laor, Wolmer, & Cohen, 2001; Suldo, 2009).

These well-established networking skills were a vital coping resource for the post-secondary refugee students in Canada. Although the participants encountered many challenges during their initial resettlement, they were able to seek out appropriate exosystem resources to help them cope with obstacles. The participants' proficient networking skills with on-campus student organizations resulted in employment opportunities and the participation in community-based social and religious groups. On one campus, there was even a policy to use the

gymnasium as a mosque once per week, which was interpreted as a very inclusive

macrosystem resource. Research from Australia has demonstrated the importance

of campus supports for refugee students, which included professors and on-

campus clubs (Earnest, Joyce, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010). Similar to the current

study, campuses that had available space for prayers and those that were located

in urban communities helped students adapt better to their new environment than

students who studied in rural regions (Earnest et al., 2010). Ade, who studied in a

rural post-secondary institution, expressed concern with the lack of mosques in

his town as well as poor job prospects in his community. Hence, living in an

urban environment may be conducive to refugee students finding similar ethnic

and cultural groups, which would help them adapt quickly to the new country.

Finally, Oppedal and colleagues (2004) suggested that the ability to form social

groups speaks to an individual's self-esteem level as they enter a new country.

Individuals with higher levels of self-esteem were observed to make friends easier

and acculturate quicker to their new environments. Therefore, it is speculated that

participants in the current study arrived in Canada with higher levels of self-

esteem, which contributed to their ability to form social groups and to cope with

settlement-related adversity.

The Migration Pathway for Post-Secondary Refugee Students

According to Prendes-Lintel's (2001) model, refugees' journey to resettled

destinations consists of three stages within the pre-migration period (i.e., Pre-

departure, Flight, and First Asylum stages) and three stages in the post-migration

period (i.e., Claimant, Settlement, and Adaptation stages). However, the post-

secondary refugee students in this study have shown that the pathway may not be as linear or concrete as suggested in the aforementioned model. Two issues were exhibited in the current findings that suggest alternative perspectives on the migration pathway model for refugee post-secondary students. First, during the pre-migration period, there were multiple Flight and Asylum stages for participants and their families in this study. Second, the Claimant stage occurred during the pre-migration period and not within the post-migration period for the participants.

According to Esther and Eyotta, fleeing from adversity and seeking asylum occurred in multiple locations. Therefore the families experienced multiple flight and asylum stages due to civil war erupting in DRC's Kibumba refugee camp, Nairobi's costly standard of living, and deficient educational resources in Tanzania's Mtabila refugee camp. These challenges forced parents to find refugee camps that would give their children the best opportunity of acquiring an education while ensuring the family was safe and had adequate shelter and food. Despite a general recognition that refugees live in a transient lifestyle prior to resettlement, an in-depth literature search revealed a paucity of research regarding this phenomenon. The observation of multiple flights was only reported by Kunz (1973) in his study of Hungarian refugees fleeing to Australia. In his research, it was stated that involuntary migrations "are not single-step movements connecting an origin and a destination point" (Kunz, 1973, p. 126). Moreover, it was witnessed that there are a variety reasons for interruptions or activating forces that cause refugees to move two or more times before stability is

found (Kunz, 1973). This is consistent with the current research findings. It appears that subsequent to Kunz's kinetic model of refugee migration, researchers have been unclear in their explanation of exceptions to their refugee origin/destination models of migration. At best, Berry (1991) and Prendes-Lintel (2001) noted that the refugee career is not the same for all refugees without elaborating on the irregularities in the pathway. Prendes-Lintel (2001) also acknowledged that some refugees go directly from Flight to Claimant stage without explaining reasons or repercussions for this deviation.

The temporal order of the Claimant stage was also different for the current participants. Prendes-Lintel's (2001) model describes that the majority of refugees completing paperwork to claim refugee status upon arrival in resettlement countries and elaborates on the subsequent challenges during the Claimant stage. In contrast, participants in the current study began their refugee claimant process after they were notified of their acceptance into WUSC's Student Refugee Program. According to the participants, they received all of the refugee claimant forms to complete in the camps. They were also interviewed for refugee qualification status in the camps. It is speculated that Prendes-Lintel's (2001) model of refugee migration is better suited for the United States' context for incoming refugees since many other researchers who have based their studies on this model were also from the United States (see Chung, Bemak, & Grabosky, 2011; Yakushko, Watson, & Thompson, 2008; Yakushko, 2009). The United States received the majority of refugee claimants from bordering Latin American countries who are often classified as "illegal aliens" (Department of Homeland

Security, 2012, p. 42). However, in the Canadian context, the majority of refugee claims are made outside of the country as opposed to within the country (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2005). For a modified conceptualization of Prendes-Lintel's migration pathway model for the post-secondary refugee population, please refer to Figure 4, which also illustrates the accompanying challenges in each stage. Perhaps this model is also relevant for post-secondary refugee students in the United States if their refugee status is approved prior to entering the country and if they are on a government or institutional scholarship.

Unique Characteristics Associated with the Refugee Migration Pathway

Unlike most refugees, the post-secondary refugee students in this study received pre-migration settlement supports from Canadian volunteers, UNHCR, and Windle Trust Kenya in the form of English tutoring, lessons introducing them to Canada and its culture, and guidance when completing the Canadian immigration forms. As a result of these preparations, the claimant process often
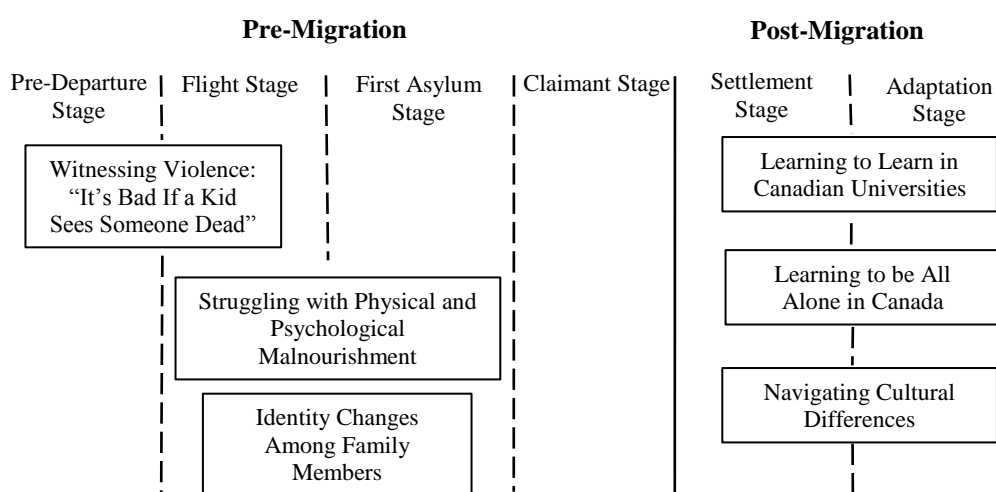
Figure 4. A modified version of Prendes-Lintel's (2001) stages of migration depicting the participants' reported risk factors for resilience.

took one year before the refugee students came to Canada. Despite these preparations, the participants still experienced a variety of resettlement challenges.

As demonstrated by the participants, they did not experience any typical Claimant stage challenges, and expressed gratitude for the agencies that made efforts to help them transition to Canada. When the participants arrived in Canada, they immediately entered the Settlement stage where they were expected to promptly adapt to their new surroundings while excelling academically – a difficult task even for Canadian students transitioning from high school to university. Although participants received pre-migration preparation for the Settlement stage from volunteers and aid agencies, they continued to experience challenges similar to international students including academic and language obstacles (Lee, 1997; Nasrin, 2001).

Despite receiving English tutoring prior to leaving for Canada, the students still found "Canadian English" hard to understand, which is also reported in the international student literature (Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012; Strauss, 2012). Strauss (2012) reported that international students had problems following academic English in lectures and also felt embarrassed of their sub-standard writing skills. This language obstacle combined with the unfamiliarity of curriculum standards usually led to lower than expected grades (Sawir et al., 2012). Furthermore, searching for housing was a struggle when participants were constrained by a limited budget. In comparison with international students and the broader refugee population (Coles & Swami, 2012),

post-secondary refugee students had similar housing obstacles. In a Canadian study situated in Toronto, young adult refugees often lived in poverty-stricken neighbourhoods (Teixeira, 2008). Furthermore, Khawaja and Stallman (2011) found that renting accommodations was a "major stumbling block" (p. 208) for international students, because they did not understand the regulations and the process of signing a rental agreement. Finally, finding a part-time job was a challenge for the participants, which is similar to the experiences of many immigrants entering Canada (Mattu, 2002; Murdie, 2002; Reitz, 2001). Post-secondary refugee students lacked familiarity with the application process and experienced cultural discrimination in the workplace, which is sadly, a common occurrence for many newcomers regardless of your immigrant status (Purkiss, Perrewé, Gillespie, Mayes, & Ferris, 2006). In a study of newcomers' settlement experiences in Alberta, 14% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination in their search for employment and 17% reported experiencing racism or discrimination by employment service providers (Prairie Centre for Excellence in Research on Immigration and Integration, 1999). Although post-secondary refugee students and international students encounter housing and employment challenges, the extent of their difficulties may be less than GSRs, since most of the students do not bring their families with them or have young children. Navigating the system for affordable daycares and finding affordable housing for families is difficult when there is the pressure to stay long hours at work, being on time for appointments, and supporting the children's development (Carter, Polevychok, & Osborne, 2009; Dumbrill, 2009; Ley & Murphy, 2001).

Post-secondary refugee students face identical protocols as other GSRs. The post-secondary institutions subsidize costs for first year tuition and textbooks. However, as illustrated by the participants in this study, after one year of resettling in Canada, they were expected to begin repaying the Canadian government for their flight, refugee claimant document-processing fees, and any additional stipend costs accrued from the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP). As a result of such guidelines, the participants in the study felt the urgency to acquire a job after their first year of academic studies, which added to their already growing stress of finding off-campus housing and studying for final exams. According to Yu, Ouellet, and Warmington (2007), GSRs receiving funds from RAP continued to experience financial difficulties after one year of living in Canada. Government sponsored refugees showed the lowest average annual full-time employment earnings (under $20,000) and did not have the resources or time to upgrade their existing skills (Yu et al., 2007). Therefore, both GSRs and post-secondary refugee students face comparable stressors after one year of being in Canada. This systemic challenge is a significant risk factor. The participants in the current study could potentially lose all their adaptation gains they have made to date. If they continue to accumulate debt, the participants could experience stress-related challenges similar to those of the refugee population since they will be unable to fulfill their goals of helping their family while pursuing their career endeavours.

Recommendations Stemming from the Current Study

This study emphasized the development of resilience in post-secondary refugee students beginning in childhood. Through the ecological-transactional model, the participants demonstrated that their coping resources were developed and groomed throughout their childhood and adolescence before they applied these strategies to manage resettlement challenges in Canada. Concurrently, this investigation elicited a number of recommendations for academic institutions, mental health and social work practitioners, educators, non-profit organizations (i.e., WUSC), and the Canadian government.

Service provision in post-secondary institutions. Given the participants' frustrations with language and academic difficulties, several recommendations may alleviate these challenges for post-secondary refugee students and international students. While some universities and colleges match their refugee students with a native Canadian student, many do not provide such a beneficial service. This was especially difficult for Ade who felt the challenges accumulate since there was no Somali community in the rural region where he lived. Furthermore, with the ever expanding international student population in North American post-secondary schools, post-secondary instructors should be encouraged to be mindful of their cultural practices in the classroom and to promote inclusive education for students from all ethnic backgrounds. Some academic faculties (e.g., Education, Social Sciences, etc.) offer cross-cultural and multicultural courses as part of the undergraduate and graduate training curriculum. It is recommended that all future professors, regardless of their academic interests, should take a course in multicultural pedagogy. Finally, post-

secondary instructors should consider slowing down their lessons while encouraging English Language Learners to use resources such as librarians and teaching assistants for remedial support.

Although the participants indicated that on-campus WUSC clubs was the best resource for help, none mentioned being offered services for mental health counselling. It is suggested that post-secondary educational institutions inform incoming refugee students of student counselling centres as well as community agencies that specialize in multicultural counselling and can provide students with free or low-cost services. Finally, two of the participants were able to acquire part-time employment on campus, which was very helpful. Perhaps all post-secondary schools can designate handful number of part-time jobs for refugee students, so that they can allocate more time towards studies rather than spending hours travelling for work. This is especially important for students resettling in rural communities.

Counselling and educational services. At the grass roots level of service provision, it is important for counsellors and educators to seek out potential community resources that may benefit the post-secondary refugee students. Participants in this study illustrated the importance of exosystem-level supports, specifically acquiring a sense of belonging among peers within a new environment. Therefore, counsellors and educators are encouraged to facilitate the search for appropriate social groups for their refugee students. By meeting other individuals who have the same interests or who are living in similar circumstances, the clients will expand their support network and acquire help and

guidance when needed. Furthermore, counsellors and educators need to take an

advocacy role for refugee students. Atkinson and colleagues (1993) emphasized

the importance of psychologists to embrace an advocacy role to help their

resettling clients adapt to their new environment. This may include helping clients

connect with self-identified religious affiliations, especially if the clients have

difficulty finding such a group. Another advocacy activity includes linking

refugee clients with employment agencies to acquire résumé and cover letter

writing, interviewing, and job search skills. As illustrated by Kanu (2008),

educators are also in a position to take an advocacy role to help their students. In a

Manitoba community, teachers arrived at school early in the morning to make

themselves available for extra help, using their own money to buy culturally

appropriate books and attending training workshops on war-affected refugee

students (Kanu, 2008).

Mental health counsellors and therapists who offer services to refugee

post-secondary students also need to have multicultural counselling training.

According to Hwang (2006), most clinicians believe that learning about their

client's culture renders them as competent multicultural therapists. However, this

learned knowledge does not translate to the implementation of insightful

therapeutic interventions (Hwang, 2006). Therefore, professional psychology

programs should include training their students in relevant models for

multicultural counselling such as the Psychotherapy Adaptation and Modification

Framework (PAMF) (Hwang, 2006). PAMF teaches students to view therapy as

an interactive process between client and therapist such that therapeutic

interventions are collaborative processes. The more a therapist learns from the client, he or she will also learn to adapt the client's culture to efficacious evidence-based intervention approaches (Hwang, 2006). Finally, the process of implementing interventions could be derived from the Multi-Level Model (MLM) (Bemak, Chung, & Bornemann, 1996; Bemak & Chung, 2002). MLM suggests that psychotherapists must understand the sociopolitical background, pre-migration history, and experiences the clients have had as refugees (Bemak & Chung, 2002). Furthermore, therapists must identify the barriers their clients are experiencing that may impede successful psychosocial adaptation and adjustment. By asking refugee clients about their experiences, therapists allow their clients to narrate their stories while acquiring a cultural understanding of presenting clinical issues. Finally, MLM incorporates four phases within the intervention process: (a) mental health education, (b) psychotherapy, (c) cultural empowerment, and (d) integration of western and indigenous health methodologies (Bemak & Chung, 2002). By understanding barriers in adaptation while concurrently providing interventions that are congruent with the refugee client's needs, it is expected that the clients will gain skills for effective system navigation in their environments and communities (Bemak & Chung, 2002).

Programming recommendations for World University Services of Canada. The SRP is a tremendous education program helping a number of motivated and academically inclined refugees each year acquire an education. However, it appears that each on-campus WUSC group has its own service provision guidelines to aid resettlement. For Ade, he received minimal guidance

from his campus WUSC representatives, whereas JK, Eyotta, and Esther received varying degrees of accommodating supports. WUSC management may want to review their policies to ensure that all students across every campus receive adequate care and guidance. This may include collaborating with post-secondary schools to set up a mentorship program so that the incoming refugee students have one or two upper year students who can guide them through the first year of university or college. Ideally, this mentor should be a current SRP student who has experienced the first year resettlement process. In some Australian universities, policies are in place where refugee students were paired with a volunteer mentor who guided them to various campus resources such as student counselling, libraries, and tutors for assignments, which may be helpful for students who are placed in regions that are isolated from urban centres (Earnest et al., 2010). This type of macrosystem support should be adopted in Canadian educational institutions. Taken together, WUSC has done a commendable job of advocating for refugee student bursaries with many of the participating post-secondary schools. However, most of the advocacy occurs in the first year and is drastically reduced from years two to four. Continued advocacy from WUSC with post-secondary schools for increased bursaries during subsequent academic years will enhance the refugee students' wellbeing while decreasing the stressor of finding multiple part-time jobs. Finally, having an on-campus WUSC representative connect over video conference or email with the post-secondary refugee student during the Claimant stage allows the student to ask specific questions about the school, the campus environment, and community resources.

The on-campus WUSC representative can also inform students of the cultural and academic expectations and challenges. This process will help in the migration preparation and alleviate any migration anxiety. Moreover, pre-migration contact could also help incoming students become aware of other cultural and social changes they may have to acclimatize to upon entry into Canada, such as change in climate, clothing transportation systems, and food.

Changes to government policies to streamline resettlement. Through WUSC and Windle Trust Kenya, the post-secondary refugee students were provided with pre-migration education including English tutorials, introductory lessons about Canada and its culture, and practical help such as acquiring suitcases and clothing during the Claimant stage. However, even with this help, participants struggled to optimally adapt to their new Canadian surroundings during the settlement and adaptation stages. Since monetary funding dictates when the post-secondary refugee students enter Canada, it is suggested that additional funds be allocated to allow students to enter Canada well before the start of the academic year. As demonstrated by the participants, the current policy to resettle students in August of each year does not provide adequate time to adjust to a new culture while preparing for a grueling academic schedule. Furthermore, by collaborating with WUSC, the government can implement a valuable resettlement program that is mandatory for all post-secondary refugee students to attend daily during the summer months before school begins. Such a program may acclimatize students to Canadian English, introduce the transit system, help students navigate the academic structure of their post-secondary

institution, and connect students to community groups that may help in the

resettlement process. Other government initiatives to help post-secondary refugee

students resettle in Canada include financial counselling or abolishing the

repayment of loans. When refugee students are inundated with repaying

government loans, it brings immense stress and coping deterioration. If these

types of programs are successful with the post-secondary refugee student

population, it may be implemented for all government-sponsored refugees who

are resettling in Canada.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There were several limitations to this study that must be acknowledged

and addressed in future research. As an exploratory study, a qualitative case study

methodology was used to gather novel information from participants while

exposing gaps in the literature in order to generate future research. To

complement the current results, it will be beneficial to gather additional data from

more participants throughout Canada to corroborate the findings from this study.

Furthermore, this study primarily recruited refugee post-secondary students from

Africa since WUSC has mainly sponsored students from that continent in the past

decade. It would be interesting to collect a more diverse sample of participants

from other refugee camps around the world to observe whether or not cultural

differences exist for migration challenges and the development of resilience.

Finally, this study only recruited participants who are currently in the Student

Refugee Program. According to WUSC (2007) statistics, approximately 15% of

students do not complete the program. It would be revealing to locate former SRP

students to determine whether or not the post-migration challenges became too overbearing for them to continue in the program. Subsequently, an examination of the pitfalls may provide insight for refugee student service provisions at post-secondary educational institutions.

Although substantial information was gathered with regard to WUSC's screening process, it is also important to gather interview data from personnel at post-secondary schools that accepted participants. This information would further the current understanding of their screening and enrollment procedures and provide more in depth explanations regarding their policies to help refugee students cope with adversities on campus and in the community. From the participant interviews, it appeared that each post-secondary school has its own approach to helping refugee students resettle and a program evaluation may uncover effective and ineffective resources for resilience. Family was prominent theme in developing resilience. Future research may want to focus on interviewing the parents of each student and inquire into their resilience process. Lastly, given the exploratory scope of the current study, future investigations may want to use an ethnographic approach to specifically document the daily lives of post-secondary refugee students and their use of coping resources to develop resilience in a new country. Using ethnography, researchers may be able to pay closer attention to the cultural factors influencing resilience (Creswell, 2007). Ethnography also allows the observer to witness the practice of resilience while following up these observations with semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007).

This type of investigation will complement the current exploratory findings with more in-depth observations of participants in their natural environments.

Personal Reflections on the Participants' Resilience

During my follow up interviews to complete member checks and to verify the accuracy of information provided the participants, I realized that the participants continued to build networks within their newly adopted country. Ade, the participant in rural Nova Scotia, who appeared to have the most difficult time with employment and finances found a summer job in the oil fields of Alberta. He had asked his friends across the country about employment opportunities and realized that the best opportunity to find work with a substantial salary was in the oil fields. Ade's ability to cope and to be resourceful was remarkable. He took calculated risks and he is currently very satisfied with his summer job. Ade will return to Nova Scotia in late August and believes that he will be financially stable for the upcoming academic year.

In my member check with Esther, she disclosed that she was not accepted into a post-graduate Bachelor of Education program for the following academic year. While talking to her about this, Esther did not seem overly upset that she was not accepted into a program. Rather, she made alternate plans to volunteer with a schoolteacher for the year while working in another job to pay for rent and living expenses. Esther noted that she will not give up her dream of becoming a teacher and will reapply to her program of choice again the following year. Esther's ability to stay positive and to proactively plan for the future has made her very resilient in the face of adversity.

For Eyotta, reading her own narrative and transcript brought increased self-awareness. She stated that she had forgotten about some of the experiences that her and her family had been through, and that the narrative reminded her of the struggles that she has had to overcome. According to Eyotta, reading about and reflecting on her personal experiences was also a coping resource, because it brought a sense of validation towards her journey. That is, if she was able to overcome all of those past challenges, she could continue to overcome current or future challenges. During our final conversation, Eyotta revealed that she recently married a former SRP student. She acknowledged that her husband is another source of resilience for her and she appeared content with her new life status.

JK's reflective nature allowed him to speak eloquently about his experience of reading his narrative. He reported that after reading the transcript and narrative, it gave him even more determination to return to his home country to alleviate the political and social instabilities. When asked about this urge to one day return to Somalia, JK stated that he believes that after overcoming all of his personal obstacles and acquiring an education, it would be a "waste" for him not return home to help others who are struggling to survive. JK acknowledged that he was once a "camp dweller" who is now in a privileged position to help in the refugee camps. JK continues to be involved in his school's Student Refugee Program and when we met, he was in the process of reviewing applications for potential SRP students. It appears that JK's continued extracurricular involvement with WUSC is another coping resource and it helps him be optimistic for future post-secondary refugee students.

As for myself, diving into the world of qualitative research with refugees was an experience full of wonder, doubt, self-discovery, and fulfillment. I had many questions about the refugee experience after having worked with Bhutanese refugee students in Nepal. As I dug deeper into the literature, there were occasions when I doubted the usefulness of my research. I occasionally asked myself, "Who cares about my research?" Yet, my instincts pushed me to move forward with the study and I found my own coping resource in a population who clearly cared: the participants who I interviewed. Through my conversations with my participants, I heard them talk about a world through a lens that few people have ever experienced. Canadians appropriately know WUSC's Student Refugee Program as the philanthropic organization that gives refugee students a higher education, but they do not know the challenges that the students face once they enter to Canada.

I was allowed into the participants' world and to hear their stories of challenges and resilience. I heard stories of hope and optimism that impassioned me to stay focused and to give a voice to my participants. During my member check conversations with Esther and Eyotta, I asked each of them whether they were confortable with sharing with me their family's ethnic identity (i.e., Hutu or Tutsi). Both of them reluctantly answered my question. According to both participants, their reluctance came from the perspective that it no longer mattered which ethnicity they belonged to. For them, it was a tragic war that resulted in atrocious deaths. They believed that they had been given a second chance to move forward and to make a better life for themselves. Esther stated that, "there is no

point to talk about those days anymore." Some would say that Esther and Eyotta were coping by avoiding this discussion. As for me, I was struck by their persistence to persevere through potentially harmful histories.

Throughout the writing process, I grew as a researcher and as a practitioner. Initially, I saw this as *my* study. I sought out the questions and the method for examining this population. Yet, as I involved the participants in the project, my perspective shifted into one of shared ownership. The results of the study became a merging of what I knew and what I was learning from the participants' stories. I felt privileged to work with such an exceptional group of participants who had overcome a number of obstacles to resettle in Canada. In a way, I felt like I had also worked with their families since the parents were such an integral component to each participant's success. This type of support that fosters resilience has impacted my clinical practice during my internship year. I constantly see how my research can be applied to my work with clients, families, caregivers, and colleagues. In my practice, I recognize that most clients are in an environment that can either enrich or hamper their ability to cope with mental health disorders and I make a conscious effort to speak with everyone in the client's ecological setting before drawing a case conceptualization. To be able to use my research and the ecological-transactional model into personal practice is the ultimate fulfillment that I have come full circle in my graduate training.

Conclusion

Using a qualitative case study design and the ecological-transactional model, the current research examined the pre- and post-migration experiences of

four post-secondary refugee students as well the protective factors that contributed to their resilience. JK, Ade, Eyotta, and Esther directly and indirectly experienced adversities such as violence, malnutrition, family separation, identity shifts, bullying and intimidation, financial problems, academic struggles, loneliness, and cultural anomalies. In spite of these challenges, they developed coping strategies at each level of the ecological-transactional model and illustrated how each level was interrelated towards the development of resilience reflected in their role as post-secondary students in Canada. In their new life context, the participants applied skills and values that they learned from parents such as creating social networks, understanding the value of education and religion, and embodying a strong work ethic. JK, Ade, Eyotta, and Esther adapted these skills and learned to advocate for themselves by networking with friends and on-campus clubs, using religion as a coping resource, and persevering through school and employment challenges. A final important coping resource was their hopefulness that a better future for themselves and their families was attainable. The results of this study exemplify the need for a comprehensive approach to facilitate resettlement adaptation and adjustment for post-secondary refugee students including promotion of culturally inclusive education, improved counselling and therapy interventions, enhanced pre-migration preparation for students and mentorship programs, and amended government guidelines to alleviate financial strain. Such improvements to resettlement service provision will likely reduce the stressors that are placed on post-secondary refugee students in order to streamline their academic and adaptation success. Successful

implementation of these recommendations may inform future service delivery for

the larger refugee and immigrant populations.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter for WUSC Club Presidents

<u>REFUGEE AND RESILIENCE RESEARCH STUDY</u>

INVITATION LETTER FOR STUDENT WUSC CLUB EXECUTIVE

Dear Mr./Ms. _____,

My name is Andrew Wong and I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta's Counselling Psychology Program. For my doctoral dissertation, I am interested in examining post-secondary refugee students' pre- and post-migration challenges in Canada and how they have coped with these challenges. Post-secondary refugee students include any students who are currently attending a Canadian university or college and are sponsored by WUSC.

Participants may participate if they meet the following criteria:

(a) Entered post-secondary education in Canada through the WUSC's Student Refugee Program
(b) Are between the ages of 17 to 25 when they arrived in Canada
(c) Completed a minimum of 1 year of undergraduate studies and are in their second year (or higher) of studies
(d) Are currently under refugee status as categorized by Citizenship and Immigration Canada or previously entered Canada under such status
(e) Regularly attend all enrolled university classes
(f) Are not currently on academic probation
(g) Are currently engaged in one or more social groups (e.g., on-campus and community clubs, etc.)

Andrew has been working closely with the Student Refugee Program's director, Michelle Manks, to gather statistics and archival data regarding the overall program. *This study does not have any association with the WUSC program or the university that students attend. Participation in this study will not affect students' scholarship status nor will it impact the students' enrollment at the post-secondary institution. All information collected will be kept confidential.*

If you believe that this research will be a worthwhile endeavour for your school's WUSC program, please distribute the attached Letter of Information to the sponsored refugee students who fit the above participant criteria.

For more information about this study, please call Andrew at (780) 994-9181 or email him at ahwong@ualberta.ca. Thank you for taking your time to address this recruitment letter and I hope to hear from you in the near future.

The plan for this study has been reviewed and approved for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Sincerely,

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Appendix B: Letter of Information

<u>University Study on Refugee Students Attending a Canadian University or College</u>

Dear Student,

My name is Andrew Wong and I am a PhD student at the University of Alberta in the Counselling Psychology program. For my research, I want to learn more about the experiences of refugee students who are in Canadian universities and colleges. My goal is to find out how students cope with challenges they experience in Canada and I would like to learn from WUSC sponsored refugee students in Canadian universities and colleges. *This study does not have any association with the WUSC program or the university that you attend. Participation in this study will not affect your scholarship status nor will it impact your enrollment at the university.* ***All of the information you share will be kept private and confidential****. At no point in time will your name be used in the study.*

More specifically, the purpose of the research is as follows:

(1) To learn about your experience in your home country before you came to Canada
(2) To learn about the challenges that you faced when you entered Canada
(3) To learn about the different strategies that you used to deal with these challenges and adapt to the Canada
(4) To take what we learn and use it towards helping new refugees resettle in Canada

You can take part in this study if you:

(a) Entered post-secondary education in Canada through the WUSC's Student Refugee Program
(b) Were between the ages of 17 to 25 when you arrived in Canada
(c) Completed at least 1 year of undergraduate studies and are in your second year (or higher) of studies
(d) Are currently under refugee status or previously entered Canada under such status

If you choose to take part of this study, you may be asked to complete two activities. The first activity will ask you to fill out two short forms on your own about your background and experiences. Some of you will be asked to return for a second activity where you will talk with Andrew about your experiences. If you want to talk in your own language, an interpreter will be provided at no cost. The talk will be about one to two hours at a time and place that works best for you. You will be given $30.00 for participation in the study. If you want to take part in this study, please call Andrew at: (780) 994-9181 or email him at ahwong@ualberta.ca.

If you are taking part in this study and you want to stop, all you have to do is let Andrew know and there will not be any questions or problems. You can stop being a part of this study except two weeks after our final meeting. After this final meeting, you have two weeks to let Andrew know if you want to stop taking part in this study. After this time, you will not have the opportunity to withdraw from the study and the information you have provided may be used.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Sincerely,
Andrew H.C. Wong, M.A.
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Appendix C: Demographics Form

Help Me Get to Know You A Little Better!

Please complete the questionnaire below as it will help me to know you better. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the email or phone number listed in the consent letter.

1. What is your gender? ❑ Male   ❑ Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. Which country were you originally from before entering a refugee camp?

_____

4. What is your ethnic or cultural background? _____

5. Which country was your refugee camp located before coming to

Canada? _____

6. Which year did you move to Canada? _____

7. Which Canadian province and city do you currently live in?

_____

8. Which university or college are you currently studying at?

_____

9. Which year of academic studies are you currently in at your university or

college?

   ❑ 2 ❑ 3 ❑ 4 ❑ 5 or more

10. Since your real name will not be used and all of your information will

be kept private, what fake name or initials do you want to replace your real

name with? _____

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Appendix D: Interview Activity 1 – Timeline Activity

Tracing Your Journey to Canada

Please complete the timeline and boxes as best as you can. It's okay if there are experiences that you cannot remember or do not want to share. If you were born in a refugee camp, then begin your timeline when you were living in a refugee camp.

During this time, you were living in your <u>home country</u>	By this time, you were living in a <u>refugee camp</u>	Now, you are living in <u>Canada</u>

Number of years: _____
How old were you? From ___ to ___

Number of years: _____
How old were you? From ___ to ___

Number of years: _____
How old are you? From ___ to ___

1. What do you remember about your life in your home country?	2. What do you remember about your life living in a refugee camp?	3. What are some challenges that you have come across in Canada?
• _____ • _____ • _____ • _____	• _____ • _____ • _____ • _____	• _____ • _____ • _____ • _____

4. What are some ways that you have found helpful in coping with some of the challenges faced in Canada?

• _____

• _____

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

Agreement to Participate

This study wants to learn more about refugee students studying in Canadian universities and colleges, including challenges that students faced when moving to Canada and coping strategies that students have used to deal with these difficulties. This study is being done by Andrew Wong, a PhD student at the University of Alberta working under the supervision of Dr. Sophie Yohani. His study will help educators and counsellors find new strategies to help refugee students overcome challenges when coming to Canada. If I sign this form, it means that I voluntarily participate in this study and I understand these things about the study:

☐ I know that the first activity will be completed on my own and that I may or may not be asked to participate in the second activity (an interview).

☐ For the interview, I know I will meet with Andrew by myself for one to two hours and I can talk to him in English, Cantonese, or in another language with the help of an interpreter.

☐ I know he will record what I say and then type it out.

☐ I know that he will use a false name for me during the interview and that I can choose this false name.

☐ I know that he will remove any information that may reveal who I am from the interview data, reports and any other writings.

☐ I understand that information given in the pre-interview activities will be used to guide the interview

☐ If I have a lot to talk about, Andrew and I will meet again for one to two hours.

☐ I know he will keep everything from the interview (the tape, notes he made, what he typed from the interview) in a locked filing cabinet in his office for five years after the completion of the project and it will be destroyed after this.

☐ I know he may make presentations and write about the study, but that if he uses my words, nobody will know I said them because he will use the made-up name.

☐ I know that if I feel stressed or worried when I talk about my experiences, I can get free help if I tell Andrew.

☐ I know that I will receive $30.00 for being in this study. If I want a copy of the research results, I can let Andrew know and he will take down my mailing address and send me the results.

☐ I know that even if I sign this form, I can still stop taking part in this study by letting Andrew know without questions/problems. I can stop taking part in this study at any time except two weeks after our final meeting. After this final meeting, I know I have two weeks to let Andrew know if I want to stop taking part in this study. After this time, I will not have the opportunity to withdraw from the study and the information I have provided may be used in the study.

☐ If I have questions or concerns about this study, I can send an email to ahwong@ualberta.ca. I can also call his supervisor, Dr. Sophie Yohani, at the University of Alberta at (780) 492-1164.

☐ I know that the plan for this study has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta that makes sure people taking part in research are treated properly. This

Board is called Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB).

☐ If I have any questions about my rights as a person taking part in this study and ethical conduct of research, I can call the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Participant's Name (please print) _____

Signature _____   Date: _____

Signature of researcher _____   Date: _____

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Appendix F: Counselling Referral Handout

The following are counselling centres or therapists that specifically practice with multicultural populations that may help you cope with the past or current challenges that you may have experienced. The name, website, and contact information (i.e., telephone number and/or email address are listed). If you have any questions about contacting the listed agency, please feel free to contact Andrew at ahwong@ualberta.ca or at (780) 492-3746:

- *This list was created with the assistance from each WUSC club on campuses where participants were recruited as well as the campus' student counselling centres*
- *The services were free of charge*
- *Andrew called the counselling centres in advance to inform them that they may have clients in the future who were participating in this study*

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

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Appendix G: Chain of Evidence for Thematic Analysis[2]

Literature Review

Demographic Form & Timeline → Interviews

Stage 1

Interviews → Transcribe & Code

Stage 2

Supervision

Established 4 Macro Themes

Supervision

Stage 3

Pre-migration Challenges
- Family Problems (3)
- Health Problems (3)
- War Consequences
- Social Problems (2)

Supervision

Stage 4
- Family Problems (2)
- Health Problems (2)
- Violence

Stage 5
- Identity Changes Among Family Members (2)
- Struggling with Physical and Psychological Malnourishment (2)
- Witnessing Violence: "It's Bad to See Someone Dead"

Pre-migration Coping
- Family (4)
- Personal Skills & Beliefs (3)
- Wealth (2)
- Education (3)
- Social Support (2)

- Family (3)
- Personal Attributes (3)
- Social Support

- Hanging Onto Family Values (3)
- Creating and Maintaining Social Supports
- Hope Allows for the Abnormal to Become Normal

Post-migration Challenges
- Cultural (2)
- Employment (2)
- Climate
- Academics (3)
- Independence (2)

- Culture (2)
- Academics
- Independence

- Navigating Cultural Differences (2)
- Learning to Learn in Canadian Universities
- Learning to be All Alone in Canada

Post-migration Coping
- Family (3)
- Community (3)
- Personal Skills & Beliefs (2)

- Family (2)
- Community
- Personal Attributes (2)

- Reciprocating Family Supports (2)
- Social Supports Help Canada Feel Like Home
- Using Childhood Lessons to Open New Doors (2)

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[2] Numbers within the brackets represent the number of subthemes within each theme.