"…we are all acolytes of our own realities, prisoners of our perceptions, so blindly loyal to the patterns and habits of our lives we forget that, like all human beings, we too are enveloped by the constraints and protection of culture."

(Davis, 2001, p. 12)

University of Alberta

More than Meets the Eye: Immigrant and Refugee Adjustment, Education, and Acculturation in Canada

by

Rebecca Georgis

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Psychological Studies in Education

Department of Educational Psychology

Spring 2014
Edmonton, Alberta

Dedicated to

The loving memory of my father

and to

my mother, for her unwavering support and encouragement

Abstract

How well immigrants and refugees adjust to Canadian society is critical for their well-being and integration. Using an acculturation development framework and emphasizing a process-oriented and strength-based approach, this dissertation reports on three papers related to immigrant and refugee adjustment, education, and acculturation in Canada. In the first paper, I drew on ethnographic methodology to examine the school engagement of newcomer Somali parents and the ways in which engagement was facilitated in a school-based transition program. I collected multiple types of data including field notes, meeting notes, 19 individual interviews with program stakeholders (teachers, after-school staff, cultural brokers, program leadership, and representatives from immigrant serving organizations), and one group interview with 13 Somali mothers. Results showed that parental engagement was limited due to language-related barriers, dissimilar cultural and educational expectations, practical, resettlement, and social barriers. These barriers were successfully addressed in the program through various strategies including cultural brokering services and parent information meetings. In the second paper, I used the same ethnographic methodology to examine the school adjustment experiences of recently arrived Somali and Ethiopian adolescents with limited formal schooling. Field notes were recorded and interviews were conducted with 11 adolescents, 8 of their teachers, and 12 after-school/settlement staff working closely with the adolescents during their early transition years. Results highlighted the social-emotional, acculturation, and academic needs of newcomer adolescent refugees, as well as their strengths. In the third paper, I used a method of interpretive description to compare the

bicultural experiences and competencies of first- and second-generation immigrants and refugees who have lived in Canada for a longer period of time and have experienced positive acculturation outcomes. Focus groups were conducted with eight first-generation and eight second-generation youth and adults. Results showed that both generations experienced acculturation challenges and developed similar bicultural competencies; however, the second generation experienced unique challenges within family and heritage peer networks. Together, the findings highlight some of the difficulties immigrants and refugees face when navigating two cultures and the need for educational supports that take into consideration their social-emotional and acculturation challenges and acknowledge their cultural capital, aspirations, and pre-migration knowledge.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Rebecca Gokiert, for her continuous guidance and support. Her mentorship, leadership, and commitment have made my graduate experience a truly remarkable one.

I am thankful to my co-supervisors, Drs. Marian Rossiter and Rob Klassen, for their valuable guidance and constructive feedback; to my committee members, Drs. Anna Kirova and Maria Mayan, for stimulating discussions and insightful comments; and to my external examiner, Dr. Mehrunnisa Ali, for critical input.

I am grateful to a number of individuals and organizations who have been an important part of my dissertation journey and enriched my graduate experience in so many ways; to colleagues at the Community-University Partnership (CUP), for their exceptional mentorship, support and encouragement; to colleagues at the Multicultural Health Brokers Cooperative (MCHB), for being an ongoing source of inspiration, assistance, and guidance; to mentors and classmates in the department of Educational Psychology, for adding significantly to my learning experience; to the Faculty of Extension, for the financial support that made this research possible; and to partners in Edmonton Public Schools and the Transition Program, for their support in carrying out this project.

Special thanks to my friends and family, near and afar, for believing in me and supporting me in numerous ways. The journey was so much more enjoyable amidst great company and camaraderie.

To George and Maria, a sincere thank you, for making Edmonton feel like home.

Finally, I am thankful to all those who participated in my dissertation research, sharing their stories and helping me see the world through their eyes.

Table of Contents

Page

List of Tables

Page

List of Figures

Page

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Canada is a desired destination for many immigrants and refugees, with annual immigration intake in the last decade reaching 280,000 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2012). Approximately half (50.3%) of newcomers come from Asia and Pacific regions, 21.7% from Africa and the Middle East, 17.6% from Europe and the US, and 10.4% from South and Central America (CIC, 2012). Immigrants enter Canada through a class system that includes the economic, family, and refugee class. Refugees constitute from 8 to 14% of new arrivals and 37.7% of all refugees are children and youth under the age of 24 (CIC, 2012). Refugees enter Canada through the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, either privately or government sponsored, or may seek refugee status from within Canada through the in-Canada asylum program (CIC, 2011). In 2002, Canada introduced the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which emphasized refugee selection based on greatest need for protection rather than adaptability. This policy change resulted in a shift in the composition of the refugee population to include more refugees with complex resettlement needs (Rossiter & Derwing, 2012).

Unlike much earlier immigrants who were of primarily European origins, current immigrants often differ from the majority population in terms of physical appearance, religion, culture and language, and are more likely to experience greater acculturation difficulties, discrimination, and culture shock (Garcia Coll et al., 1996; McBrien, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2003; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Refugees and asylum seekers, who migrate involuntarily to escape conflict

and persecution, often experience increased adjustment challenges rooted in traumatic pre-migration contexts (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien, 2005; Watters, 2008). The process of relocation can be particularly difficult for children and youth. When migrating to a new country, children lose family, friends, and familiar surroundings and often need to learn a new language while simultaneously acclimatizing to a new school and social environment (Adams & Kirova, 2007; Oppedal, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). In addition, the high demands of the migration experience can create power shifts within the family, requiring children not only to adjust to the external environment but to also deal with changes in their roles and responsibilities within the family (Birman, 2006).

How well immigrants in general, and refugees in particular, adapt to Canadian life is critical for their own well-being and integration. Failing to adjust to the new culture can lead to marginalization, poor health, and negative psychosocial and educational outcomes (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Ward et al., 2001). The present dissertation consists of three papers reporting on the process of adapting to life in Canada. Taking into account that immigrant experiences are influenced by several factors, including one's age of arrival, generation status, refugee background, and length of residence, each paper examines adjustment from a different perspective. The first and second papers report exclusively on the experiences of refugees navigating a new educational system. The first describes the parent perspective, whereas the second narrates the adolescent experience; yet both focus on recently arrived

refugees and their early perceptions of living in Canada. The third paper moves away from a newcomer focus to examine generational differences in adjustment from the perspectives of immigrant and refugee youth and adults who have lived in Canada for a longer period of time and who have experienced positive acculturation outcomes. While focused in part on their school experiences, the third paper also provides a glimpse into the immigrant and refugee family life and how it is impacted by acculturation-related stressors. All three papers emphasize the experiential nature of adjustment and, in particular, the challenges that immigrants and refugees face living in Canada and navigating two cultures, as well as the competencies, coping responses, and strengths upon which they draw to deal with these challenges.

Definition of Terms

Acculturation researchers distinguish migrant groups on the basis of immigration class (immigrants vs. refugees) and generation status (first vs. second generation). The term *immigrant* is used to refer to those who seek permanent residence in a country other than the one they were born in. While refugees are also immigrants, this dissertation makes a distinction between refugees and immigrants based on the purpose and voluntary nature of their migration (Berry, 2006). Thus, in this dissertation the term *immigrant* is used to refer to those who migrate voluntarily, for example, for educational or economic purposes. The term r*efugee* is used to refer to those who migrate involuntarily, often fleeing their country because of political instability, persecution, war, or conflict. According to Article 1 A (2) of the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, a refugee is a person who:

> owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his 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 former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (p. 14)

First-generation immigrants are those who are foreign-born residents of Canada. *Second-generation immigrants* are those who are born in Canada to foreign-born parents. Occasionally, reference is made in the literature to three more generations based on the age of arrival: generation 1.25 refers to those who migrated to a new country during their secondary education years, generation 1.5 refers to those who migrated during their elementary education years, and generation 1.75 refers to children who migrated during their early childhood years, usually before the age of five (Rumbaut, 2004). In this dissertation, the term first-generation will be used to encompass generations 1.25 and 1.5, but not generation 1.75.

Acculturation theorists differentiate between acculturation and adjustment. Individual-level acculturation, also known as psychological acculturation (Berry 1997), refers to changes to an individual's values, beliefs, attitudes, identity, and/or behaviour following intercultural contact (Berry 1997, 2006; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Ward, 2004). Whereas acculturation is specific to changes that are bound by culture, the term adjustment (also referred to as adaptation) is used more broadly in the literature. As it is most commonly used,

often in outcome-based quantitative studies, adjustment refers to indicators of well-being such as academic performance, socioeconomic status, and mental health (Berry, 1997; Fulgini, 1998; Ward, 2004). As it is less commonly used, often in qualitative studies, adjustment refers to the experiential process of adapting to a new culture, which encompasses, but is not limited to, acculturation changes. The latter definition of adjustment is used in the three papers in this dissertation; however, the studies cited may use either definition.

Theoretical Perspectives

The three papers presented in this dissertation are guided by acculturation theory in general (Berry, 1997, 2006) and the acculturation development model in particular (Oppedal, 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003); social stratification theory and the integrative model of minority children's development (Garcia Coll et al., 1996); and Bourdieu's cultural capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986). A theoretical framework is important for understanding the research questions, analysis, and interpretation presented in each of the papers. It also provides a linguistic platform for describing the phenomenon being studied.

Acculturation Theory

Acculturation is a process of cognitive, behavioural, and psychological change that begins once immigrants and refugees come into contact with a new culture (Berry 1997, 2006; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Ward et al., 2001). Acculturation is often described as a bi-dimensional process in which the migrants make simultaneous choices about contact and involvement with the home and receiving

cultures (Berry, 1997, 2006). In Berry's widely used bi-dimensional acculturation model, there is no interdependency among choices. Migrants may adopt one of four acculturation strategies: *integration or biculturalism*, when showing a preference for involvement in both the new and the heritage cultures*;* *marginalization*, when lacking preference for either culture; *separation*, when showing a preference for the heritage (home) culture; and *assimilation*, when showing a preference for the new (receiving) culture.

Integration or biculturalism has been associated with the most optimal outcomes for migrants, including immigrant and refugee children. Biculturalism has been associated with enhanced cognitive abilities, such as abstract thinking (Benet-Martinez, Lee & Leu, 2006; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009), lower health risks, positive school adjustment, and better psychological wellbeing (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Epstein, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1996; Fosados et al., 2007; Myers, et al., 2009; Phinney, Berry, Vedder, & Liebkind, 2006). Marginalization, on the other hand, has been linked to increased risk for alcohol and drug use, poor school adjustment and in-school behavioural difficulties (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Epstein et al., 1996; Fosados et al., 2007). Separation and assimilation strategies have been associated with both positive and negative adjustment outcomes (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, 2002; Lopez, Ehly, & Garcia-Vasquez, 2002; Myers et al., 2009; Trickett & Birman, 2005). The inconsistent findings regarding both separation and assimilation strategies may be attributed, at least in part, to domain and context specificity; whether an assimilation or a separation strategy will act as a protective or risk factor is associated with the

domain being measured (e.g., language acculturation vs. peer acculturation) and the context or targeted outcome to which it applies (e.g., school problems vs. peer relationships). For instance, Birman et al., (2002) found that familiarity with heritage culture practices (i.e., separation) was predictive of relationships with parents and peers from the heritage culture, whereas familiarity with receiving culture practices (i.e., assimilation) predicted school adjustment and relationships with peers from the receiving culture. Conceptually, such findings are further supportive of the benefits of biculturalism, which is a combination of ethnic and receiving culture competencies.

The choice of an acculturation strategy (i.e., integration, marginalization, separation, or assimilation) not only depends on individual preference but is also highly dependent on pre-migration and post-migration acculturating contexts (Berry, 2006; Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal, 1997). The migration and integration policies of the receiving country, as well as the degree of cultural, linguistic, and religious congruence between the receiving and home culture greatly influence how immigrants acculturate. Immigrant groups from non-Western countries are likely to have cultural beliefs and values that are considered to be different from countries of the West (Gokiert, Chow, Parsa, & Rajani, 2009; Hofstede, 2001; Klassen, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and are more likely to experience acculturation challenges (Hofstede, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1996; Ward et al., 2001). Moreover, in societies with an assimilationist or ethnic ideology, the adoption of an integration strategy is more difficult than in

societies with a pluralism ideology, such as Canada (Berry, 2006; Bourhis et al., 1997).

For immigrant and refugee children and youth, acculturation is part of their overall development and occurs alongside other cognitive, biological, and behavioural changes taking place in childhood and adolescence. Some researchers (e.g., Oppedal, 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003) argue that acculturation cannot be seen as a separate process from development. In the next section, the acculturation development model is briefly reviewed.

The Acculturation Development Model

The Acculturation Development Model (ADM; see Figure 1), proposed by Sam and Oppedal (2003), is useful for understanding the acculturation and adjustment of immigrant and refugee children, as it takes into consideration the multicultural and ecological contexts in which they develop. This model is rooted in eco-cultural theories that recognize culture as a driving force of development (see Super & Harkness' [1986] developmental niche theory), as well as in theories that emphasize the interaction between the developing individual and the environment (see Lerner's [1991] developmental contextual theory). The ADM, however, goes beyond these theories to make explicit the unique situation of immigrant and refugee children who are simultaneously socialized in two cultural contexts: (a) the culture of the country in which they live, which is reflected in the institutions (e.g., schools, health care) and environments of the majority culture; and (b) the heritage culture of their parents, which is reflected in their home and ethnic community life. Socialization is defined as "…the process through which

children acquire the beliefs, values, practices, skills, attitudes, behaviours, ways of thinking, and motives of their culture that together help children develop into effective and contributing members of the group" (Gauvain & Parke 2010, p. 239). According to the ADM, immigrant and refugee children need to become familiar with the language, beliefs, and behaviours of both their heritage and majority cultures in order to "have a sense of belonging and be able to participate successfully within both" (Oppedal, 2006, p.97).

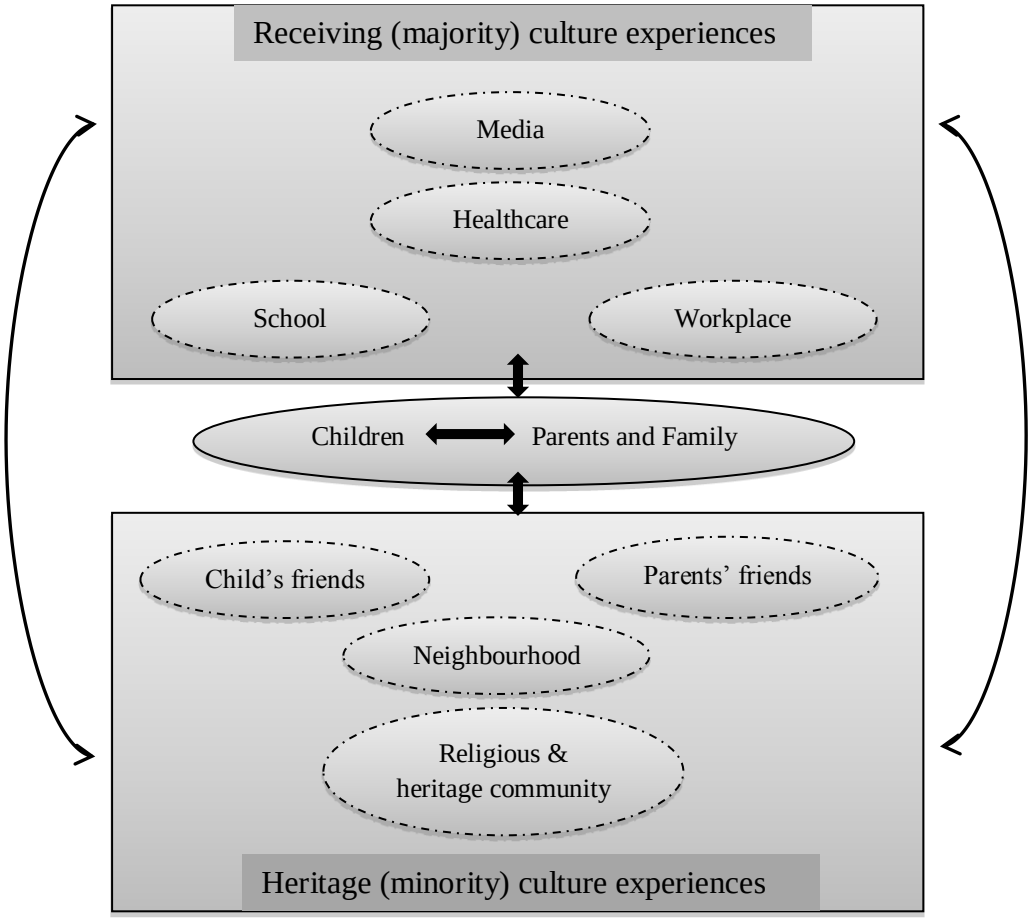


Figure 1-1. The Acculturation Development Context of Immigrant and Refugee Children (Adapted from Oppedal, 2006)

A key premise of the ADM is that, unlike adults who migrate to a country having acquired competencies in their home culture, immigrant and refugee children have not yet fully developed such competencies and need to simultaneously build cultural schemas/frames of reference to be able to navigate the home and mainstream (Canadian) cultures (Oppedal, 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003). While the model considers the multiple settings within which the socialization and adjustment of immigrant and refugee children take place, this dissertation is primarily concerned with experiences within the contexts of family, school, and peer networks.

The ADM offers a useful framework for understanding the post-migration ecological context of immigrant and refugee children, but it has two limitations. First, the ADM does not explicitly take into account how structural variables such as race and class influence the development of immigrant and refugee children. Second, the model is concerned only with the post-migration context of development, neglecting the pre-migration experiences of immigrant and refugee children. The pre- and trans-migration ecologies of immigrants, and in particular refugees, are critical to understanding their adjustment. Research on refugee children and youth shows that several pre- and trans-migration stressors, such as war trauma, multiple resettlements, family separation, and interrupted or limited prior schooling, influence their acculturation and adjustment (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; McBrien, 2005; Rutter, 2006). To complement the ADM, I draw on two other models/theories: (a) Garcia Coll et al.'s (1996) integrative

model for understanding the developmental competencies of minority children, and (b) Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital theory.

The Integrative Model

The Integrative Model (IM) that Garcia Coll and her colleagues (1996) proposed, much like the ADM, emphasizes the various systems (family, school, peers) within which development occurs. The IM, however, makes explicit reference to the role that social stratification variables and mechanisms play in the lives of immigrant and refugee children. Specifically, the IM identifies social position (based on race, ethnicity, or class), racism, and segregation (e.g., economic, residential) as key influences on development. The authors note that "the interplay of these three major derivatives of social stratification (social position, racism, and segregation) creates and affects the nature of the developmental processes that operate and the eventual competencies that result. These are 'nonshared' [quotations in original] experiences with mainstream populations and define the unique pathways of development of children of color" (p. 1896). According to the IM, immigrant and refugee children, especially those who come from low-income families and are visible minorities, are more likely to grow up in segregated environments and to experience discrimination at some point in their lives. These experiences will shape the nature of their social interactions, their developmental trajectories, and their educational outcomes. Moreover, these experiences will likely be different from those of non-immigrant children or immigrant children who live in high-income households and are not visible minorities.

Cultural Capital Theory

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital can be applied to further elucidate how social position and cultural background influence the adjustment experiences of immigrants and refugees. Cultural capital refers to people's cultural practices, knowledge, and dispositions (Larau, 2003; Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). Bourdieu introduced the terms *habitus* and *field* to describe how the culture of individuals fits that of the larger society. Habitus can be defined as a set of dispositions that shape people's actions and thoughts based on past experiences, whereas a field can be described as the social structure that is found in institutions (Lareau, 2003). If applied within a school setting, Bourdieu's theory suggests that students from culturally diverse and less privileged backgrounds are more disadvantaged than their peers from mainstream and middle/upper class backgrounds because their habitus does not fit the field of the school and larger society. Educational researchers utilizing a cultural capital and acculturation framework criticize schools for operating from a position of assimilation and subtractive acculturation and for not acknowledging the cultural capital of immigrant and refugee students and their parents (Gibson, 1998; Pérez Carreón, Drake, & Calabrese Barton, 2005; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Valenzuela, 2002). When students' capital is not recognized, they are more likely to become marginalized and to experience poor educational outcomes.

Together, the ADM, IM, and Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital provide a comprehensive framework for understanding immigrant and refugee adjustment experiences. Specifically, the adjustment challenges that immigrants and refugees

face, described in each of the three papers, are associated with the bicultural social context proposed by the ADM and the social stratification mechanisms outlined by the IM. The strengths and competencies that are also highlighted in each paper are based on cultural capital theory and the need for the receiving society and its institutions to acknowledge the migration experiences and bicultural skills of immigrants and refugees as a critical determinant to their adjustment, integration, and well-being.

Literature Review

The Adjustment of Immigrant and Refugee Children and Youth

The literature on the adjustment of immigrant and refugee children and youth illustrates great variability in academic and psychological outcomes. While some immigrant and refugee children do well in school, exhibit a strong bicultural identity, report having many friends, and are in good mental health (Berry et al., 2006; Birman & Tran, 2008; Birman et al., 2002; Potochnick & Perreira, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, et al., 2010), others experience contrasting outcomes. That is, they exhibit poor academic achievement, feel marginalized from one or both the minority and majority cultures, become involved with gangs, and/or report poor health (Berry et al., 2006; Ellis et al., 2008; Oppedal & Roysamb, 2004; Potochnick & Perrerira, 2010; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). This variability in adjustment outcomes can be attributed to an array of pre- and post-migration factors, which can be grouped into four categories: (a) individual factors, (b) family factors, (c) community factors, and (d) societal factors. Individual factors include immigration class (i.e., immigrant vs. refugee), generation status (i.e.,

first- vs. second-generation), age at arrival, educational background, heritage and host language ability, ethnic background, strength of ethnic identity, and degree of pre-migration trauma (e.g., Berthold, 2000; Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, & Jamieson, 1999; Fulgini, 1997; Fulgini et al., 2005; Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Kao & Trienda, 1995; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburn, 2009). Family factors include post-migration socioeconomic status (often measured by parents' income or education), parental school involvement, parental mental health, and the extent of the acculturation gap between the parent and the child (Birman, 2006; Fazel et al., 2012; Zhou & Kim, 2006). Community factors include the school environment, neighbourhood composition, and the size, stability, and socioeconomic capital of the heritage community in the receiving society (e.g., Birman et al., 2002; Birman & Tran, 2008; Eamon, 2005; Georgiades, Boyle, & Duku, 2007; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Potochnick & Perreira, 2010; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). Lastly, societal factors include the policies of the receiving country with regard to immigrants (e.g., multicultural vs. assimilation), attitudes towards immigrants and refugees, degree of racism and discrimination, and cultural, linguistic and religious match/mismatch between the home and receiving countries (Berry, 2006; Bourhis et al., 1997; Ellis et al., 2008; Hofstede, 2001; Okazaki, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). While this list is not exhaustive, it includes some of the most commonly reported influences on immigrant and refugee children's academic and psychological adaptation.

Immigrant and refugee adolescents who are considered to be at high risk for negative educational and psychological outcomes are more likely to be second-generation (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012); migrate at older ages (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010); come from lower socioeconomic status families (Glick & White, 2003); have limited host-language skills (Eamon, 2005; McBrien, 2005; Portes, 1999; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010); attend lower-quality schools (i.e., schools that are under-resourced, or highly segregated; Kao & Thompson, 2010; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008, 2010); have less community and peer support (Portes, 1999, Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008); experience unwelcoming school environments and high levels of perceived discrimination (Ellis et al., 2008; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; McBrien, 2005; Portes, 1999; Potochnick & Perrerira, 2010; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008); have had multiple school transitions (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010); and/or have pre-migration experiences associated with war, trauma and conflict (Berthold, 2000; Ellis et al., 2008). As this dissertation is concerned with refugee adjustment (papers 1 and 2) and generational differences in adjustment (paper 3), a brief summary of relevant literature in these two areas is provided below.

Refugee Adjustment

Research examining the adjustment of refugee children and youth has focused primarily on their mental health during resettlement. As a result of pre- and trans-migration stressors, such as war trauma, multiple resettlements, and separation from parents/caregivers, mental health problems are not uncommon among refugee children and youth (Ellis, Millier, Abdi, Barrett, & Blood, 2013;

Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al., 2004; McBrien, 2005; Rutter 2006). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is especially prevalent in this population, with estimates ranging between 19% and 54% (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011). Moreover, coming from countries that are troubled by war and disruption of daily activities and infrastructure, refugee children are more likely to have interrupted schooling and learning gaps that can significantly hinder their school adjustment during resettlement (McBrien, 2005; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Corin, 1998; UNESCO, 2013). A recent report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013), for instance, notes that 50% of the children estimated to be out of school worldwide live in areas affected by war and conflict. The post-settlement educational experiences of refugee children, in comparison with their mental health, have received little research attention. Several scholars have criticized this one-sided understanding of refugee adjustment (Mathews, 2008; Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012) and have argued that education is a critical vehicle for refugee integration and success and thus deserves further attention.

The literature on refugee resettlement in Western countries suggests that the post-migration period is difficult not only for the children but also for their parents. Social isolation, discrimination, poverty, underemployment and unemployment, acculturative stress, and linguistic and cultural barriers are some of the challenges facing refugee families (Beiser, 2009; Garcia Coll et al., 2009; George, 2002; Liebkind, 1996; Montgomery, 1996; Porter & Haslam, 2005; Simich, Beiser, Stewart, & Mwakarimba, 2005). The first few post-settlement

years can be especially challenging for refugees. The literature suggests that while refugees exhibit positive integration, as measured by educational attainment and other socioeconomic indicators, the time required to achieve such outcomes is longer compared with that of immigrant groups who migrate voluntarily for primarily economic reasons (Beiser, 2009; Cortes, 2004).

Programs and provisions during resettlement can contribute to positive long-term adjustment for refugee children and families (Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; Rutter, 2006; Sidhu & Taylor, 2012). For instance, research has shown that positive post-migration school environments and a sense of school belonging can moderate the negative effects of pre-migration stressors (e.g., Ellis et al., 2013; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Such evidence points to the importance of understanding the adjustment of refugee children and youth through an ecological lens that takes into consideration their post-migration context.

Adjustment across Generations

All immigrant and refugee children go through dual cultural socialization; however, the acculturation and adjustment context of first-generation children is different from that of the second generation. Many first-generation children arrive in the host country with limited or no competencies in the host culture but some degree of competency in and connection to their heritage culture, especially if they arrive at older ages. Second-generation children, on the other hand, have increased connection to the majority culture because they were born in the country to which their parents migrated, have acquired the language at an early age, and often experience a social advantage associated with being citizens of the

receiving country (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012). Research on the relationship between generational status and adjustment outcomes, however, suggests a *paradox* (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012) in the acculturation and adaptation of first and second generations. That is, despite, their linguistic and socioeconomic advantage, second-generation children experience poorer adjustment outcomes than their first-generation co-ethnics. Second and later generations have been found to exhibit inferior school performance (Pong & Zeiser, 2012), higher levels of delinquent behaviour (Bui, 2012), poorer mental health (Montazer & Wheaton, 2011), and increased exclusion from peers from their heritage culture (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001).

Several explanations have been proposed for the observed differences in first- and second-generation children. Portes and Rumbaut (2001), for instance, emphasized the variability that exists in the adjustment outcomes of the second-generation. That is, while some second-generation children exhibit poor socioeconomic and social integration, others experience upward social mobility. Other researchers (e.g., Hernandez, Denton, Macartney, & Blanchard, 2012; Suarez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009) highlighted the stronger connection that first-generation children have to their first culture and to fulfilling their parents' high expectations, and they note that this connection has a protective effect on their development. These explanations account for some but not all of the observed generational differences, and researchers (e.g., Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012) have called for a better understanding of the distinct acculturation and adjustment contexts of each generation.

Limitations of the Adjustment Literature

Adjustment research to date has focused primarily on adjustment as an outcome. While such research has been critical in identifying some of the variables that influence the adaptation of immigrants and refugees, it is limited in at least two ways. First, it neglects to take into account the evolving and experiential nature of adjustment, a limitation which has been noted by a few scholars in the field (Li, 2009; Mistry & Wu, 2010; Padilla, 2006). Adjustment is a continuous process of learning how to live in a new country and to contribute as a member of the new society. This process includes challenges and accomplishments, is mediated by one's personal and sociocultural experiences, acquires different meanings throughout the migration journey, is highly influenced by the receiving social context, and varies across individuals and groups. When focusing on pre-determined, categorical, and quantifiable predictors and outcomes, researchers may disregard some important but hidden aspects of the adaptation process that can be identified only through the narrative and experiential accounts of newcomers' journeys of adapting to a new culture.

Second, the adjustment literature paints an incomplete picture of immigrant and refugee children and families by focusing more on their vulnerabilities and less on their strengths. This gap has been identified by several researchers (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sullivan, 2009; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Mistry & Wu, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2007). Mistry and Wu (2010) note that "absent within the literature to date is an empirical knowledge base about the nature of expertize and strengths that are found in culturally and linguistically

diverse families and how these develop" (p. 6). Studies of immigrant and refugee children's adjustment are often based on comparative research with non-immigrant children and tend to operate from a deficit-based framework (e.g., Fazel & Stein, 2003, Oppedal & Roysamb, 2004). Although researchers are increasingly moving away from immigrant and non-immigrant comparisons to examine the variability that exists within immigrant groups, the framework that these researchers adopt continues to be based on outcomes and indicators created for mainstream children, and it neglects to take into account the unique capital and skills that immigrant and refugee children may have as a result of their pre-migration history and bicultural upbringing. For example, many immigrant and refugee children, because they acquire knowledge of the new language and receiving culture much faster than their parents, act as translators and mediators for their parents at school or other settings (Yosso, 2005). This brokering skill that immigrant and refugee children develop, sometimes early on, can be seen as a distinctive competency, one that can potentially influence their psychological adjustment but is rarely acknowledged or measured as an indicator of their well-being.

A deficit-based view of adjustment is particularly dominant in refugee discourses, as has been noted by several scholars (e.g., Banki, 2012; Fangen, 2006; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 2007; Papadopoulos, 2007; Rutter, 2006). In seeking to interpret the adjustment challenges that Somali refugees face, Fangen (2006) notes that "in many respects, refugees start at the bottom rung of the new social hierarchy. They find that their competence is not recognized, and they are

instead reduced to being only this, a refugee" (p. 70). Papadopoulos (2007) reminds us, however, that "becoming a refugee is not a psychological phenomenon *per se* [emphasis in original]; rather it is exclusively a socio-political and legal one, with psychological implications" (p. 301), and he calls attention to the coping responses that individuals develop as a result of being in adverse and less than optimal circumstances. Within the education field, research that operates from a strength-based, multicultural, and/or cultural capital framework emphasizes the strengths that are found in refugee students and parents (e.g., Banki, 2012; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Rutter, 2006).

Utilizing a process-oriented and strength-based approach to understanding experiences of adjustment is critical for shifting the dialogue away from deficit-based narratives. Even though research that highlights the strengths, coping responses, and competencies of minority children and families in general (e.g., Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005), and refugee families in particular (e.g., Banki, 2012), is growing, it is still far more limited compared with outcome-based research, especially within an acculturation development framework.

The Current Dissertation

The three papers presented in this dissertation are based on two qualitative studies that examined the acculturation and adjustment of immigrants and refugees.

Study 1 (Papers 1 and 2)

Papers 1 and 2 are products of the first study, which is an ethnography of the school adjustment experiences of newcomer refugee parents and students who

attended a Transition Supports Program (TSP) for newcomers in western Canada. Specifically, the first paper examines the school engagement experiences of newcomer Somali parents and the ways in which engagement was facilitated in the TSP. The questions addressed by paper 1 are as follows:

(a) What were the barriers to Somali parent engagement within the context of the TSP?

(b) What strategies were perceived to be most effective in addressing these barriers within the context of the TSP?

The second paper reports on the school adjustment experiences of recently-arrived Somali and Ethiopian adolescents. Paper 2 addresses the following two questions:

(a) What are the school adjustment needs of recently arrived adolescent refugees?

(b) What are the strengths of recently arrived adolescent refugees?

Study 2 (Paper 3)

The third paper is based on a second qualitative study, which examined the acculturation of first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults and the competencies that they developed as a result of navigating two cultural contexts. Utilizing a method of interpretive description, this study addressed the following questions:

(a) What experiences have a salient influence on the bicultural journey of first- and second-generation bicultural youth and adults, and how are these experiences similar and/or different between generations?

(b) What competencies are critical for successful bicultural navigation in first- and second-generation youth and adults, and how are these competencies similar and/or different between generations?

Unlike papers one and two, which describe perceptions of adjustment from the perspective of recently arrived refugee students and parents just as they are trying to make sense of their new environment, the third paper examines acculturation development and adjustment retrospectively.

Implications of the Dissertation

Together, these three papers advance the current dialogue on immigrant and refugee adjustment, schooling, and acculturation in at least three ways. First, as speculated by the acculturation development model, each of the three papers illustrates that acculturation is at the core of the adjustment experiences of immigrant and refugee children and families and that it cannot be seen as a separate process. Second, this dissertation describes adjustment as a lived experience, and immigrants and refugees as active agents who transform and are transformed by the receiving context. By taking such an approach, this dissertation elucidates some of the needs and struggles that are at the core of the adjustment process of immigrants and refugees in Canada. Third, all three papers highlight not only the challenges but also some of the strengths of immigrants and refugees, thus counterbalancing deficit-based narratives commonly found in the literature.

Research Assumptions and Considerations

The two studies presented in this dissertation utilized a qualitative inquiry methodology and a community-based approach to research. I introduce the basic assumptions and considerations of the methodology and approach below; however, the specifics of the qualitative method (i.e., ethnography and interpretive description) that was used in each study will be described in the individual papers.

A Qualitative Inquiry Methodology

Qualitative inquiry is an umbrella term used to describe research that seeks to generate an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon by taking into consideration the context within which it occurs (Mayan, 2009). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research is…

> multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 2)

The researcher plays a key role in qualitative research as the primary instrument/medium of data collection. Although qualitative researchers can utilize multiple sources of information about the participants and their environment in order to meaningfully construct participants' experiences, the collection and interpretation of the information are heavily dependent upon the researcher. For this reason, qualitative researchers should be reflective and acknowledge their own biases and limitations and how these may influence the research process

(Merriam et al., 2001; Morrow, 2005). For instance, the language used to describe participants' experiences is rooted in the researcher's own personal history, beliefs, disciplinary background, and theoretical assumptions, all of which can enhance or limit the interpretation of the findings. In the next section, I provide an overview of my own positionality and assumptions (ontological and epistemological).

Ontological and epistemological assumptions. The qualitative studies presented in this dissertation generally adhere to a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism, as explained by Guba and Lincoln (1994, 2008), is a paradigm that rejects the notion of an objective reality as proposed by positivist and post-positivist paradigms. Constructivism asserts that there are multiple realities, created by individuals or groups, and that knowledge is the product of the dialectical interaction between the researcher and the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, 2008). In other words, meaning exists only when it is constructed and situated within a context. Research that falls within this paradigm acknowledges the possibility of multiple interpretations of the phenomenon being studied.

Researcher's positionality. My interest in the intersection of culture and psychology is rooted in my own experiences of crossing physical and mental cultural borders as an international student. These experiences brought culture to the forefront of many of my social and academic interactions and developed in me a curiosity for understanding cultural influences on behaviour and relationships. Prior to undertaking this research, I was involved in various other research

projects that examined the role of culture in child development, assessment, and educational practice. As a result, I acquired knowledge of the literature in these areas, as well as cross-cultural research skills for working with immigrant and refugee populations.

In addition to having a disciplinary grounding in acculturation and cross-cultural psychology, my immigration status as an international student in Canada also influenced my positionality. Being an international student, I was both an insider to the communities I worked with, in that I was a non-Canadian native, and an outsider, in that I did not share the same ethnocultural background or language. Although insider-outsider statuses were once considered mutually exclusive, scholars (e.g., Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam et al., 2001) now acknowledge that these distinctions can be complex and that researchers can occupy the positions of both insider and outsider. Being an insider, I shared some of the acculturation experiences of the parents and children I worked with and was welcomed into those communities on the premise of the solidarity and commonality that exists between those who are foreign-born. Being an outsider, I had to develop close relationships with cultural brokers and community members in order to understand the cultural protocols of Somali and Ethiopian communities in order to be able to recruit participants and to complete the research. Acknowledging the insider-outsider boundaries is particularly important in ethnographic research because it requires prolonged involvement of the researcher in the field and some level of trust from members of the group/setting that is being studied.

A Community-Based Research Approach

The research described in this dissertation was guided by a community-based research (CBR) approach. CBR, also known as participatory, empowerment, or action research (Israel, Schultz, Parker, & Baker, 1998), is a collaborative approach to research that acknowledges the expertise of community and the right of community members to participate in the quest for knowledge. Two of the defining characteristics of the approach, although others have been described in the literature (e.g., Israel et al., 1998), involve addressing power disparities through the participation of community members in the research process and committing to knowledge mobilization and social action (Israel et al., 1998; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003).

Definitions of community vary in CBR and may include a geographic community, a group defined on the basis of a common characteristic or experience, and/or an organization. In this dissertation, the term community refers to the partnering community organizations that were involved in the research process. The primary community partners in the first study were a local school board and an immigrant-serving organization. The immigrant-serving organization was also the community partner in the second study.

Qualitative research and community-based research both adopt a recursive action-reflection cycle that allows for changes to be made in the research plan to address emergent findings or issues identified by community partners (Israel et al., 1998; Morrow, 2005). A CBR approach was chosen because of its participatory nature and its potential to generate useful and relevant knowledge

and practical applications. A CBR approach was evident in both studies in at least two ways: (a) partner input was sought at key points throughout the research process and especially during the formation of the research questions, recruitment and engagement of parents and youth, and interpretation of research findings; and (b) knowledge-sharing activities (e.g., short summaries, discussion of subsequent data collection processes) were introduced at key points during the data collection and analysis (i.e., integrated knowledge translation) and more formally at the end of the research, in the form of short reports/research summaries, and community presentations. For instance, a community research forum was organized with the community partners involved in the first research study, as a way of sharing the results with key program stakeholders, educators, and educational policy- and decision-makers. These knowledge-sharing activities were designed to mobilize the research findings to inform action that could be continued beyond the completion of the research.

Ethics and Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval for both studies was obtained from the University of Alberta's Research Ethics Board. In CBR, however, ethics negotiations also occur with the community to ensure the ethical and cultural validity of the study (Edwards, Lund, & Gibson, 2008). This is particularly important when working with vulnerable populations such as immigrant children (Kirova & Emme, 2007). The immigrant-serving organization was a critical community voice in both research projects, ensuring that the research process was respectful of the values and beliefs of the communities and participants.

References

Adams, L., & Kirova, A. (Eds.). (2007). *Global migration and education: Schools, children, and families*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Arzubiaga, A. E., Nogueron, S. C., & Sullivan, A. L. (2009). The education of children in im/migrant families. *Review of Research in Education, 33*, 246-271.

Banki, S. (2012). Refugees as educators: The potential for positive impact on educational systems. In F. E. McCarthy & M. H. Vickers (Eds.), *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education* (pp. 43-64). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Beiser, M. (2009). Resettling refugees and safeguarding their mental health: Lessons learned from the Canadian refugee resettlement project. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 46,* 539-583.

Benet-Martínez, V., Lee, F., & Leu, J. (2006). Biculturalism and cognitive complexity: Expertise in cultural representations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 37,* 386-407.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46,* 5-68.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Contexts of acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 55,* 303-332.

Berthold, S. M. (2000). War traumas and community violence: Psychological, Behavioral, and Academic Outcomes among Khmer Refugee Adolescents. *Journal of Multicultural Social Work, 8,* 15-46.

Birman, D. (2006). Measurement of the "acculturation gap" in immigrant families and implications for parent-child relationships. In M. H. Bornstein & L. R. Cote (Eds.), *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development* (pp. 113-134). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Birman, D., & Tran, N. (2008). The impact of pre- and post-migration factors on psychological distress and adjustment of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 78,* 109-120.

Birman, D., Trickett, E. J., & Vinokurov, A. (2002). Acculturation and adaptation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents: Predictors of adjustment across life domains. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30,* 585-607.

Bourhis, R. Y., Moïse, L. C., Perreault, S., & Senécal, S. (1997). Towards an interactive acculturation model: A social psychological approach. *International Journal of Psychology, 32,* 369-386.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory of research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bronstein, I., & Montgomery, P. (2011). Psychological distress in refugee children: A systematic review. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review, 14,* 44-56.

Bui, H. N. (2012). Immigrant generational status and delinquency in adolescence: Segmented assimilation and racial-ethnic differences. In C. Garcia Coll & A. K., Marks (Eds.), *The Immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk?* (pp. 135-158). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012). *Facts and figures: Immigration overview, permanent and temporary residents 2012*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011). *Evaluation of government assisted refugees and resettlement assisted program*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada.

Corbin Dwyer, S., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8,* 55-63.

Cortes, K. E. (2004). Are refugees different from economic immigrants? Some empirical evidence on the heterogeneity of immigrant groups in the United States. *The Review of Economics & Statistics, 86,* 465-480.

Derwing, T. M., DeCorby, E., Ichikawa, J., & Jamieson, K. (1999). Some factors that affect the success of ESL high school students. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 55,* 532-547.

Eamon, M. K. (2005). Social-demographic, school, neighborhood, and parenting influences on the academic achievement of Latino young adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34,* 163-174.

Edwards, K., Lund, C., & Gibson, N. (2009). Ethical validity: Expecting the unexpected in community-based research. *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health, 6*(3), 17-30.

Ellis, B. H., MacDonald, H. Z., Lincoln, A. K., & Cabral, H. J. (2008). Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: The role of trauma, stress, and perceived discrimination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76,* 184-193.

Ellis, B. H., Miller, A. B., Abdi, S., Barrett, C., & Blood, E. A. (2013). Multi-tier mental health program for refugee youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 81,* 129-140.

Epstein, J. A., Dusenbury, L., Botvin, G. J., & Diaz, T. (1996). Language use and initiation of alcohol use among New York City Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse, 5(2), 63-76.*

Fangen, K. (2006). Humiliation and Somali refugees in Norway. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 19,* 69-93.

Fazel, M., Reed, R. V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. *Lancet, 37,* 266-282.

Fazel M., & Stein, A. (2003). The mental health of refugee children. *Archives of Disease in Childhood, 87,* 366-370.

Fosados, R., McClain, A., Ritt-Olson, A., Sussman, S., Soto, D., Baezconde-Garbanati L., & Unger, J. B. (2007). The influence of acculturation on drug and alcohol use in a sample of adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors, 32,* 2990-3004.

Fuligni, A. J. (1997). The academic achievement of adolescents from immigrant families: The roles of family background, attitudes, and behavior. *Child Development, 68,* 261-273.

Fulgini, A. J. (1998). The adjustment of children from immigrant families. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 7,* 99-103.

Fuligni, A. J., Witkow, M., & Garcia, C. (2005). Ethnic identity and the academic adjustment of adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, and European backgrounds. *Developmental Psychology, 41,* 799-811.

Garcia Coll, C., Akiba, D., Palacios, N., Bailey, B., Silver, R., DiMartino, L., & Chin, C. (2002). Parental involvement in children's education: Lessons from three immigrant groups. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 2,* 303-324.

García Coll, C. T., Lamberty, G., Jenkins, R., McAdoo, H. P., Crnic, K., Wasik, B. H., & Vazquez García, H. (1996). An integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development, 67,* 1891-1914.

Garcia Coll, C. T., & Marks, A. K. (Eds). (2012). *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk*? Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Gauvain, M., & Parke, R. D. (2010). Socialization. In M. H. Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of cultural developmental science* (pp. 239-258). New York, NY: Psychology Press.

George, U. (2002). A needs-based model for settlement service delivery for newcomers to Canada. *International Social Work, 45,* 465-480.

Georgiades, K., Boyle, M. H., & Duku, E. (2007). Contextual influences on children's mental health and school performance: The moderating effects of family immigrant status. *Child Development, 5,* 1572-159.

Gibson, M. A. (1998). Promoting academic success among immigrant students: Is acculturation the issue? *Educational Policy, 12,* 615-633.

Glick, J. E., & White, M. J. (2003). The academic trajectories of immigrant youths: Analysis within and across cohorts. *Demography, 40,* 759-783.

Gokiert, R., Chow, W., Parsa, B., & Rajani, N. (2009). *Cross-cultural lessons: Early childhood developmental screening and approaches to research and practice.* Edmonton, AB: Community-University Partnership.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). London, UK: Sage.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln Y. S. (2008). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S., Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 225-286). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hamilton, R., & Moore, D. (2004). *Educational interventions for Refugee*

children: Theoretical perspectives and implementing best practice. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Harrell-Bond, B., & Voutira, E. (2007). In search of 'invisible' actors: Barriers to access in refugee research. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 20,* 281-298.

Hernandez, D. J., Denton, N. A., Macartney, S., & Blanchard, V. L. (2012). Children in immigrant families: Demography, policy, and evidence for the immigrant paradox. In C. Garcia Coll & A. K., Marks (Eds.), *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk?* (pp. 17-36). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Israel, B. A., Schultz, A., Parker, E. A., & Baker, A. B. (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 19,* 173-202.

Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1995). Optimism and achievement: The educational performance of immigrant youth. *Social Science Quarterly, 76,* 1-19.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12,* 29-43.

Kirova, A., & Emme, M. (2007). Critical issues in conducting research with immigrant children. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 7,* 83-

107.

Klassen, R. M. (2004). Optimism & realism: A review of self-efficacy from a cross-cultural perspective. *International Journal of Psychology, 39,* 205-230.

LaFramboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114,* 395-412.

Lareau, A. (2001). Linking Bourdieu's concepts of capital to the broader field. In B. J. Biddle (Ed.), *Social class, poverty, and education: Policy and practice* (pp. 77-100). New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Leung, A. K., Maddux, W. W., Galinsky, A. D., & Chiu, C. (2008). Multicultural experience enhances creativity: The when and how. *American Psychologist, 63,* 169-181.

Li, J. (2009). Forging the future between two different worlds: Recent Chinese immigrant adolescents tell their cross-cultural experiences. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 24,* 477-504.

Lopez, E. J., Ehly, S., & Garcia-Vazquez, E. (2002). Acculturation, social support, and academic achievement of Mexican and Mexican American high school students: An exploratory study. *Psychology in the Schools, 39,* 245-257.

Lustig, S. L., Kia-Keating, M., Knight, W. G., Geltman, P., Ellis, H., Kinzie, J. D., …Saxe, G. N. (2004). Review of child and adolescent refugee mental health. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 43,* 24-36.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 2,* 224-253.

Mayan, M. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 75,* 329-364.

Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: Negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 20,* 405-416.

Mistry, J., & Wu, J. (2010). Navigating cultural worlds and negotiating identities: A conceptual model. *Human Development, 53,* 5-25.

Montazer, S., & Wheaton, B. (2011). The impact of generation and country of origin on the mental health of children of immigrants. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 52,* 23-42.

Montgomery, J. R. (1996). Components of refugee adaptation. *International Migration Review, 30,* 679-702.

Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52,* 250-260.

Myers, R., Chou C. P., Sussman S., Baezconde-Garbanati L., Pachon H., & Valente T. W. (2009). Acculturation and substance use: Social influence as a mediator among Hispanic alternative high-school youth. *Journal of*

Health and Social Behavior, *50,* 164-79.

Okazaki, S. (2009). Impact of racism on ethnic minority mental health. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 4,* 103-107.

Oppedal, B. (2006). Development and acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 97-112). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Oppedal, B., & Roysamb, E. (2004). Mental health, life stress, and social support among Norwegian adolescents with immigrant and host national background. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, *45,* 131-144.

Padilla, A. M. (2006). Bicultural social development. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 28,* 467-497.

Papadopoulos, R. (2007). Refugees, trauma and adversity activated development. *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling, 9,* 301-312.

Pérez Carreón, G., Drake, C., & Calabrese Barton, A. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal, 42,* 465-498.

Phinney, J. S., Berry, J. W., Vedder, P., & Liebkind, K. (2006). The acculturation experience: Attitudes, identity, and behaviors of immigrant youth. In J. W. Berry, J. S. Phinney, D. L. Sam, & P. Vedder (Eds.), *Immigrant Youth in Cultural Transition: Acculturation, Identity, and Adaptation Across National Contexts* (pp. 71-116). Mahwah, NJ: Lawerence Erlbaum Associates.

Pong, S., & Zeiser, K. L. (2012). Student engagement, school climate, and academic achievement of immigrants' children. In C. Garcia Coll & A. K., Marks (Eds.), *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk*? (pp. 209-232). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Porter, M., & Haslam, N. (2005). Predisplacement and postdisplacement factors associated with mental health of refugees and internally displayed persons: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 294,* 602-612.

Portes, P. R. (1999). Social and psychological factors in the academic achievement of children of immigrants: A cultural history puzzle. *American Educational Research Journal, 36,* 489-507.

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Potochnick, S. R., & Perreira, K. M. (2010). Depression and anxiety among first-generation immigrant Latino youth. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 198,* 470-477.

Rios-Aguilar, C., Kiyama, J. M., Gravitt, M., & Moll, L. C. (2011). Funds of knowledge for the poor and forms of capital for the rich? A capital approach to examining funds of knowledge. *Theory and Research in Education, 9,* 163-184.

Rossiter, M. J., & Derwing, T. M. (2012). Still far to go: Systematic programming for immigrant and refugee children and youth. In F. E.

McCarthy & M. H. Vickers (Eds.), *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education* (pp. 89-106). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Rossiter, M. J., & Rossiter, K. R. (2009). Diamonds in the rough: Bridging gaps in supports for at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. *International Migration and Integration, 10,* 409-429.

Rousseau, C., Drapeau, A., & Corin, E. (1998). Risk and protective factors in Central American and Southeast Asian refugee children. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 11,* 20-37.

Rousseau C., & Guzder, J. (2008). School-based prevention programs for refugee children. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 17*, 533-549.

Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, life stages, and generational cohorts: Decomposing the immigrant first and second generations in the United States. *International Migration Review, 38,* 1160-1205.

Rutter, J. (2006). *Refugee children in the UK*. London, UK: Open University Press.

Sam, D. L., & Oppedal, B. (2003). Acculturation as a developmental pathway. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 8*(1), 1-14.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist, 65,* 237-251.

Simich, L., Beiser, M., Stewart, M., & Mwakarimba, E. (2005). Providing social

support for immigrants and refugees in Canada: Challenges and Directions. *Journal of Immigrant Health, 7*, 259-268.

Statistics Canada (2009). *Immigration in Canada: A Portrait of the Foreign-born Population, 2006 Census: Findings.* Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/

Statistics Canada (2003). *Ethnic diversity survey: Portrait of a multicultural society*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Pimentel, A., & Martin, M. (2009). The significance of relationships: Academic engagement and achievement among newcomer immigrant youth. *Teachers College Record, 111,* 712-749.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Gaytán, F. X., Bang, H. J., Pakes, J., O'Connor, E., & Rhodes, J. (2010). Academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant youth. *Developmental Psychology, 40,* 602-618.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Rhodes, J., & Milburn, M. (2009). Unravelling the immigrant paradox: Academic engagement and disengagement among recently arrived immigrant youth. *Youth & Society, 41,* 151-185.

Tadmor, C. T., Tetlock, P. E., & Peng, K. (2009). Acculturation strategies and integrative complexity: The cognitive implications of biculturalism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40,* 105-139.

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting refugee students in schools: what

constitutes inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16,* 39-56.

Triandis, H. C. (1996). The psychological measurement of cultural syndromes. *American Psychologist, 51,* 407-415.

Trickett, E. J., & Birman, D. (2005). Acculturation, school context and school outcomes: Adaptation of refugee adolescents from the Former Soviet Union. *Psychology in the Schools, 42,* 27-38.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2013, July). *Education for all: Global monitoring report* (Policy Paper No. 10). Paris, France: Author.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2012). *A year of crises: Global trends 2011*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

Valenzuela, A. (2002). Reflections on the subtractive underpinnings of education research and policy. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55,* 235-241.

Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2003). The conceptual, historical, and practice roots of community based participatory research and related participatory traditions. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 27-52). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Ward. C. (2004). Psychological theories of culture contact and their implications for intercultural training and interventions. In D. Landis & R. S. Bhagat (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (3rd ed., pp. 185-218). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). *The psychology of culture shock* (2nd ed.). East Sussex: Routledge.

Watters, C. (2008). *Refugee children: Towards the next horizon*. London, UK: Routledge.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8,* 69-91.

Zhou, M., & Kim, S. S. (2006). Community forces, social capital, and educational achievement: The case of supplementary education in the Chinese and Korean immigrant communities. *Harvard Educational Review, 76,* 1-29.

CHAPTER TWO

Addressing Barriers to Parent Refugee Engagement in a School-Based Transition Supports Program[1]

Migration is a forced and rarely well-planned choice for refugee parents. After escaping conflict, violence, and/or persecution, refugees reside in refugee camps, with resettlement as one of the options available to them for rebuilding their lives. The literature on refugee resettlement in Western countries such as Canada, US, UK, and Australia suggests that the post-migration period is far from easy for refugees. Social isolation, discrimination, poverty, lack of affordable housing, unemployment or underemployment, and increased mental health needs due to high levels of pre-migration trauma are commonly reported issues facing refugee families post-settlement (Beiser, 2009; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008; Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; George, 2002; Krahn, Derwing, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 2000; Lustig et al., 2004; Porter & Haslam, 2005). In addition, as for other newcomers, acculturative stress; changes in family dynamics; unfamiliarity with the political, social, economic, and cultural context of the resettlement country; and, in many cases, lack of English language proficiency, make the first few years of transition particularly challenging for refugee parents (Ali, 2008; Allen, Vaage, & Hauff, 2006; Beiser, 2009; Garcia Coll et al., 2009; George, 2002; Liebkind, 1996; McBrien, 2005; Montgomery, 1996).

Canada, a signatory to the United Nations Convention Related to the Status of Refugees (Pressé & Thomson, 2008), accepts 20,000-35,000 refugees each year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2012). Refugees enter

Canada from sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Europe, and the Middle East through the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program (CIC, 2012). Refugees may be privately or government sponsored or they may seek refugee status from within Canada through the in-Canada asylum program. To assist sponsored refugees, the government of Canada may cover resettlement expenses such as medical examinations and transportation to Canada (CIC, n.d.); however, refugees are expected to repay these expenses, which are considered a loan and can be as high as $10,000, soon after they resettle in Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees, n.d.). In 2002, Canada introduced the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act, which placed emphasis on refugee selection based on greatest need for protection (CIC, 2011; Rossiter & Derwing, 2012). As a result of this policy change, recent refugees are more likely to have complex resettlement needs and require significant support.

Refugees from Somalia are currently the third largest refugee group worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2012) and have been one of the top ten refugee groups to arrive in Canada over the past decade (CIC, 2012). Many years of civil war and political instability, following a long history of colonization, have resulted in massive exodus from Somalia, cumulative trauma, and prolonged stays in refugee camps for many Somalis. Research specific to the post-settlement experiences of Somali children and youth shows evidence of mental health difficulties such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as educational and acculturation struggles (e.g., Bigelow, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). In a

study examining the psychological adjustment of Somali adolescents in the US, Ellis et al. (2008) found that symptoms of PTSD were associated with pre-migration trauma as well as with post-migration stressors such as high levels of perceived discrimination and acculturation difficulties. The literature on the adjustment of Somali children and youth is gradually growing; however, far less is known about the experiences of Somali parents in general and within the Canadian context in particular. Studies (e.g., Nilsson, Barazanji, Heintzelman, Siddiqi, & Shilla, 2012; Pavlish, Noor, & Brandt, 2010) that focused exclusively on Somali parents in North America examined post-settlement family dynamics or experiences with the health care system. There is a lack of studies that focus on the school engagement experiences of Somali parents. One exception is a study by McBrien (2011), which examined the school involvement of mothers from three refugee groups in the US, one of which was Somali mothers. A second exception is a study by Ali (2012) which focused on the school experiences of immigrant and refugee parents in Canada, including Somali parents. From an ecological acculturation development framework (Oppedal, 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003), it is critical to understand the parent experience because family-related factors, such as maternal health, parental education, home culture, family income, and differences in parent-child acculturation, play a critical role in the educational and psychological adjustment of immigrant and refugee youth (Birman, 2006; Fazel et al. 2012; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

This paper reports on the school involvement experiences of newcomer Somali parents in Alberta, western Canada. Alberta is currently the fourth largest

immigrant-receiving province in Canada as a result of a prosperous economy related to the oil and gas industry and to the employment opportunities that it offers (CIC, 2012; Derwing & Krahn, 2008). The Somali community in Alberta has grown in the last few years to an estimated 5,015 (Statistics Canada, 2012). This growth was the result of both direct migration from abroad and internal migration, primarily from the province of Ontario (Khalema, Hay, Wannas, Joseph, & Zulla, 2011). In light of an increased presence of Somali children and youth in Alberta's schools, an understanding of Somali parent engagement will contribute to fostering strong school-family relationships that supports refugee children's education.

This paper is organized into five sections. The first section provides a brief review of the literature on school-based refugee programming and parent engagement. This is followed by a description of the Transition Supports Program, the research method, and the results. In the last section, I discuss the findings of the study in relation to the literature on refugee adjustment and parent engagement.

Literature Review

School-based Refugee Programming

In Canada, as in many other countries of resettlement, schools are seen as the main access point for refugee children and families, and school-based programs are increasingly described in the literature (Ellis, Miller, Abdi, Barrett, & Blood, 2013; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008; Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). While the central idea of school-based programming is based on acknowledging

and responding to the specific needs of the refugee students, models vary, depending on whether they focus on mental health, language learning, or education/schooling in general (Rutter, 2006). Rousseau and Guzder (2008) have identified three pillars of school-based refugee programming. The first is a focus on teachers' professional development and the need for increased competence to meet the needs of their students. The second is enriched in-class and after-school support. The third is an investment in parent engagement and the enhancing of school-home relationships. Other scholars (e.g., Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien & Ford, 2012; Rah, Choi, & Nguyen, 2009; Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Yohani, 2013) have stressed the importance of second language learning, a welcoming school environment, strong school leadership and policies, the role of cultural liaisons, and collaboration with community agencies as key elements of school-based refugee programming. As the focus of this paper is on refugee parent engagement, relevant literature in that area is reviewed next.

Immigrant and Refugee Parent Engagement

Parental engagement in education is important to children's academic success. Research illustrates that when parents are involved in their children's schooling, children tend to be motivated learners, have high educational aspirations, receive good grades, and experience a sense of school belonging (Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Hill et al., 2004; Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2007). Research also shows that the parental involvement benefits all students, including those from minority and immigrant communities (Jeynes, 2003).

Parental engagement is often described in terms of involvement in school-based activities (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, committee service, volunteerism) and home-based activities (e.g., homework support). To the extent that parents perform these activities, they are considered by the school to be engaged. Yet, racial, cultural, and socioeconomic factors influence how and to what extent parents are involved in their children's schooling (Garcia Coll et al., 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). In examining cultural differences in parental involvement practices, Huntsinger and Jose (2009) found that Chinese American parents were more likely to be involved in home-based practices, whereas European American parents were more likely to volunteer in their child's school.

In addition to cultural differences, immigrant and refugee parents experience other obstacles that influence their involvement in school-based activities. These may include low second language proficiency and unfamiliarity with the expectations of the receiving country's education system (Ali, 2012; Garcia Coll et al., 2009; Ramirez, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). The limited school involvement of immigrant and refugee parents, especially newcomer parents, however, is often misinterpreted by teachers or schools as a deficit in the parents' value system, rather than understood in relation to the social, economic, or cultural barriers they may face (Lightfoot, 2004; Pérez Carreón, Drake, & Calabrese Barton, 2005). In a textual analysis of parent engagement literature, Lightfoot (2004) draws attention to how perceptions of parental involvement are connected to parents' cultural capital, in particular class and language ability. She notes that:

> middle-class parents are seen as overflowing containers, whose involvement in schools is to be valued…contrasted with low-income, urban parents who speak English as a second language and who are portrayed as empty containers, which need to be filled before they can give anything of value to the schools or their own offspring. (p. 93)

In order to shift the dialogue away from such deficit-based views, it is critical to have a better understanding of the sociocultural realities of refugee parents and how these may influence their school involvement.

Various guides have been developed in North America to assist schools in developing partnerships with immigrant and refugee families. For instance, the Coalition for Equal Access to Education (www.eslaction.com) in Canada has published two such guides; the first is titled *Toward cultural competency: A practical guide to facilitate active participation of culturally diverse families in schools* and the second is titled *Toward active parental participation: A practical guide to working with immigrants*. These guides provide a series of modules to be used by school personnel to critically reflect on their resources and parent engagement practices and the ways in which these practices may facilitate or hinder the engagement of culturally diverse families. The Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS; www.brycs.org) in the US has also published a toolkit, *Refugee children in U.S. schools: A toolkit for teachers and school personnel*, outlining best practices in refugee education. One of the components of the toolkit specifically addresses collaboration between schools and refugee-serving agencies as one way of enhancing supports and school-based

services for refugee families. Achieving optimal outcomes for refugee students and families can be facilitated through collaborative efforts that bring together resources and expertise from different organizations (Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Such well-intentioned efforts, however, can also be problematic in the absence of systematic coordination and sufficient communication between stakeholders, and can result in some students falling through the cracks (Rossiter & Derwing, 2012).

One noteworthy practice, which is achieved through collaboration between schools and refugee-serving agencies and appears promising in enhancing school-family relationships, is the utilization of cultural brokering services, typically offered by cultural brokers (a.k.a. cultural liaisons or settlement practitioners) working with immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies. Cultural brokers are individuals who speak the language of the parents and can act as bridges between them and the school (McBrien & Ford, 2012; Rah, et al., 2009; Yohani, 2013). Programs that have utilized the services of cultural brokers report benefits for students, parents, and the school (McBrien & Ford, 2012; Yohani, 2013). Cultural brokers working with refugee families in educational settings engage in various activities, including interpretation/translation, cultural and educational mediation, capacity building for school personnel to work more effectively with refugee families, and, in some cases, advocacy for and with parents (McBrien & Ford, 2012; Yohani, 2013). The literature on cultural brokers in school-based refugee programming is still limited, however, and more research is needed to better

document and understand the role cultural brokers play in facilitating school-family relationships.

The Present Study

The present study examined the school engagement of newcomer Somali parents within the context of a school-based Transition Supports Program (TSP) implemented by a school district in a medium-sized metropolitan city in Alberta. Parent engagement within the program and in this paper is defined as engagement "embedded in cultural spaces" (Pérez Carreón, Drake, & Calabrese Barton; 2005, p. 469). I use the term *cultural* broadly to encompass the social and linguistic aspects of a cultural space that influence social interactions and, in this case, school-family relationships.

The following two research questions guided this study:

(a) What were the barriers to Somali parent engagement within the context of the TSP?

(b) What strategies were perceived to be most effective in addressing these barriers within the context of the TSP?

The Transition Supports Program

The Transition Supports Program (TSP) model was guided by a prevention philosophy. By increasing protective factors and reducing risk factors upon arrival, it was anticipated that the program would have a positive impact on the adjustment of newcomer refugee students who were perceived as being at risk for poor educational, psychological, and social outcomes. The program sought to enhance students' adaptation through a range of in-school and after-school

activities, while providing settlement support to refugee parents. Co-location of services was a critical element of the program, aimed at transforming the school into a hub of community connection, settlement services, and learning opportunities. The program model was loosely based on a wraparound program philosophy. Wraparound models have gained acceptance in education for supporting students with complex needs (Bruns, Suter, Force, & Burchard, 2005; Prakash et al., 2010). Although there is no widely accepted definition of *wraparound*, the term often refers to collaborative intervention efforts that are family-centered and build on the strengths of the family as well as the expertise, perspectives, and resources of multiple sectors and agencies (e.g., Bruns, et al., 2005; Prakash et al., 2010). When applied to serving newcomer immigrant and refugee families, wraparound models include cultural brokering and settlement services tailored to the family's needs (Ford & Georgis, 2011).

The program was developed and implemented by a local school board in collaboration with thirteen community partners. Six of the community partners were immigrant-serving agencies and the remaining seven offered a wide range of social, recreational, and/or educational services and programs for children, youth, and/or families. Degree and type of involvement differed across partnering agencies and organizations. For instance, some partners were primarily involved in the development of the program, and others were heavily involved in the delivery of services to students and families. The development of the program aligned with the school board's adoption of a multicultural education policy. The program was piloted between 2010 to 2013 at an inner-city elementary/junior high

school with a dense immigrant and refugee population. The research presented in this paper is based on this pilot site.

The program had three main components: a transition classroom, after-school student activities, and parent education and settlement support. A short description of the three components and the population served by each one is presented in Table 2-1. As the focus of this paper is on parent support and engagement, the transition classroom and after-school activities will only be briefly described here.

Table 2-1

Overview of the TSP Components and the Population Served by Each

	Transition Classroom	After-school Activities	Parent Support
Purpose	To ease the transition of newcomer students though English language learning, literacy and numeracy, and school readiness skill development	To support the social-emotional and academic development of students through recreation opportunities (sports, dance, cooking) and homework support	To facilitate the adjustment of parents through English language learning opportunities and settlement services
Primary Target Population	Recently arrived students with limited English, gaps in learning, and/or limited formal schooling	Transition classroom students and other English Language Learners (ELL) students in the school	Parents of transition classroom and other ELL students
Actual Population Served	Same as target population	Transition classroom students, ELL and non-ELL students	Same as target population

The transition classroom served newcomer refugee students with limited or no English and with significant gaps in learning. The classroom was typically small

in size, with between 10 and 18 students. The teachers focused heavily on English language learning, school routines and expectations, and basic literacy and numeracy. Three transition classrooms were available at the school: an intercultural early learning classroom for preschool-aged English language learners (ELLs), an elementary transition classroom for children in Grades 4-6, and a junior high classroom for students in Grades 7-9. While the school had ELLs in Kindergarten-Grade 3, there was no separate transition classroom for these learners; rather, they were receiving ELL support within their regular classrooms in the school due to resource limitations and the desire to focus primarily on the older students who were perceived to be most at risk. The transition classroom students were from various countries including Ethiopia, Colombia, Mexico, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. During the second and third years of the program, more than half of the students in the elementary and junior high transition classrooms were Somali.

The after-school component served the transition classroom students as well as other immigrant students attending the school. In the third year, in response to interest from parents, this was expanded to all students in the school, but the majority of those attending were immigrant and refugee students. The inclusion of all students in after-school programming was seen as advantageous because the services provided at the school could benefit all students. It was also beneficial for integrating Canadian-born and immigrant students. Most of the students accessing the after-school programming were Somali. After-school academic support and sport activities (e.g., soccer, basketball, volleyball) were

provided on a daily basis (excluding weekends) throughout the school year. In addition to sports, activities such as dancing, cooking classes, and art were provided on a short-term basis (e.g., a series of 10 cooking classes). After-school activities were age-based and lasted for 2 to 2.5 hours. Students in grades 4-6 and 7-9 received one hour of academic support and one hour of recreation each afternoon. Those in Kindergarten-Grade 3 had a more flexible schedule during after-school programming. Snacks were offered to all students attending the after-school program. The after-school activities were run at the school by the community partners and served 70-80 students daily, with higher participation rates for Kindergarten-Grade 3 (K-3) and grades 4-6. For instance, average attendance during 2011-2012 for K-3 was 25, for grades 4-6 was 23, and for grades 7-9 was 11. There was no cost associated with participating in the after-school program.

The parent support component served newcomer parents with children in the transition classroom, as well as other ELL parents whose children attended the school. The parent support component was also offered in collaboration with the community agencies. Three types of services were offered to parents at the school: organized classes, settlement support, and parent information meetings. Organized classes included English language and citizenship education classes offered on a weekly basis and typically attended by 10 to 30 parents. Two short-term classes (a sewing class and a computer class), jointly selected with the parents, were also offered at the school. These were attended by 10 to 20 parents.

Organized classes were typically offered in the morning, after parents dropped their children off at the school.

In addition to the scheduled programming, settlement support was offered to parents by two cultural brokers (one male and one female) from two of the partnering immigrant-serving organizations. Because of the large numbers of Somali parents at the school, both cultural brokers were Somali. The cultural brokers provided two types of settlement support: in-school support and out-of-school support. Table 2-2 provides examples of each of the in-school services and supports provided by the cultural brokers.

Table 2-2

Examples of In-School Services/Support Provided by Cultural Brokers

Type of Service	Example(s)
Somali-English Interpretation	Interpret during parent-teacher interviews or parent information meetings
Somali-English Translation	Translate school letters or forms; help parents to complete forms in English
Communication between school and home	Communicate with parents in person or by phone to remind them about an upcoming meeting or to bring a signed permission slip to the school
Education and cultural awareness	Educate teachers about the refugee pre- and post-migration experience; educate teachers about Somali educational expectations and family practices; educate parents about school rules and regulations
Mediation and conflict resolution	Act as a third-party mediator in the event of conflict arising from a lack of cross-cultural understanding and/or a lack of understanding of family circumstances, and help the two parties reach the solution that best benefits the child
Advocacy/empowerment	Bring suggestions from parents to decision- making related to parent programming activities (e.g., parents' topics of interest for parent meetings); encourage parent participation in school activities

The in-school support included: interpretation, translation, personalized communication between home and school, education, mediation and conflict resolution, and advocacy. The out-of-school support included similar types of supports, but in out-of-school contexts such as health services and employment. For instance, the cultural broker would accompany a parent to a doctor's appointment to provide interpretation or would help a parent complete a job application in English. Out-of-school support also included connecting families to resources in the community.

The third type of parent support was the organization of parent information meetings. The meetings were held at the school one evening a month, for 2.5 to 3 hours, and were attended by the parents, the three transition classroom teachers, the school principal, the cultural brokers, and the community partners. The meetings were typically attended by 20 to 40 parents. At each meeting, a meal and childcare were provided. The early part of the meetings was informal, with parents interacting with other parents and school staff. A formal portion with a guest presenter followed the meal. The topic of the presentation was jointly decided with the parents; topics covered included: overview of the school system in Alberta, school rules and regulations (e.g., student attendance, registration), key information for parents with children in junior high and high school (e.g., course selection, grading system), ELL assessments and grade placements, nutrition and diabetes, housing information, and orientation to Canadian services (e.g., children and youth services, police services, making emergency calls). Parent-teacher interviews were also scheduled during the parent meetings. During the meetings,

language support was available to all parents, most of whom were Somali. An increase in the Spanish-speaking population of the school resulted in an increased number of Spanish-speaking parents at the monthly parent meetings during the second and third years of the pilot program. As a result, arrangements were made to have Spanish interpreters during these meetings. Due to the large presence of Somali students and parents in the program, however, this paper is focused on Somali parent engagement.

Method

This community-based qualitative study was conducted using ethnography. Ethnography is a method by which a researcher seeks to understand and describe a social setting, group, or culture through observation and immersion in the setting or group to be studied (Mayan, 2009). In this paper, I focus on the engagement of Somali parents and how it was facilitated in the context of the TSP is described.

Participant Characteristics and Recruitment

Individual and group interviews were conducted with 13 parents and 19 program stakeholders. Specifically, one focus group was conducted with 13 Somali mothers, and 19 one-on-one interviews were conducted with the three transition classroom teachers, the two cultural brokers, five after-school staff (one identified as Somali), five stakeholders from immigrant-serving partner organizations (two identified as Somali), and four program stakeholders with a leadership role. The latter group included school-level leadership (i.e., the school principal, and the community coordinator working on-site) as well as program-

wide leadership (i.e., two program supervisors). Although parents can also be considered program stakeholders, the distinction between the two groups is made to facilitate the naming of data sources in the results section.

Program stakeholders were recruited over email (see Appendix A for a sample information letter and consent form). The initial email included a short description of the study and invited interested participants to contact the researcher. Stakeholders who expressed an interest were then contacted by the researcher to arrange a date and time for the interview. Parents were recruited with the help of one of the cultural brokers. The researcher met with the cultural broker to explain the research study and what would be asked of the parents who participated. Then, the researcher attended three of the parent classes/meetings and explained the study to the parents, inviting them to participate. Interested parents were asked to approach the cultural broker after the researcher had left the room. The cultural broker was present on all three occasions to interpret. The voluntary nature of parents' participation was emphasized during the introduction of the study. Parents who expressed an interest in participating were then contacted by the cultural broker and were invited to attend a focus group. All 13 parents who attended the focus group were newcomer mothers (i.e., had been in Canada for five years or less) and were accessing the various services at the school. They had no knowledge of English prior to coming to Canada. Nine of the mothers lived in refugee camps, from between 4 to 17 years, prior to resettling in Canada.

Data Collection

Four types of data were collected in this study: individual and focus group interviews, field notes, meeting minutes, and program documents. Data collection lasted 14 months; it began in December 2011 and continued to March 2013, excluding the summer months of July and August 2012.

Individual interviews. Interviews with program stakeholders were conducted at the school (i.e., in an empty classroom, office, or meeting space) and lasted approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. During the interview, participants were asked to comment on their overall involvement with the program, their experiences working with newcomer families, the barriers that were perceived to influence refugee parents' adjustment in general and school involvement in particular, and the program practices and processes that were found most and least beneficial in supporting and engaging parents. As stakeholders had different roles within the program and not all were working closely with the parents, the interview protocol (see Appendix B-i) was adapted to the needs of each group of participants. All interviews were conducted by the researcher, were audio-recorded, and then transcribed by a research assistant.

Focus group. One parent focus group was conducted with 13 Somali mothers to gain insights into their experiences with the TSP. Focus group was chosen as the preferred method for data collection with parents because the mothers were more comfortable conversing in a group setting. The size of the focus group was slightly larger than the typical size of 6 to 10 participants (Mayan, 2009) because more parents than those anticipated arrived with the intention of participating in the focus group. As it would have been considered

culturally offensive and ethically inappropriate to refuse participation to any of the parents who showed up, all those present participated in the discussion. Two researchers were present; one researcher acted as the facilitator and the other as the note-taker. The focus group was not audio-recorded, in accordance with the participants' wishes, but detailed notes were taken. All the parents in the focus group required language support; thus, one of the cultural brokers served as the interpreter. I met with the cultural broker in advance to share the focus group protocol and to provide some basic research-related guidelines for the focus group (e.g., confidentiality). During the focus group, parents were asked to comment on the challenges they faced as newcomer parents raising their children in Canada and being involved in their children's schooling, their hopes for their children, their overall experience with the program, the program activities that they found most and least beneficial, and their relationships with school and program staff (see Appendix B-ii).

Field notes. In order to gain a deeper and more contextualized understanding of the TSP and the school environment, I participated as a volunteer in after-school activities one day a week for the 14-month duration of the data collection. On occasion, I also participated as an observer in other types of program activities (e.g., parent information meetings). I recorded a total of 39 field notes in an electronic data log. Each field note was 1-1.5 pages long (see Appendix C-i for a field note excerpt). The field notes included one or more of the following types of information: (a) descriptions of actions, behaviours, and interactions between program actors observed during my visit, (b) notes on

conversations I had with program participants and staff during my visit that were relevant to the research questions, (c) methodological notes about the interview protocol, emerging coding, and interpretation of the data (e.g., questions I thought should be added to the protocol based on my observations in the field, "aha" moments with regards to data interpretation), and (d) personal reflections. The field notes were quite broad in scope at the beginning of the data collection, but became more focused on specific actors (e.g., cultural brokers) and/or actions and practices (e.g., parent meetings) from the mid-point on, when the research questions became more focused.

Meeting notes and documents. Notes from monthly after-school staff meetings as well as monthly preschool team meetings were also collected and analyzed. The community coordinator and after-school staff attended the after-school staff meetings. The preschool teacher, school principal, community partners working directly with parents, and one of the Somali cultural brokers who provided wraparound support to families typically attended the preschool team meetings. The discussions that took place at these meetings provided useful contextual information on students, families, program processes, and activities. A total of 24 meeting notes, each 2-4 pages in length, were recorded, the majority of which were from the monthly preschool meetings. In addition to meeting notes, documents, such as successful funding proposals for some of the program activities, progress reports, and district policy reports, were also reviewed.

Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. Mayan (2009) defines qualitative content analysis as the "…process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data" (p. 94). The analysis focused on the ways in which parent engagement was defined in the context of the program, the factors that were perceived to hinder the engagement of Somali refugee parents, and the practices and processes that facilitated parent engagement. Three steps were followed during this inductive process of analysis. First, transcripts, field notes, meeting notes and documents were read using ATLAS ti (ATLAS ti 7), and data were coded by identifying persistent concepts and ideas (see Appendix D for a screenshot of a coded transcript). This resulted in a list of codes, which were then reviewed to identify similarities and differences. Codes that were conceptually similar or related were grouped together to form comprehensive categories that captured the richness and content of the data. Lastly, a definition/description for each category was produced and evaluated based on "internal and external homogeneity" (Mayan, 2009, p. 97). Categories were considered to be internally homogenous if the data fit the category well, without any contradictory information. Categories were considered to be externally heterogeneous if each category was distinct from the others.

Despite its seemingly sequential nature, the analysis—and especially coding—began while data collection and field observations were being conducted and continued until all the data had been collected. Ellis (1998) describes this cyclical process of qualitative analysis as "…a series of loops in a spiral. Each loop may represent a separate activity that resembles data collection and

interpretation" (p. 19). As a result of this concurrent process of data collection and analysis (Ellis, 1998; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002) the interview guide was modified several times throughout the data collection process, in particular for the first half of the interviews, to allow for an in-depth examination of the ideas/concepts that were formed in the field. During this modification process, core interview topics remained the same, but questions were re-worded or new questions were added to allow for deeper exploration of evolving ideas.

Trustworthiness

Three strategies were used to enhance the rigor/trustworthiness of this qualitative study. First, member checks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004) were performed with four participants (one teacher, one cultural broker, one stakeholder from an immigrant-serving organization, and one stakeholder with a leadership role) who were intimately involved with the TSP. Member checks can be one of two types. The researcher may provide participants (i.e., members) with a copy of their interview transcript and the opportunity to make changes (e.g., additions, clarifications). Alternatively, the researcher may provide participants with a summary of thematic categories and/or a synthesis of research findings and invite participants to comment on the analysis and interpretation (e.g., to determine if the categories are meaningful and if they resonate with some of their experiences within the program). The latter was used in this study. Involving community partners/participants in the analysis process is desirable and widely practiced in community-based qualitative research studies to enhance the

relevance and interpretation of the data (Jackson, 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003). During this process, participants had the opportunity to comment on the thematic categories and preliminary summary of findings. While none of the four members disagreed with the organization and content of the findings, they provided additional explanations and contextual information regarding the factors that facilitated parent engagement; this allowed a more succinct and detailed interpretation of the findings pertaining to addressing the barriers within the program and the role of cultural brokers.

The second strategy used to enhance the trustworthiness of the research was that of data triangulation. Data triangulation was achieved through the purposeful selection of a diverse sample of participants representing a range of roles and program involvement and the utilization of multiple data collection strategies such as interviews, field notes, and documents (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). The latter is inherent in ethnographic methods (Mayan, 2009). Through participant and data collection triangulation, I was able to gain a richer and more comprehensive understanding of refugee parent engagement within the TSP. For instance, some of the examples and information provided during the interviews by cultural brokers and stakeholders from immigrant serving organizations were different from and complementary to those provided by teachers and program leadership. Thus, by combining multiple participant perspectives, I gained a broader and more inclusive view of parent engagement. Instances where stakeholder views diverged are described in the results sections.

Third, as noted in the description of the field notes earlier, various types of field notes were recorded, including methodological notes and personal reflections. I regularly read and reflected on the notes taken in the field as a way of keeping myself grounded in the research, identifying my own bias in observations, and detecting turning points in data collection and analysis. For instance, upon reflecting on some of the earlier field notes, I realized that my comments and observations appeared to be more evaluative and critical than descriptive of program activities and actors. Once I became more aware of this tendency, I was able to change my approach to recording more descriptive information of actions and behaviours. Researchers' ability to be reflective and detect their own bias is of vital importance in qualitative research in general and ethnography in particular because of the prolonged fieldwork in which the researcher engages (Allan & Bacon, 1995; Mayan, 2009). Together, these strategies enhanced the credibility and dependability of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Morse et al., 2002; Rodgers & Cowles, 1993).

Results

The results are presented separately for each of the research questions.

Research Question 1: What were the barriers to Somali parent engagement within the context of the TSP?

Through qualitative content analysis, four barriers were identified: language-related barriers, cultural and educational expectations, practical and resettlement barriers, and social barriers.

Language-related barriers. Limited English language ability was identified by participants (parents and program stakeholders) as one of the greatest barriers to school involvement for many of the newcomer Somali parents served by the program. In the absence of a common language, oral (e.g., parent-teacher interviews) and written (e.g., letters, emails, newsletters) forms of communication, which were typically used by the school, were considered ineffective. One of the stakeholders, from an immigrant-serving organization, noted during the interview that language was a critical element to welcoming parents and building healthy school-family relationships: "…if they don't know the language, they need someone to understand them. I think if they get someone who speak what they speak, the language they know,… they [would] feel, I believe, comfortable and more welcome." The connection between language and school-family relations was echoed by one of the cultural brokers who noted during one meeting that although some parents had been in Canada longer and had some basic conversational English language skills, they felt embarrassed communicating in English because they thought their English was not adequate (Meeting Notes). Parents and program stakeholders noted during the interviews that lack of English language proficiency was not only a barrier to communication with the school but it was also making it difficult for parents to support their children's learning at home (e.g., helping with homework). During the focus group, parents noted that one of the reasons they wanted their children to attend the after-school homework club operating daily at the school was so they "[could] get help" from others who spoke English.

Cultural and educational expectations. Contrasting educational expectations based on culturally different schooling experiences was another barrier to school engagement. During the focus groups, parents talked about their educational experiences in Somalia, which were based primarily on their own schooling, and they described a more hierarchical and authoritarian education system. Parents commented that, in Somalia, in-school discipline and learning were the responsibility of the teacher. One parent commented on how difficult it was for her to understand why the school would call her every time her son misbehaved or didn't complete his homework. She explained that in Somalia it was the teacher and not the parent that had "to make sure kids do their school work." During data collection, it became apparent that parents and cultural brokers perceived parental involvement differently from school and program staff. For teachers and some of the after-school staff, parental involvement was about the extent to which a parent attended parent-teacher interviews or school-related activities and inquired about a child's progress. For parents and cultural brokers, parent involvement was less about performing these activities and more about "parents taking care of the children." During one meeting, one of the cultural brokers recounted the story of a mother who considered herself to be involved in her daughter's schooling because she "fed her, clothed her, taught her to respect others, and made sure she [was] a good person" (Meeting Notes). In other words, there was a distinction between holistic parental care and parental school involvement. Parents' care was seen in relation to their presence and involvement

in their children's life as a whole, not their school life in particular, which was considered to be the responsibility of the teacher.

In addition to a different view of schooling, lack of knowledge of school practices and regulations was identified by program stakeholders as another barrier to school-family relationships. One stakeholder from an immigrant-serving organization noted that "parents are challenged in how to work with systems in general because of their lack of English or just lack of knowledge of the system." Teachers and cultural brokers explained that unfamiliarity with English language learner assessments and placements had a significant impact on school-family relationships. They noted that many newcomer parents had difficulty at first understanding why their child was placed in an ESL classroom and felt the school was not treating their child equitably. This added to anxiety resulting from adjusting to a new culture and increased the tension between parents and the school.

Moreover, Somali parents came from a culture with a more relaxed orientation to time, flexible use of collective spaces, and a primarily oral and informal style of interpersonal communication; these contrasted with typical practices in Canadian schools and created a disconnect between parents and the school. One teacher reflected on his experience and noted how different perceptions of time created tensions between school and family:

> the biggest thing is the sense of time. When you set an appointment, particularly with the Somali community, it doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to be that window. For example, our monthly parent meetings

> were supposed to start at 5 o'clock and people would start to show up at about 6:00, 6:30. And things would drag on until 8:00 … not really being aware well we have families and lives outside of school, too. So that part has been kind of frustrating.

Practical and resettlement barriers. As many of the families served by the program were new to Canada, they were in the process of re-building their lives in an unfamiliar place. When asked to share the challenges they faced raising their children in Canada and being involved in their schooling, parents commented on the loss of extended family and peer networks, and the supports that those networks provided, as their biggest challenge. One parent explicitly commented on the hardships of being a newcomer without a support system: "Back home we are more as a family; neighbour can play a role, aunts, whole community. Life is very hard here….[you] are very alone." In the absence of a support system, many parents, especially those with younger children, found it challenging to attend school events unless childcare was provided. Parents, especially fathers, who were already employed, were working long hours and were challenged to find time to meet the many demands of parenting without a support system in a new country.

Field notes, meeting notes, as well as interview/focus group data revealed pressing settlement priorities for many of the families, such as learning new skills (e.g., learning English; learning how to drive), having increased housing needs (e.g., landlord issues, finding stable and affordable housing), seeking employment, and dealing with day-to-day responsibilities of managing a

household in a new country without any immediate support system (e.g., paying bills). Many of these tasks required oral and/or written English communication skills; some degree of familiarity with the city and its various social, health, and employment services; and access to a means of transportation, making them cumbersome and stressful for newcomer parents. One of the cultural brokers noted during the interview that the resettlement challenges were much harder for families who migrated after prolonged stays in refugee camps and had limited urban living experience.

Social barriers. Social barriers included those that influenced the relationships between parents and school staff and were attributed to certain social perceptions/views of Somali parents. Two types of social barriers were identified: unrecognized cultural capital and undervalued parental aspirations. Cultural capital included the knowledge and skills parents had of their own culture, history, and language. Some of the program stakeholders, and in particular cultural brokers and community partners from immigrant serving organizations, noted that this wealth of knowledge and skills was not valued by some program or school staff and that parents felt underappreciated. One stakeholder from an immigrant-serving organization, who was Somali herself, noted during a meeting that some Canadians had negative views of Somali people, based primarily on narratives provided in the media. She said that her "hope [was] that people see Somali [people] not just as pirates" but as a people with a rich "history, culture, and religion" (Meeting Notes). This was echoed by another participant from an

immigrant serving agency who was also Somali and cited the need for mainstream and immigrant communities to support each other:

> …we are not just immigrant. The Canadian people, they need to know that these people who come from somewhere else…have a lot of good things…we bring a lot of things in this country, but we need someone to listen to us. Let them listen to us as immigrant and we want to listen to them too. Both sides need each other, we are not going nowhere, we want to be here, this is our country now.

For refugee families, Somali heritage knowledge had a special meaning, as it was often the only connection these families had to their home country. During one meeting, one stakeholder from a community-based organization, who was a refugee herself and had worked extensively with refugee families, reminded the group that for refugees "religion, language, culture, is all they have. Many had to leave their country with nothing, just a small suitcase. This is all they have" (Meeting Notes). Thus, this cultural capital is of critical importance to refugees because it is a socio-emotional link connecting them to the past and to the future.

The importance of cultural capital was further reflected in parents' aspirations for their children. Two aspirations were identified in the data: a desire for a bicultural identity and a desire for educational success. During the focus group, parents explained that they wanted their children to speak good English, be successful in Canada, and also be proud Somali. One parent commented that she noticed that her children, even at young ages, were refusing aspects of their culture and that this was hurtful to her as a parent and contributed to her anxiety

about cultural loss and identity in her children. At the same time, she said that she was happy to see her children speak English, because she herself was still struggling with the language. Parents also expressed high educational aspirations for their children; they wanted their children to do well in school so they could find stable employment as adults. They valued education and acknowledged that that was the reason they had enrolled their children in the homework club offered at the school. One mother, whose son received a leadership award, explained that she was proud of him and wanted her other children to do as well. Another mother expressed her gratitude for the program because, she said, "[my] son had difficulty reading, but the [transition] teacher helped him a lot and now he is able to read." She then talked about wanting all five of her children to do well in school.

Program stakeholders also acknowledged the aspirations of the parents, especially the educational aspirations. They acknowledged that parents want the best for their children and that parents saw themselves as having a role to play in helping their children succeed in Canada. Some program stakeholders, especially the cultural brokers, those with a leadership role, and those from immigrant-serving agencies, also talked about the importance of cultural capital and the need for schools to become more aware and inclusive of that capital in their programming. Some of the program stakeholders noted, however, that cultural capital and parent aspirations are not recognized by everyone in the school and that parents may be misjudged based solely on their absence from school-related activities.

Research Question 2: What strategies were perceived to be most effective in addressing these barriers within the context of the TSP?

Various strategies were implemented within the context of the program to address the four aforementioned barriers and will be discussed separately for each. The role of the cultural brokers was identified as a recurrent theme in addressing all of the barriers.

Addressing language-related barriers. Cultural brokers were critical to facilitating communication between home and school. During the focus groups, parents commented on how much they appreciated the presence of the cultural brokers as it made them feel that they were part of the school and that their language was respected and embraced. The principal recounted an incident during his interview to show the empowering effects of acknowledging parents' first language:

> I had a parent who was insisting on writing in his own language... and the translator would write his translation of the comment. And [the parent said] that only at this school he would be comfortable doing that… to put his own language on something that's handed in to the principal. For him, that was a huge issue.

Program stakeholders, especially teachers and leadership, noted during the interviews that because cultural brokers were present on a daily basis, morning and afternoon, they were able to provide translation/interpretation as needs arose. For instance, cultural brokers could call the parent at home on behalf of the teacher if a child felt sick during school. Cultural brokers were also present during

parent information meetings, parent-teacher interviews, and key school celebrations that were held outside of school hours. One participant noted the benefit of having the cultural brokers in the school:

> it's been a great asset to the school largely because it brings a skill into the school…that the school doesn't have. And their experience and their skills in working with us to support these families has been just a huge asset. It helps the parents then to interact with the school, which has traditionally for ELL parents often been a huge challenge. And so the school can be far more supportive because they're able to communicate. Because these people with this expertise are in the school, [school] becomes a place where parents can come and get help.

The language services provided by the cultural brokers included more than the simple act of translating/interpreting. Rather, they established relational and personalized ways of communicating orally with families on school-related topics (e.g., phone calls or face-to-face communication), which were more effective than conventional, written-based forms of communication (e.g., letters). One participant with a leadership role emphasized during the interview the relationship cultural brokers had with the families as a motivating force behind parent attendance and involvement:

> Because [families] are so busy with their own lives going to school, dealing with all the paper, it is only really that face-to-face contact regularly in their first language that encourages them to come back...Because we actually sent home a little notice [about the meeting]

> and that goes home to every youngest student in the school a half page, but it's written in English again and it could be among other papers. How likely are you to really notice it? So we've tried various methods to try to say how can we communicate with parents. But we know if your first language is not English, the best way to encourage people to come is to have that direct contact in their first language…over the phone.

Addressing cultural and educational expectations. Providing information to both parents and school staff about Somali and Canadian education systems and cultural perceptions of parent involvement was key to reducing the barrier of cultural and educational differences. Two strategies were used to facilitate information sharing. The first involved cultural brokers acting as informants and providing cultural education, mediation, and, if needed, conflict resolution, in relation to all of the issues that were identified in the corresponding section above. Because cultural brokers were knowledgeable of both the Somali and Canadian educational systems, they were able to provide cultural interpretations of a particular behaviour/situation and thus help the two parties (family and school) better understand each other. This information exchange was ongoing but needs-based. Teachers noted during the interviews that although they, as transition teachers, worked closely with the cultural brokers and had the opportunity to learn about the cultural and educational expectations of the parents, other teachers at the school rarely had this opportunity and were more likely to experience tensions with the parents. This was also true for after-school staff from non-immigrant-serving organizations, especially those who had little experience

working with refugee families. One participant commented on how beneficial it would have been for her to receive explicit and prior information about the culture, language, and pre-migration experiences of the refugee groups she worked with in order to better understand the parents' and children's behaviours. Because of these requests, one information session on cultural competency was scheduled for after-school staff.

This information exchange relieved some of the tensions between the school and the parents and resulted in enhanced school-family relationships. Program stakeholders noted during the interviews that the cultural and contextual information provided by the cultural brokers helped the school staff become more aware of cultural differences and post-settlement refugee family realities, and thus deal with situations in ways that would most benefit the family. One of the cultural brokers, who had several years of experience working in other schools, noted during one of the meetings how lack of cultural understanding of immigrant and refugee family practices and post-settlement realities could occasionally result in extreme measures being taken on behalf of the school. She noted that having cultural mediation services at the school on a daily basis greatly benefits the families: "It's prevention what we do. We are here every day, we provide information so not once did they call social services." This was further echoed by another participant in a leadership role:

> [the program] helps these families that have a very limited understanding of language, culture, schooling. And it helps them to… integrate into the school. It helps them to become part of the school community…it helps

> us to deal with issues before they become big issues in the school …largely through failure to understand and to communicate.

The second strategy utilized to address the barrier of dissimilar cultural and educational expectations was the monthly parent information meetings. As noted earlier, these meetings included guest speakers who provided information on a variety of topics of interest to parents and of need to the school. Several of the sessions were focused on information about the Canadian educational system and helped parents better understand school rules and regulations in Alberta in general and ELL practices in particular. By being more informed, parents were better prepared to support their children. Program stakeholders and parents noted during the interviews that, because of their informal and stable nature, those meetings were more than a venue for information sharing; they contributed to relationship building between school and parents, especially for teachers and program leadership, given the face-to-face personal contact with families. One teacher described the meetings as contributing to a sense of community:

> the parent support meetings…I like them because it gives a sense of community; I feel like it's a connection that the parents have with the school. It's a regular once-a-month thing. The kids stay, get to see the parents. If I know that week is coming up, then I don't have to call home. I know I'm going to get a face-to-face with some of them.

One program stakeholder noted that once the parents have a better understanding of the system and have established relationships with the teachers through face-to-face contact, they can be better involved in their children's schooling:

> Parents are… comfortable coming into the school and asking the questions they need to. They're seeing what's in the school, so they're better able to support their kids in terms of what's happening in the school. So if a child is, you know, coming and struggling in something academically, the parent may not or may have their idea about what the child may do and give them advice that isn't relevant. But because they've seen the school…they've seen how the school works 'cause they're in the school so much more, they're able to give better advice to their children. And better problem solve. They're also able to talk to staff at the school around smaller issues rather than waiting for an issue to become a big issue.

Addressing practical and resettlement barriers. To address some of the practical barriers that prevented parent participation, such as lack of childcare and transportation, childcare was always available for parents during parent meetings, which took place in the evening, as soon as after-school activities were finished. Cultural brokers and other parents who had access to a vehicle would sometimes drive the parents who lived far away from the school and were in need of transportation.

To address the wide range of settlement issues parents faced on a daily basis, cultural brokers offered wraparound services within and outside the school. These services included completing paperwork, making phone calls, accompanying parents to appointments, connecting parents to appropriate services and resources in the community, and advocating. During one of my visits, the principal approached one of the cultural brokers to help one of the newest students

get a bike. The principal noted that the family had to go that afternoon to collect the bike and would be in need of someone to provide transportation. The cultural broker responded that she would gladly help because "they need it" (Field Notes). On another occasion, the cultural broker had to leave the school to go to the hospital to provide support and interpretation for a mother who was in labour. I recorded several similar instances in my field notes in which the cultural brokers would provide services to a family during out-of-school hours. Parents welcomed these services. One of the parents commented during the focus group how much she appreciated the help she received at the school not only from the cultural brokers but also from the teachers and principal. She noted how "even the principal would ask 'How can I help? What can I do?'" Moreover, parent meetings were used as a venue for parents to address some of their resettlement needs through guest informants speaking on topics of interest to the parents, such as information on housing options.

A community room was available in the school, and, while at the beginning it was used primarily for some of the classes available to parents, it served as a place where parents could meet one another and facilitated the socialization of parents. While this was not the original intent of the room, its value for increasing social support and networking among parents soon became evident. Moreover, the room served as a reminder to parents that they had a place in the school, as was noted by one of the teachers during the interview:

> having that community room for people to wait in and having an environment there where people drop in, it's not like sitting in an office,

> waiting for an hour for the right person to come and meet with them. It's, it's more comfortable.

Addressing social barriers. Addressing social barriers within the context of the TSP meant acknowledging parents' cultural capital and aspirations and raising awareness about the pre-migration and cultural realities of refugee parents. Cultural brokers, as advocates of and with families, along with some of the program stakeholders from partnering immigrant-serving organizations, played a vital role in helping school and program staff to recognize and include parental capital in the program. Much of what cultural brokers provided to staff was an extension of the cultural education and mediation services that they offered, such as information about parents' pre-migration experiences, their wealth of cultural knowledge, and their post-migration aspirations. In addition to the role of cultural brokers and partnering organizations, a broader school climate of intercultural respect and appreciation was supported by school leadership (principal and community coordinator). One of the school staff with a leadership role emphasized the importance of having an active immigrant parent voice during the interview:

> I think the element that is critical is that the parental voice is always heard. That we don't dismiss; I mean, we always are a bit of ethnocentric in the way that we do things…but we need to be cognizant of what parents are saying.

Field notes, meeting notes, and interviews revealed that once school and program staff became aware of the realities of the parents as well as their hopes, dreams,

and cultural wealth, they were more likely to seek parental input and involvement in ways that would allow parents to demonstrate their skills and resources. For instance, teachers would ask parents to showcase games and cultural activities during multicultural school events. Parents themselves spoke with enthusiasm about the opportunities provided to them within the program to share their culture, whether in the classroom or at a school celebration. One of the teachers commented on the ways in which he sought to embrace and acknowledge this capital, by trying to greet parents in their first language:

> I remember my first parent meeting I went up in front of them and I put my hands up and I said…. "Aamus" which means be quiet in Somali. And I said "macallin", [which means] teacher". I then said, "labba mas", "Oooh, two snakes". Scary. "Sagaal mas", "nine snakes" ahhhh! And that was all I said because I picked up these things from the kids. And the parents are just roaring with laughter …which …really opened doors. It's like "Oh wow! You know, this guy, he's speaking to us and he's making an effort. He cares about our kids."

He further added that he always welcomed the food parents would bring to the classroom to be shared with children. The sharing of food was a gesture of appreciation, care, and pride, for many of the Somali parents. During multicultural day or year-end school events parents would volunteer to cook some of their traditional food to be shared with others. In all the parents' meetings, a traditional meal was provided in order to integrate aspects of the parents' culture. While the sharing of food at particular events had to conform to certain rules and

regulations, once those were satisfied, it became a standard practice and helped solidify that sense of community within the school. This was echoed by other teachers, as well as the school leadership.

Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to describe the school engagement barriers of newcomer refugee parents and how these barriers were addressed within a school-based TSP. Parental engagement is important to children's academic success, but not all parents can be involved in the same way. Existing discourses and practices of parent engagement have been too narrowly focused on involvement in school-based activities, such as volunteering, and have excluded other ways in which parents can contribute to the school and support their children's education. Moreover, as noted by some scholars (e.g., Pérez Carreón et al., 2009), these discourses have underplayed the impact that social, cultural, and economic factors have on school-family relationships. The findings presented in this paper showed that in order to welcome and engage parents, barriers to engagement had to be eliminated, and engagement had to be defined in accordance with parents' daily realities, experiences, and capital.

Barriers to Refugee Parent Engagement

This study showed that while Somali parents valued education and wanted their children to have a strong grounding in both the Canadian and Somali cultures, language- and culture-related barriers, practical and resettlement issues, as well as social barriers prevented them from being involved in their children's schooling. The findings from this study illustrated that when parents had limited

knowledge of the English language and had culturally different views of education, they felt disconnected from the school and disempowered with respect to their children's education. This finding reinforces previous findings which highlighted the significant role that language (as a means of communication) and culture (as the knowledge, values, and beliefs that guide behaviour) play in school-family relationships (Ali, 2008, 2012; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Pérez Carreón et al., 2005; Ramirez, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). Language- and culture-related barriers do not appear to be unique to refugee parents and have been previously reported in the immigrant parent engagement literature (Ali, 2012; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Ramirez, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). This study extends current literature, however, by showing that cultural and educational differences were particularly salient for newcomer Somali parents living in Canada and acted as a source of tension between the parents and the school. Given the lack of research that focuses exclusively on Somali parent engagement, the current study makes a useful contribution to the parent engagement literature by identifying some of the more specific cultural perceptions of parental involvement as they were perceived by Somali parents (e.g., the notion of holistic parental care as opposed to parental school involvement).

In addition to language-related and cultural barriers, this study has also shown how practical hassles, such as lack of transportation, and newcomer settlement challenges, such as lack of peer and extended family support networks to assist with childcare and system navigation, further impacted parents' ability to

be involved in school activities. In understanding these barriers, it is important to acknowledge that refugees are a unique immigrant group in that they migrate following displacement, war, and/or persecution. Due to the abrupt and forced nature of their migration, many refugee families experience migration as a cumbersome, ill-planned, and stressful event (Beiser, 2009; Fazel et al., 2012). The refugee adjustment literature has shown that the early years of resettlement in Western countries are particularly difficult for refugee families who experience increased mental health needs, poor socioeconomic conditions, and social isolation (Beiser, 2009; Ellis et al., 2008; Fazel et al., 2012; George, 2002; Krahn et al., 2000; Lustig et al., 2004; Porter & Haslam, 2005). These complex resettlement issues are much more pronounced for refugees who migrated to Canada after the introduction of the Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act in 2001, which, as noted earlier, based refugee selection on need rather than adaptability. Amidst these many resettlement challenges, it was not surprising that refugee parents found it difficult to be involved in their children's schooling, especially through traditional forms of engagement such as volunteering, which require knowledge of the school system and increased time commitment.

This study revealed a fourth set of barriers to parent engagement, which I referred to as social barriers. Social barriers were tied to social perceptions of parent refugees and influenced relationships between the parents and school/program staff. The findings from this study showed that when teachers and school staff failed to acknowledge parental capital and aspirations, Somali parents felt underappreciated and excluded from the school community; thus, they were

less likely to be involved with the school. Previous studies of barriers to immigrant and refugee parent engagement have focused primarily on the linguistic, cultural, and practical barriers parents experience (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Ramirez, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009), with little consideration of how social barriers can also affect relationships between home and school. With few exceptions (e.g., Ali, 2012; Lightfoot, 2004; Pérez et al., 2005), most of the literature on immigrant parent engagement barriers has been about the skills and knowledge that immigrant and refugee parents do *not* possess and rarely about the assets (e.g., aspirations, beliefs) that they do possess and the extent to which these assets are valued or could be of value in a school setting. By utilizing an ethnographic design and operating within an acculturation framework, I was able to explore the hidden influences of social barriers in perpetuating experiences of exclusion rather than inclusion.

Addressing Barriers to Refugee Parent Engagement

This study identified three strategies that were implemented within the context of the TSP to address barriers to Somali parent engagement: the presence of cultural brokers, parent information meetings, and the availability of a community room. The role of cultural brokers was identified as the most vital component in fostering school-family relationships. In the program, cultural brokers engaged in various day-to-day activities including translation, interpretation, communication, cultural education, and wraparound support. This paper described the multiple benefits of in-school cultural brokering services; these included recognition and inclusion of parents' language and culture, which

resulted in parents feeling respected and part of the school community; increased awareness of families' pre- and post-migration contexts amongst school staff; more efficient and proactive communication between home and school on issues related to children's education; and increased presence of parents in school and program activities. Findings from this study extend the literature on cultural brokers (e.g., McBrien & Ford, 2012; Yohani, 2013) by demonstrating the significance of employing cultural brokers at the school on a daily rather than on a needs-only basis. That is, the effectiveness of cultural brokering services was related to their continuous presence in the school, which allowed for immediate response to the needs of the parents and the development of relationships of trust. A trusting relationship with a cultural broker was especially important for refugee families who had negative pre-migration experiences associated with mistrust of authority and conflict, a finding that corroborates previous findings by Yohani (2013).

Lastly, parent information meetings and the availability of a community room for parent-related activities were two other strategies that played a role in enhancing school-family relationships. While parent education sessions have received some attention in the literature (e.g., Rah et al., 2009) as one strategy for building newcomer parents' knowledge of the education system of the receiving country, the findings from this study demonstrated that regular parent meetings achieved additional goals: they provided a safe space for strengthening communication between parents and teachers related to children's progress, and they fostered an inclusive school community, where parents' voices were heard.

To achieve these multiple goals, it was important that the meeting topics were jointly decided with parents so that they addressed both the parents' and the school's needs. Moreover, the use of a community room for parent interaction and access to settlement services, one of the novel findings of this study, further confirmed the importance of inclusive school spaces for parents. Overall, the findings from this study demonstrated that once parent engagement barriers were lifted and parents were given the opportunity to practice engagement within their own social and cultural spaces, they were more likely to be engaged with the school.

Limitations and Future Research

One of the strengths of this study is that it focused exclusively on the school engagement of newcomer Somali parents, an area that has received limited attention in the literature. However, some limitations need to be acknowledged. First, the use of a convenience sample of parents who volunteered to be in the study resulted in the inclusion of only those Somali refugee mothers who accessed the services at the school on a regular basis and may have been particularly supportive of the program. All of the mothers had limited English language ability, and the majority of them had lived in refugee camps for many years prior to migrating. A study with a more diverse sample of Somali parents, including fathers and those who did not access the services offered by the program, might reveal additional barriers to engagement or alternative appraisals of the identified engagement strategies and would be worthy of further investigation. Moreover, as noted in the program description, there was an observed increase in Spanish-

speaking families at the school during the implementation of the program. Literature examining the experiences of low-income Latino parents in the US suggests that Latino parents face similar barriers to school involvement (e.g., Ramirez, 2009); however, there is lack of research examining the experiences of Latino parents in Canada.

Second, based on the Somali parent experience presented in this paper, cultural brokers played a valuable role in enhancing school-family relationships by assisting the school in addressing some of the communication, cultural, settlement, and social obstacles that parents face. The literature on the role of cultural brokers in school-based refugee programming is still quite limited (e.g., McBrien & Ford, 2012) and has, to date, focused on refugee parents as a uniform group (e.g., Yohani, 2013), neglecting to take into account the differences that may exist between and/or within immigrant and refugee groups. The findings of this study showed that with the direct involvement of cultural brokers, school-family relationships can be enhanced, a benefit that has been reiterated by other researchers (e.g., McBrien & Ford, 2012; Yohani, 2013). However, the extent to which the involvement of cultural brokers can benefit all ethnocultural groups deserves further exploration. For instance, differences exist between collectivist and individualist cultures (Hofstede, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991); thus, the involvement of cultural brokers may not have the same effect on all cultural groups, especially refugee groups who may come from more individualistic cultures with a heightened sense of privacy. Moreover, research on cultural brokers working in educational settings has focused more on describing the roles

cultural brokers fulfill and less on the challenges that may arise in their work. Yohani (2013) notes that tensions may arise between cultural brokers and the school because cultural brokers often work with immigrant-serving organizations, which operate from a more community-based framework compared with the school, which is a more bureaucratic organization. Further examination of the challenges that arise when cultural brokers are employed in educational settings can advance knowledge in the area and inform educational policy and practice related to working with culturally diverse families.

Footnotes

[1] A version of this chapter has been accepted for publication. Georgis, Gokiert, Ford, Ali, in press. Multicultural Education.

References

Ali, M. A. (2008). Loss of parenting self-efficacy among immigrant parents. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 9,* 148-160.

Ali, M. A. (2012). The shadow of colonialism on relations between immigrant parents and their children's teachers. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *58*, 198-215.

Allen, J., Vaage, A. B., & Hauff, E. (2006). Refugees and asylum seekers in societies. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 198-217). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Beiser, M. (2009). Resettling refugees and safeguarding their mental health: Lessons learned from the Canadian refugee resettlement project. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, *46*, 539-583.

Berg, B. L. (1998). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bigelow, M. H. (2010). *Mogadishu on the Mississippi: Language, racialized identity, and education in a new land*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Birman, D. (2006). Measurement of the "acculturation gap" in immigrant families and implications for parent-child relationships. In M. H., Bornstein & L. R. Cote (Eds.), *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development* (pp. 113-134). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (n.d.). *Refugee children in U.S. schools: A toolkit for teachers and school personnel.* Retrieved from http://www.brycs.org/publications/schools-toolkit.cfm

Bruns, E. J., Suter, J., Force, M., & Burchard, J. (2005). Adherence to wraparound principles and association with outcomes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 14*, 521–534.

Canadian Council for Refugees. (n.d.). *Refugee transportation loans.* Retrieved from http://ccrweb.ca/en/transportation-loans

Cheung, C. S., & Pomerantz, E. M. (2012). Why does parents' involvement enhance children's achievement? The role of parent-oriented motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 104,* 820-832.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012). *Facts and figures: Immigration overview, permanent and temporary residents 2012*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011). *Evaluation of government assisted refugees and resettlement assisted program*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada.

Coalition for Equal Access to Education (2002).*Toward active parental participation: A practical guide to working with immigrants.* Calgary, AB: Author.

Coalition for Equal Access to Education (2002).*Toward cultural competency: A practical guide to facilitate active participation of culturally diverse families in schools.* Calgary, AB: Author.

Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative research. *Theory into Practice, 39,* 124-130.

Derwing, T. M., & Krahn, H. (2008). Attracting and retaining immigrants outside the metropolis: is the pie too small for everyone to have a piece? The case of Edmonton, Alberta. *International Migration and Integration, 9,* 185-202.

Ellis, J. (1998). Interpretive inquiry as a formal research process. In J. L. Ellis (Ed.), *Teaching from understanding* (pp. 16-32). New York, NY: Garland Publishing.

Ellis, B. H., MacDonald, H. Z., Lincoln, A. K., & Cabral, H. J. (2008). Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: The role of trauma, stress, and perceived discrimination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76,* 184-193.

Ellis, B. H., Miller, A. B., Abdi, S., Barrett, C., & Blood, E. A. (2013). Multi-tier mental health program for refugee youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 81,* 129-140.

Fazel, M., Reed, R., V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: Risk and protective factors. *Lancet, 37,* 266-282.

Ford, D. M., & Georgis, R. (2011). An intercultural early learning program: What

wraparound support looks like for newcomer families. *Early Childhood Education, 39*(2), 21-30.

Garcia Coll, C., Akiba, D., Palacios, N., Bailey, B., Silver, R., DiMartino, L., & Chin, C. (2002). Parental involvement in children's education: Lessons from three immigrant groups. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 2,* 303-324.

George, U. (2002). A needs-based model for settlement service delivery for newcomers to Canada. *International Social Work, 45,* 465-480.

Hamilton, R., & Moore, D. (2004). *Educational interventions for refugee children*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J., & Pettit, G. (2004). Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence. *Child Development, 75,* 1491-1509.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Huntsinger, C. S., & Jose, P. E. (2009). Parental involvement in children's schooling: Different meanings in different cultures. *Early Childhood Quarterly, 24,* 398-410.

Jackson, S. F. (2008). A participatory group process to analyze qualitative data. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action, 2,* 161-170.

Jeynes, W. H. (2003). A meta-analysis: The effects of parental involvement on minority children's academic achievement. *Education and Urban Society, 35,* 202-218.

Khalema, N. E., Hay, C., Wannas, J., Joseph, S., & Zulla, R. (2011). *A review of crime risk factors and community-based prevention strategies for Somali-Canadians in Edmonton, Alberta*. Calgary, AB: Center for Criminology and Justice Research, Mount Royal University.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12,* 29-43.

Krahn, H., Derwing, T., Mulder, M., & Wilkinson, L. (2000). Educated and underemployed: Refugee integration into the Canadian labour market. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 1,* 59-84.

Kuperminc, G. P., Darnell, A. J., & Alvarez-Jimenez, A. (2008). Parent involvement in the academic adjustment of Latino middle and high school youth: Teacher expectations and school belonging as mediators. *Journal of Adolescence, 31,* 469-483.

Liebkind, K. (1996). Acculturation and stress: Vietnamese refugees in Finland. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 27,* 161-180.

Lightfoot, D. (2004). "Some parents just don't care": Decoding the meanings of parental involvement in urban schools. *Urban Education, 39,* 91-107.

Lustig, S. L., Kia-Keating, M., Knight, W. G., Geltman, P., Ellis, H., Kinzie, J. D., …Saxe, G. N.(2004). Review of child and adolescent refugee mental

health. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 43,* 24-36.

Mayan, M. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Morse, J., M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 13-22.

McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 75,* 329-364.

McBrien, J. L. (2011). The importance of context: Vietnamese, Somali, and Iranian refugee mothers discuss their resettled lives and involvement in their children`s school. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 41,* 75-90.

McBrien, J. L., & Ford, J. (2012). Serving the needs of refugee children and families through a culturally appropriate liaison service. In F. E. McCarthy & M. H. Vickers (Eds.), *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education* (pp.107-126). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Nilsson, J. E., Barazanji, D., M., Heintzelman, A., Siddiqi, M., & Shilla, Y. (2012). Somali women's reflections on their children in the United States. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 40,* 240-252.

Oppedal, B. (2006). Development and acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 97-112). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Pavlish, C. L., Noor, S., & Brandt, J. (2010). Somali immigrant women and the American health care system: Discordant beliefs, divergent expectations, and silent worries. *Social Science & Medicine, 71*, 353-361.

Pérez Carreón, G., Drake, C., & Calabrese Barton, A. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal, 42*, 465-498.

Prakash, M. L., Bisanz, J., Chalmers, G., Daniels, J. S., Gokiert, R. J., McNeil, D. C., Michailides, M., Schnirer, L., Varnhagen, S., Walker, C., & Wosnack, N. (2010). *Integrated supports for children, youth and families: A Literature review of the wrap-around process*. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta. Retrieved from http://www.cup.ualberta.ca/

Pressé, D., & Thomson, J. (2008). The resettlement challenge: Integration of refugees from protracted refugee situations. *Refuge, 24*, 94-99.

Porter, M., & Haslam, N. (2005). Predisplacement and postdisplacement factors associated with mental health of refugees and internally displayed persons: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 294,* 602-612.

Rah, Y., Choi, S., & Nguyen, T. S. T. (2009). Building bridges between refugee parents and schools. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 12*, 347-365.

Ramirez, A. Y. F. (2003). Dismay and disappointment: Parental involvement of Latino immigrant parents. *The Urban Review, 35*, 93-110.

Rodgers, B. L., & Cowles, K. V. (1993). The qualitative research audit trail: A complex collection of documentation. *Research in Nursing & Health, 16*, 219-226.

Rossiter, M. J., & Derwing, T.M. (2012). Still far to go: Systematic programming for immigrant and refugee children and youth. In F. E. McCarthy & M. H. Vickers (Eds.), *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education* (pp. 89-106). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Rossiter, M. J., & Rossiter, K. R. (2009). Diamonds in the rough: Bridging gaps in supports for at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. *International Migration and Integration, 10*, 409-429.

Rousseau, C., & Guzder, J. (2008). School-based prevention programs for refugee children. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 17*, 533-549.

Rutter, J. (2006). *Refugee children in the UK*. London, UK: Open University Press.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*, 63-75.

Statistics Canada. (2012). *Census Profile, 2011 Census* (Catalogue No. 98-316-XWE). Retrieved from http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting refugee students in schools: What constitutes inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16,* 39-56.

Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? *The Journal of Educational Research, 102,* 257-271.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2012). *A year of crises: Global trends 2011*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2003). The conceptual, historical, and practice roots of community based participatory research and related participatory traditions. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 27-52). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Yohani, S. (2013). Educational cultural brokers and the school adaptation of refugee children and families: Challenges and opportunities. *International Migration and Integration, 14,* 61-79.

CHAPTER THREE

Limited Formal Schooling but a Wealth of Life Experiences: The School Adjustment Needs and Strengths of Recently Arrived Adolescent Refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that it has under its protection 25.9 million refugees, 46% of whom are children under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2012). In Canada, approximately one in four immigrant children is of refugee background (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2012). Refugee children enter Canada from European, sub-Saharan African, Central and South American, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries (CIC, 2012) after been exposed to numerous displacement-related stressors. These may include exposure to one or more of the following: violence and armed conflict, deprivation of basic needs, loss and/or separation from parents/caregivers, and multiple resettlements (Derluyn, Mels, & Broekaert, 2009; Ellis, Millier, Abdi, Barrett, & Blood, 2013; Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012; Lustig et al., 2004; McBrien, 2005; Rutter, 2006). As a result of these complex pre- and trans-migration experiences, the adaptation of refugee children post-settlement has been of concern to researchers, educators, health practitioners, and policy makers alike.

Literature relating to the adjustment of refugee children and adolescents in Western countries has focused primarily on their mental health needs. Mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety are not uncommon among many refugee children and youth, with PTSD being especially prevalent in this population (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008; Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al.,

2004). While mental health difficulties experienced during resettlement are largely influenced by pre-migration experiences, research on the effects of post-migration environments suggests that positive experiences in the countries of resettlement can have a protective effect on the psychological functioning of refugee adolescents (Ellis et al., 2008; Fazel et al., 2012; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Porter & Haslam, 2005). Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007), for example, examined the mental health outcomes of Somali adolescents and found that a sense of school belonging was associated with lower levels of depression and higher self-efficacy for the adolescents, despite war trauma. Supportive peer and adult relationships have also been associated with advantageous outcomes, while experiences of discrimination, acculturative stress, and bullying have been associated with negative psychological outcomes (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Ellis et al., 2008; Fazel et al., 2012; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007).

The over-emphasis placed on the mental health outcomes of refugee adolescents has been criticized by education scholars. First, it has been described as too narrow in scope, in that it neglects to take into account refugee adolescents' educational needs (Matthews, 2008; McBrien, 2005; Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Siddhu, 2012). Coming from war-torn countries and/or having lived in refugee camps, refugee students are more likely than other immigrant students to have had interrupted schooling, multiple school transitions, and/or learning gaps, all of which can significantly hinder their educational outcomes (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Matthews, 2008; Rutter, 2006). A recent report released by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2013)

states that more than half of children who are currently out of school live in conflict areas. Second, an exclusive focus on mental health outcomes is deficit-oriented, in that it neglects to take into account the strengths and cultural capital of refugee students. Cultural capital is defined as the sociocultural knowledge, experiences, and dispositions of individuals that influence their actions and social interactions (Bourdieu, 1986; Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011). In taking an assimilationist perspective, schools have been criticized for undervaluing the cultural capital of minority students (Gibson, 1998; Valenzuela, 2002). Educational researchers operating within a cultural capital paradigm (Banki, 2012; Bigelow, 2010; Dooley, 2012; Kirova, 2007; Matthews, 2008; Naji, 2012; Yosso, 2005) emphasize the cultural and community wealth that is part of the lived experience of being a refugee and/or living between languages and cultures, and explain how this wealth, if acknowledged and nurtured within the school, can lead to positive outcomes.

Indeed, the school adjustment of newcomer refugee adolescents deserves research attention because it can affect not only their academic success but also their overall development and integration into the new society (Fazel et al., 2012; Ngo, 2010; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2012). For instance, in a qualitative study of stakeholders working with immigrant and refugee youth who had encounters with the criminal justice system, Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) reported that "refugee youth were perceived to be particularly vulnerable to recruitment by gangs" (p. 414) and that school-based discrimination and lack of resources for English language learners were two school risk factors affecting

immigrant and refugee youth adjustment. Lack of a sense of school belonging and exclusion have been identified by other researchers (e.g., McBrien, 2005; Sanchez, Colon, & Esparza, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozcco, & Todorova, 2008; Szente & Hoot, 2007) as persistent obstacles in the adjustment of immigrant and refugee youth.

Schools play a dual role in the lives of children and youth post-settlement; they are places of academic learning as much as they are places of acculturation. As places of academic learning, schools have the primary task of helping students develop the literacy and numeracy skills they need for integration and future employment. In today's world, education is a critical determinant of later life success, but many immigrant and refugee students face multiple barriers that influence their academic success, such as the need to learn another language and unfamiliarity with the education system of the receiving country (Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sulivan, 2009; Derwing, DeCorby, Ichikawa, & Jamieson, 1999; Kanu, 1999; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Rutter, 2006). In examining the educational experiences of refugee students in Canada, Wilkinson (2001) found that 50% of refugee adolescents in a random sample of 91 students were experiencing academic difficulties and were at risk of dropping out of high school. In another study of the graduation rates of English language learners in Western Canada, Toohey and Derwing (2008) identified refugee students as an at-risk group. These two Canadian studies are among a growing body of international literature (e.g., Matthews, 2008; Rutter, 2006; Szente & Hoot, 2007; Taylor & Sidhu, 2007) that calls attention to the unique circumstances of refugee

students and the need for a better understanding of their educational experiences and outcomes.

In addition to being places of academic learning, schools are also places of acculturation. Acculturation is the process of behavioural, cognitive, and emotional change that follows contact with a new culture (Berry, 2006; Bigelow, 2010; McBrien, 2005). During this process, adolescents may adopt one of four acculturation strategies: the strategy of integration or biculturalism, when showing a preference for involvement in both the new and the heritage cultures; marginalization, when lacking preference for either culture; separation, when showing a preference for the heritage (home) culture; and assimilation, when showing a preference for the new culture (of the receiving country) (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2006). According to the acculturation development model (Oppedal, 2006), refugee adolescents' bicultural competencies allow them to effectively navigate both their heritage culture and the new culture and to feel a sense of belonging to both (Berry, 2006; Oppedal, 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003). Failure to develop bicultural competencies can be detrimental for their well-being and has been linked to marginalization, educational difficulties, and health problems (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Epstein, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1996; Fosados et al., 2007; Myers, Chou, Sussman, Baezconde-Garbanati, Pachon, & Valente, 2009). Acculturation can be particularly challenging for adolescents who come from non-Western countries that are culturally different from Canada (Hofstede, 2001). Research that has examined the acculturation experiences of immigrant and refugee adolescents in Canada has focused primarily on adolescents from Asian

countries (e.g., Li, 2009), neglecting more recent arrivals from African and Middle-Eastern countries, and especially those with a refugee background.

In sum, the research shows that refugee adolescents experience increased mental health needs during resettlement, and schools can facilitate and/or hinder positive sociocultural, psychological, and educational outcomes. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the early school adjustment experiences of newcomer Somali and Ethiopian adolescent refugees. Specifically, this study addressed the following two research questions:

(a) What are the school adjustment needs of recently arrived adolescent refugees?

(b) What are the strengths of recently arrived adolescent refugees?

Method

This research takes a qualitative approach to examining the school adjustment of adolescent refugees. I used ethnography as the method by which to address the research questions. Ethnographic researchers seek to understand and describe the "shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language" (Creswell, 2002, p. 481) of a group through observation and the immersion of the researcher in the sociocultural setting in which the group operates (Creswell, 2002; Mayan, 2009). By using ethnography, I was able to explore first-hand how the adolescents assigned meaning to their first experiences in a Canadian school setting, the challenges they faced, and the cultural capital they brought to their new environment. In seeking to gain a more comprehensive picture of their process of adaptation, I also examined how teachers and after-school/settlement staff who

worked closely with the adolescents during their first two years of resettlement perceived the adjustment needs and strengths of the adolescents.

The Research Context

This research is part of a larger ethnographic study examining the role of a Transition Supports Program (TSP) in the adjustment of refugee students and families. A public school district in a medium-size metropolitan city in the province of Alberta, western Canada, implemented the TSP. The TSP sought to support newcomer refugee students with limited or no English and interrupted or limited formal schooling by providing them with extensive language, academic, and social-emotional in-class support. The program was first implemented at two schools in the district and was then expanded in a condensed/adapted form to other schools with large immigrant populations. Students in the program were placed in a transition classroom full-time or with pull-out to acquire basic numeracy and literacy and to become familiar with school routines and practices. Length of stay in the transition classroom varied, depending on the needs of the students. In addition to classroom support, the program offered daily after-school educational (e.g., homework club) and recreational (e.g., sports, dance) opportunities for students. At one of the two original schools, on-site settlement services were also available to parents, including English language classes, monthly information sessions, and wraparound settlement support offered by cultural brokers. After-school and settlement services were offered in collaboration with multiple community agencies. Three of these agencies were primarily immigrant-serving agencies, whereas six others offered a wide range of

services (e.g., mentoring, education, recreation, crime prevention) to children, youth, and families. All adolescents, teachers, and after-school/settlement staff who participated in this study were recruited from three different program sites: the two original sites and one of the later sites in which the full or condensed/adapted TSP was operating.

A Community-based Research Approach

Even though ethnography was the method that guided this research study, a community-based research (CBR) approach was used to plan and conduct the study. CBR is a collaborative approach to research that encourages community participation throughout all stages of the research process (Israel et al., 1998; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003). This study was conducted in collaboration with an immigrant health-serving agency and a local school board. Representatives from both the immigrant-serving agency and the school board, who were heavily involved with the TSP, played a key role in shaping the focus of the research, recruiting participants, interpreting the findings, and sharing the knowledge with other stakeholders involved with the TSP.

Participant Characteristics and Recruitment

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of 11 adolescents attending the TSP across three sites, 8 of their teachers, and 12 after-school/settlement staff who worked closely with the adolescents within the context of the TSP.

The students were between 12 and 17 years of age; nine had come from Somalia (6 females, 3 males) and two from Ethiopia (2 females), and they had

been in Canada for three years or less. All the students had been in the transition classroom for one or two years at the time of the interview. The students spoke little to no English upon arrival and had significant educational gaps. Four of the students had no formal schooling prior to coming to Canada, but two of these four had received some home schooling in their home country. The other seven students had attended school in their home country or in refugee camps but, based on the information provided by the students and parents, their school attendance was limited and interrupted.

Students were recruited through the school, and, because they were all under 18 years of age, parental consent was needed. I visited the schools and, with the help of an interpreter, I introduced the research to all the transition classroom students and invited interested students to give the information letter and consent form to their parents and to return the signed consent form to their teacher. This recruitment strategy yielded few responses, primarily due to the fact that the information letters were in English and many of the parents had limited English language skills. As a follow-up recruitment strategy, I attended three of the parent information sessions held at one of the three schools and, with the help of one of the cultural brokers working on site, I explained the study to the parents and invited those whose children were between 12 and 17 and attended the transition classroom to participate. Parents who agreed to their children's participation in the study signed a consent form during the meeting. The study was explained directly to the students on the day of the interview, and their verbal assent was obtained before beginning the interview.

Eight teachers (7 female, 1 male) and 12 after-school/settlement staff (8 female, 4 male) were recruited via email. The initial email included a short description of the study and invited interested participants to contact the researcher. Stakeholders who expressed an interest were then contacted by the researcher to arrange a date and time for the interview. The teachers were all teaching in junior high and/or high school, were 26-45 years of age, and had 3-13 years of experience in teaching English language learners. After-school/settlement staff members were from immigrant-serving agencies, were 26-55 years of age, and had 1-20 years of experience working with immigrant and refugee students and families. There was wide variability in the training of the after-school/settlement staff; six had a university degree in social or educational sciences, and the remaining six received on-the-job training related to their role.

Data Collection

Data collection was based on one-on-one interviews and participant observations that took place over a 14-month period, starting in January 2012 and continuing to April 2013, excluding summer months.

Interviews. Teacher and after-school/settlement staff interviews were 60-90 minutes long and took place at a mutually convenient time and place (i.e., a school classroom, meeting space, or the participant's office). During the interviews, participants were asked to describe their experiences working with refugee adolescents in general and TSP adolescents in particular (see Appendix B-i for a copy of the interview guide). Specifically, they were asked to comment on the educational challenges that adolescents faced during their first three years of

transition, and on the strengths and supports that were perceived to be important to them during that time.

Student interviews were typically one hour long and took place in a meeting room at the school during school hours. I contacted the students' teachers in advance to arrange a date and time when students could be taken out of class for the interview. An interpreter assisted during two of the adolescent interviews because, at the time of the interview, those adolescents had been in Canada for less than a year and had limited conversational English skills. Nine of the 11 student interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed. For the two students who felt uncomfortable being audio-recorded, notes were taken during the interviews.

Student interviews differed from teacher and after-school/settlement staff interviews in that activities and prompts were used to help the younger participants describe their school experience. As all the adolescents had limited English literacy skills at the time of the interview, activities that required reading or writing were purposefully limited. Two activities (see Appendix B-iii) were created for the purpose of this study, based on suggestions provided in the literature on the use of narrative and creative interview techniques to explore children's experiences (Christian, Pearce, Roberson, & Rothwell, 2010; Ellis, 2006). The first activity, "My journey to Canada," was completed at the beginning of the interview. I mapped on a piece of paper my journey to Canada, starting from the country I was born in, followed by all the different countries I had lived in before coming to Canada. The adolescents then had the opportunity

to ask me questions before they were asked to map their own journey to Canada. This activity served three distinct purposes. First, it helped the adolescents feel comfortable being in an interview setting by giving them the opportunity to learn about and/or question the researcher. Second, the map that the adolescents produced was used as a guide to prompt deeper questioning about their school experiences before and after coming to Canada. Third, the activity served as a means of collecting demographic and contextual information about the adolescents' pre-migration and family experiences without requiring them to complete extensive demographic questionnaires. The second activity was called "My day" and sought to unpack adolescents' daily activities and social interactions during and after school. The process and purpose of this second activity were the same as those of the first. All the questions and prompts that followed each activity were focused primarily on the adolescents' school experiences.

Observation/field notes. In order to gain a better understanding of the school experiences of the adolescents, I completed field visits to the TSP sites one day a week. During that time, I participated as a volunteer primarily during the after-school activities and occasionally during school day activities. I recorded 39 field notes, each half to one and a half pages long (see Appendix C-ii) for a field note excerpt). The field notes included one or more of the following types of information: (a) descriptions of the actions and behaviours of the students and their interactions with their peers, teachers and after-school/settlement staff; (b) notes on conversations I had with program participants and staff during my visits

that were relevant to the research questions; (c) methodological notes about the interview protocol, emerging coding and interpretation of the data (e.g., questions I thought should be added to the protocol based on my observations in the field; "aha" moments with regards to data interpretation); and (d) personal reflections.

Data Analysis

The interviews and field notes were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Mayan, 2009). Qualitative content analysis is a process of careful examination of the data to identify and code recurring patterns. To begin, the transcripts and field notes were reviewed line by line and codes were assigned to important ideas/concepts. ATLAS-ti.7, a qualitative analysis software, was used during the coding of the transcripts and field notes. Once all the data had been coded, a list of codes was generated, and connections, similarities, and differences between them were examined. During this stage, conceptually similar or related codes were grouped together to form core thematic categories (themes) that captured the richness and content of the data. The categories were then defined so that each category was internally consistent and externally distinct from other categories. To test the extent to which the categories addressed the research questions comprehensively and to ensure that no contradictory evidence was available, the transcripts and codes were revisited to identify potentially disconfirming evidence (negative case analysis; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). Such evidence was found in two cases and will be described in the findings section, along with the differences that were identified in the adolescent, teacher, and after-school/settlement staff interviews.

In addition to examining the data for negative cases, the trustworthiness of the data was enhanced by the use of data triangulation strategies and member checks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Shenton, 2004). Data triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of three different participant perspectives (adolescents, teachers, and after-school/settlement staff) and the use of both interviews and field notes as sources of data (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). The combination of multiple sources of data is inherent in ethnographic methods (Mayan, 2009). Through participant and data collection triangulation, I was able to gain a richer understanding of adolescents' school experiences within the TSP, inclusive of diverse views and examples.

Member checks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004) were performed with three participants (one teacher, two after-school/settlement staff). Member checks can be one of two types: (a) the researcher provides participants (i.e., members) with a copy of their interview transcript and the opportunity to make changes (e.g., additions, clarifications); and, (b) as in this study, the researcher provides participants with a summary of thematic categories and/or a synthesis of research findings and invites participants to comment on analysis and interpretation (e.g., whether the categories are meaningful and if they resonate with some of their experiences within the program). Involving community partners/participants in the analysis process is desired and widely practised in community-based qualitative research studies to enhance the interpretation of the data and relevance of the findings (Jackson, 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003).

During this member checking process, participants had the opportunity to comment on the thematic categories and preliminary summary of findings; this process allowed for a clarification of thematic categories and enhanced the interpretation of the data.

Despite being described above as a series of systematic and consecutive steps, the qualitative content analysis was a cyclical process that began during data collection (Mayan, 2009). The fieldwork (observations and interviews), which lasted several months, was an ongoing interpretive process that shaped the initial coding of the data and the cumulative process of data collection. The interview guide was adapted throughout the data collection process to allow a more in-depth examination of the ideas/concepts that were generated in the field and recorded in field notes. Because of the iterative process of data collection and analysis, data saturation (Morse, 2000) — the point at which no new categories are identified — occurred after approximately two thirds of the data were analyzed, and for this reason no further interviews were conducted.

Results

The results from this project are organized into two sections, each corresponding to one of the research questions. The first research question focused on the needs of the adolescents and the second concentrated on the strengths of the adolescents. When adolescents are named in the description of the results, a code name is provided (i.e., A1 refers to Adolescent 1, A2 refers to Adolescent 2, and so forth) to protect their anonymity.

The Needs of Recently Arrived Adolescent Refugees

Three major needs were identified in the data: (a) social-emotional, (b) intercultural and intracultural, and (c) curriculum and learning needs. While these needs are presented in separate categories, they are interrelated and are all part of the early school adjustment and acculturation experiences of the newcomer refugee adolescents in this study.

Social-emotional needs. The social-emotional school adjustment needs of the adolescents included forming social connections with peers and adults in the school, and dealing with emotions of fear, loneliness, and loss. Adolescents described going to a new school in a new country as a frightening experience. For some adolescents, the fear of being in an unfamiliar school environment was related to not knowing other students or adults and to feeling lonely. In describing her school experience A1, a 17-year-old girl, stated several times during the interview how frightened she was when she first started school in Canada: "When I came to a new school I was scared…. It was different people and I don't know the people and I don't have friends." For other adolescents, the fear of being in a new country was associated with being unfamiliar with the language of the receiving country and worrying about how to communicate with others. A2, a 17-year-old male adolescent, commented on how difficult the first few months were for him and how much he wanted others to understand the challenges he faced:

> When you don't know the language very well and you don't know the people very well, it's not good. When you don't know anybody from there, it's hard to be part to someone. So I was trying to get in school and to get everyone to understand it.

To deal with feelings of loneliness, adolescents talked about purposefully reaching out to others and seeking to form close relationships with peers. The importance of first friendships was also emphasized by teachers and after-school/settlement staff, who commented on how they deliberately tried to build those early social connections for newcomer students. For instance, at one of the TSP sites, an in-school peer mentoring program was established. Through the peer mentorship program, newcomer students were paired with senior immigrant and/or refugee students who had been in Canada for a longer period of time and would act as their mentors throughout the school year. The student mentor would often speak the same language as the newcomer student and would help them navigate the school system. One teacher described how friendships, some of which were established though the peer mentoring program, were often a turning point in the lives of the adolescents:

> it's not until they meet a peer who can translate or help them feel included or help them understand the gist of what the teacher is saying that they really begin to unlock or uncap what's available in the school. And one student credits…forced partnerships with helping her make her first friend. 'Cause they're put in a group together, so then they have time to talk and there's my first friend. And then the story's usually a first friend down the road and leads to other friends…

The task of forming relationships with peers, however, was described as a challenging task for all adolescents, some of whom reported being excluded, feeling out of place, and in some cases being bullied or discriminated against by

other students, immigrant and non-immigrant, in the school. A3 said that: "some girls they bully you and I don't like the physical… And one of my friends from India he said 'don't, don't, ok' he said 'just ignore it and go away'." After-school staff, especially those who had close relationships with the adolescents and were often called to mediate in such situations, also noted student experiences of exclusion.

Forming secure and trusting relationships with teachers and after-school staff was another important aspect of the adolescents' early school transitions. With one exception, all adolescents reported positive experiences with their teachers, whom they described as "funny," "kind," and "nice". One after-school/settlement staff member noted how important it was to provide adolescents with the opportunity to talk with adult-mentors about their feelings and adjustment challenges because "they really have had no one to talk to about adjusting, about feeling lonely, about feeling like you're lost …the first couple of years, you establish that relationship so that is very important – someone they can talk." This search for safe adult connections was evident during the after-school program activities, as adolescents, especially females, would enjoy spending one-on-one time with the after-school staff and volunteers, either to talk about "girl stuff" or school (Field Notes).

In addition to feeling nervous about being in a new place and dealing with loneliness, adolescents, because of their refugee background, had experienced some form of loss and emotional suffering rooted in forced displacement. Many had had to move to different countries before finding a stable home in Canada.

Six had been separated from one or both of their parents at one point in their lives. One adolescent shared the painful experience of losing her father. Seven had lived in refugee camps, and all had experienced disruption in their everyday lives. All these experiences were psychologically challenging for the adolescents, who appeared to be in an ongoing process of trying to make sense of their multiple resettlements and the loss of familiar surroundings and loved ones left behind. One settlement staff member highlighted during her interview the multiple losses that adolescent refugees experience:

> they have lost family, they lost friends, they lost their home, they lost their language, they lost their culture, they lost their assets, they lost their neighbours in the refugee camps…they lost, they lost, they lost. They build a relationship with you and you are gone, that's another loss.

During the interviews as well as during field observations, adolescents talked about how much they missed their friends and family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, and/or parents) back home. A4, whose parents were separated and who had come to Canada to live with his father, shared his dream of bringing his mom to Canada. During the interview, A5 talked about missing playing soccer with his friends, whereas A6 talked about how much she was missing the activities she used to do with her friends back home, such as talking about boys and music. To stay connected with their family and friends back home, adolescents used technology (e.g., email, video chatting) as one way of dealing with the separation.

Teachers and after-school/settlement staff emphasized the importance of creating a welcoming school and after-school environment to help adolescents feel secure and supported. One teacher noted the benefits of fostering a sense of belonging in his transition classroom:

> I try …to build relationships and to build that sense of trust and give that sense of community in the classroom. And once you've established that sense of community in the classroom…people are a little more comfortable, a little more trusting, and that opens up the doors to learning.

During the interviews, adolescents spoke about their search for a safe place in the school, especially during the early months of being at the new school and not having friends. A1, for instance, talked about how she would spend most of her lunch break time at the ESL office at the school, because that was the one place in the school where she felt safe and comfortable.

Intercultural and intracultural needs. Intercultural and intracultural needs were associated with the post-settlement acculturation development context of adolescents. Intercultural needs included the ability to adapt to a multicultural environment (including diversity of language, culture, religion, and race), whereas intracultural needs included learning to cope with the challenges of being a minority in a new country. Being in a multicultural environment was a new experience for the majority of the adolescents, who needed to learn how to interact with those who had a culture and religion different from their own. One teacher noted how surprised many newcomer adolescent refugees were to be in a multicultural school setting, "realizing not everybody is of the same religion. And

that's a huge thing…to realize, wait…these are also still good people. That's a shock to them." In seeking to understand and navigate these intercultural differences, adolescents would often ask questions about religion and ethnicity. After-school/settlement staff and teachers, however, noted that many teachers and staff were ill-prepared to address these types of questions, and they identified the need to strengthen intercultural programming for adolescents and intercultural training for both in-service and pre-service teachers to facilitate a more positive school adjustment experience for adolescents.

In addition to their intercultural needs, adolescents also had to learn how to be a newcomer Somali/Ethiopian in a Canadian school and how to interact with co-ethnic peers who were born in Canada or had immigrated many years before. During this exploration/transition phase, adolescents came to realize that some of their second-generation co-ethnic peers did not practice their culture in the same way, nor did they speak their heritage language. A2 commented on how surprised he was to find out that not all of his Somali peers spoke Somali:

> I saw the Somali people [and] I want to speak with them….I went to them and I was like, "I need help, help me with the language." They were kind of like this, "Excuse me, are you talking to me? I don't understand Somali.' They go away from me. I get so upset.

This tension between newcomer and second-generation co-ethnics was also evident during my observations in the after-school programs. During after-school activities, all newcomer Somali adolescents would sit together at one table separated from all the second-generation Somali adolescents. Newcomer Somali

adolescents were more likely to reach out to the second-generation peer group, especially during the first few weeks of being at the new school; however, this gesture was not always reciprocated (Field Notes).

Despite the initial shock of being in a multicultural environment, adolescents would often transcend cultural barriers and connect with other newcomer students of diverse backgrounds, including other Somali or Ethiopian students. A1 mentioned during the interview that although her best friend was Somali, she was proud and excited to have friends from other parts of the world: "Arab girls are my friends; Spanish, they are my friends, too." These early intercultural friendships were formed on the basis of the common experience of being a newcomer student and navigating a new sociocultural environment, and they contributed to a sense of belonging to/inclusion in a peer group, thus addressing some of the students' social needs described above. This experience of coming together to deal with exclusion was described by one after-school/settlement staff as follows:

> When kids…they do feel that isolation or they do feel different because for the language barrier or whatever reason, they'll kind of connect with different kids that are also somewhat outcast. And I've seen that a couple of times too and that's really interesting to see them. There's the language barrier and the culture barrier there, but they still have that connection because they're still kind of outcasts themselves, so they'll connect through that.

Curriculum and learning needs. The curriculum and learning needs of newcomer adolescents were of five types (not presented in any particular order): mastering the curriculum to meet grade appropriate standards, acquiring academic language, understanding the new school system, building academic confidence, and gaining school readiness skills. The curriculum and learning needs in general, and school readiness needs in particular, were primarily identified by teachers, and to a lesser extent the after-school staff; no students explicitly commented on either during their interviews.

Teachers and after-school/settlement staff commented on how many of the adolescent refugees, because of their limited prior schooling, were behind same-age peers and had to work much harder to reach their appropriate grade level. Mastering the curriculum was not an easy task and was further complicated by the need to achieve academic language competence. In this study, learning English was overwhelmingly identified by adolescents as one of the hardest tasks they faced upon coming to Canada. While curriculum mastery and academic language proficiency occur gradually (see Cummins, 1994, for a distinction between basic interpersonal conversation skills [BICS] and cognitive academic language proficiency [CALP]) and the adolescents in this study were in only their first three years of transition, teachers noted that it was important to build those skills concurrently with other learning during the first year of transition. Some teachers commented that assessing the academic level of refugee adolescents with limited English and limited formal schooling was not easy, as the tests and resources they had available were often inappropriate for this population. One teacher stated that

assessing a student's grade level is a difficult task: "the biggest challenge is figuring out when they first arrive, where they're at so I can start teaching them. And especially in math…And sometimes I misjudge… Because it's really hard to figure that out without language…" Many teachers noted that they went out of their way to change textbooks and to create age- and grade-level appropriate resources to enable adolescents' learning; all emphasized the need for continued adaptation of materials in subsequent years.

The need for adolescent newcomers and their parents to understand the school system was also identified by teachers and after-school/settlement staff. Course selection (especially for high-school students), ELL assessments and grade placements, and attendance rules and regulations were three of the issues noted by teachers and after-school staff. Some teachers commented that knowledge about the school system should be presented early after arrival, especially for high school students. They argued that refugee adolescents with limited formal schooling tend to be "sheltered" during their first few years of transition and, as a result, they are not prepared to make appropriate course selection decisions to help them achieve their educational aspirations. At the same time, other teachers acknowledged that adolescents can be overwhelmed during the first two years of transition by the influx of a wide range of school information, and they suggested that course selection guidance should be provided later. Understanding ELL assessment and grade placements was described by teachers as important because without that knowledge, students and parents felt confused and questioned the school's decisions. One teacher noted how difficult it

was for adolescents to understand why some of their newcomer peers were moving to a higher grade level while they were left behind:

> the biggest thing is that…because of gaps in their education, they might see some students moving quickly further ahead and then that frustrates them. Because we have students who…yeah they're from refugee camps. They had some schooling, but they had a lot of gaps where they didn't go to school. And they see people moving – 'Oh, how come that person's in that class right now and how come I'm in this class?' And there's a real gap for them I think, because they want to be way further ahead. But yet, they're not ready for it, so I think that's tough.

Academic confidence was an important need that participants associated with adolescents' early school adjustment experiences. Teachers and after-school/settlement staff commented that adolescents formed perceptions of their own abilities in comparison with those of other students and that many were often discouraged by their own slower progress. Fostering adolescents' academic confidence was difficult, given that existing school structures reinforced a different type of perception, as described by one teacher:

> they know they're in the ESL program, which I think facilitates in them a belief that there's something less about their ability. And the one thing that we are quite consistent in …is sending the message that you are actually some of the smartest and most capable students in the school because your job is twice as challenging as the other students, right? Like drop one of these guys into a school in Mogadishu and see how they do? But it's

> really hard when their experience is telling them otherwise about their abilities to get them to believe how capable they are….especially when some of them see other students progressing faster.

Finally, the acquisition of school readiness skills was a need that participants identified as especially important for newcomer adolescent refugees with limited formal schooling. Some of the identified school readiness skills were of an interpersonal nature, such as dealing with peer conflict through discussion and self-regulation of emotion, or working collaboratively with other students. Others were associated with readiness to learn in a formal school setting such as following directions; taking turns; raising one's hand before speaking out in class; using calculators, computers, or other learning equipment; and asking for clarification. Lack of these skills was associated with the limited formal school exposure that students had received prior to arriving in Canada, as well as with war and refugee camp experiences. For instance, some of the students exhibited aggressive behaviours during conflict with other students in the classroom; such behaviours were associated with their pre-migration contexts, which required students to develop survival strategies. One of the settlement staff explained how challenging it is for youth with limited formal schooling and refugee camp experience to make the transition from an unstructured to a highly structured environment:

> If you have refugee youth, they might have never had schooling so it's not only that they end up in a classroom [in] which they do not understand the language, they never had... You know, in a camp if you are a very a person

> who likes routine and structure, your survival chances are much lower because you are much more of a target, if every day at nine you get your water; if anybody wants to rape you or do whatever you are much more of target than if you go one day at ten and another day at night. So it's a survival strategy to be unstructured, here it's the worst thing you can be, and so the boys also often were head of households because the men were gone, dead, so they were men and now they are supposed to behave like boys.

Teachers noted that, while there is variability in how fast adolescents adapt, it can take up to two years before they have acquired some of the basic practical skills to be self-sufficient learners in a formal school setting. Helping adolescents to develop those practical skills was a significant objective in the transition classroom, as indicated by one of the participating teachers:

> We introduce them to the classroom routine. I mean something like finding their locker and how do you open your locker and where's the bathroom. And where do you go for lunch? …parents are often concerned the school's so big: "What if my child's going to be lost?"' We understand that they're new. And we do look out for them.

While adolescents and teachers in this study were all part of a TSP that sought to intentionally support the development of school readiness skills, teachers noted during their interviews that school readiness skills were not always explicitly taught and scaffolded. They also noted that in-class activities and curriculum for

newcomer refugee adolescents with limited formal schooling should include school readiness modules to help adolescents become successful learners.

The Strengths of Recently Arrived Adolescent Refugees

Three strengths were identified in the data: multilingualism, educational aspirations and learning assets, and a sense of responsibility towards family, religion, heritage culture and country.

Multilingualism. All adolescents had experienced one or more resettlements that exposed them to a variety of different languages. English was their second and in many cases their third language, and adolescents were eager to show off their multilingual abilities or to learn new words in the languages of other newcomer adolescents. During the after-school activities, adolescents practiced pronouncing and/or writing words in languages spoken by other students and/or after-school volunteers and staff (Field notes). A4's experiences illustrated what it meant to live between languages. A4 was born in Ethiopia to Somali parents but spent most of his childhood in a refugee camp in Eritrea before moving to Canada. He self-identified as Somali and spoke Somali, English, and some Swahili. He was such an avid viewer of Hindi movies that his nickname was borrowed from a famous Hindi actor. He spoke Somali at home but both English and Somali with his friends. Much like A4, other adolescents in the study were adapting to using different languages to communicate with parents at home, peers at school, and teachers in the classroom. One of the female adolescents commented on how she switched between English and Somali when speaking with her friends: "Sometimes, in lunch, I always mix up Somali and English.

When I don't like speak Somali at school but [other girls] would like to, then I mix up."

The adolescents mastered a fluid ability to move between linguistic spaces, which was part of their daily lives and cultural capital. These multilingual abilities were not always appreciated in the school. After-school staff noted that, albeit well-intentioned, some teachers' emphasis on using only English in the classroom made students feel depreciated and deprived of part of their heritage identity. Two of the adolescents explicitly commented during their interviews that speaking their home language was not always encouraged in the transition classroom. During my field observations, I recorded two instances in which two Somali students came to the after-school program upset because their transition teacher had reprimanded them for speaking to one of their classmates in Somali. In narrating one such incident, A7 appeared puzzled with her teacher's behaviour: "I just asked [another girl] something in Somali. I don't know why [the teacher] didn't like it" (Field notes).

Educational aspirations and learning assets. When asked about their educational aspirations during the interview, the majority of the adolescents expressed plans to pursue a post-secondary education. Two of the male adolescents wanted to be doctors, and one of them specifically hoped to become "doctor in operation room" (this was the English term he used during the interview to describe a surgeon). Two adolescents, one male and one female, wanted to become engineers. Two other females wanted to become nurses, and one wanted to be a teacher. One male adolescent wanted to be a soccer player.

Three were unsure about what they wanted to do after finishing school and one student did not comment on future aspirations during the interview. In discussing their aspirations, it became evident that the motivating factor behind students' intention to pursue a career in health fields or education was a desire "to help people" or a parental expectation. The male adolescent who wanted to be an engineer wanted to do so because he liked science and "doing things." The female adolescent stated that although her mother wanted her to become a nurse, "I don't like blood. Bluh. I don't want to be a nurse;" rather, she wanted to study engineering. These high educational aspirations were confirmed by the teachers and after-school/settlement staff, who further commented that although parents wanted their children to pursue post-secondary education, both parents and adolescents were often unaware or ill-informed of the steps they needed to take to be able to achieve their goals. One teacher commented that a lack of understanding of gatekeeper courses for high-school students (as was identified in the curriculum and learning needs section above) made adolescents' educational goals difficult to achieve:

> These families expected them to go on to a technology or engineering program at NAIT or to university. So they are not able to take Math 10-C, which is what they need to get into the post-secondary entrance, math classes in high school because they don't have grade 8 and 9 math. .. It's very streamlined in high school. This is your level of achievement. This is where you go. You don't get to go in this door cause your grades aren't high enough. So… there's all of these gates and fences to jump.

Despite the many obstacles that adolescents faced, they never lost hope in the future or the willingness to work hard to overcome all the obstacles they were faced with on a daily basis. Their learning strengths, as identified by teachers and after-school/settlement staff, included persistence/perseverance in learning, resourcefulness, adaptability, and hope for the future. One teacher gave the following example of one students' resourcefulness: "We were talking about taste buds and human anatomy. She couldn't think of the English word for 'sour'. So she asked for it on my ipad and quickly found a picture of a sour candy. And then showed the class: 'You know that, oh sour. Yes, sour'!" Another teacher emphasized perseverance and how vital it was for continued engagement in school learning, despite the many obstacles described in the needs section above:

> The amazing perseverance and drive that they have. Like in English, it's amazing 'cause we do lots of writing. That's when they reveal a lot of stories. And then when you read the stories, you realize that they're so strong. [I] can't imagine going through what they go through. And still be wanting to be here…and learn. And it's amazing. Like all my refugee students….I can tell you who's a refugee student by the way they act…they're not even pretending. They genuinely are happy here. They genuinely enjoy learning. And you forget that.

One after-school staff commented on the development of adaptability as a result of having to move between environments:

> [they] had to adapt to so many different situations and they were able to do that, so they are learning fast. They have to bridge between cultures,

> between languages, often between educations, basically not being educated in that way, not ever having gone to school.

One teacher also emphasized the continuous effort that students put into making life work for them and the hope they possess for the future:

> Hopeful. I think for some, it's a strength that we don't recognize as a strength…, but students who keep showing up even though they feel on the periphery…so they're kind of disengaged from the academic learning. They're kind of disengaged socially. They feel awkward being in school. But actually there must be a really strong heart for someone that's in that uncomfortable position and yet keeps coming back day after day.

Sense of responsibility/commitment. Adolescents in the study exhibited a strong sense of responsibility towards their family, religion, heritage culture, and home country. On a daily basis, adolescents contributed to the family household in various capacities. Three of them worked outside of the school (one worked part-time at a store and two worked 4-8 hours a week at the after-school program) to help support their family financially; all of them had assumed roles of caring for their younger siblings or helping their parents with daily chores. A9, a 13-year-old girl who had lost her father, helped her mother care for her younger siblings and cook dinner on a daily basis. "Take care of your mom and brothers" was the advice her father had given to her before passing away, and she shared this commitment during the interview. This sense of responsibility towards the family shown by the adolescents, despite their youth, was acknowledged by

teachers and after-school staff. One settlement staff described it as having "a very strong identity as a family."

In addition to their strong family commitment, all the adolescents exhibited a sense of pride and obligation towards continuing the cultural and religious legacy of their parents. All of them were Muslim, and many attended a Quran school on Saturdays, which they enjoyed. This continuation of their religious practices seemed to contribute to a sense of stability and meaning in their lives, and they cherished it deeply. All adolescents also displayed a commitment to their heritage culture; they proudly identified as being Somali or Ethiopian, although most of the Somali adolescents had not been born in Somalia. A8, a 16-year-old adolescent, referred to her parents' culture as "our roots." (Field notes). Yet, as was noted in the needs section of this paper, adolescents' cultural and religious identities were challenged in their new multicultural environment and had to be re-constructed to accommodate aspects of the Canadian culture.

Finally, adolescents exhibited a strong commitment to bring change to their home countries. As refugees, they all acknowledged the conflict and suffering that existed in their home countries. When asked to dream of what they would like to do if they had a million dollars, which was often the question that concluded the interview with adolescents, all expressed dreams that involved some sort of return (personal, financial, social) to their home countries or families. Some wanted to build hospitals or work as doctors in their home country, some wanted to build schools, and others wanted to bring their family and loved ones to Canada.

Discussion

This ethnographic study examined the school adjustment experiences of recently arrived adolescent refugees, emphasizing their social-emotional, acculturation, and academic needs alongside their multilingualism, learning strengths and sense of responsibility, as they were collectively perceived by the adolescents, their teachers, and the after-school/settlement staff working closely with the adolescents during their early years of resettlement in Canada. The findings from the study show that adjustment is a continuous and multifaceted process of adaptation that entails challenges and opportunities. Focusing on refugee adolescents who arrive with limited English and interrupted or limited formal schooling, this study makes an important contribution to the refugee adjustment literature by shifting away from a refugee mental health framework and by emphasizing the acculturation and educational experiences of adolescent refugees. Moreover, as will be further discussed below, this study helps illustrate the unique as well as some of the common post-settlement school experiences of refugee adolescents in relation to other newcomer immigrant populations.

Needs of Adolescent Refugees

The findings from this study show that during cross-cultural transitions, and especially during the early stages of a transition, a number of concurrent changes are taking place in the lives of adolescent refugees that give rise to an array of relational, emotional, intercultural, intracultural, and educational (curriculum and learning) needs. Upon arrival, adolescents grieve for the family and friends they left behind, and they desperately seek to connect with peers and

adults in the school to reduce loneliness and the fear of the yet unexplored and unfamiliar new surroundings. These emotional and relational needs are not unique to refugee adolescents but have been reiterated by other researchers who have examined the adjustment of immigrant children in Western countries (Li, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Rutter, 2006; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Szente & Hoot, 2007). A perhaps unique aspect of the social-emotional experiences of adolescent refugees is the experience of forced displacement that amplifies experiences of loss. That is, the loss that refugee adolescents experience extends well beyond the loss of familiar surroundings and family members that is a common feature of the immigrant experience; it may include loss of trust towards others and separation from caregivers before and/or during migration. Scholars of refugee studies, especially those operating within a mental health framework (e.g., Papadopoulos, 2007), have elucidated some of the deeper meaning of loss in the lives of refugee children and families. This study extends this notion to an educational adjustment context by showing that experiences of loss are transcendent and influence relationships and adjustment within the school environment. By examining the adjustment experiences of the adolescents as a process and not as an outcome, and by incorporating not only their own but also the experiences of those around them, this study shows the reciprocal relationship that exists between adolescents and their environments, which is described by the acculturation development model (Oppedal, 2006). When faced with social and emotional challenges, adolescents actively seek to reduce feelings of loneliness and fear by reaching out to others and finding their own safe space in the school. The formation of social

connections and the creation of a secure and welcoming environment is reinforced by teachers and after-school/settlement staff, who also create opportunities for adolescents to feel connected and welcomed.

In a post-settlement acculturation development context, immigrant and refugee students have specific intercultural and intracultural needs. The findings from this study show that navigating a diverse, multicultural environment, which contrasted with the culturally and religiously homogenous environment of their pre-migration countries, requires Somali and Ethiopian adolescents to negotiate new identities as members of their own heritage group and as members of the Canadian society. In her discussion of the racialized identities of Somali youth, Bigelow (2010) notes that "in the process of adjusting…[youth] try on, reject, and embrace any number of identities through adolescence" (p. 147). The current study focused on the first two years of adjustment and thus illustrated the initial conflict and confusion that adolescents experienced as minority members in Canadian society. Acculturation research shows that upon intercultural contact, adolescents adopt one of four strategies (biculturalism, marginalization, separation, assimilation, separation) to balance the demands of their two cultural (heritage and Canadian) environments. The intercultural and intracultural challenges identified in this study suggest that, without support for their acculturation needs, adolescents may be at risk for marginalization, a state that has been linked to negative academic, social, and health outcomes (Berry, 2006; Berry et al., 2006; Bigelow, 2010; Fosados, et al., 2007). The acculturation needs of the Somali and Ethiopian refugee adolescents that were highlighted in this

study are congruent with findings from other studies that emphasize the challenges of constructing bicultural identities (e.g., Bigelow, 2010; Naji, 2012) and stress the importance of supportive relationships and a sense of school belonging for positive adjustment (e.g., Ellis et al., 2008; Kia-Keating & Ellis).

Finally, the findings about the educational needs of refugee adolescents illustrate the complex nature of their academic transitions. The findings related to limited language proficiency, lack of academic confidence, and unfamiliarity with the Canadian education system corroborate previous research findings related to the academic barriers faced by immigrant and refugee students (e.g., Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2005; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). The findings from this study suggest that the academic confidence of refugee students, especially students who come with significant learning gaps and no English, can be threatened during the post-settlement period; these students are likely to make slower school progress compared with immigrant students who have some English language skills and strong academic foundations and can move faster to age-appropriate grade levels. The findings related to school readiness skills appear to be unique to refugee students with limited formal schooling. These skills were associated less with age than with lack of formal school experiences pre-migration, as well as exposure to violence and refugee camp experience. The development of school readiness skills requires special and intentional classroom support. The identification of these school readiness needs is an important addition to the current refugee education literature. By combining multiple perspectives to examine refugee school adjustment, this study highlights the unique needs of refugee adolescents,

such as developing strategies for coping with loss and building school readiness skills, which might not have surfaced if only one perspective (e.g., adolescent vs. teacher vs. after-school staff) had been included.

Strengths of Adolescent Refugees

In addition to identifying the needs of newcomer refugee students, this study highlights some of their strengths: multilingualism, high educational aspirations and learning strengths, and a sense of responsibility towards their family heritage culture, religion, and home country. These strengths serve as a form of capital in refugee families and echo the voices of other researchers (e.g., Bigelow, 2010; Kirova, 2007; Valenzuela, 2002; Yosso, 2005) who suggest that the linguistic, cultural, and familial capital of immigrant and refugee students is undervalued in today's schools. Refugee adolescents, despite an array of adverse pre-migration experiences (e.g., trauma, exposure to violence, separation from caregivers; see Fazel et al., 2012; Hamilton & Moore, 2004) and increased post-migration school challenges, such as those identified in this study, demonstrate high educational aspirations and persistence in learning. Recognizing and utilizing students' capital can positively influence their overall academic and social integration. By illuminating the strengths of newcomer refugee students who, despite their limited formal schooling, have a wealth of life experiences, this study challenges current discourses and practices (e.g., Kanu, 2008; Szente & Hoot, 2007) that tend to focus exclusively on the needs of adolescent refugees. The findings from this study show that in order for refugee students to fulfil their post-secondary education dreams and to integrate successfully into Canadian

society, schools, as primary places of contact with refugee adolescents post-settlement, should create optimal educational environments through the appropriate and adequate provision of social-emotional, acculturation, and academic supports.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has made some useful contributions to the literature on the school adjustment and acculturation of newcomer adolescent refugees. The inclusion of only Somali and Ethiopian adolescents with limited or interrupted formal education, two ethnocultural groups who have received limited, albeit growing research attention (e.g., Ellis et al., 2008), is a significant advantage of the study. However, some important limitations need to be acknowledged. The use of a convenience sample of adolescents raises questions about the characteristics of the adolescents who participated in the study and the generalizability of the findings. First, all adolescents were attending a transition supports program and were already receiving special classroom support. As they were all volunteers who participated with the consent of their parents, they may have been especially supportive of the program. Replicating the study with a sample of adolescents who did not attend a transition program may lead to the identification of additional adjustment needs. Second, none of the adolescents in the study were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Given the high prevalence of PTSD in refugee children (Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al., 2004), it would be worthwhile to examine the school adjustment experiences of adolescents with a formal diagnosis of PTSD utilizing a similar design that

includes both adolescent and teacher perspectives. Third, the majority of the adolescents in the study were female. Some studies have found gender differences in immigrant adjustment, especially academic adjustment, with female adolescents reporting better academic outcomes but more internalizing symptoms such as depression (e.g., Fazel et al., 2012; Sanchez et al., 2005; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Future research that includes a more balanced adolescent sample and examines gender differences in adolescent refugee school adjustment could make important contributions to the field. Fourth, all adolescents in this study had limited to no English skills and limited formal schooling experiences upon arrival in Canada. By purposefully focusing on this population, this qualitative exploratory study addressed an important gap in the refugee education literature; however, the extent to which these findings apply to refugee adolescents who arrive with English abilities and formal schooling requires further examination.

Future research should focus more on the educational and acculturation needs of adolescent refugees. The academic needs of adolescents that were identified in this study provide a starting point for understanding some of the challenges adolescents with limited education face at school, but the list should not be seen as exhaustive. For instance, second language learning is a vital part of school adjustment but was not explicitly examined in this study. Mixed methods research that examines, in greater depth, the educational needs of newcomer adolescents with learning gaps and longitudinally tracks their educational trajectories would provide useful insights into their long-term academic adjustment. A longitudinal design could also be useful in tracking the

acculturation trajectories and outcomes of refugee adolescents. Acculturation researchers (e.g., Berry et al., 2006; Fosados et al., 2007) have given limited attention to refugee youth as a distinct immigrant group. However, findings showed that, due to the involuntary nature of their migration and prolonged stays in refugee camps with limited opportunities for multicultural exposure, the refugee students in this study were unprepared to deal with the acculturation challenges that follow intercultural contact and were at risk for less adaptive acculturation strategies.

References

Arzubiaga, A. E., Nogueron, S. C., & Sullivan, A. L. (2009). The education of children in im/migrant families. *Review of Research in Education, 33*, 246-271.

Banki, S. (2012). Refugees as educators: The potential for positive impact on educational systems. In F. E. McCarthy & M. H. Vickers (Eds.), *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education* (pp. 43-64). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Contexts of acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Berry, J. W., Phinney, J. S., Sam, D. L., & Vedder, P. (2006). Immigrant youth: Acculturation, identity, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 55*, 303-332.

Bigelow, M. H. (2010). *Mogadishu on the Mississippi: Language, racialized identity, and education in a new land*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory of research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bronstein, I., & Montgomery, P. (2011). Psychological distress in refugee children: A systematic review. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review, 14*, 44-56.

Christian, B. J., Pearce, P. F., Roberson, A., & Rothwell, E. (2010). It's a small, small world. Data collection strategies for research with children and adolescents. *Journal of Pediatric Nursing, 25*, 202-214.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012). *Facts and figures: Immigration overview, permanent and temporary residents 2012*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Public Works & Government Services Canada.

Creswell, J. W. (2002). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative research. *Theory into Practice, 39,* 124-130.

Derluyn, I., Mels, C., & Broekaert, E. (2009). Mental health problems in separated refugee adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence Health, 44,* 291-297.

Derwing, T. M., DeCorby, E., Ichikawa, J., & Jamieson, K. (1999). Some factors that affect the success of ESL High School Students. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 55,* 532-547.

Dooley, K. (2012). Positioning refugee students as intellectual class members. In F. E. McCarthy & M. H. Vickers (Eds.), *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education* (pp. 3-20). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Ellis, B. H., MacDonald, H. Z., Lincoln, A. K., & Cabral, H. J. (2008). Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: The role of trauma, stress, and

perceived discrimination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76,* 184-193.

Ellis, B. H., Miller, A. B., Abdi, S., Barrett, C., & Blood, E. A. (2013). Multi-tier mental health program for refugee youth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *81,* 129-140.

Elo, S., & Kyngas, H. (2007). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 62,* 107-115.

Epstein, J. A., Dusenbury, L., Botvin, G. J., & Diaz, T. (1996). Language use and initiation of alcohol use among New York City Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse, 5*(2), *63-76.*

Fazel, M., Reed, R., V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: risk and protective factors. *Lancet, 37,* 266-282.

Fosados, R., McClain, A., Ritt-Olson, A., Sussman, S., Soto, D., Baezconde-Garbanati L., & Unger J. B. (2007). The influence of acculturation on drug and alcohol use in a sample of adolescents. *Addictive Behaviors, 32,* 2990-3004.

Gibson, M. A. (1998). Promoting academic success among immigrant students: Is acculturation the issue? *Educational Policy, 12,* 615-633.

Hamilton, R., & Moore, D. (2004). *Educational interventions for refugee children*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Jackson, S. F. (2008). A participatory group process to analyze qualitative data. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and Action, 2,* 161-170.

Kanu, Y. (2008). Educational needs and barriers for African refugee students in Manitoba. *Canadian Journal of Education, 31,* 915-940.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12,* 29-43.

Kirova, A. (2007). Moving childhoods: Young children's lived experiences of being between languages and cultures. In L. Adams & A. Kirova (Eds.), *Global migration and education: Schools, children, and families* (pp. 185-198). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Li, J. (2009). Forging the future between two different worlds: Recent Chinese immigrant adolescents tell their cross-cultural experiences. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 24,* 477-504.

Lustig, S. L., Kia-Keating, M., Knight, W. G., Geltman, P., Ellis, H., Kinzie, J. D., …Saxe, G. N. (2004). Review of child and adolescent refugee mental health. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 43,* 24-36.

Matthews, J. (2008). Schooling and settlement: refugee education in Australia.

International Studies in Sociology of Education, 18, 31-45.

Mayan, M. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 75,* 329-364.

Morse, J. M. (2000). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(3), 3-5.

Morse, J. M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 13-22.

Myers, R., Chou C. P., Sussman S., Baezconde-Garbanati L., Pachon H., & Valente T. W. (2009). Acculturation and substance use: Social influence as a mediator among Hispanic alternative high-school youth. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 50,* 164-79.

Naji, L. (2012, Spring). Integrating young Canadians of minority background into mainstream Canadian society: The case of Somali youth. *Metropolis Conversation,* 1-10. Retrieved from www.metropolis.net

Ngo, H. V. (2010). *Unravelling identities and belonging: Criminal gang involvement of youth from immigrant families.* Calgary, AB: Centre for Newcomers.

Oppedal, B. (2006). Development and acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 97-112).

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Papadopoulos, R. (2007) Refugees, trauma and adversity activated development. *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling, 9,* 301-312.

Porter, M., & Haslam, N. (2005). Predisplacement and postdisplacement factors associated with mental health of refugees and internally displayed persons: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 294,* 602-612.

Rios-Aguilar, C., Kiyama, J. M., Gravitt, M., & Moll, L. C. (2011). Funds of knowledge for the poor and forms of capital for the rich? A capital approach to examining funds of knowledge. *Theory and Research in Education, 9,* 163-184.

Rossiter, M. J., & Rossiter, K. R. (2009). Diamonds in the rough: Bridging gaps in supports for at-risk immigrant and refugee youth. *International Migration and Integration, 10,* 409-429.

Rousseau C., & Guzder, J. (2008). School-based prevention programs for refugee children. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 17*, 533-549.

Rutter, J. (2006). *Refugee children in the UK*. London, UK: Open University Press.

Sam, D. L., & Oppedal, B. (2003). Acculturation as a developmental pathway. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 8*(1), 1-14.

Sanchez, B., Colon, Y., & Esparza, P. (2005). The role of sense of school belonging and gender in the academic adjustment of Latino adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 34,* 619-628.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22,* 63-75.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Gaytán, F. X., Bang, H. J., Pakes, J., O'Connor, E., & Rhodes, J. (2010). Academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant youth. *Developmental Psychology, 40,* 602-618.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Szente, J., & Hoot, J. (2008). Exploring the needs of refugee children in our schools. In L. Adams & A. Kirova (Eds.), *Global migration and education: Schools, children, and families* (pp. 219-236). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting refugee students in schools: What constitutes inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16,* 39-56.

Toohey, K., & Derwing, T. M. (2008). Hidden losses: How demographics can encourage incorrect assumptions about ESL High School students. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 54,* 178-193.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2012). *A year of crises: Global trends 2011*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2013, July). *Education for all: Global monitoring report* (Policy Paper No. 10). Paris, France: Author.

Valenzuela, A. (2002). Reflections on the subtractive underpinnings of education research and policy. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55,* 235-241.

Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2003). The conceptual, historical, and practice roots of community based participatory research and related participatory traditions. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 27-52). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Wilkinson, L. (2002). Factors influencing the academic success of refugee youth in Canada. *Journal of Youth Studies, 5,* 173-193.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8,* 69-91.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Bicultural Journey and Competencies of First- and Second-Generation Immigrants and Refugees: A Comparative Study[1]

The sociocultural development of immigrant and refugee children in Canada takes place in two cultural environments. On the one hand, the home and family environment is modeled on the beliefs and practices of their parents' heritage culture, and, on the other hand, the out-of home environment (e.g., school, peer networks) is shaped according to the beliefs and practices of the Canadian culture. These two socialization contexts are often culturally and linguistically incongruent and, as a result, immigrant and refugee children need to acquire an additional set of sociocultural developmental competencies to effectively navigate these heterogeneous environments (Oppedal, 2006; Padilla, 2006). The Acculturation Development Model (ADM; Oppedal 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003) speculates that acquiring competencies in both the home and out-of-home contexts will allow children to fully participate and belong to both cultures, thus experiencing positive adjustment. Considerable research has been devoted to understanding bicultural development in immigrant and refugee children (e.g., Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris; Li, 2008; Berry, 2006; Mistry & Wu, 2010); however the role of generational status (i.e., first-generation vs. second-generation) has received little attention in much of that research, especially within a Canadian context. In the current study[2], the experience of dual culture socialization in first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults in Canada was examined in order to identify the competencies that

support effective bicultural navigation and differences and similarities between generations.

The Bicultural Individual: Models and Definitions

Acculturation development is the process of growing up learning to navigate two cultural environments. Utilizing a bi-dimensional model of acculturation, Berry (1997, 2006) identified four strategies that immigrant and refugee children may adopt as part of their acculturation development. If children integrate both cultures, they become bicultural, whereas if they reject both cultures, they become marginalized. If children show preference for their parents' culture, they adopt a strategy of separation from the majority (Canadian) culture. If they show preference for the majority culture, they adopt a strategy of assimilation. Biculturalism has been associated with an array of positive outcomes for immigrant and refugee children; it has been linked to positive psychological and sociocultural adaptation (e.g., Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013), good physical health (e.g., Epstein, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1996), and enhanced cognitive abilities such as abstract thinking (Benet-Martinez, Lee & Leu, 2006; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009).

Although biculturalism has been associated with optimal outcomes, there is great variability in how the bicultural individual is conceptualized (e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Birman, 1994; Hermans & Kempen, 1998; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Early models of biculturalism focused primarily on the behaviours exhibited by bicultural individuals and the extent to which individuals identified with each culture (Birman, 1994; LaFromboise, et al.,

1993). LaFromboise et al. (1993) proposed six dimensions of biculturalism: (a) a sense of belonging in both cultural groups; (b) an ability to communicate effectively in both languages; (c) bicultural self-efficacy, defined as "confidence that one can live effectively and in a satisfying manner within two groups without compromising one's sense of cultural identity" (p. 404); (d) knowledge of beliefs, values, histories, and traditional practices of both cultures; (e) familiarity with behaviours and roles for socializing in both cultures; and (f) positive attitudes towards both cultural groups. Unlike LaFromboise et al.'s model, which focuses on the behavioural, cognitive, and emotional dimensions and does not take into consideration the identification dimension, Birman (1994) distinguished between biculturalism as shown by behavioural competency in both cultures and biculturalism characterized by identification with both cultures. In her theory, the blended bicultural is an individual who identifies with both cultures (e.g., Greek-Canadian) and is behaviourally competent in both cultures (e.g., speaks Greek and English); the instrumental bicultural, on the other hand, is an individual who is behaviourally competent and participates in both cultures (e.g., speaks Greek and English) but does not identify with both cultures (e.g., identifies as Greek or Canadian but not Greek-Canadian). Other researchers (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos 2005; Hong et al., 2000; Phinney & Navarro 1997) have made distinctions between biculturals who perceive their cultures as blended and those who see them as separate (i.e., the alternated bicultural). According to Hong et al. (2000), "internalized cultures are not necessarily blended" (p. 710) and bicultural individuals alternate between cultural frames of reference, depending on

environmental input. For instance, in the presence of peers from the same heritage culture, the bicultural individual thinks and acts in a way appropriate to that cultural group because knowledge pertinent to that culture becomes accessible. This skill has been defined as cultural frame switching (Benet Martinez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2000). Finally, some researchers view biculturalism as a hybrid form of a third culture that is different from the two cultures from which it is derived (e.g., Hermans & Kempen, 1998).

Regardless of how biculturalism is conceptualized, researchers agree that the process of negotiating two cultural environments can be difficult for immigrant and refugee children. Acculturative stress, racism, discrimination, exclusion from one or both cultures, and family tensions resulting from different rates of acculturation between children and parents are some of the most commonly reported challenges (Birman, 2006; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Katsiaficas, Suarez-Orozco, Sirin, & Gupta, 2013; Love & Buriel, 2007; Okazaki, 2009; Trickett & Jones, 2007). These experiences can have a negative impact on the psychological well-being and educational adjustment of immigrant and refugee children and youth (e.g., Carter, 2007; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008; Okazaki, 2009; Stone & Han, 2005) and can influence their sense of belonging to and relationship with each culture (e.g., Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000).

Undoubtedly, the diversity that exists in descriptions of the bicultural individual speaks to the multidimensionality of biculturalism, and researchers are increasingly utilizing more comprehensive models of acculturation (Schwartz,

Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2012). As the field adopts more refined representations of the bicultural individual, the perspectives of those who are bicultural and their experiences navigating both cultures become even more important to the discourse. Some researchers (e.g., Mistry & Wu, 2010; Padilla, 2006; Salehi, 2010) have explicitly called for a better understanding of the competencies and assets that can facilitate bicultural navigation. Consequently, investigating the competencies that support bicultural development from the perspective of first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults who have successfully navigated their two cultural environments can provide insights into the experience of becoming bicultural.

Generational Differences in Acculturation and Adjustment

All immigrant and refugee children go through dual cultural socialization; however, the developmental context of first-generation children is different from that of the second generation. Many first-generation children arrive in the receiving country with limited or no competencies in the new culture but with some degree of competence in and connection to their heritage culture, particularly if they arrive as adolescents. Many experience poor socioeconomic conditions, increased acculturative stress, and the need to learn the language of the receiving culture (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Hernandez, Denton, Macartney, & Blanchard, 2012; Katsiaficas et al., 2013; Lara-Cinisomo, Xue, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013; Ngo, 2010). Second-generation children, on the other hand, have increased connection to the majority culture because they were born in the country to which their parents migrated, have acquired the language at an early

age, live in higher socioeconomic status neighbourhoods, and often experience a social advantage associated with being citizens of the receiving country (Hernandez et al., 2012; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2013; Ngo, 2010). Research on the relationship between generational status and adjustment outcomes, however, suggests a *paradox* (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012) in the acculturation and adaptation of the first and second generations. That is, despite, their linguistic and socioeconomic advantage, second-generation children experience poorer adjustment outcomes than their first-generation co-ethnics. Second and later generations have been found to exhibit inferior school performance (Pong & Zeiser, 2012), higher levels of delinquent behaviour (Bui, 2012), and poor mental health (Montazer & Wheaton, 2011). While both groups, as minority members, report experiences of exclusion from the majority culture (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Ali, 2008; Ngo, 2010), second-generation individuals also report increased exclusion from same-ethnic peers (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001).

Several explanations have been proposed for the observed differences in first- and second-generation children. Portes and Rumbaut (2001), for instance, emphasized the variability that exists in the adjustment outcomes of the second generation. That is, while some second-generation children exhibit poor socioeconomic and social integration, others experience positive socioeconomic outcomes. Other researchers (Hernandez et al., 2012; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008) highlighted the stronger connection of first-generation children to their first culture and to fulfilling their parents' high expectations and assert that this connection has a protective effect on their

development. While these explanations can account for some of the observed generational differences, they are as yet insufficient for fully explaining the generational paradox. Thus, a better understanding of the similarities and differences that exist in the acculturation experiences of first- and second-generation youth and adults is needed. Qualitative studies, through an in-depth examination of the subjective experience of navigating two cultures, can generate new knowledge on the generational upbringing of immigrant and refugee children and youth, and can inform emerging explanatory models of the immigrant paradox. To date, qualitative studies that have examined the process of navigation in immigrant and refugees have focused on only one ethnic group or generation (e.g. Li, 2007), with a noted lack of comparative qualitative studies. The following two research questions were explored in this study:

(a) What experiences have a salient influence on the acculturation journey of first- and second-generation bicultural youth and adults, and how are these experiences similar and/or different between generations?

(b) What competencies are critical for successful bicultural navigation in first- and second-generation youth and adults, and how are these competencies similar and/or different between generations?

Method

Interpretive Description

This qualitative study utilized a method of interpretive description (Mayan, 2009; Thorne, Kirkham, & MacDonald-Emes, 1997; Thorne, Kirkham, O'Flynn-Magee, 2004). Interpretive description is considered "a smaller scale

qualitative investigation of a … phenomenon of interest …for the purpose of capturing themes and patterns within subjective perceptions and generating an interpretive description" (Thorne et al., 2004, p. 3). Interpretive description as a distinct qualitative research method has been used primarily in health research (Thorne et al., 1997, 2004); however, interpretive inquiry as a philosophical tradition has been used more extensively in educational research (Merriam, 1998). Interpretive description is suitable when seeking to generate new knowledge about a phenomenon (Thorne et al., 1997), in this case the common and unique acculturation development experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants and refugees. This method is particularly useful for situating new knowledge within the existing field of knowledge "…so that findings can be constructed on the basis of thoughtful linkages to the work of others in the field" (Thorne et al., 1997, p. 173).

A Community-based Research Approach

While interpretive description was the method that guided this research study, a community-based research (CBR) approach was used to plan and conduct the study. CBR involves working collaboratively with a community partner throughout all stages of a research process (Israel et al., 1998; Wallerstein & Duran, 2008). This study was conducted in collaboration with an immigrant health-serving organization and took place in a medium-sized metropolitan city in Western Canada. The partnering organization played a key role in identifying the research questions, recruiting participants, interpreting the findings, and

mobilizing the knowledge to inform programming pertaining to immigrant and refugee children and youth.

Participant Characteristics and Recruitment

Eight first-generation and eight second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults (see Table 3-1) participated in a series of focus group interviews.

Participants were recruited based on the following three criteria:

(a) Generational status. First-generation participants had to be foreign-born and to have migrated in adolescence or later; and second-generation participants had to be born in Canada to foreign-born parents.

(b) Age. Younger adults had to be under 25 and older adults had to be 25 or older. It was acknowledged that the process of retrospectively assigning meaning to experience is ongoing (Davies and Davies, 2007) and influenced by one's life stage. Also, it was acknowledged that because the multicultural landscape in Canada has become more diverse in recent years, recruitment of a younger and an older adult cohort would generate a broader perspective on the experience of biculturalism.

(c) Bicultural experience. Participants had to have had experience with navigating multiple cultural contexts, and to consider their learning and outcomes from this process positive. By understanding the experiences of those who had successfully navigated two cultural landscapes, it was possible to identify competencies that promote positive bicultural outcomes in the development of immigrant and refugee children.

Table 3-1

Age, Gender, and Ethnicity Information by Generation

	Generation	
	First	Second
Characteristic	*n*	*n*
Age Group		
young adults < 25	4	4
older adults ≥ 25	4	4
Gender		
Female	5	6
Male	3	2
Ethnicity (in alphabetical order)		
Cambodian	1	–
Chinese	1	1
Colombian	1	–
Cuban	1	–
Eritrean/Ethiopian	1	1
Filipino	–	1
Japanese	–	1
Kurdish	2	–
Lebanese	–	1
Pakistani	–	2
Vietnamese	1	1
Developmental stage at arrival in Canada		N/A
Adolescents	6	
Young Adults	2	

Note. N/A = not applicable.

Purposive participant selection occurred with the help of the partnering organization. All of the participants perceived themselves as bicultural and were involved with the organization as cultural brokers. The young adults were working as youth leaders, and the older adults were working as adult cultural brokers. As part of their professional roles, both young and older adults engaged in cultural brokering on a daily basis. Cultural brokering is defined as "…the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change" (Jezewski, 1990, p. 497). Cultural brokers

would often mediate between their communities and health or education systems to enhance relationships between the two, with the ultimate goal of providing improved services to immigrant and refugee families. Thus, participants had experience not only in bridging between their home and out-of-home culture but also, because they were skilful in navigating bicultural contexts, in bridging between their communities and larger systems.

As can be seen in Table 3-1, even though participants were of various ethnocultural backgrounds, they all were from non-Western countries and the majority were visible minorities. Cross-cultural studies have identified several differences in the values and practices of Western and non-Western cultures. Non-Western cultures are considered to be more collectivist, defined by significant obligations towards the collective and close relationships between extended family members, whereas Western countries such as Canada are considered to be more individualistic (Hofstede, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The greater the cultural differences between one's heritage culture and the receiving culture, the more challenging is the process of acculturation (Berry, 2006). In addition to ethnocultural heterogeneity, variability also existed in the immigration status (immigrants vs. refugees) of participants. Some participants—or their parents, if they were second generation—came to Canada through the economic or family class (e.g., those of Chinese or Filipino heritage), whereas others came through the refugee class (e.g., those of Kurdish or Colombian heritage). Immigrants often migrate voluntarily for economic or education purposes, for example, whereas refugees migrate involuntarily to escape conflict and violence in their respective

countries (Berry, 2006). Literature shows that differences exist in the pre-migration (e.g., degree of trauma) and, in many cases, the post-migration experiences of immigrants and refugees (e.g., employment and time required to achieve financial security) (Beiser, 2009; Cortes, 2004; Watters, 2008). Similarities also exist between the two groups in that, depending on their country of origin, both groups may have to learn a new language and adapt to Western culture (e.g., Berry, 2006). Thus, these two groups can be treated separately or together, depending on the focus of the study. As the focus of the current study was on generational differences in the bicultural development of those who experienced positive acculturation outcomes, and because no major differences were observed in the retrospective narrative accounts of those who were refugees compared with those who were immigrants, no distinction was made between the two groups in results section. To honour participants' self-identification and immigration status, however, I use both terms (i.e., immigrants and refugees) throughout this paper.

Sample size in qualitative research depends on a number of factors, including the quality of the data, saturation, the research question, and subsequently the method itself (Morse, 2000). When the data is considered to be rich and informative, a small amount is sufficient and desirable (Morse, 2000). Interpretive studies tend to emphasize depth over breadth and usually have a smaller sample of participants. The purpose of this research was to elicit an in-depth, intergenerational understanding of the experience of navigating multiple contexts, and a sample of 16 participants, eight in each generational group, was

deemed sufficient for this study to allow for within-group exploration of the phenomenon as well as between-group comparison. Small-scale qualitative studies of immigrant adjustment often include a sample of 8 to 12 participants (e.g., Li, 2009) and comparative qualitative studies of interpretive description use a similar size of eight participants per group (e.g., Thorne, Harris, Mahoney, Con, & McGuinness, 2004).

Data Collection

Four focus groups were conducted to examine participants' experience of navigating two cultural environments and the competencies they had developed. Focus groups were purposefully chosen over individual interviews to allow for interaction between participants and to assist with the identification of commonalities and differences in their experience (Mayan, 2009). All but one of the focus groups was attended by four participants. Although efforts were made to find a mutually convenient time for all participants, because of a busy schedule, one participant was not able to join a scheduled focus group and instead completed a one-on-one interview. The members of each focus group all represented the same generation and age group (i.e., the first focus group was with first-generation adults, the second with second-generation adults, the third with second-generation youth, and the fourth with first-generation youth). Each interview/focus-group was audio-recorded and then transcribed. The single interview and two of the focus groups took place in an empty classroom at a university and the other two focus groups took place at the office of the immigrant-serving organization. All focus groups were held on a Saturday,

beginning at 9 am and continuing until 2 pm. Breakfast and lunch were provided. All focus groups had one main facilitator and one or two note-takers. The single interview, which was also held on a Saturday morning, lasted an hour and a half and was conducted by one researcher.

Each focus group/interview had two parts. The first included a mapping activity of participants' acculturation journey. Participants were asked to visually map their journey to becoming bicultural from the time they were born (second generation) or migrated to Canada (first generation) to the present time, highlighting the events that were particularly important to them in learning how to navigate two cultures. To aid their reflection process and to focus on the competencies they developed, one of the objectives of this study, participants were given two sets of 18-20 index cards. The first set included a list of transformative life events (e.g., culture shock, discrimination, positive cross-cultural relationships with Canadians or members of other cultures) and the second included a list of learning processes (e.g., learning trust, learned heritage language/English, tolerance). This list was generated during a pilot phase of this study and is described in Lange, Chiu, and Gokiert (2011). Participants were told that they could use the cards that resonated with them the most or they could write their own transformative events and coping responses on the blank cards available. Half the participants used only the cards, and the other half used a combination of their own and the ones provided. Participants were given half an hour to map their journey on a piece of paper. They used markers to name the key phases of their acculturation journey and then placed the corresponding index

cards under each phase. Once participants had completed their map, they were each asked to describe their journey to the group. After each presentation, the facilitator and other participants had the opportunity to ask questions to explore more deeply each participant's bicultural experience.

The second part of the focus group was a facilitated discussion of the competencies that support bicultural navigation. Participants were asked to reflect further on their journey and to identify the competencies that they considered critical in helping them bridge their two cultures. The competencies listed by the first focus group participants were then presented to the participants of the second focus group, who were asked to comment on the competencies in relation to their own journey, select the ones that resonated with them the most and/or the least, and/or add their own to the list. This process was repeated for each focus group, except for participants of the first focus group who generated the original list. This process resembles the Delphi technique, defined as a "…a multistage approach, with each stage building on the results of the previous one" (McKenna, 1994, p. 1221). This technique allowed for the identification of competencies that were common across generations, as well as those that were unique to each generation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, as noted above, was an iterative process and was conducted in parallel with data collection. Interpretive description studies are not tied to a particular analytic strategy but emphasize the researcher's role in transforming the "…raw data into a structure that makes aspects of the phenomenon meaningful in

some new and useful way" (Thorne et al., 2004, p. 6). Thus, qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data. Although a list of competencies was developed and elaborated during data collection, it was further refined and expanded after all the data had been collected. At this stage in the analysis process, three researchers were involved. All three researchers had post-secondary training and experience in qualitative analysis. Each researcher independently read through the transcripts and coded the data. Next, the researchers came together to identify similarities and differences between codes and to group them accordingly into comprehensive categories (Mayan, 2009). If there was a disagreement in the grouping of the data, it was resolved through discussion. Categorization occurred both within and between groups, leading to a set of conclusions about generation-specific aspects of bicultural development, as well as general competencies inherent in development that occurs in more than one cultural environment. The final phase of the analysis involved a validation of the findings by participants through a group consultation process of sharing the findings with participants and asking for their feedback (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Shenton, 2004). The involvement of participants and community partners in the interpretation of the data is especially desired in CBR to enhance the relevance and validity of the findings (Jackson, 2008; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003).

Results

The results of this study are organized into two sections. The first describes the acculturation journey of becoming bicultural, as experienced by each generation, emphasizing the challenges that participants faced and their

coping strategies. The second section describes the competencies that participants developed and utilized to navigate their two cultural environments. Understanding the journey is critical to understanding the competencies and, for this reason, it is presented first.

The Bicultural Journey

This section describes participants' journeys of navigating their heritage and Canadian cultures, highlighting those situations and incidents that were most salient in participants' reflections of their acculturation experience. Participants' journeys begin with the recognition of being different from mainstream culture and end with a description of self-identifying as bicultural. Relationships within the majority culture context, including school, and within family and heritage peer networks are particularly emphasized in the description of each generation's journey.

The bicultural journey of the first generation. For first-generation participants, the realization of being different coincided with their arrival in Canada, either as adolescents or adults. Participants spoke about the challenges they faced during their first few years in Canada, which included poverty, exclusion, and lack of social connections. One participant described those years as "struggling with poverty and realizing our place in society in Canada, that we had to work hard, and we had to start from scratch." Another participant noted how difficult it was to navigate the new culture in the absence of a support system: "I came without having any guidance, any navigating, any system, any social support. Nothing…"

Participants talked about experiencing discrimination and exclusion from members of the majority culture and about being led by these experiences to question their sense of belonging in the new country. One participant described her experiences of exclusion as follows:

> Canada…you picture it to be such a nice place and then you come here and you face racism and discrimination. You name it, I've been told, "Go back to your country, you don't belong here" or "Where are you from?"

For participants who migrated during adolescence, school was a particularly challenging time. Some talked about being bullied or called names by their peers, and others reported that they felt teachers were treating them as inferior to other students because of their limited English. This is reflected in the quote from one participant: "Going to school, there was lots of events where I realized I was different. Bullying, because I wasn't like anyone else….I couldn't speak English. I couldn't communicate to people." The two participants who migrated as adults talked about finding that their skills were not recognized in the new society and having a difficult time finding a job. One participant talked about feeling that his skills were devalued in the Canadian society:

> And you feel that you are different, you feel that your value is different… We have the value in our country. But when you are here in this labour market, you have different value. You know, value is close to nothing.

To deal with feelings of exclusion and discrimination in school and in Canadian society in general, participants explained how, after realizing that the receiving society was not adapting to their needs, they themselves had to adapt to their new

reality in Canada. One participant emphasized how she purposefully sought to acquire new skills to fit into the majority culture:

> I realized that [the school system] wasn't changing, so I had to change. I realized the teachers were not going to speak Kurdish to me no matter what, so I had to start learning English. I realized that I wasn't going to be making friends if I wasn't going to be open, be flexible, and kind of make an effort myself, right?

Openness and flexibility were essential skills for first-generation participants adapting to the new culture. One participant described this process as one of acquiring skills that had "value" in the new culture. These skills included learning English and the norms and behaviours of the new culture to effectively communicate with others in the new environment. This was seen by participants as an additive process of acquiring new skills; it was not seen as a threat to their heritage culture. Participants emphasized that they saw their navigation journey as a learning process. They all talked about being open to trying new ways of acting and being, which included building relationships outside their family and community. They also emphasized that, despite the rejection they experienced from the majority culture and despite difficult pre-and post-migration experiences, they were keen to make life work for them in Canada. One participant noted that: "We never, never, never define our self as victim or survivor. I think we define our self as a learner."

Family and community played an important role in the lives of all first-generation participants as sources of both strength and conflict. As a source of

strength, parents, family, and community members were instrumental in helping participants maintain connections to their roots. Also, participants who migrated as adolescents explained that seeing their parents struggle during those early years instilled in them empathy and a strong commitment to succeed in the new society, not only for themselves but also for their parents. One participant expressed this commitment by stating, "We're grounded by some belief, [that the] parent sacrifice for us." In addition to being a source of strength, family was also a place of new challenges. All participants spoke about changes in family power dynamics, with children increasing their power within the family and needing to translate/interpret for parents and help them adapt to the new country. One participant described her experience as "being the parent to my parents" and noted that this was a new role for her, in contrast to her childhood growing up in a supportive, extended family in her home country*:*

> because my parents couldn't speak English, I had to go to the doctor's appointments [with them]… I had to support my mom because she was going through a depression. So I had to be able to be very, very strong. And I wasn't that person when I came to Canada. I was very sheltered. I was very protected. I was surrounded by family.

Throughout their learning process, participants maintained a strong grounding in their heritage culture in terms of their identity, traditions, values, and family connections. One participant noted how strong her cultural identity was at arrival and how it continued to be strong throughout her journey: "I had a very strong…relationship to my roots and to my identity of being Kurdish and I

honoured that and I liked that about myself." Another participant stated that despite the challenges of being in a new country, he never rejected his home culture: "I've never denied my own culture and believed other cultures are more important. And that's because my parents hammered that into us…" As shown by this quote, parents were a key influence to maintaining a strong connection to the heritage culture, and participants were grateful to their parents and community for helping them maintain that connection. When describing their current bicultural self, first-generation participants reported feeling confident in their ability to navigate both cultures. They described themselves as proud members of both cultures, while at the same time having a unified sense of self. One participant noted "I can still be myself…I don't have to be different in different situations." After embracing and claiming their bicultural self in a way that allowed them to feel confident and proud in themselves, participants talked of another phase in the process, that of transcending other cultural barriers and becoming intercultural. That is, they were fluid not only in moving back and forth between their heritage and majority cultures but also between other cultures.

The bicultural journey of the second generation. The realization of being culturally different, for the second generation, coincided with experiences that brought culture to the forefront. Participants described a gradual process of piecing together a puzzle and realizing that their home experience was different from that of their peers in school. This process coincided with going to school, which was participants' first real exposure to the majority culture outside their family and community:

> You're not necessarily aware of being different until it may come to the forefront in some way. It might be a number of things that gradually grow and so you start to feel a tension between the culture you have at home and what you see elsewhere, at school.

During this time, participants noticed that behaviours that were commonly practiced and desired within their family and community were dissimilar to those of their friends. One participant described her school experience in the following way:

> There are a couple things where you notice you're different and there happen to be maybe 6 out of 10 related to culture. And then you're like "Oh, this isn't me." So maybe I got made fun of 'cause I had glasses. But then I was also made fun of because I didn't bring a sandwich to school. And then you're like "Oh, but that sandwich has to do with my family," and "This dress has to do with my family."

This realization of being different came at first based on observing differences between cultures (i.e., having different traditions, foods, clothes, family values) and was a surprise for participants who considered themselves to be Canadian and like all other Canadians, until their out-of-home experience told them otherwise: "…it wasn't so much that it was an 'Oh, I've stepped into this world and now it's different.' It was more along the lines of 'Oh…oh, I thought I was the same and oh, I'm different.'"

Following this realization, second-generation participants talked about the tensions they experienced in having to move between their home and school, and

the ways in which they dealt with those tensions. Their navigation process was described as a journey to building confidence in being bicultural and was an emotionally challenging period in their lives, which resulted in resentment and anger towards their parents as the source of cultural differences. One participant explicitly commented how difficult this period was for her:

> I was always so confused and that was always a struggle…I understand this is who I am but just trying to deal with that and trying to build your confidence up so you're not emotionally stressed out, that was hard for me. Feeling angry was just right at the beginning.

Experiences of exclusion from both the heritage culture and the majority culture were common for all second-generation participants. Exclusion from the heritage culture was particularly prevalent in their narratives and was associated with not speaking the heritage language (not at all, or not well enough to be considered a native speaker) or not exhibiting all social protocols and ways of behaving that would be considered typical of their heritage culture. In wanting to deal with the exclusion they experienced from their heritage culture, participants spoke of a period of rejecting their parents' culture and a phase during which they felt they did not belong to either culture. One participant described this process of feeling out of place in the following way:

> Then my next step was kind of a rejection of the home culture because you kind of try to connect to your own culture, and then you realize you may not fit completely there either. So, I didn't speak my home language, I didn't take dancing, I didn't like our events, so I was always told that I

> was a coconut. Brown on the outside, white on the inside. And then you're kind of rejected from your home culture. So home culture rejects you, you kind of don't belong to either...You don't feel like you have the same values as your own culture.

Family relations were described as a particularly tense time during their childhood and adolescent years. Participants explained that communication with parents was an issue because they did not speak their heritage language and their parents did not speak English. Relationships were also hampered because participants could not understand the rationale behind some of their parents' actions or behaviours. Due to a lack of in-depth exposure to the heritage culture outside of their family, second-generation participants would interpret a parent's behaviour or action based on their knowledge of the majority culture. One participant described this as a struggle: "growing up, it was a struggle to understand sort of, like, where my dad was coming from or where the rules came from or sort of just not being able to do things like everybody else." The lack of a common cultural frame of reference further distanced second-generation participants from their parents and alienated them from their heritage culture. Some participants whose parents did not speak English had to broker situations and interpret for their parents, much like the first-generation participants. Despite heightened tensions between children and parents, family and community were described as a source of support, especially outside the school. One participant noted how her cousins, who were going through the same process of acculturation, provided social support and the opportunity to explore the meaning of living between cultures:

> For us, our community was very large and so we had a lot of little cousins and they were our support system as kids - whether acting out in a skit or making fun of different accents, especially our own family.

Although it was less pronounced when compared with that of the first-generation, exclusion from the majority culture was also part of the experience of the second generation. Some participants talked about experiences of being excluded and discriminated against because they were a visible minority, whereas others described experiencing discrimination vicariously through their parents or siblings, who were first generation and had an accent or physical characteristics that identified them as distinct from the majority culture. One participant shared how she empathized with her family being discriminated against:

> Everyone that I know has an Ethiopian accent in my family. So… if I'm around mainstream Canadians, who say really offensive things about someone's accent, it bothers me very much. 'Cause I know I don't have an accent, but you can clearly understand what [others are] saying.

Following a phase of rejection and family tensions was a period of ownership, acceptance, and pride during late adolescence and young adulthood. One participant described this phase as "accepting who I was, accepting being different, and then being proud of it. I'm an Arab, I'm a Muslim. I'm a Canadian-born and I'm proud of it." Another participant defined acceptance as "owning [culture] on your own terms." Both youth and adults talked about realizing they had a choice in how they defined biculturalism, and the choice included selecting what resonated with them from each culture. The influence of role models and

especially others who had similar experiences growing up was described as particularly beneficial in helping participants claim a bicultural self on their own terms. Unlike first-generation participants who felt that they had a unified self, being bicultural for second-generation participants meant having more than one identity and switching back and forth, depending on their social context. As one participant described it, "I'm living two lives, and, I still have multiple identities." Much like first-generation participants, second-generation participants also spoke about feeling confident in crossing cultural boundaries and connecting with members of other cultures.

The Bicultural Competencies

Five competencies were identified as essential to navigating two cultural contexts. Although both groups highlighted the same five competencies as the most important for healthy bicultural development, differences existed between groups on how these competencies were developed and how they contributed to their bicultural journey. A description of the five competencies and the similarities and differences between the generations is provided below.

Confidence in bicultural self. They described confidence as "owning [culture] on [their] own terms," feeling connected to [their] heritage roots, "accepting being different," and seeing difference as an asset rather than a liability. Both first- and second-generation participants emphasized that confidence was one of the most critical competencies for those who were members of a minority culture and the one that was the hardest to acquire. To them, confidence acted as a protective shield against negative experiences and

helped them maintain connections with both cultures. For first-generation participants, exclusion and discrimination by members of the majority culture were the primary threats to their confidence and resulted in their questioning their place in Canadian society. For second-generation participants, confidence was threatened not only by majority culture exclusion but also by exclusion by members of their heritage culture. Thus, they had to work much harder to claim ownership over their bicultural self and to find ways to belong to both cultures. To express how fundamental confidence was to her journey, one second-generation participant shared the following advice: "Someone was saying, 'What's the greatest gift you can give your child?', and I said, 'The gift of confidence, [to be] confident in themselves and how different they are.'"

Sociocultural flexibility. Sociocultural flexibility was described as the ability to adapt to the demands of the social environment, to learn socially and culturally appropriate ways of behaving, and to utilize them in appropriate contexts. For first-generation participants, who had a unified sense of self, this flexibility was characterized as being open to learning about the Canadian culture and acquiring new ways of being and behaving because the skills and knowledge of the heritage culture were not sufficient for being able to fully integrate into Canadian society. This process was seen as an additive process of acquiring new skills while maintaining connections to one's cultural roots. One participant described this process as needing "to find ground to be myself, to keep my roots and to learn… from others." For second-generation participants, who felt they had two identities/selves, this flexibility was a continuous process of adapting

behaviours and actions to the values and expectations of the social and cultural contexts in which they found themselves. One participant described this process as radio tuning:

> most people have one radio going on in their head telling them what's wrong and what's right, like a moral guide. And as a bicultural person you have two. And you just kind of tune in to one or the other, depending on where you are and who you're with.

For both generations, this flexibility was needed to achieve a form of bicultural balance/equilibrium, and it helped participants form healthy relationships with members of both cultures.

Communication skills. Communication skills included the ability to decode social interactions, situate behaviour in a cultural context, understand and openly communicate similarities and differences between cultures to peers and family, and act as a bridge/mediator. Communication skills were deemed especially important for dealing with the tensions that arose not only within the family but also in out-of-family contexts (e.g., in peer groups) as a result of contrasting cultural values, expectations, and behaviours. One second-generation participant noted that this skill should be cultivated in children early on: "… you learn how to explain or communicate. So you explain to your parents why your friends do this, and you explain to your friends why your parents do this. It's…a skill you have to develop pretty early on."

While communication was emphasized by both generations, the importance of communication skills within the family context was much more

pronounced in the narratives of the second-generation participants. The acculturation gap between parents and children was wider for the second generation, not only in relation to the majority culture but also in relation to the heritage culture.

Knowledge of heritage and English language. Both first- and second-generation participants acknowledged the importance of English proficiency in assisting them to effectively navigate the Canadian context. Knowledge of the English language was particularly emphasized by first-generation participants, who saw language as a means of achieving majority culture membership and "fitting in." Participants from both generations, however, talked about having to act as translators/interpreters for their parents who had limited knowledge of the English language.

All first-generation participants were also fluent in their heritage language. They emphasized the importance of their heritage language as a contributor to a strong cultural identity and as a source of connection between the individual and family and/or community members. One first-generation participant noted, "I was fortunate when I was young. I was able to speak three languages plus English. So if my parents were unable to find the English word for it, they have three other languages they can attempt to see if I'll get it." While only half of the second-generation participants were fluent in their heritage language, they also acknowledged the benefits of knowing their heritage language. Participants who had knowledge of their heritage language felt strongly about its positive benefits, especially for communication with parents and

extended family, for an enhanced understanding of the heritage culture (and in some cases religion, as well), and for a strong sense of belonging to the heritage culture. One participant who had knowledge of her heritage language noted how important it was in helping her gain acceptance from her ethnocultural community: "For me, I belonged, I fitted, and it was great, they were so proud of me because of my language." Those who didn't know the language wondered whether some of their family communication challenges were associated with this lack of knowledge. One participant noted, "I actually didn't grow up with my heritage language. And my parents show no remorse about that. And it's interesting because I've always wondered, 'Well, is there a communication disconnect because I don't speak their language?'" Those participants who did not speak their heritage language also acknowledged its importance and noted that they wanted their children to be able to speak their heritage language.

Intercultural assets. These were attitudes and traits that participants identified as beneficial, not only for navigating between their heritage and Canadian culture but also for living in a multicultural space and having to interact with people from different cultures. Four such intercultural assets were identified: empathy, acceptance of difference, forgiveness, and positive reframing. *Empathy* was the ability to understand other people's point of view and what they might be experiencing. Participants, especially those of the second generation, talked about empathy towards their parents as being especially important for family relationships. A second-generation participant noted how empathy helped her understand her mother's point of view:

> I mean my Mom has done a lot of amazing, funny learning... I get a lot of joy out of seeing her kind of work with us, right? Her daughters…[and] what I'm learning is this empathy in her thinking, "Okay why are my daughters so different from me?" You know, I'm sure she goes through this cultural disconnect, like "What happened that my daughters are like this?"

Acceptance of difference was described as the ability to accept that people may behave and act in different ways, all of which need to be valued and respected. *Forgiveness* was described as the ability to move past negative experiences, especially instances of exclusion, racism, and discrimination, by forgiving the offending person. *Positive reframing* was described as transforming those negative experiences into a source of strength and motivation for social change. Participants noted that having all these skills helped them to deal with the challenges inherent in bicultural navigation in a constructive and healthy way. All four of these assets were equally highlighted by first- and second-generation participants as positive coping responses to deal with negative experiences of exclusion and discrimination, without compromising one's sense of self and well-being. Participants' retrospective accounts of their experience, however, suggested that exhibiting these assets was part of an evolutionary trajectory of coping with negative experiences. This trajectory began with anger and moved gradually towards these four intercultural responses. Confidence was seen as foundational in the process; that is, once participant felt confident in their

bicultural self, they were more likely to utilize intercultural assets to help them deal constructively with negative encounters.

Discussion

This study examined the experience of growing up in two cultures, through retrospective accounts provided by first- and second-generation bicultural youth and adults. The findings contribute to an understanding of the competencies that support bicultural navigation and the role of generational context in the acquisition of these competencies. Specifically, the findings from this study illustrated that there are commonalities as well as differences in the acculturation experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants and refugees. Although the two groups developed similar competencies to effectively navigate their culturally and linguistically heterogeneous environments, the second generation faced unique obstacles along the way.

The Bicultural Journey

The first objective of this study was to examine each generation's journey to becoming bicultural and to reveal convergent and divergent experiences. Two findings are particularly noteworthy in this regard. The first includes experiences of discrimination within the majority culture context. Both first- and second-generation immigrants and refugees reported experiencing racism and discrimination by members of the majority culture. These experiences appeared to be a source of emotional distress that led immigrant and refugees, especially those of the first generation, to question their sense of belonging in Canada. While both groups experienced exclusion by members of the majority culture, second-

generation participants also experienced exclusion by members of their heritage culture. Such exclusion was often a result of second-generation youth and adults being more competent in the majority culture rather than in their heritage culture. Second-generation participants were also less likely to be fluent speakers of the heritage language than their first-generation peers and less likely to have a deep understanding of the norms and practices of the heritage culture. As a result, their co-ethnics perceived them as belonging less to the heritage culture and more to the majority culture. Such exclusion was associated with a rejection of home culture and a period of marginalization by both cultures for second-generation participants. First-generation participants, who appeared to maintain a strong grounding in their first culture throughout their journey, did not report experiencing this rejection and marginalization phase. A large body of literature has illustrated the adverse consequences of racial/ethnic discrimination and perceived racism on the mental health and educational outcomes of minority individuals (e.g., Carter, 2007; Garcia Coll et al., 1996; Okazaki, 2009; Stone & Han, 2005). This literature, with few exceptions (e.g., Abouguendia & Noels, 2001), has focused primarily on exclusion by the majority culture, with little attention to how exclusion by members of the heritage culture might influence adjustment outcomes. The qualitative accounts of second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults reported in this study illustrated that the double exclusion facing the second-generation added to their acculturative stress. In light of these findings, the double exclusion facing second-generation newcomers may be a useful framework for explaining some of the poor social and educational

outcomes of second-generation immigrant and refugee children (Montazer & Wheaton, 2011; Pong & Zeiser, 2012). In addition, this study extends current literature by identifying how competencies such as confidence and intercultural assets can have a protective effect on immigrants' and refugees' sense of belonging. These competencies can be a mechanism through which immigrants and refugees deal with the adverse consequences of discrimination and navigate between cultures without feeling threatened or out of place.

The second important finding that stems from the examination of participants' bicultural journey highlights increased parent-child tensions and family responsibility within the context of the heritage culture. Both first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee children, because of their faster acculturation to the majority culture, were called on to act as bridges between their parents and the majority culture. This form of bridging included acting as translators and interpreters for parents for a variety of day-to-day tasks and resulted in a shift in power dynamics within the family. Participants described this process as children "parenting the parents", a description that connotes the burden that they carry in this role. Familial commitment is often described as a cultural strength in immigrant and refugee children who come from cultures that have a more collectivist orientation to family (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008; Yosso, 2005). Yet, research that examined the effects of language brokering on adolescents revealed that this role could be quite stressful for children and adolescents and was linked to increased levels of depression (e.g., Love & Buriel, 2007).

Tensions within the family context were not only a result of changing family dynamics and increased responsibility within the family, but they were also attributed to a lack of a deep understanding of the parents' heritage culture, especially for second-generation children. Because they were born in Canada, second-generation children's exposure to the values, practices, and traditions of the heritage culture was limited to what was practiced by their parents at home and within the boundaries of the heritage community in the receiving culture. This limited exposure to their heritage culture seemed to widen the acculturation gap between second-generation children and their parents in two ways. They were not only *more* acculturated to the majority culture, but they were also *less* acculturated to the heritage culture, thus experiencing a double acculturation gap. First-generation children, on the other hand, especially if they had migrated at older ages, as was the case with the participants in this study, experienced a stronger link to the parental heritage because they had a first-hand understanding of the practices of their heritage culture and spoke the heritage language. Although first-generation immigrant and refugee children also experienced tensions within the family due to their faster acculturation to the majority culture, their robust connection to the heritage culture appeared to translate to a stronger commitment to family values and traditions. The protective effect of family commitment for first-generation children has been used by other researchers (e.g., Hernandez et al., 2012; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008) to explain the positive outcomes of first-generation children and youth. The current study adds to this body of knowledge by illustrating how good communication skills and

intercultural competencies, such as empathy, can assist both first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee children to navigate family tensions in a positive way.

In sum, the double exclusion and double acculturation gap that second-generation immigrant and refugee children face differentiates their acculturation journey from that of the first generation. This finding is aligned with the limited literature that highlights the added acculturation challenges of the second generation and how these challenges threaten their belonging to both cultures (e.g., Abouguendia & Noels, 2001; Ngo, 2010). When interpreted within the immigrant paradox framework (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012), the acculturation disadvantages of the second generation can provide an alternative interpretive lens through which to further examine the less positive outcomes of the second generation.

Bicultural Competencies

The second objective of this study was to identify the competencies that were essential for navigating two cultural contexts from the perspective of first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults who experienced positive acculturation outcomes. The findings from this research suggested that bicultural confidence, sociocultural flexibility, communication skills, knowledge of heritage and English languages, and intercultural attitudes were five important competencies for effective bicultural navigation. Of these five, language competency has received the most attention in acculturation literature to date. Dual language competency has been included in some of the earlier (e.g., Birman

1994; LaFromboise et al., 1993) and more recent (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2012) models of the bicultural individual and has been used as a proxy of one's acculturation level (e.g., Epstein et al., 1996; Phinney et al., 2001). The findings from this study reinforce our existing understanding that language contributes to a sense of membership in a cultural group and that knowledge of the heritage language enhances parent-child relationships.

In addition to language, sociocultural flexibility and communication skills have also received some attention in the literature. Sociocultural flexibility, also referred to as cultural frame switching (Benet Martizez et al., 2002; Hong et al., 2000), has been proposed as a domain-specific knowledge model of dual culture socialization. According to this model, bicultural individuals can subscribe to two knowledge systems, one for each culture, and activate the corresponding knowledge structures, depending on their sociocultural environment. This study demonstrated that this skill enhanced individuals' ability to balance the demands of being socialized in two heterogeneous environments and to feel a sense of belonging to both cultures. Sociocultural flexibility was enhanced by bicultural communication competency, defined here as the ability to understand and openly communicate similarities and differences between the two cultures to those who do not belong to the same cultural group. Findings from this study showed that in-family communication competency had increased importance for second-generation participants, who had limited exposure to their heritage culture. The importance of communication skills has been investigated in the context of the cultural brokering activities in which immigrants and refugees engage (Love &

Buriel, 2007; Trickett & Johnson, 2007; Yosso, 2005). The findings from this study suggest that communication skills are not only useful for within-family brokering but also for brokering outside the family (e.g., with peers).

Unlike language, social flexibility and communication skills, the role of bicultural confidence and intercultural assets have received little research attention. The results of this study showed that both of these competencies can have a protective and empowering effect in the acculturation development of first- and second-generation children. Specifically, confidence, once acquired, was critical for protecting individuals against the negative impact of perceived discrimination and exclusion. Bicultural self-efficacy (LaFromboise et al., 1993) is the only construct that is conceptually similar to the construct of confidence identified in this study; however, its relationship to the adjustment outcomes for immigrant and refugee children and youth has yet to be empirically tested.

Limitations and Future Research

This study contributes to the understanding of generational differences and similarities in the acculturation trajectories and competencies of bicultural immigrant and refugee youth and adults. The small sample size and qualitative approach to understanding generational differences allowed for an in-depth examination of participants' retrospective experiences, with useful insights for future research. However, three limitations of this study are notable. First, this study presents the perspective of only those who perceived themselves to be bicultural and who had experienced positive acculturation outcomes. The purposive selection of participants was necessary to facilitate the identification of

competencies that foster healthy navigation, the second objective of this study. Acculturation research, however, shows that biculturalism is one of four possible outcomes of navigation, the other three being marginalization, separation, and assimilation (Berry, 2006). By excluding the perspectives of those who experienced other outcomes, the acculturation journey of first- and second-generation participants presented in this study is limited. Future research that examines the dual culture socialization experiences associated with each of the four acculturation profiles may reveal additional challenges that immigrants and refugees encounter when growing up in two cultures and could contribute to a greater understanding of the similarities and differences that exist in first- and second-generation acculturation development.

A second limitation of this study is the way in which biculturalism was defined and assessed. Biculturalism in this study was assessed based on participants' self-identification and on their professional expertise in working as youth leaders and adult cultural brokers. While this self-identification was appropriate because of the exploratory and qualitative nature of this study, future mixed method studies that utilize standardized measures of acculturation to define the bicultural profile of participants (e.g., instrumental vs. blended) prior to conducting interviews could contribute to an enhanced understanding of the way in which the identified competencies support bicultural navigation. A third limitation of this study is that it relied on a diverse sample of immigrants and refugees, thus downplaying the role that ethnicity and associated variables (e.g., the historical and socioeconomic context of migration for a particular ethnic

group) play in generational outcomes (e.g., Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Growing up in two cultures can be a challenging experience for both first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee children and youth who need to develop an array of competencies to manage the demands of their bicultural upbringing. Second-generation immigrant and refugee children face unique challenges along the way, including double exclusion and a double parent-child acculturation gap. This finding has important implications for future acculturation research. Specifically, this finding suggests that, insomuch as acculturation strategies are measured on a bi-dimensional scale of involvement in majority culture (vertical axis) and heritage culture (horizontal axis), experiences of discrimination and degree of parent-child acculturation gap should be, also. By improving current measures of perceived discrimination and parent-child acculturation gap, researchers will be able to better tease out how these experiences contribute to documented generational differences in adjustment outcomes (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012). Lastly, this study identified confidence in bicultural self as an important competency for healthy navigation between cultures. More studies that measure degree of confidence in relation to adjustment outcomes are needed. Future research in this area can be particularly useful in identifying the role that confidence plays in the acculturation development of immigrant and refugee children and the factors that contribute to confidence building.

Footnotes

[1] A version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA. Gokiert, Georgis, Daniels, Edwards, Nosworthy, 2013, April.

[2] The study presented in this paper is part of a larger study funded by the Norlien Foundation and Women and Children's Health Research Institute. Dr. Gokiert was the principal investigator of this larger study, which examined the social-emotional competencies that immigrant, refugee, and Aboriginal children need to develop to successfully navigate multiple cultural environments. I worked as a research assistant on the study described in this paper and was heavily involved in participant recruitment, data collection (i.e., facilitated the interview and two of the focus groups and served as a note-taker for the remaining focus groups) and data analysis.

References

Abouguendia, M., & Noels, K. A. (2001). General and acculturation-related daily hassles and psychological adjustment in first- and second-generation South Asian immigrants to Canada. *International Journal of Psychology, 36,* 163-173.

Ali, M. A. (2008). Second generation youth's belief in the myth of Canadian multiculturalism. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 40*(2), 89-107.

Beiser, M. (2009). Resettling refugees and safeguarding their mental health: Lessons learned from the Canadian refugee resettlement project. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 46,* 539-583.

Benet-Martínez, V., & Haritatos, J. (2004). Bicultural identity integration (BII): Components and psychological antecedents. *Journal of Personality, 73,* 1015-1049.

Benet-Martínez, V., Lee, F., & Leu, J. (2006). Biculturalism and cognitive complexity: Expertise in cultural representations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 37,* 386-407.

Benet-Martinez, V., Leu, J., Lee, F., & Morris, M. W. (2002). Negotiating biculturalism: Cultural frame switching in biculturals with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 33,* 492-516.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46,* 5-68.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Contexts of acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Birman, D. (1994). Acculturation and human diversity in a multicultural society. In E. Trickett, R. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 261-284). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Birman, D. (2006). Measurement of the "acculturation gap" in immigrant families and implications for parent-child relationships. In M. H., Bornstein & L. R. Cote (Eds.), *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development* (pp. 113-134). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bui, H. N. (2012). Immigrant generational status and delinquency in adolescence: Segmented assimilation and racial-ethnic differences. In C. Garcia Coll & A. K., Marks (Eds.), *The Immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk?* (pp. 135-158) Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Carter, R. T. (2007). Racism and psychological and emotional injury: Recognizing and assessing race-based traumatic stress. *The Counseling Psychologist, 35,* 13-105.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative research. *Theory into Practice, 39,* 124-130.

Cortes, K. E. (2004). Are refugees different from economic immigrants? Some empirical evidence on the heterogeneity of immigrant groups in the United States. *The Review of Economics & Statistics, 86,* 465-480.

Davies, B., & Davies, C. (2007). Having and being had by "Experience": Or, "Experience" in the social sciences after the discursive/poststructuralist turn. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13,* 1139-1159.

Ellis, H. B., MacDonald, H. Z., Lincoln, A. K., & Cabral, H. J. (2008). Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: The role of trauma, stress, and perceived discrimination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76,* 184-193.

Epstein, J. A., Dusenbury, L., Botvin, G. J., & Diaz, T. (1996). Language use and initiation of alcohol use among New York City Hispanic adolescents. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse, 5*(2), *63-76.*

García Coll, C. T., Lamberty, G., Jenkins, R., McAdoo, H. P., Crnic, K., Wasik, B. H., & Vazquez García, H. (1996). An integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development, 67,* 1891-1914.

Garcia Coll, C. T., & Marks, A. K. (Eds). (2012). *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk*? Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Jezewski, M. A. (1990). Culture brokering in migrant farmworker health care. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 12,* 497-513.

Jones, C. J., & Trickett, E. J. (2005). Immigrant adolescents behaving as culture brokers: A study of families from the Former Soviet Union. *Journal of Social Psychology, 145,* 405-428.

Hermans, H. J. M., & Kempen, H. J. G. (1998). Moving cultures: The perilous problems of cultural dichotomies in a globalizing society. *American Psychologist, 53,* 1111-1120.

Hernandez, D. J., Denton, N. A., Macartney, S., & Blanchard, V. L. (2012). Children in immigrant families: Demography, policy, and evidence for the immigrant paradox. In C. Garcia Coll & A. K., Marks (Eds.), *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk*? (pp. 17-36). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hong, Y., Morris, M. W., Chiu, C., & Benet-Martínez, (2000). Multicultural minds: A dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition. *American Psychologist, 55,* 709-720.

Israel, B. A., Schultz, A., Parker, E. A., & Baker, A. B. (1998). Review of community-based research: Assessing partnership approaches to improve public health. *Annual Review of Public Health, 19,* 173-202.

Jackson, S. F. (2008). A participatory group process to analyze qualitative data. *Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research, Education, and*

Action, 2, 161-170.

Katsiaficas, D., Suarez-Orozco, C., Sirin, S., & Gupta, T. (2013). Mediators of the relationships between acculturative stress and internalization symptoms for immigrant origin youth. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 19,* 27-37.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114,* 395-412.

Lange, E. A., Chiu, Y., & Gokiert, R. (2011). *The making of wisdom: From the Transformative fire of immigration to living in the `Third Space`*. Paper presented at the 9th International Transformative Learning Conference, Athens, Greece.

Lara-Cinisomo, S., Xue, Y., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2013). Latino youth`s internalizing behaviors: links to immigrant status and neighbourhood characteristics. *Ethnicity and Health, 18,* 315-335.

Li, J. (2009). Forging the future between two different worlds: Recent Chinese immigrant adolescents tell their cross-cultural experiences. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 24,* 477-504.

Liebkind, K., & Jasinskaja-Lahti, K. (2000). Acculturation and psychological well-being among immigrant adolescents in Finland: A comparative study of adolescents from different cultural backgrounds. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 15,* 446-469.

Love, J. A., & Buriel, R. (2007). Language brokering, autonomy, parent-child

bonding, biculturalism, and depression: A study of Mexican American adolescents from immigrant families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 29,* 472-491.

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review, 2,* 224-253.

Mayan, M. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

McKenna, H. (1994). Delphi technique: a worthwhile research approach for nursing? *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 19,* 1221-1225.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mistry, J., & Wu, J. (2010). Navigating cultural worlds and negotiating identities: A conceptual model. *Human Development, 53,* 5-25.

Montazer, S., & Wheaton, B. (2011). The impact of generation and country of origin on the mental health of children of immigrants. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 52,* 23-42.

Morse, J. (2000). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(3), 3-5.

Ngo, H. V. (2010). *Unravelling identities and belonging: Criminal gang involvement of youth from immigrant families.* Calgary, AB: Centre for Newcomers.

Nguyen, A. D., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2013). Biculturalism and adjustment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 44,* 122-159.

Okazaki, S. (2009). Impact of racism on ethnic minority mental health. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 4,* 103-107.

Oppedal, B. (2006). Development and acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 97-112). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Padilla, A. M. (2006). Bicultural social development. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 28,* 467-497.

Phinney, J. S., & Devich-Navarro, M. (1997).Variations in bicultural identification among African American and Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 7,* 3-32.

Phinney, J. S., Romero, I., Nava, M., & Huang, D. (2001). The role of language, parents, and peers in ethnic identity among adolescents in immigrant families. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 30,* 135-153.

Pong, S., & Zeiser, K. L. (2012). Student engagement, school climate, and academic achievement of immigrants' children. In C. Garcia Coll & A. K. Marks (Eds.), *The immigrant paradox in children and adolescents: Is becoming American a developmental risk?* (pp. 209-232). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R., (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Salehi, R. (2010). Intersection of health, immigration, and youth: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 12,* 783-797.

Sam, D. L., & Oppedal, B. (2003). Acculturation as a developmental pathway. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 8*(1), 1-14.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist, 65,* 237-251.

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22,* 63-75.

Stone, S., & Han, M. (2005). Perceived school environments, perceived discrimination, and school performance among children of Mexican immigrants. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27,* 51-66.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tadmor, C. T., Tetlock, P. E., & Peng, K. (2009). Acculturation strategies and integrative complexity: The cognitive implications of biculturalism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 40,* 105-139.

Thorne, S. E., Harris, S. R., Mahoney, K., Con, A., & McGuiness, L. (2004). The context of health care communication in chronic illness. *Patient Education & Counseling, 54,* 299-306.

Thorne, S., Reimer Kirkham, S., & MacDonald-Emes, J. (1997). Interpretive description: A non-categorical qualitative alternative for developing nursing knowledge. *Research in Nursing & Health, 2,* 169-177.

Thorne, S., Kirkham, S. R., & O`Flynn-Magee, K. (2004). The analytic challenge in interpretive description. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*, 1-11.

Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2003). The conceptual, historical, and practice roots of community based participatory research and related participatory traditions. In M. Minkler & N. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Community-based participatory research for health* (pp. 27-52). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Watters, C. (2008). *Refugee children: Towards the next horizon*. London, UK: Routledge.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*, 69-91.

CHAPTER FIVE

General Discussion

Each year, Canada welcomes thousands of immigrants and refugees from all over the world. As the demographic landscape of Canadian society continues to change, it is important to understand immigrant and refugee adjustment and integration. Utilizing a process-oriented and strength-based framework rooted in theories of acculturation (Berry, 2006; Sam & Oppedal, 2003), social stratification (Garcia Coll et al., 1996), and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), this dissertation examined immigrant and refugee experiences of adjustment, education, and acculturation in Canada. By focusing on adjustment as a process, this dissertation identified some of the needs and challenges that are part of the lived experience of migrating to a new country and navigating two cultures. By adopting a strength-based approach, this dissertation also highlighted some of the assets that are inherent in immigrant and refugee families.

Each of the three papers presented in this dissertation described adjustment from a different perspective. In paper 1, I examined the school engagement barriers that newcomer refugee parents faced and the ways in which these barriers were addressed within the context of a school-based transition program. In paper 2, I shifted the focus from parent to adolescent refugees and identified the school adjustment needs and strengths of adolescents during their early transition years. In paper 3, I used retrospective interviewing to examine the acculturation trajectories and competencies of bicultural first- and second-generation immigrant and refugee youth and adults in order to identify similarities and differences across generations. While each paper addressed a particular gap in

its area of focus and generated knowledge specific to its research questions, some recurring themes and interconnected ideas were evident across the three papers. In the following two sections, I discuss focal points about adjustment needs and challenges, as well as immigrant and refugee strengths and capital.

Immigrant and Refugee Adjustment, Education, and Acculturation Challenges

The findings of this dissertation illustrated that adjustment was a multifaceted process for immigrant and refugee families and included a set of interconnected social-emotional and acculturation challenges. Social-emotional adjustment challenges were inherent in social interactions within the majority and/or heritage environments. Acculturation challenges were connected to navigating a new cultural environment, including acquiring competencies and knowledge relevant to the new culture, and balancing those with the competencies of the heritage culture. Four social-emotional and acculturation challenges were prevalent across the three papers of this dissertation: (a) social isolation and loneliness, (b) discrimination and exclusion, (c) lack of knowledge of the English language and Canada's educational system, and (d) intracultural belonging, relationships, and communication.

Social isolation and loneliness were particularly evident during the early years of settling to a new country. The findings from paper 1 showed that refugee parents experienced social isolation as new residents of Canada and grieved the loss of extended family, friends, and community networks they left behind. Such networks provided invaluable social-emotional and practical (e.g., assisting with

child-care) support. The findings from paper 2 revealed that newcomer adolescents also grieved the loss of old friends and family members and felt lonely in a new school without any friends. To deal with loneliness, they eagerly tried to establish new friendships, especially with other immigrant and refugee students with whom they shared the common experience of migration. Evidence of social isolation was also found in the retrospective narratives of immigrants and refugees in paper 3, especially the narratives of the first generation, who reported lack of social connections as part of their initial adjustment experiences in Canada. The findings from this research corroborate previous findings which show that many immigrants lack social connections post-migration (e.g., Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Beiser, 2009; Oppedal & Roysamb, 2004; Simich, Beiser, Stewart, & Mwakarimba, 2005). For instance, Oppedal and Roysamb (2004) found that compared with their non-immigrant peers, immigrant adolescents reported having less school and family social support. The same authors further reported that those with less support experienced poorer mental health than those with access to social support networks.

In addition to social isolation, experiences of discrimination and exclusion were also reported across the three papers. In forming relationships and searching to establish their place in Canadian society, immigrant and refugee adolescents/youth, and parents/adults faced social exclusion and discrimination from the majority culture. In social encounters, they realized that their capital, defined as the experience-based knowledge, pre-migration skills, cultural values and dispositions that immigrant and refugees have, was not acknowledged and

that they struggled to find a sense of belonging to the Canadian society. As shown by all three papers, these experiences of feeling undervalued and being an outsider were particularly pronounced within the school setting, where differences between immigrants and refugees' heritage culture and that of the school, as an institution of the majority culture, were exacerbated. The presence and adverse consequences of racism, discrimination, and social exclusion on the psychological well-being of visible minority individuals have been well documented in the literature (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008; Garcia Coll, 1996; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; McBrien, 2005; Okazaki, 2009; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, 2008). Results from a pan-Canadian survey showed that visible minorities, such as many immigrants and refugees from African or Asian countries, reported higher rates of discrimination than non-visible minorities (Statistics Canada, 2003). The current research adds to this body of knowledge by illustrating the many forms of social exclusion. Social exclusion can take explicit forms, such as bullying or name-calling at school, or offensive comments in social interactions (papers 2 & 3). Social exclusion can also take more implicit forms, such as lack of respect for immigrant and refugee cultural values and aspirations (papers 1 & 2). Regardless of how exclusion is experienced, immigrants and refugees need to cope with intercultural social tensions throughout their journey, as highlighted not only in the narratives of newcomers (papers 1 & 2) but also in the retrospective accounts of first- and second-generation immigrants (paper 3). Developing bicultural confidence, communication/mediation skills, and

intercultural skills such as empathy can help immigrants and refugees deal with exclusion and discrimination in a positive way (paper 3).

The third major adjustment challenge was lack of knowledge of the English language and Canada's educational system. Paper 1 illustrated that newcomer parents struggled to build relationships with the school and to support their children's learning because of their limited knowledge of the English language and a culturally different understanding of parental involvement. Paper 2 further demonstrated how lack of such knowledge was a detriment to the academic adjustment of refugee students with limited formal schooling who were unaware of gatekeeper courses and lacked fundamental curriculum knowledge in subject areas that were of vital importance to the career paths they had chosen. As shown in paper 3, however, first-generation immigrants recognized the limitations of not knowing English and actively sought to better their lives in Canada by enhancing their English language skills and knowledge of Canadian culture without compromising their cultural identity. Similar to previous research (Garcia Coll et al., 2009; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien, 2005; Ramirez, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009), these findings support the claim that lack of knowledge of the language and culture of the receiving society is a persistent barrier to the educational success of immigrant adolescents, the school involvement of immigrant parents, and the overall integration of immigrants into Canadian society.

Lastly, findings from this research revealed that intracultural challenges related to belonging, relationships, and communication were experienced at the

individual, family, and peer levels. At the individual level, immigrant and refugee children and youth had to negotiate bicultural identities and ways to maintain connections to the heritage culture, while developing bicultural competencies to be able to navigate their two cultural environments, a task that was far from easy. At the family level, children had to manage increased responsibilities within the family (e.g., translate/interpret for their parents), as well as tensions that arose because of intergenerational acculturation gaps. Much like their children, parents were also adapting to the new culture, and they experienced their own acculturation journey. These findings are congruent with previous research highlighting the changes in family dynamics that occur post-migration and the additional stress that these changes create in immigrant and refugee families (Birman, 2006; Fazel, et al., 2012; Love & Buriel, 2007). This research adds to this body of literature by demonstrating that the parent-child acculturation gap is wider and more difficult to navigate for second- generation children, who need to develop bicultural communication skills to bridge between their heritage and Canadian cultures. At the peer level, this research illustrated that intracultural relationships were particularly difficult for second-generation participants, who, as noted above, experienced exclusion in co-ethnic peer and community networks (paper 3). In papers 2 and 3, I found the peer relationships between the first and second generations to be weaker, due to the fact that many second-generation individuals did not speak their heritage language and were less knowledgeable of their heritage culture, creating a gap between the two generations. The role of heritage language as a means of communication and social-emotional connection

to the heritage culture has been acknowledged in acculturation models (e.g., LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2012) and post-migration parent-child relationships (Birman, Trickett, & Vinokurov, 2002; Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001); however, its role in intergenerational peer relationships within the heritage culture has received little attention and needs to be further explored. Overall, these findings suggest that acculturation is a community and peer process as much as it is an individual and family process.

Immigrant and Refugee Adjustment, Education, and Acculturation Strengths and Capital

The findings from this research illustrated that expertise and capital existed in immigrant and refugee families and was inherent in the cultural knowledge, family values, aspirations, and intercultural competencies of immigrant and refugee children and parents. Immigrant and refugee families came to Canada with a rich capital rooted in the values, history, practices, and networks of their family and cultural community. Findings from paper 1 illustrated that refugee parents had a deep knowledge and understanding of their heritage culture and language and that they wanted to pass that knowledge on to their children. Adolescents, especially those who were first-generation (papers 2 & 3), valued their parents' capital and exhibited a strong commitment to their culture, religion, and family. This commitment was expressed in many forms, such as taking on financial or household responsibilities within the family and honoring cultural values and heritage language. This finding confirms the protective effects of

culture for first-generation children, as noted by other researchers (e.g., Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012), and emphasizes the importance of a strong ethnic identity for positive educational and psychological adjustment (e.g., Birman et al., 2002; Fuligni, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005; Phinney et al., 2001). As shown in paper 3 however, this commitment varies across generations. Second-generation children shared this commitment but to a lesser extent, due to the fact that they were born in Canada and did not have the same exposure to their heritage culture. This reduced commitment to the heritage culture may explain some of the poorer outcomes of the second generation (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012) and deserves further investigation.

In addition to cultural and familial capital, findings from all three papers showed that immigrant and refugee children and parents come to Canada with high educational aspirations and dreams for a better life. Many, especially those with a refugee background, experienced multiple hardships in their pre-migration as well as their post-migration contexts. Despite these hardships, they continued to hold on to their dreams (papers 1 & 2) and worked hard in order to learn English and acquire the knowledge and skills they needed to succeed in Canadian culture (paper 3). These aspirations were not always acknowledged in the receiving context (papers 1 & 2), thus creating a social barrier, which, in addition to the lack of knowledge of the Canadian education system, made the realization of their dreams much more difficult.

Finally, as a result of migration and bicultural development, immigrant and refugee youth and adults developed a special set of intercultural skills to

effectively navigate their two cultural environments, including relationships with parents, family members, peers from heritage and majority culture networks, members of the majority culture, and members of other cultures (papers 1 & 3). These skills included knowledge of two or more languages; enhanced communication/mediation skills for decoding and explaining differences and similarities between cultures; the sociocultural flexibility to adapt to the demands of heterogeneous sociocultural environments by drawing on the knowledge, behaviours, and repertoire of each culture; and intercultural attitudes such as empathy for positive interactions with people from different cultures. Some of these skills, such as sociocultural flexibility and multilingualism, have been previously reported in the literature as an important part of the capital of immigrant and refugee families (Benet Martizez et al., 2002; Yosso, 2005). Others, such as intercultural attitudes, have received less attention in the literature and their influence on immigrant psychological well-being warrants further attention.

In sum, immigrant and refugee adjustment is a complex process that entails much more than meets the eye. In order to experience positive adjustment outcomes, well-being and societal integration, immigrants and refugees have to overcome several social-emotional and acculturation-related challenges and utilize individual, cultural, and family capital in the process. When this capital is not acknowledged by the many individuals and systems with which they come into contact in receiving countries, immigrant and refugee children and parents can feel excluded and out of place and are more likely to experience poor

adjustment outcomes (e.g., Arzubiaga, Nogueron, & Sullivan, 2009; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Post-settlement school-based supports and services can facilitate the adjustment of immigrant and refugee children, and, for this reason, recommendations for educational practice are provided below.

Recommendations for Educational Practice

Education is a significant indicator of immigrant and refugee integration into the new society and a determinant of long-term health and socioeconomic success in today's globalized world (Arzubiaga et al., 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2008). Five recommendations for educational practice are provided here, based on the findings from the three papers presented in this dissertation. First, in order to ease the adjustment of immigrant and refugee children and youth, school-based student programming should be holistic and encompass more than English language instruction. The findings from this research illustrated the multifaceted academic, social-emotional, and acculturation needs of immigrant and refugee children, all of which should be taken into account when planning and implementing educational services and supports. Unfortunately, immigrant and refugee child and youth programming is often compartmentalized rather than holistic, and it rarely encompasses acculturation support for students' intracultural and intercultural needs and the social exclusion challenges that they face as a minority living in two cultures. Such acculturation support is often seen as supplementary and secondary to other types of support. Acculturation programming that includes education, guidance, and mentoring opportunities should be provided not only to first-generation but also to second-generation

immigrant students, who face distinctive acculturation challenges and, despite perceptions of linguistic and socioeconomic advantages, are at increased risk for poor social and educational outcomes (Garcia Coll & Marks, 2012).

Second, school-based programming that targets newcomer students should also incorporate transition supports and services for parents, who face multiple barriers to school engagement. Collaborating with immigrant-serving agencies and creating positions for cultural brokers to work within educational institutions appear to be promising practices for facilitating school-family relationships. As shown in paper 2, the wide range of services offered by cultural brokers can be most effective when brokers have a continuous presence and a clear role in the schools. This is in contrast with current in-school cultural brokering services that operate on a needs-only basis and focus primarily on translation, interpretation, and cultural awareness. Shifting to a model in which cultural brokers become an integral part of the school community can have promising outcomes for the integration of immigrant and refugee children, youth, and parents.

Third, students who are newcomers and have a refugee background have unique academic needs that should be recognized and supported. The findings from paper 1 of this dissertation, along with a growing body of literature on refugee education (e.g., Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McCarthy & Vickers, 2012; Rutter, 2006; Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; UNESCO, 2013; Watters, 2008), show that, unlike children of those immigrants who enter Canada well prepared and with age-appropriate education, refugee students often immigrate following prolonged stays in refugee camps and interrupted or limited formal schooling. As a result,

they are more likely to have significant learning gaps and limited familiarity with formal education. Thus, curriculum and instruction for refugee students who arrive with limited formal schooling need to be adapted to meet their unique academic needs.

Fourth, immigrant and refugee students and parents have many strengths and rich cultural capital, which should be acknowledged and utilized within the school. The three papers in this dissertation illustrated the multiple competencies and assets of immigrant and refugee children, including bi/multilingualism and interculturalism, strong family and cultural values, a commitment to social change, and perseverance in learning. Adapting curriculum and instruction in ways that bridge between students' multiple cultural contexts and pre- and post-migration realities is of vital importance for immigrant and refugee adjustment. Of critical significance is that parent engagement be re-defined and facilitated so that parents can be meaningfully engaged in their children's schooling and feel part of the school community.

Finally, all teachers and after-school staff working with newcomers should receive pre- and in-service intercultural and migration awareness training. I use the term intercultural and migration awareness training quite broadly to encompass information on the range of pre- and post-migration adjustment realities of immigrant and refugee families, such as acculturation, cross-cultural differences in education and child development, second language learning, post-migration family context, trauma, and refugee pre-migration experiences. Such training should raise awareness not only of the challenges of the adjustment

process for immigrant and refugee children, youth, and families, but also of their strengths and competencies. Given Canada's multicultural demography, this training should be mandatory for pre-service teachers in university classes, as well as for in-service professional development. Cultural brokers or staff from immigrant serving agencies, who have a wealth of knowledge and expertise in assisting newcomer families as they adapt to life in Canada, can be valuable allies in enabling school and after-school personnel to better understand the intercultural and migration realities of immigrant and refugee children and families.

Conclusion

This dissertation examined immigrant and refugee experiences of adjustment, education, and acculturation. By adopting a process-oriented and strength-based lens, this dissertation elucidated the experiential and meaning-making aspects of the immigrant and refugee adjustment experience, illustrated the centrality of social-emotional and acculturation-related processes in immigrant and refugee adjustment, and revealed not only the challenges but also the strengths inherent in immigrant and refugee families. School is one of the first places in which immigrant and refugee families come into contact with the Canadian culture, and it plays an important role in facilitating the process of adjustment for immigrant and refugee children. Through transformation of educational policy and practice, schools can become agents of change and can provide inclusive and welcoming environments for immigrant and refugee students and families. This transformation should include enhanced awareness

and support for students' multiple needs, a strength-based approach to integration and learning, and collaboration with parents and community.

References

Arzubiaga, A. E., Nogueron, S. C., & Sullivan, A., L. (2009). The education of children in im/migrant families. *Review of Research in Education, 33*, 246-271.

Beiser, M. (2009). Resettling refugees and safeguarding their mental health: Lessons learned from the Canadian refugee resettlement project. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 46,* 539-583.

Benet-Martinez, V., Leu, J., Lee, F., & Morris, M. W. (2002). Negotiating biculturalism: Cultural frame switching in biculturals with oppositional versus compatible cultural identities. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 33,* 492-516.

Berry, J. W. (2006). Contexts of acculturation. In D. L. Sam & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation* (pp. 27-42). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Birman, D. (2006). Measurement of the "acculturation gap" in immigrant families and implications for parent-child relationships. In M. H., Bornstein & L. R. Cote (Eds.), *Acculturation and parent-child relationships: Measurement and development* (pp. 113-134). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Birman, D., Trickett, E. J., & Vinokurov, A. (2002). Acculturation and adaptation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents: Predictors of adjustment across life domains. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30,* 585-607.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of*

theory of research for the sociology of education (pp. 241-258). New York, NY: Greenwood.

Bronstein, I., & Montgomery, P. (2011). Psychological distress in refugee children: A systematic review. *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review, 14*, 44-56.

Ellis, B. H., MacDonald, H. Z., Lincoln, A. K., & Cabral, H. J. (2008). Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: The role of trauma, stress, and perceived discrimination. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76*, 184-193.

Fazel, M., Reed, R. V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: Risk and protective factors. *Lancet, 37*, 66-282.

Fuligni, A. J., Witkow, M., & Garcia Coll, C. (2005). Ethnic identity and the academic adjustment of adolescents from Mexican, Chinese, and European backgrounds. *Developmental Psychology, 41*, 799-811.

Garcia Coll, C., Akiba, D., Palacios, N., Bailey, B., Silver, R., DiMartino, L., & Chin, C. (2002). Parental involvement in children's education: Lessons from three immigrant groups. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 2*, 303-324.

García Coll, C. T., Lamberty, G., Jenkins, R., McAdoo, H. P., Crnic, K., Wasik, B. H., & Vazquez García, H. (1996). An integrative model for the study of developmental competencies in minority children. *Child Development, 67*, 1891-1914.

Garcia Coll, C., & Marks, A. K. (2012). *The Immigrant paradox in children & adolescents: Is becoming an American a developmental risk?* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Hamilton, R., & Moore, D. (2004). *Educational interventions for Refugee children: Theoretical perspectives and implementing best practice*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12,* 29-43

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114,* 395-412.

Love, J. A., & Buriel, R. (2007). Language brokering, autonomy, parent-child bonding, biculturalism, and depression: A study of Mexican American adolescents from immigrant families. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 29,* 472-491.

McBrien, J. L. (2005). Educational needs and barriers for refugee students in the United States: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research, 75,* 329-364.

McCarthy, F. E., & Vickers, M. H. (2012). *Refugee and immigrant students: Achieving equity in education*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing

Okazaki, S. (2009). Impact of racism on ethnic minority mental health. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 4,* 103-107.

Oppedal, B., & Roysamb, E. (2004). Mental health, life stress, and social support among Norwegian adolescents with immigrant and host national background. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 45,* 131-144.

Phinney, J. S., Romero, I., Nava, M., & Huang, D. (2001). The role of language, parents, and peers in ethnic identity among adolescents in immigrant families. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 30,* 135-153.

Ramirez, A. Y. F. (2009). Dismay and disappointment: Parental involvement of Latino immigrant parents. *The Urban Review, 35*, 93-110.

Sam, D. L., & Oppedal, B. (2003). Acculturation as a developmental pathway. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 8*(1), 1-14.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J., B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist, 65,* 237-251.

Simich, L., Beiser, M., Stewart, M., & Mwakarimba, E. (2005). Providing social support for immigrants and refugees in Canada: Challenges and Directions. *Journal of Immigrant Health, 7*, 259-268.

Statistics Canada (2003). *Ethnic diversity survey: Portrait of a multicultural society*. Ottawa, ON: Minister of Industry.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, S., & Sidhu, R. K. (2012). Supporting refugee students in schools: What constitutes inclusive education? *International Journal of Inclusive*

Education, *16*, 39-56.

Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? *The Journal of Educational Research, 102*, 257-271.

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (2013, July). *Education for all: Global monitoring report* (Policy Paper No. 10). Paris, France: Author.

Watters, C. (2008). *Refugee children: Towards the next horizon*. London, UK: Routledge.

Yohani, S. (2013). Educational cultural brokers and the school adaptation of refugee children and families: Challenges and opportunities. *International Migration and Integration, 14*, 61-79.

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 8*, 69-91.

Appendix A

Information Letter and Consent for Study 1(Chapters 2 and 3)

Note: The information letter and consent provided below were prepared for teachers, after-school staff, and program stakeholders. Similar letters were given to parents, one for their own and one for their child's participation in the research. Due to lack of English lack proficiency and unfamiliarity with the research consent process, the parental letter was written at a lower reading level than the teacher/after-school staff/program stakeholder letter and a verbal consent option was provided.

Teacher/After-school Staff/Program Stakeholder Information Letter and Consent

Title of Study: Cross-Cultural Transitions of Immigrant and Refugee Students: Examining Initial Adjustment and the Role and Nature of Transition Supports

Principal Investigators: Rebecca Georgis, Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.
Supervisors: Rebecca Gokiert, *Ph.D.,* Assistant Professor, Community-University Partnership, Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta
Rob Klassen, Associate Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta

What is the study?

We invite you to take part in the Cross-Cultural Transitions study. The study focuses on examining immigrant and refugee students' transition to Canada and the role and nature of transition school supports. This study is conducted in partial fulfillment of a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology at the University of Alberta.

What are we asking you to do?

If you choose to be in the study, you will be asked to participate in an interview or focus group discussion about your experience with the transition centres and associated learning. The interviews/focus groups will be audio-recorded and/or paper recorded to ensure accuracy of the information.

What are the benefits and risks of participating?

The study will benefit you by giving voice to your experiences with the transition centres and the opportunity to teach and inform the broader academic and policy communities' about how to better support newcomer students and their families.

We do not expect any risks for being in this study. Your input is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you can still change your mind and stop at any time. However, for the discussions that happen in a group setting, it may not be possible to withdraw your comments afterwards. A $20 honorarium will be given to thank you for taking the time to participate in the study.

How will we protect your privacy?

The information that you provide will be kept private. No names will be attached to the summaries or in any reports from the study. Since some of the discussions are happening in a group setting, confidentiality is a shared responsibility and is requested from all participants, but it cannot be guaranteed. The data from the discussions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and/or password protected computer and will only be available to the research team. We will keep the data for a minimum of 5 years and then the data will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality. If the data are used for other studies, ethic approval will be obtained.

It is our intent to summarize the results from this study and share it with people who may be interested in this type of work (e.g., schools, community organizations serving immigrant and refugee children and families). I may also publish the overall results from this study in scholarly journals and present results at conferences; however, individual participant comments will not be identifiable because all focus group will be combined and any identifiers will be removed.

Contact Names and Telephone Numbers:

Thank you very much for considering this request. Any questions you may have about this study may be directed to Rebecca Georgis at 780 492 4367, georgis@ualberta.ca. or Rebecca Gokiert, 780 492 6297, or Rob Klassen, 780 492 9170.

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.

If you consent to participate in the study, please sign the attached Consent Form.

Consent Form

(Teacher/After-school Staff/Program Stakeholder)

Title of Study: Cross-Cultural Transitions of Immigrant and Refugee Students: Examining Initial Adjustment and the Role and Nature of Transition Supports

Are you willing to participate in the research study?	**YES**	**NO**

I agree to participate in the Cross-Cultural Transitions Study.

Signature of Participant: _____

Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Two copies of the consent form are provided: One to be signed and returned and one to be left with the participant.

Appendix B

Interview Guides for Study 1 (Chapters 2 and 3)

The following three interview guides are provided:

1. B-i. Teacher/after-school staff /program stakeholder guide
2. B-ii. Parent focus group guide
3. B-iii. Student interview guide

B-i. Teacher/after-school staff/program stakeholder guide

Note: Adaptations were made to the interview guide throughout data collection to best capture emerging patterns in the data and get more in-depth information on specific areas of focus. Also, the teacher/program staff/community partner guide was adapted to include more or fewer questions for a particular topic for each participant depending on their role (e.g. leardership vs. front line) and program involvement. The guides included as appendix provide examples of the types of questions that were asked.

Introduction

- Introduce self and study; Obtain consent
- Can you tell me about your role/your organizations role with the Transition Centres?
- How long have you been working with immigrant and refugee students and/or families?
- How long have you been working with the Transition program

Working with Transition Program Students and families

- From your experience, how is teaching/supporting recently-arrived refugee students different from teaching/supporting other immigrant students?

Thinking about the transition students you are working with, as recently-arrived refugee students with limited formal schooling:

- What are some of the challenges they face in school?
- Aside from language, what other types of learning takes place during the first year(s) of school transition?
- How would you describe students' socio-emotional adjustment? (use probes below)
    - How do they get along with other students?
    - How do they get along with teachers?
    - Any differences between boys and girls?
    - Transition students with limited formal
- How would you describe their academic motivation?

    - How would you describe their academic self-confidence? (confidence in learning abilities)
- What types of school supports do you think are critical during the first couple of years of transition?
    - For students
    - For parents
- What are some challenges you, as a (add professional title), face when working with recently-arrived refugee students and/or families?
- What do you enjoy most working with recently arrived refugee students and parents?
- What do you see as some of the strengths of transition program students?

Now thinking about the transition program parents you are working with:

- What are some of the challenges they face adjusting to a new country?
- How would you describe parent involvement in the program?
    - Barriers to involvement?
    - What is in place (or needs to be in place) to address those barriers?
- What are some of the challenges you, as a (add title) face working with newcomer refugee parents?
- What do you see as some of the strengths of the parents?

Transition Program Model and Partnership

Thinking about the transition centers as being a school-family-community partnership model for supporting newcomer students and families with certain needs:

- How would you describe the transition centers model?
    - Difference between original vision-current vision/practice?
- How has this transition program partnership influenced your work with newcomer families and children?
        - Your work with the students?
        - Your work/relationships with parents?
        - Any connections to other organizations?
- What did you find to be some effective activities/practices of the transition center?
        - Parent engagement?
        - Parent support and meetings?
        - After-school activities and meetings?
        - Presence of cultural brokers?
- What did you find to be challenging activities/practices of the transition center?
    - What will need to happen for these challenges to be addressed (e.g., resources, supports, changes, processes)?
- What do you think are the benefits/strengths of school-community partnerships such as the transition one?
- What are the challenges of school-community partnerships?

- For a program like the transition partnership center to be successful and sustainable, what do you think needs to be in place?

Conclusion

- If you were to give up to three pieces of advice to a new (add profession/role) coming to work with the transition students and families what would those be?
- Anything to add?
- Thank participants and describe next steps; Demographics and honorarium

B-ii. Parent focus group guide

Introduction

- Thank you for being here. This evening we would like to hear your perspectives as immigrant parents raising your children in Canada and being involved with the school and programs like we have here at Balwin.
- Round of introductions

Questions

1. Thinking about life back home and life in Canada, what is different about raising your children here compared to back home?
    - What is tough about being new to Canada?
    - What are your hopes about raising your children in Canada?
2. How are schools here different from back home?
    - How are parents involved with the school back home?
3. What do you like about the school here?
    - What services do you currently use here at the school?
    - What activities do you like best/least?
    - How do you get along with the teachers and staff at the school?
4. What resources would you need to better support your children in Canada?

Conclusion

Thank you for sharing with us. We have a small thank you gift and some papers to fill out before leaving.

B-iii. Student interview guide

Introduction

- Hello. My name is Rebecca and this is …… (introduce interpreter if any).
- What's your name?
- Today I want to ask you some questions about your experience coming to Canada and going to school here; what do you like or what is maybe difficult.
- Your mom said it's ok to ask you some questions but you don't have to answer if you don't want to ok? No one will be upset.
- Review information letter and obtain verbal consent). Nobody will know what you tell me. I am asking many kids your age the same questions but I never tell their parents or their teacher what they tell me.
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Do you know what this is? It's a recorder and if's ok with you I can put it on while we talk so I don't have to take a lot of notes.

Activity One: Coming to Canada

- So the first thing I want us to do is to do an activity about coming to Canada.
- So here is my story about coming to Canada. I will share it with you (walk participant through the story).
- Now I want us to do the same with your story. You can tell me and I can write it down or you can write it down if you want.
    - Where were you born? So you are….(name ethnicity)?
        - How old are you now?
    - After …….(name of country) did you move to another country?
        - How old were you? Do you remember? (it's ok if you don't)
    - After……., (name of country) where did you go?
        - How old were you? Who was with you?
    - After that? (continue until we are in Canada)
    - Did all the family come to Canada together at the same time?
    - Life in Canada
        - Is life different here in Canada than in ….?
            - What is different?
        - What new things did you learn when you came here in Canada?
        - What has changed for your family since you came to Canada?
        - What do you like most about living here? (e.g., I like hockey)
        - What do you like least? (e.g., I don't like the cold)

        - What is hard/difficult?
        - What do your parents say is good about Canada?
            - What do they say is bad about Canada?
    - Life before Canada
        - What do you miss about ……. (name of country)? (e.g., I miss my family and my friends)
        - What did you like about…… (name of country)?
        - When you found out you were coming to Canada, what did you imaging/think Canada was like?
    - School in each country
        - Did you go to school here?
        - Did you like going to school here?
        - What did you like best about it?
        - What didn't you like about it?
        - What is the most difficult thing about school? (homework-probe on motivation)
    - School in Canada (probe more)
        - How is this year different from last year?
        - What new things did you learn in school here?
        - What is different about school here?
        - What do you like best about it?
        - What don't you like about school here?
        - What is the most difficulty about school here?
        - What do you think about your teachers? Other students?
        - When you don't understand something in class who do you ask for help?
        - What do you do during lunch?
        - Who helps you with homework?
            - Do your parents help you with homework?
    - Network of Relations
        - Who are the most important people in your life?
        - Who do you talk to if you have a problem?
        - Where are your friends from?
- Family life
    - Who lives with you at home?
        - Brothers and sisters: how many and ages
    - Do your parents work?
    - What are some rules your parent(s) have at home?
- Acculturation
    - What music do you listen?
    - What is your favorite food?
    - What language do you speak:
        - With mum? With siblings? (at home)
        - At school?
        - With your friends?
        - What language do you prefer to speak? English or…?

- Future
    - What do you want to be/do when you grow up?
    - How important is school to do that?

Activity 2. What my day looks like now and before

- Now I want us to do another activity where we talk about our day. So here is how my day looks like.
- Now can you describe me what your day looks like?
- What do your parents want you to do after school?
- Do you do any activities after school?
    - In the weekend?
    - With whom?
- When you were back in ……. .(name of country), did you do the same things?
    - What did you do in the morning/in the afternoon/after-school (adapt based on participant's story)

Conclusion

- If you had a magic power and you could ask for anything, what would you ask?
- Ok, we are now done. Do you have any questions for me?
- Thank you very much for talking to me. I really enjoyed talking to you. This is a gift card for you to say "Thank you" for being here.
    - Do you know how a gift card works?

Appendix C

Field Notes Excerpts

The following two field notes excerpts are provided:

1. C-i. Excerpt of field notes about parents and cultural brokers
2. C-ii. Excerpts of field notes about adolescents

C-i. Excerpt of field notes about parents and cultural brokers

Oct 24, 2012. Principal comes into the room and asks M (i.e. the cultural broker) to help with 2 kids that need bikes. The school has arranged for them to get the bikes but needs parents to sign forms and be at a certain place at a certain time that afternoon to get the bikes. The parents don't speak English so they need someone to help them and for that reason the principal asks M to do it. M's response is that "they need the bikes you know but no one understands how much support the parents need and how much time this takes". M noted of how she was supposed to have the afternoon free but now she has to do this and she has to attend her kids event at the school at night. M. also said that that day she has to drive two of the early learning kids to their home after school because the mum couldn't come in that day. She said that usually the girl's mum picks both her and the boy and takes them to her house to look after them in the afternoon because the boy's mum works from 7am to 7pm and with the commute it takes her very long time to come to the school.

Personal comments/reflections: the benefit of having M in the school and that immediate response to the needs of the school and family. The examples show the relationship between the families and M and the importance of social connections to ease the daily challenges of the parents. But what is the realistic expectation around this type of work? Can M really serve all those needs when she is there part time? I really wonder how she manages. What if someone like M were to be at schools with high ESL populations as opposed to the current liaison model? The stability of having M & A, the continuous presence, the relationship between them and the parents, and the trust, seem to be important for the model to work effectively.

C-ii. Excerpts of field notes about adolescents

Feb 2012. The dynamics of student interaction in the after-school program are so interesting. During the 7-9 after-school, the three newcomer girls always hang together whereas all the second generation girls are always together. The girls feel in some ways overwhelmed and threatened in the presence of the second

generation Somali girls who tend to be a lot more outgoing and outspoken as opposed to the shy and reserved newcomer girls. One of the after-school staff commented on how good it is that volunteers are there because the girls feel better coming to the program when they can interact with the staff one on one and feel safe. This is not so much the case with the 4-6 kids. They are a lot more blended and while occasionally they might be segregated into newcomers and non-newcomer ESL (e.g., when having to focus heavily on language learning activities for the newcomer kids), the barriers between them are more fluid. Also, the younger kids feel more comfortable switching between English and Somali when interacting with newcomer kids whereas the older second generation kids are less likely to use Somali when speaking with newcomer kids.

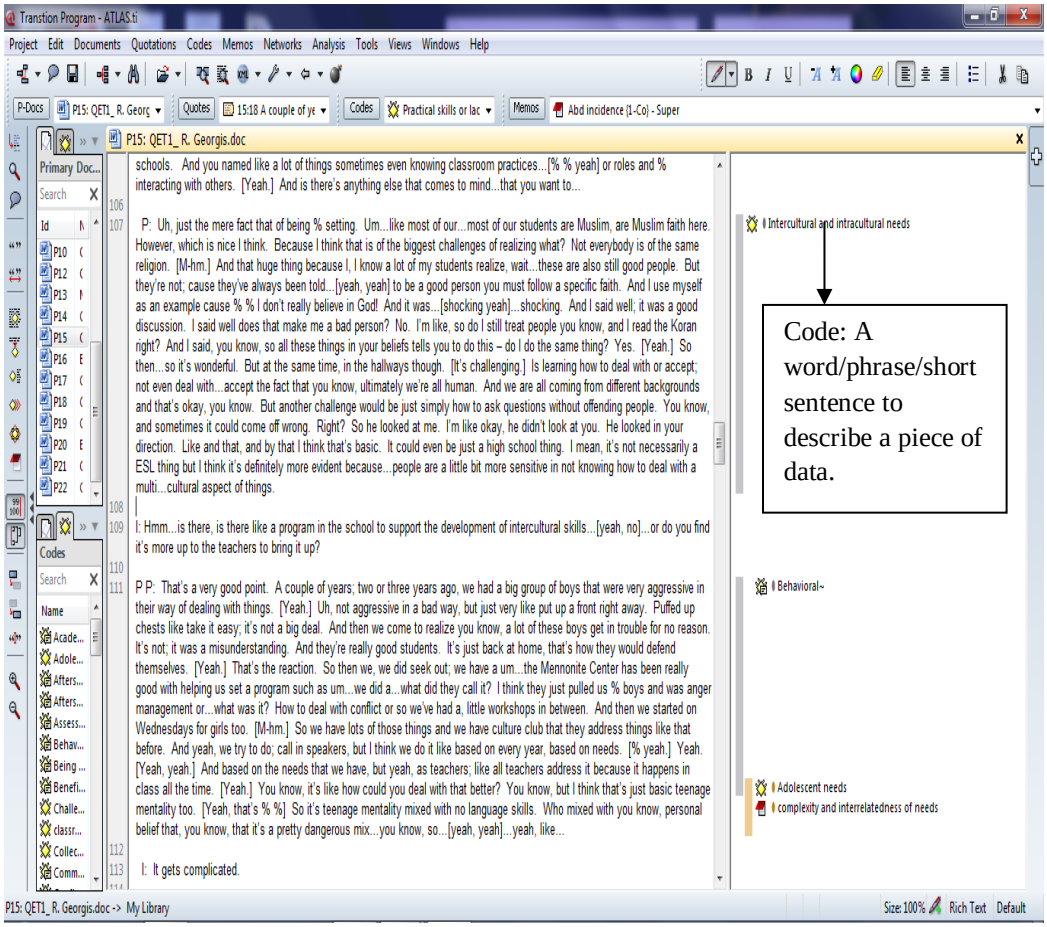
March 2013. Today I spend some time with F while waiting at the bus stop for the bus. She was showing me all her knee injuries from learning how to ride a bike. She said that she had never rode a bike before and her teacher last year gave her a bike which she loved. She said she was determined to learn how to bike and she "learned in 3 days". She fell on the ground many times but "I will learn" she said. She was so proud of her accomplishment.

Personal reflections/comments: In hearing her talk about her experience it made me think of how much joy and pride lies in those simple everyday tasks that are new experiences for some of these kids. During adolescence many new, first experiences happen that mean a lot to adolescents and some will be the same for newcomer kids but others will not.

Appendix D

Coding Process Using Atlas-ti

Below is an example of the initial coding done using atlas-ti. This example is used to illustrate how codes were assigned to a piece of data during the first phase of the analysis. A large list of codes was generated at the end of phase one. These codes were then grouped together based on homogeneity and heterogeneity principles to form comprehensive categories to describe the content of the data in relation to the research questions.



Appendix E

Information Letter for Study 2 (Chapter 4)

Title of Study: Social-Emotional Developmental Competencies in a Multicultural Context

Principal Investigator: Rebecca J. Gokiert, Faculty of Extension, Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families (CUP), University of Alberta.

What is the study?
We invite you to take part in discussions about the social-emotional skills that you have developed to enable you to positively cope with issues arising out of living within multiple cultures. The purpose of the discussions is to: (a) understand the different worlds you live within, (b) understand what social-emotional skills mean to you, and (c) discuss the strategies and skills you were taught as a young child that supported you to live in multiple cultures successfully.

Why are we doing the study?
Alberta is becoming increasingly multicultural and our children are growing up in a context where they need to be able to flow between multiple cultures and contexts. However, often tools that look at children's development do not consider the skills and strategies that children need to develop in order to succeed flowing between multiple cultures. We want to engage those that walk in multiple worlds – Aboriginal and Immigrant and Refugee youth, adults, and elders – so they can learn about the important social-emotional strategies and skills that children who need for healthy and positive development.

What and who is involved?
Aboriginal youth, adults, and elders as well as 1st and 2nd generation Immigrant/Refugee youth and adults will discuss their experiences living in multiple cultures. Each discussion group should take from 1 to 2 hours.
The study will benefit you by giving voice to your experiences and the opportunity to teach and inform the broader academic, government, and policy communities' about how to better meet the needs of children who live in multiple cultures. We do not expect any risks for being in this study. Your input is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you can still change your mind and stop at any time. You can choose not to be in the discussion/focus group and this will not impact any services you receive. However, for the discussions that happen in a group setting, it is not possible to withdraw your comments afterwards. For one-

on-one interviews, if you wish to have your interview removed from the data this will need to take place no later than four weeks after your interview.

How will we protect your privacy?

The information that you provide will be kept private. No names will be attached to the information or in any reports from the study. Since some of the discussions are happening in a group setting, confidentiality is a shared responsibility and is requested from all participants, but it cannot be guaranteed. The discussion/focus groups will be audio-recorded and/or type-recorded to ensure accuracy of the information and will remain anonymous and confidential at all times. The data from the discussions will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office and will only be available to the research team. It is our intent to summarize the results from this study and share it with people in the early childhood community. We also plan to post a summary of the findings on our website (www.cup.ualberta.ca).

We may publish the overall results from this study in scholarly journals and present results at conferences, however, individual participant comments will not be identifiable because all focus group data will be combined. We will keep the data for a minimum of 5 years and then the data will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality. If the data are used for other studies, such as for a students' thesis work, ethics approval will be obtained.

Contact Names and Telephone Numbers:

Thank-you very much for considering this request. If you have any questions or would like more information about the study please contact Rebecca Gokiert at (780) 492-6297, or at rgokiert@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, Augustana and Campus Saint Jean Research Ethics Board (EEASJ REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEASJ REB c/o (780) 492-2614. If you consent to participate in the study, please sign the attached Consent Form.

Adult Consent Form

Social-Emotional Developmental Competencies in a Multicultural Context

Are you willing to join in the discussion/ focus group?

If yes, please print and sign your name:

I_____con
sent to
(First, Last)

join in the above study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please provide a phone number or email address where you may be reached.

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Best Time to Reach You: _____ Mornings _____ Afternoon _____ Evenings

Two copies of the consent form are provided: one to be signed and returned and one for you to keep for your own records.

Appendix F

Focus Group Guide for Study 2 (Chapter 4)

A. Introductions/Consent/Food

- Go around the table for **introductions**
- Provide a brief **introduction to the research project**
    - Immigrant and refugee children having many contexts and cultures that they are navigating through.
    - Through this research we are learning that maintaining balance in these different contexts and cultures is important for healthy development and later life success.
    - Our goal in this research is to understand the different contexts and cultures, how they impact early experiences and child development, and how we can support this development through programming and policies.
    - We are very interested to hear about your experiences as immigrant and refugee youth who have grown up in this environment or some of your observations of young children that you know (cousins, nieces/nephews, siblings).
- Hand out **consent forms**, walk through each section, sign, and remind youth of the ground rules of the focus group.

B. Document and Describe Individual Journey (TE and LP)

1. ***Gaining a deeper understanding of the journey***
    - We are hearing people describe being multicultural in many different ways. For example, it has been described as having different windows on the world, having a foot in 2 worlds, having multiple identities, navigating multiple worlds.
        - We would like you to describe your journey from childhood to adulthood?
        - On this large piece of paper you can draw your journey – whether it was liner, circular, a wave, etc. We heard from the adults in our study that there were pivotal moment(s) in their life that brought clarity or confusion? Can you pick up to 3 pivotal moments and place them on your journey? It could be a particular event, experience, place, person, or environment.
        - On these green pieces of paper we have Trigger Events (TE) and on the orange paper we have Learning Processes (LP). For each pivotal moment please place the TE's and LP that correspond to each pivotal moment.

- Once you have finished we will get each of you (if you are comfortable) to describe your journey to the group.
- Ask each to describe their journey and get them to think about
    - What were the facilitators?
    - What were the challenges?

D. Discuss Competencies, Strategies and Resources

2. Understanding how competencies support success

- Through your trigger events and learning processes you likely gained competencies and were able to apply them to future situations. Have the group look at the competencies on the table/walls.
    - Can you share with the group the competencies that you learned and how/where they map onto your journey?
    - Do you think these are important things (the themes and competencies that are on the wall and were just presented) to have in order to be successful?
    - How do you define success, for yourself, for other Aboriginal children and youth?
    - Can you think of a time (from your own experiences or someone you know) where you have experienced success as a result of possessing these competencies?
        - What facilitated the success?

3. Supporting navigation in young children

- How do we support/nurture this in young children?
    - What did you find particularly helpful growing up?
    - What are the skills that children need?
    - What are the lessons they need to be taught?
    - What are the resources that children need to be successful?
    -

E. Debrief and Close

- Anything to add?
- Briefly explain what our future steps are and how are we using the information collected during focus group.
- Thank participants.