REFUGEE STUDENTS' NEEDS IN HIGH SCHOOL: REALTIONSHIPS, PEDAGOGY, AND CARE

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to refugee students in Canada who have completed their school years, those who are currently in school, and those who have yet to come.

ABSTRACT

Based in a theoretical framework of the ethics of care (Noddings, 2005), researching lived experience through semi-structured interviews, and the individual-environment relation, the central research question asks: What insights into needs of refugee students can be understood through their own words about their lived experience in high school? Conceptually, the research literature focusses on refugee students' expressed needs and ethics of care, including working with refugee students as a teacher and administrator. Five recently graduated refugee students' lived experiences and their expressed needs are investigated through interviews and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The participant researchers included three male and two female refugee students. To counteract appropriation of voice in the participant researchers' words, Bishop's (2015) methods and reflections on becoming an ally and respectful listener are employed. Each participant engaged in an opportunity to do a member check for accuracy of content and voice. This doctoral research documents their expressed needs and capabilities. It contributes key insights, themes, and new information from refugee students' experiences to add to collective education understanding about new Canadians and explores significant implications for better pedagogy and learning success.

much in the developmental stage of my work, from the importance of care, to the recruitment of participant researchers.

Most importantly, I must say thank you to the participant researchers themselves– these are their words and stories. Their courage in sharing with me and developing their narratives so that I could humbly learn from and with them about the refugee experience, and share those stories and lessons with other teachers and researchers. Without these kind and compassionate folks, none of this is possible.

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Context of the Study: From Chaos to Individual Relation

In eleven years working as a science teacher and administrator in public high schools, I worked with many refugee students. This experience served as an impetus to investigate how to better support refugee students in science classrooms. These students are so much more than refugees. They are individual citizens, unique, with their own contexts, languages, cultures, and histories. While *newcomers* may be a more acceptable term, it encompasses a larger population than this researcher is focused on. The term *refugee students*, therefore, will be used to refer to a specific group of students from whom research has heard little directly, and who deserve research that can contribute to their increased success as they develop as Canadian Citizens. From my professional and personal experiences with this population, they also have much to share with respect to pedagogy, teaching, and learning.

Some background to this inquiry: My experience in working with refugee students has been both rewarding and frustrating. Rewarding, because the refugee students brought a passion to learning that was refreshing and inspiring. Many of the refugee students were overtly thankful for any extra effort I put forth in supporting their learning. The frustration perhaps originates in a feeling of professional failure as I continually saw less academic success for refugee students, despite a work ethic that was in general greater than their classmates. [Academic success is defined here as completing courses for credit—achieving a grade of 50% or better on non-modified summative assessments.] I witnessed this difficulty both first-hand in my own science classroom and at the school where I served as vice principal.

Although I worked with refugee students throughout my teaching career, the experience was amplified in my transition to a new high school in my sixth year of teaching. It was an exciting moment in my life, a fresh beginning, and an opportunity to undertake new roles. Being a newly built high school (grades 9-12), we had a small population of grade eleven and twelve students, and the administration presented me with the opportunity to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. To clarify, those students were defined as English Language Learners (ELL), and the programming and classes as ESL. I had no background in teaching ESL, but I have always been up for a new challenge, and this was one of the best decisions of my career. I quickly grew to eagerly anticipate meeting with my ELL students every day.

My secondary ELL students were primarily Nepali/Bhutanese refugee students. Many of the students consider themselves Nepali because they were born in Nepal, within refugee camps. However, their families came to Nepal from Bhutan to live in the refugee camps when the Lhotshampa people were driven out of southern Bhutan in the 1990's (Hutt, 2005). Bhutan shares its western border with Nepal in South Asia, separated from Tibet by the Himalayas. Therefore, many of the parents and a few of the students still recognized themselves as Bhutanese.

After my first year as an ESL teacher, I travelled to Nepal. While there, I taught science classes for two weeks, in English. I came to this opportunity through a friend doing humanitarian work in Nepal. I believed I may better understand my new students' culture and schooling experience by immersing myself in a school in their home country. Through this experience, I was exposed to many (new-to-me) cultural, linguistic, and educational norms. For example, within classrooms in Nepal there was a heavy reliance

on repetition of content for rote memorization. This knowledge enhanced my teaching practice with my Nepali/Bhutanese students as I had a deeper understanding of what style of instruction they were used to and was able to help the students to transition to the differing norms of my own classroom. Broadening my understanding of their lived experiences informed a more beneficial pedagogy.

The Nepali/Bhutanese refugee students had a passion for learning that I did not often see in many of my Canadian-born students, and teaching ESL soon became a passion of my own. I jumped at the opportunity to take on the role of lead ESL teacher in our school in addition to acting as the department head of science. I remained in that role for two years. In 2012, I took on a vice principal position at the same school. My role was primarily focused on academic and technological aspects of the school, but in transitioning into the position, I requested to take ESL programming under my umbrella.

In this role, where I reviewed the students' grades and worked to place them in appropriate classes, I clearly saw the difficulty refugee students, and their teachers faced in traditional classrooms. The refugee students struggled in passing courses. The teachers, though well intentioned, were overwhelmed in locating resources and means to support refugee students' success. As the one responsible for the ESL program, my own search for strategies, research, and exemplar programs, came up with limited results. These combined challenges created an impetus for me to return to university and undertake doctoral research focused in supporting refugee students.

Throughout my time in public schools, I worked with refugee students as a teacher, an advisor, and a vice principal. We grew to know each other very well, and I am sure that the students taught me more than I ever taught them. What follows is a

description of my first experience of refugee education. The aim of this anecdote is to demonstrate both the beginning of my frustration with the system of support for refugee students, and to illustrate the difficulties faced by both teachers and refugee students within high school classrooms.

Learning by Diffusion

Early in my second year of teaching, we had a district employee come and talk to our staff about working with refugee students on a professional development day. This was to be a new experience for many of us in the district, and this person had come to give some guidance to the staff in an hour-long presentation. In the school I was working in at that time, we had a very small population of ELL students. These students were primarily from families from South America, native Spanish speakers, or Filipino's speaking native Tagalog at home. These students would be coded as ELL in entering the school system. For most of these students, by the time they reached high school, they had limited need for language support. It was presented to our staff that we would soon have a new influx of students who were refugees in addition to ELL, and that they would have a much larger language barrier to overcome. It was shared that the expectation of successfully completing courses for credit would be above the students' capability.

Instead, we were coached that we should allow the students to just immerse themselves in the classroom. In what was a surprising notion to me, we were to allow for them to naturally develop language through everyday interactions in the classroom, and not develop specific supports for the students. This *natural* learning would be supplemented with ESL classes, once a day, in which they would receive instruction and assessment of English language development. I remember clearly that day, thinking to

myself, that a learning "English through diffusion" approach seemed to be less than ideal for students. Being a rather idealistic beginning teacher, I thought there should be more, something we as classroom teachers could be doing, to increase the students' acquisition of English. We were reassured that, with regard to content, we should focus on the other students in our class, and just allow for the refugees to develop language in a natural manner.

My first refugee student arrived in my grade 9 math classroom a couple weeks later. A young man from the Sri Lankan Tamil population, Kannan, came without any school supplies, but with a giant, bright smile, and a rather quiet "hello". I was happy he seemingly knew some English. After settling him next to my desk and finding him some scrap paper and a pencil, I got to the "important stuff" of teaching math. Kannan sat quietly and attentively and scribbled as I taught. Ignorantly I thought to myself, "this is good, he is following along, maybe it is the nature of math having limited language aspects, maybe the barrier is not as big an obstacle as was presented". Once my lecture was done and the students began some seat work, I wandered over to his desk to see how well he had followed along with my instruction. It was at this point that I noted his notes were not a compilation of numbers and mathematical signs, but a scribble of writing in a language that I could not identify. Again, unaware, I thought he had just been taking notes in his own language. I asked if he would like to go get a text book and he smiled back at me with that bright grin, nodding his head. I asked if he knew where the textbook center was, again a smile and a nod. "This is not going to be so bad" I thought to myself, so I said, "all right, go ahead and grab a text book". Again, a smile and a nod… and then he went back to writing on his paper, head down, oblivious to my intention. That is when

it hit me, he had no idea what I was saying, and I had no idea what to do to help him. I had no preparation for this, was assuming incorrectly about his needs and comprehension, and had no concept of what this student needed from me. How was I to help him gain mathematical knowledge, or language, or build anything that resembled a connection between him and me?

Little did I know, in that moment, how much this first encounter with a refugee student would influence my life trajectory. I remember feeling one prevalent emotion: frustration. I was frustrated with myself for not being able to help this young man, frustrated by not knowing any of his language, frustrated that I had not been prepared in teacher education and professional development to know what to do, and frustrated because the advice I had received was to let the student just pick up language on his own. In that moment, I felt an injustice was being done to Kannan and I knew I had to do more than just leave him be.

Over the course of the next ten years I found myself face-to-face with many more refugee students, from across the globe. I developed strategies, primarily from guess and test procedures, using approaches that had worked with other students, to build relationships with students who were themselves refugees. I, however, continued to feel let down by my training to know how to best serve the students. An uncertainty about effectiveness explored by Lortie (1975), where I found "self-blame, a sense of inadequacy, the bitter taste of failure" (p. 144). Lortie's work focused on teachers lived experiences, and like this study, searched for understanding through a thematic analysis of interview data. In my uncertainty I also experienced anger, not at the students, but with myself and with the system of education I was a part of. An anger that I had not found, or

been offered, a better way. These feelings are what led me to apply for, and begin my doctoral studies, and is one of the driving forces behind this thesis and my commitment to it.

In both my experience, and within the research literature, it is demonstrated that refugee students see education as a path to a better life (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016). To find their path, however, they need proper supports, especially if they intend to access higher education (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). In order to determine those supports, further research into what refugee students need is called for. Within the research literature explored in this thesis, there is an absence of student voice about their own needs that is concerning. I define the student voice as both the identification of the narrator—who is speaking—and the concept of the "politics of voice", borrowed from feminist scholarship (Schwandt, 2001). As a marginalized population, refugee voice has been restricted through social structures (Bishop, 2015). My thesis research centers around the student voice, to understand their experiences and needs directly, and to serve as a conduit for refugees to share their experiences free of restraint. A key question arises from this focus on the student perspective: how does one create the conditions for refugee students' needs to be explored, while providing a platform for their voice to be heard, and not continue to colonize that voice? To help address this important question, my decision was to approach this research from a qualitative perspective, which was grounded in my own life experience. From my school experiences, through my experience as an educator, to my initial research within this field, I wanted to hear from students themselves about their high school experiences and what helped them and what other supports may have been available as well.

A Journey from Positivist to Qualitative Researcher

I grew up as the son of a physics teacher. My father always brought to my attention the wonders of the natural world that surround us and instilled in me a passion for understanding. As a student, I was always successful in math and science, and if someone had asked me in high school why, I would have told them it was because science and math had answers—universal truths—and that they demonstrated solutions to problems that were clear. I also liked the rigid, linear process that defined the *right* way to find an answer. I had less interest in subjects like English because there was no one path, no one answer, and an uncomfortable ambiguity in the assessment of my understanding.

I had understood science as a systematic method to understanding. This reductionist approach assumes that the variables, the parts, can be isolated and solved for, in order to understand the whole. The challenge with human science is how one determines what you *need to know* about another human, to solve a problem with them, and pedagogically support them. People are not open books or inanimate objects. They have emotions, and although the spontaneous and unpredictable nature of people is a positive aspect of the human condition, allowing for creativity and invention, it also means decisions are not always rational or predictable. Therefore, in exploring other peoples' experiences, actions, and needs, there are many contextual factors to consider. It is difficult to dissect a human's behavior into parts to be studied, then reconstruct those findings to understand the whole.

Rather, as Capra (1996) noted in *The Web of Life*, when speaking about living systems theory: "the essential properties of an organism, or living system, are properties

of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the interactions and relationships among the parts" (p. 29). One must investigate the relationships of the whole, to its parts and its environment, to understand the whole. The human being is influenced by so many factors at once, peers, family, their environments, their health, that the context of the person's whole, and their environment and relationships, must be considered to understand their needs. Because a reductionist approach to problems of human relationships is not very effective, I turned to a more qualitative approach, grounded in conversation and care.

The value in an approach to connecting with people through care was reinforced in my years as a high school educator and administrator. For example, in examining a former student's educational psychology report, I found a strategy to support slow processing speed: offering the student notes in advance which I implemented. Yet this student continued to struggle when given notes. A follow-up discussion with the student uncovered a self-concept that a labeled learning difficulty (called a code) led them to believe they were unable to learn. This attachment of self-concept to a learning disability code is not uncommon (Lauchlan & Boyle, 2007). In speaking with the students and coming to know them, a renewed approach of support that focused on celebrating small successes to demonstrate they could learn proved more helpful than offering notes in advance. A slow processing speed was just one part of the students' whole approach to successful learning. Their relationship with their learning had to be uncovered, examined, and explored through conversations.

I also experienced that a reductionist approach to teaching often fell short of meeting refugee students' needs. For example, utilizing an approach to creating a

meaningful learning activity in science in which the students could root their experiences (Østergaard, 2015) did not necessarily translate to meaningful learning experiences for refugee students. If a student had suffered trauma associated with the refugee experience, the learning activity, no matter how well planned and researched, did not always engage the student. The trauma needed to be recognized, and supported first by trained professionals, before the student could take any interest in science content (Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2014). I learned to understand the students' experience through speaking with them.

From experiences like these, I learned the value of investing time with students, to hear their stories, to better understand their needs. *Figure 1* outlines the impact of these experiences on my philosophical positioning and the ontological and epistemological frameworks of this study. The whole child always needs to be considered to support their learning. This shift in my own method of understanding has become my *science* of understanding the human being, a focus on the relationships of a person and their environment. By looking at the big picture teachers can understand the needs of others to develop effective pedagogies while serving *in loco parentis*.

Introduction

Epistemology
I can understand needs through interpretation of lived experience

Ontology
Expressed Needs are unique to the individual, Truth is subjective

Constructivist & Participatory
Understanding is co-created by researcher and participant researcher

Understanding Refugee Students Needs Through Their Stories of Experience
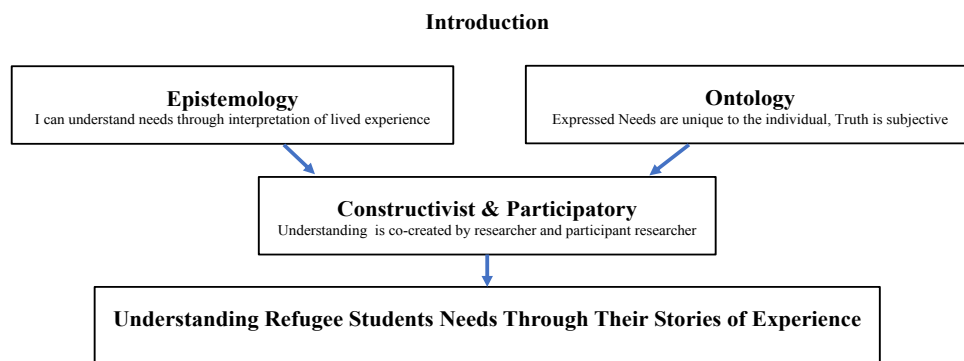
Figure 1. An overview of philosophical positioning.

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My Experience in Researching Teacher and Student Perspectives

In the initial year of my doctoral studies I undertook two reconnaissance research projects that explored supporting refugee students in the high school science classroom. The first study examined the effectiveness and use of the pedagogical approaches uncovered in the research literature on supporting ELL students in science. This study utilized a mixed method approach to explore the perceptions of local high school science teachers about the pedagogical approaches, their experiences, and what they felt was most effective in supporting refugee students.

The second study also examined the effectiveness of the pedagogical approaches highlighted by the research literature. For this second study, however, a student's perspective was explored. This study, co-authored with Santosh, my former student, took the form of a narrative interview to explore more detailed experiences of one student in transitioning from a refugee camp, to a Canadian high school, and into Canadian University. Within this study, the student and I also explored what was most important in supporting refugee students in the high school classroom. Through these two research experiences, the value of exploring the student perspective came to the forefront.

Something not explored in the research, or offered from the teachers' perspective, was uncovered: The importance of care. These research studies will be further explored below to demonstrate that by sitting with students to understand their experience, we may uncover more important needs for support than has been offered from teachers' perspectives. The research studies will be framed in Noddings' (2005) concepts of inferred and expressed needs.

Inferred needs by Educators and Researchers

Noddings (2005) defined inferred needs as any source commenting on the needs of another, without reference to the person themselves. Therefore, the needs are indirect, or assumed. In working with students, the inferred needs can come from teachers, parents, peers, and researchers. The research examined, with few exceptions, proposed needs of refugee students from the perspective of the researcher, or the participants, who were most commonly teachers. This research, and the corresponding themes of experiential science, science and literacy connections, and teacher cultural awareness therefore represent inferred needs of refugee students. To examine these themes in the local setting, I undertook a reconnaissance research project in the form of a questionnaire of local high school science teachers. The questionnaire was used to investigate the perceptions of local teachers about working with refugee students, and to explore the three themes of research literature.

I set out to investigate the phenomenon of reduced academic success for refugee students at a school district level, in a small urban setting, which included four high schools. The reconnaissance study was focused on science teachers' perceptions of working with refugee students. The study had three guiding questions: 1. What level of successful completion of classes for credit are refugee students reaching? 2. What strategies are the science educators using with their refugee students? 3. What supports have teachers experienced and what supports are they interested in for future professional development? Success within this study was defined as the students' completion of the course for credit, which requires a minimum course grade of 50%.

A convergent mixed methods approach was planned, following the recommendations of key mixed methods scholars (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Through this study, I examined if teachers were struggling in supporting refugee students, to what degree, and in what ways. Additionally, I investigated if the teachers thought they could be better supported in developing the necessary skills to aid in student success. The objective of the study was to determine if high school teachers from one school district were experiencing similar frustrations and differences in success for refugee students as was I.

The results showed that teachers across the district shared my own levels of frustration, and that their refugee students were not finding the same levels of success as their Canadian-born classmates. Additionally, although the teachers were using the recommended pedagogy found in the themes of the research literature, they desired further support and professional development in all aspects of working with refugee students. The teachers felt well prepared in relation to utilizing hands-on experiential science but desired more support in developing their own cultural awareness and students' scientific literacy. The quantitative items were built around the themes of the research literature explored above, and the qualitative responses confirmed they were valued by these educators. The qualitative comments demonstrated that the teachers felt that the pedagogical practices and support for cultural awareness were key to supporting students. In this local context, the teachers felt refugee students face difficulty, but not insurmountable obstacles in high school science.

From this research, local science teachers' perspectives on working with refugee students were uncovered. This work informed my doctoral thesis research as a window

into the inferred needs of refugee students in the local context. This research also provided confirmation that the themes found in the research literature were apparent and appreciated in local practice. Following this research, a second study was undertaken to investigate one student's perspective, a student who is a refugee.

Expressed Needs of Refugee Students

Noddings (2005) defined expressed needs, as those needs coming directly from the individual with the need. Therefore, in examining the needs of refugee students, expressed needs can only come from the students themselves. As a second exploration for my initial research, I interviewed a former student, who is a refugee. The original intention of this research, explored below, was to examine the three organizing themes outlined by the research literature—experiential science, science and literacy connections, and teacher cultural awareness—from the student's perspective. What I gained from this experience was insight into the expressed needs of one student, which aligned with the themes of pedagogy found in the research literature. This research also demonstrated a need not found in the themes of the research literature, a need for care. The interview I conducted with this student generated an awareness of a gap in the research in working with refugee students in science—their voice, their stories, and their needs.

This study was a narrative exploration of a former refugee student's journey from a Nepal refugee camp to enrollment in a Canadian university. Once student and teacher working together in high school, Santosh and I undertook an in-depth interview and produced a narrative of his experience. Three important themes were generated through our conversation. First, Santosh felt education systems, schools, and teachers, need to be wary about the impact of dismissing the previous schooling of refugee students, and need

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to value previous education and experience, even if that schooling does not match our pedagogy, curriculum or certification. Santosh had put time into that schooling and was proud of his accomplishments. Second, the organizing themes of pedagogical approaches found in the research literature were valued by the Santosh. Experiential science, and focusing on connections of science and literacy, were strategies that he felt supported him in science classrooms. Teacher cultural awareness was deeply valued by my former student; he claimed that when educators are aware of the backgrounds of refugee students, and what school was like in their camps, they will be in a better position to understand the students' needs. Third, and most important to the me, as a participant researcher, was the need for teachers to create an atmosphere of comfort through care. He emphasized that teachers should ensure refugee students know they care about them. This theme was not clearly articulated or explored in the inferred needs of the teacher reconnaissance questionnaire. Pairing this theme with my reading in the ethics of care, demonstrated a disconnect between the inferred needs found in the research literature and the expressed needs of this student. The emphasis on care, placed by Santosh himself, led me to a decision that this thesis research should focus on the student perspective.

For this research, an awareness of the complexity of the relationships between refugee students and their environment, is essential to consider in understanding their experiences. This consideration was first driven home for me as an educator when I experienced the appreciation that refugee students had for my interest in their lives, and what they had experienced before being in my classroom. In beginning my doctoral classes, the theoretical importance of considering the interactions of the environment and the individual were reinforced in revisiting Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979). However, rather than framing this research in Bronfenbrenner's model, I instead decided to focus on the individual-environment relation, adapted from ecological systems theory by Barab and Roth (2006), in considering the impact of family, teacher, and peer relationships on refugee students' experiences. This inclusion broadened my scope to include and understand student voice more fully than has previously been done.

The individual-environment relation, and the ethics of care, serve as the theoretical framework to support an investigation into the needs of refugee students through their lived experience. In order to come to understand the complexity of their experience, and to understand the needs of these individuals, there is a requirement to speak directly with the students themselves. As explored in the second chapter, the lack of student voice in the literature demonstrates a gap in knowledge about expressed needs in comparison to inferred needs in current research. In relation to the theoretical aspects explored, a call to an exploration of expressed needs—to truly understand how to care for and support refugee students in high school—is needed.

Research Question

In summary, my central research question is: What insights into the needs of refugee students can be understood through their own words about their lived experience in high school? The following chapters articulate the related research literature, methodological research with the design, development, and implementation of the research, the lived experiences of the participant researchers, and keys themes and findings from their expressed needs, capabilities, and lived experiences transitioning from refugee camps in Nepal to a Canadian secondary school. The final chapter discusses the

implications for teachers and teacher educators. *Figure 2* outlines an overview of the

thesis structure.

Thesis Overview

Epistemology	**Ontology**
I can understand needs through interpretation of lived experience	Expressed Needs are unique to the individual, Truth is subjective

Constructivist & Participatory
Understanding is co-created by researcher and participant researcher

Understanding Refugee Students Needs Through Their Stories of Experience

Care Ethics	**Refugee Education**	**Individual-Environment Relation**
Caring relation	Inferred Needs of refugee students	Understanding the impact of a student's environment

Interviews and Thematic Analysis
Method of Data Production and Analysis

Participant Researchers Lived Experiences
Their Stories

Effectivity Sets of Refugee Students	**Inequality in Affordance Networks**	**Microsystem Relationships**
Understanding Individual Identity & Resilience and Capabilities	Isolation and Marginalization & Overt Discrimination	Positive Peer Relationships, Family Expectations and the Cultural Broker, & The Importance of Teacher Care

Implications
Teachers, Teacher Educators, & Research

Figure 2. Thesis structural overview.

CHAPTER 2: FOCUSING ON STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Ethics of Care

Early in my doctoral journey I encountered the work by Nel Noddings (2005) that focused on recognizing and addressing students' needs. This research literature led me to an exploration of Noddings' (1984, 2013) work on the ethics of care. From my experiences explicated earlier, I recognized the importance of care in supporting students in general, and in supporting refugee students specifically. Noddings' exploration of care resonated deeply with me, primarily the importance of coming to understand students' needs, through hearing their experiences. This resonance has shaped the approach of this thesis: I want to speak with refugee students directly and hear about their lived experiences, without interrupting them so that I can understand better their needs. In order to justify this approach, I outline key elements of the Ethics of Care. These elements, in concert with the importance of the individual-environment relation in complex systems theory, form the theoretical frame of this research proposal.

Care, at its base, is relational. Wilde (2013), another care theorist, outlined that "caring for others then arises from deep relation" (p. 8). Noddings herself recognized the relational nature of care in changing the title of *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (1984) to *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* for her 2013 edition: "*Relational* is a better word. Virtually all care theorists make the relation more fundamental than the individual" (Noddings, 2013, p. xiii). Virginia Held (2006), another researcher in care theory, stated "it is the characteristic of the ethics of care to view persons as relational and as interdependent" (p. 46). Education is also relational and interdependent. Teacher and student relationships, and their

importance to care, is well documented by these authors. Furthermore, Jule (2019) highlighted:

> Teachers need to actively listen to their students' self-evaluations, evaluate their purposes, and help them grow as participants in caring relationships. This orientation suggests that caring teachers exhibit an array of practices and behaviours underpinned by a relational approach to pedagogy that puts pedagogic bonds at the centre of teaching. (p. 3)

Jule is emphasizing the relational interdependence between student and teacher. Teachers are assisted in designing meaningful learning activities for students, by listening to them. The teachers learn from the students, so the students can learn from the teachers, in a cyclical fashion. All of this is accomplished while simultaneously demonstrating and modeling care.

Wilde (2013) noted that: "western, modern institutions are still plagued by power-based positivistic assumptions that reduce educational experience to assembly-line images of production and development." (p. 11). Therefore, although the importance of care has been acknowledged in education, it does not always come to the forefront in research on supporting students. Research into supporting ELL and refugee students within the science classroom, as will be explored in this chapter, indicates an overwhelming focus on pedagogical strategies for instruction. Through my experiences, as both educator and researcher, a need to consider the ethics of care appears important, in addition to knowing and understanding instructional approaches.

A language of care ethics has emerged as important to this research (Noddings, 2012c), and it is of value here to explore that language to understand the foundations of care ethics. Noddings defined care ethics as a relation between two individuals which she defined as the *carer* and the *cared-for*. For the carer, the person demonstrating care, it is

essential they are perceptive and receptive in regard for the cared-for. The cared-for in this relation is the person to receive care. The carer needs to be perceptive and receptive, in conversation and observation, in order to develop an empathic relation.

Noddings (1984) is clear on a specific form of empathy in care ethics, an empathy that does not project feelings, but rather receives them. The carer is *feeling with* the cared for: "The notion of 'feeling with' that I have outlined does not involve projection but reception" (Noddings, 1984, p. 30). To accomplish this: "I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality… The seeing and feeling are mine, but only partly and temporarily mine, as on loan to me" (p. 30). Through feeling with the cared-for, the carer comes to know and understand the needs of the cared for.

Within the caring relation, there are responsibilities for the cared-for as well. Although the responsibility may be less intricate, it is essential to the relation. The cared-for's responsibility is to acknowledge, in a spontaneous manner, that the care has been received: "He responds in a way that shows that the caring has been received, recognized…. Without this response, there is no caring relation no matter how hard the carer has worked at it" (Noddings, 2012c, p. 53). Noddings' defined a situation where only the carer's responsibility is filled as *virtue caring*. Virtue caring itself, is not care. Noddings (1984) summarized the caring relation as: "A caring relation requires the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-caring and the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared for" (p. 78). Engrossment is the requirement of receptive empathy, and motivational displacement is to act on behalf of the cared-for's needs, even when challenging. The recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for needs to be authentic, not elicited by the carer.

In Noddings' (2005) article "Identifying and Responding to Needs in Education*"*, she emphasizes the consideration of students' expressed needs in addition to the inferred needs that teachers presuppose students to have. She differentiated the two types of needs as follows: "The distinction between expressed and inferred needs is important. An expressed need comes from the one expressing it, and it may be expressed in either words or behavior. An inferred need comes from someone other than the one said to have it." (p. 148). Noddings (2005) did not value expressed needs above inferred needs, rather she emphasized that expressed needs often go unheard, and should be explored to limit unmet needs in the classroom. In addition, expressed needs can inform inferred needs. For example, if a student offers an expressed need—a refugee student asks to record audio answers rather than write responses in biology class due to their comfort levels with spoken and written English—a teacher can make this an option for future refugee students (or students in general), an inferred need.

The opportunity to receive expressed needs stems from the empathic experience of the caring relation, through listening *with* the students, about their experiences. Once the carer has assumed the responsibility of receiving the cared-for's expressed needs, the second responsibility of the carer emerges, to act upon those expressed needs. In education there will be ethical, physical, emotional and structural barriers to meeting all the expressed needs of the cared-for students in the classroom. Noddings (2012c) was clear in noting that not all needs can be met, but the responsibility of the carer is to do what they can.

It is of value to recognize the difference of natural and ethical care explored by Noddings (2012c). Natural care is care that is easily demonstrated, like the care of parents

and spouses. This natural care is often a result of expressed needs that can be easily met, and care readily accepted. Noddings (2012c) contrasted this to ethical care, care that may not be simple to demonstrate for the carer or willingly received by the cared-for. Noddings (2012a) argued that ethical care is what is needed in schools, and that this care must be authentic: "we have to show in our own behavior what it means to care…. Our caring must be genuine; the inevitable modeling is a by-product" (p. 431). Through authentic, ethical care of teachers, the development of an ethic of care within students can develop, which Noddings saw as major component of moral education, and a path to a more caring society.

Noddings (2012c) emphasized that care ethics should not be dismissed as *fluff*, but embraced as a way to educate, and a way of life: "The words care, attention, empathy, response, reciprocity, and receptivity all have special meaning in care ethics, and caring—far more than a fuzzy feeling—is a moral way of life" (p. 56). There are critiques of care ethics, for example, that the carer's needs are ignored in the relation, and that this unidirectional care is not ethical itself (Hoagland, 1990). Noddings (2012c) has addressed this critique, and points out that these relations can be reciprocal, and that the carer and cared-for are not always unidirectional: "Carer and cared-for are not permanent labels but names for roles accepted in encounters" (Noddings, 2012c, p. 53). I, like many educators, have had students bring me coffee, ask about my family, and give gifts and cards of appreciation. In this the students were demonstrating care for me, although the power dynamic may imply that they should be the cared-for.

A critique of Noddings' work that has stirred in my own reflections is the carer's interpretation of an expressed need. When the carer is interpreting the need, does this

transform the expressed need into an inferred need? Does this discernment matter or have an impact on how I hear what a student has to say? Is labeling the type of need important, or is it important not to label? I am conscious of this in developing a research method and methodology for this study in which the appropriation of voice, and inferred need, could be a concern. In interviewing students, and asking direct questions about needs, one can seek clarity, especially if one attempts to be empathic in co-producing the interpretation of needs with the participant researcher. Also, seeking clarity about how the student thinks those needs can be met, maintains the authenticity of the need, rather than first projecting solutions or making decisions without the student's guidance. In this research, I will explore the experiences and needs of refugee students with them. In the analysis, needs may emerge that can be defined as expressed needs, but I will avoid this parameter when speaking with the students.

There is another aspect of care ethics, which has been critiqued by authors such as Card (1990), that raises concerns for me. In ethical caring, the requirement of the carer to act upon the expressed needs of the cared-for, even when difficult, also could result in injury to the carer. That injury can be physical, emotional, or social, and is a possibility in the process of demonstrating ethical care. Noddings (1984) speaks to how the engrossment required of the carer can make the carer vulnerable. What happens if the carer takes great lengths to demonstrate care, but then the cared-for does not respond? Noddings (1984) addresses this challenge in a section of *Caring* entitled "Guilt and Courage" (pp. 37-40). In this section, the author recognized the difficulty of guilt a carer may experience where they have failed to receive recognition of care, how that guilt could cause the carer pain, and that this guilt may be unavoidable. Her answer to this

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difficulty is courage. For Noddings, the courage requirement is two-fold: the carer must be courageous in accepting where they may have failed and have the courage to continue to care appropriately. Noddings recognizes that there are contextual factors outside of the carer's control that they need not take responsibility for, but that, nonetheless: "the risk of guilt is present in all caring" (p. 39). To have an approach to education in which the educator is at risk for injury is an ethical dilemma, and my own experiences have shown how devastating this can be.

The Challenges of Care

As an administrator, I often had the honor of working with students in crisis. I consider it an honor when someone is in a high level of need and they come to me for guidance; they are honoring me with their trust. In most cases, these interactions proved positive for those in my charge, and for me in return. In some cases, however, the guilt I felt and still feel, brings caution to the responsibilities of the carer to do their best to meet expressed needs. Although I have, like Noddings (2013) recommends, tried to have courage to accept where I have faltered and to continue caring, this guilt is with me. Educators cannot always meet those expressed needs or continue to meet them indefinitely.

Within my current role as an instructor of future educators, I suggest that care is an approach to education that has led to many positive experiences, for both me and the students I work with. The experience outlined above, however, leaves me hesitant to promote care without caution. It is one thing to call for courage, as Noddings has, it is another thing entirely to have it. Parker Palmer's (2012) words from the book, *The*

Courage to Teach, is a powerful reminder of how that courage also leads to overcoming challenges, and may be well worth the risk:

> The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living, require. (pp. 11-12)

In my experience with refugee students, they have been ready and willing to accept care, and the risk has been overwhelmingly worthwhile. The challenge in care with refugee students, however, lies for me in understanding how to demonstrate it, and in coming to know the students expressed needs. Cultural and experiential differences need to be traversed, mindfully, in understanding what care looks like for the students and how to appropriately demonstrate it. For me, it begins with listening to refugee students' experiences, as the first step in understanding 'the what and the how' of demonstrating care.

Understanding Lived Experience through the Language of Care

Van Manen (2005) outlined how educational researchers, including Noddings (1992), have argued that: "the most unfortunate fact about contemporary discourses and practices of education is that they have tended to become overly rationalistic, scientific, corporatist, managerial, and narrowly results-based" (van Manen, 2005, p. 219). This is a return to a more traditional view of research, and excludes the complexities explored in the individual-environment relation. Furthermore, van Manen noted that to overcome this challenge in education, educators and researchers need to professionally acknowledge the language of moral education, work to become stewards of moral language, and teach that language to students.

This moral language, and van Manen's (2005) argument, is centered on care. He noted that although caring may be instinctively understood by teachers, there is a lack of reflection on its importance in education. van Manen added that "conceptual models and professional discourses are not always the best references" (p. 220), for understanding how care is experienced. Rather, he presented, that stories of experience serve as a better reference for understanding the experiences of both caring and being cared for. His argument is supported through a series of anecdotes of lived experience that explore care-as-worry. He describes care-as-worry as a "very human response to vulnerability in others" (p. 222), like a parent for their child. The author extends this concept into an exploration of worry as a caring responsibility, and that worry and care share a relationship that is constructively resonant: the more I care, the more I worry, and the more I worry, the more I care.

For van Manen (2005), the caring relation begins with an individualized call from the other, the cared-for:

> In everyday life the experience of the call of the other, of care-as-worry, is always contingent and particular. It can happen to anyone of us anywhere, anytime. Every situation like that is always contingent. I can only be here and now. In this home. In this classroom. In this street. Thus, it is the singularity of this person, this child who addresses me in my singularity. (p. 227).

He also stated that this call to care is individualized, "it addresses each person uniquely" (p.224), and creates a personal responsibility that is described as pure ethical. The concept, pure ethics, is borrowed from Levinas (1998), and is described as a pre-conscious knowing, that the ethics of care is not founded in a moral judgment, but a human reaction. This recognition of the instinctual nature of care relates to this study of the relationship of care in education. It highlights the instinctual need for care that

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refugee students, like all students, have. Additionally, van Manen sees lived experience of care as providing the best insights into understanding a language of care, and how to teach it. Thus, to understand how to demonstrate care for refugee students, to meet that instinctual need, there is a necessity to explore their experiences of care.

In education, this pure ethics, is represented in the standard of care for students, *in loco parentis*, that is expected of teachers (ATA, 2019). The issue van Manen is highlighting, the lack of language and reflection on how to provide that care, is concerning. This coincides with the concerns of the marginalization of care in schools expressed by Wilde (2013). Care needs to be a focus, and there needs to be accessible language to teach and discuss its practice in schools. The goal of this research is to gain insight into what that language of care may be, between student and teacher, and to examine what practices educators can use to establish caring relationships with refugee students, and in turn, all students.

In closing, van Manen states:

Only by remaining attuned to our sense of unique responsibility can we insert into our professional ethical practices the general responsibility of caring and all its various modalities that our vocations require. For the cynics and the pragmatically minded, this may still be an unrealistic or a 'heavy' idea. Caring as worrying seems a burdening responsibility. But so it is a burden. It may not always be pleasant or delightful, but as Levinas (Rötzer, 1995, p.61) says, it is good: 'It's the experience of the good, the meaning of the good, of goodness. Only goodness is good.' (van Manen, 2005, p. 228)

Van Manen is stating a major justification for this research, that to explore the care of refugees, through their lived experience, is to explore care-as-worry. I experienced care-as-worry for these students, and they addressed me, uniquely. The goal is to bring understanding about how to demonstrate care for refugee students, and the experience may not be easy. It may be a burden, as the suggestions made to educators from the

conclusions of this research may also be labeled a burden. But it is also good, good to take on the responsibility of care. It is through exploring that care, and its moral language, that I can provide ideas for other educators who are faced with new, unique, care-as-worry responsibilities each day.

Van Manen (2005) noted other key researchers in care ethics and education outside of Noddings (1992). Eaker-Rich and van Galen (1996) noted that research in care ethics, related to education has demonstrated the importance of: "schools and classrooms that are defined not only in terms of their technical and organizational components, but also in terms of the quality of relationships and the emphasis placed on the development of students as caring, ethical people" (p. 2). As has already been explored, to teach caring, one must begin with modeling authentic caring relationships (Noddings, 2005). Eaker-Rich and van Galen's (1996) work is an edited collection of research which explored the dilemmas of both the carer, the teacher, and the schools that aim to become centers of care. The first section focused on exploration of the care and is centered on narratives of experience. Specifically, the authors examined the challenges of establishing caring relations when social barriers exist between the carer and the cared-for: "stories of those who, because of circumstances of history, politics, intolerance, or social and economic domination, are strangers to those for whom they would demonstrate care" (p. 5). Although the barriers focused on within this work was based on sex, gender and sexuality, rather than culture and language, there is value in exploring this work to understand barriers to demonstrating care.

The second theme of Eaker-Rich and van Galen's (1996) research continued to expand, from a focus on interpersonal caring relationships to developing environments, or

schools, where those relationships can flourish. Rather than a focus on individual stories, the contributors explored school-based projects, and the barriers explored were more focused on ethnic and cultural barriers. Through the exploration of both sections, Eaker-Rich and van Galen (1996) concluded that several major themes were generated. The first, "caring is consistently revealed as an important value and desire" (p. 231), is an aspect that this study aims to explore and confirm with the participant researchers. The second theme is an important lesson and reminder: "caring does not always 'work': interpretations of what is caring and what is received as caring are not generalizable across the different borders of culture and social position" (p. 232).

This echoes Noddings' (2005) concern that the care needs to be authentic and requires the relational demonstration and acceptance of that care between the two participants, what she described as their responsibilities. Where care did not *work* in the research presented, one or more of these responsibilities were not met. This is an important reminder for both this research, and for educators, that despite the best intentions care will not always be received. What educators must focus on is continuity in their care in hopes that it will eventually be accepted and acknowledged, and in Noddings (2012c) work, until this occurs, true caring has not been accomplished.

The third theme Eaker-Rich and van Galen (1996) described relates to this concept: "that sentimental caring necessarily be distinguished from the practice of caring" (p. 233). Noddings (2012c) described sentimental caring as virtue caring, and stated that this was in fact, not caring at all. For Eaker-Rich and van Galen the practice of caring is that as described by Noddings and requires the aforementioned relational aspects. The authors highlight that: "modeling, experience, and confirmation are important in caring

relations, but it is the last component, dialogue, that shifts caring out of potentially mere sentiment and into a dynamic process required for successful caring in heterogeneous settings" (p. 234). This emphasis on dialogue led to their fourth theme: "*dialogue* is crucial to enable the translation of caring across various cultures and social positions" (p. 234). This, of all the themes highlighted, is most pertinent to this research. In order to understand what care needs to look like to be recognized and accepted by the cared-for, educators and researchers must speak with the cared-for. Hence the development of this research to be focused on the experiences of care of refugee students, understood through their own stories, and their interpretations of care. Through this dialogue with them, I hope to better understand not only what care looked like for the participant researchers, but also better understand *how* to go about generating that dialogue.

The last theme presented by Eaker-Rich and van Galen (1996) focused on the importance of critical reflection by the carer, and their understanding of power relations and imbalances. This deeply resonates with Bishop's (2015) work on becoming an ally. Eaker-Rich and van Galen demonstrated: 1. the importance of educators understanding the need for care; 2. the importance of demonstrating care and ensuring it is received; 3. that to determine how to demonstrate that care begins with speaking with students; 4. and that in that conversation, educators must create a space that mitigates against the power imbalance for the student as much as possible. Not only is this of great value for educators of refugee students, it is an outline of important considerations for researchers hoping to support refugee students, and an affirmation of the structure of this study—to best understand how to support refugee students it is imperative to converse with refugee students directly about their experiences of care.

These precepts are further demonstrated to be essential in education by another care and education researcher, James L. Jarrett (1991): "only when we care for others— truly desire the alleviation of their woes to make way for growth—can we become effective moral agents" (p. 9). In *The teaching of values*, Jarrett stated this as the primary concern of the school: "the school is the chief instrumentality for making the lives it can touch rich in values" (p. 9). Thus, for teachers to cultivate the values Jarrett called on as the "most important step in improving the lot of humankind" (p. 9), they must begin with caring. He extends this to students becoming readily able to consider the realities of others in their worldview, and that then modeling of care by teachers is an essential component of this education. Jarrett concluded his text with this statement: "caring and appreciation are learnable and teachable. The argument here is that their cultivation should be the unifying container of the curriculum" (p. 235). For Jarrett, caring is not just essential in reaching students, and creating an atmosphere in which they can best approach intellectual endeavors, it is also, to borrow a term from Fowler (2006), the *temenos* of the curriculum. It is what holds together the reactive material of knowledge to ensure it remains a constructive entity passed on to future generations.

The theorist that supplied the genesis of care ethics in education is Carol Gilligan (1982), who presented the initial argument against moral development as being limited to the objective pursuit of rights and justice, and that an ethic of care coincides with justice in moral and ethical decision making (Eaker-Rich & Van Galen, 1996). Teachers are faced with ethical and moral decisions on a daily basis, and often have little time to reflect on matters before a decision is required. Gilligan demonstrated that considerations of care not only strengthen relationships, but also renders judgements that are "more

tolerant, and less absolute" (p. 149). This tolerance is essential when dealing with the complex backgrounds and individual-environment relations of refugee students. Although her seminal text, *In a different voice,* outlined this by demonstrating that women approach morality in a way that is different than men, I do not believe her work needs to be reduced to such generalized gender stereotypes. In fact, Gilligan noted:

> The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex. (p. 2)

I would argue alongside this statement, as a male who deeply values care, that although statistical measurements may show tendencies among genders, that care and care education can be just as valued by men. In fact, it is arguably more essential to be used with and taught to young men, who may be more likely to focus on an objective, justice-based approach and in greater need of the demonstration, modeling, and education of care ethics in order to make improved moral and ethical decisions. As demonstrated in the results of this research, care and being cared for, were just as important to the male research participants as the female. Additionally, in the spirit of becoming an ally, and the fluid nature of gender, I do not believe this gender-based reduction is relevant in current Canadian classrooms.

Across this research in care ethics, the common themes express that which Noddings outlined, that care is desired, care is relational, and care is essential in creating effective learning environments. Beyond this, individuals experience care in unique ways, therefore, to determine the best way of expressing care, with the goal of it being acknowledged and accepted is to sit with student and talk with them about their

experiences of care. Furthermore, the demonstration of care is also a key component of moral education. In modeling care for students, we encourage the value of care in the students' themselves in hopes of creating a more empathetic and caring society.

Within refugee education research, Due, Riggs, and Barclay (2016) investigated the need of care from both refugee students' and teachers' perspectives. Of note, this was the only study I found in my initial research to explore the refugee student voice. The authors undertook a mixed-method examination of the refugee experience in Australian elementary schools. The authors concluded that the students felt safe at school and had positive relationships with their teachers, but the teachers reported challenges in developing relationships with refugee students. The authors noted "that 'care' may look somewhat different for students with refugee or migrant backgrounds, and their teachers—albeit with some overlap" (p. 198). Although the students felt safe, the teachers were struggling with understanding what the students' academic needs were. This highlights the current limit of understanding of refugee students' expressed needs, and how it is a barrier for both students and teachers. The students may feel safe, which is a basic need (Noddings, 2005), but their expressed needs in developing language and finding success in school, were still unknown to their teachers.

For Noddings (2012b), receptive listening is a key element of demonstrating care, and in understanding expressed needs. I employ receptive listening through interviews to better understand the needs of refugee students, by empathetically sharing their experiences. "Receptive listening is a powerful intellectual tool. But, from the perspective of care theory, it is more than that; it is the basic attitude that characterizes relations of care and trust" (Noddings, 2012b, p. 780). In following Noddings' care ethics, I

responded to these needs, which is my responsibility as carer, by complementing my doctoral research with a research agenda into possible effective ways of supporting refugee students, not only in science classrooms but across the curriculum.

The caring relation is an examination of the whole learner, coming to know their needs and experiences. It is also centered on relationships between the student and the teacher and understanding the environment of the student. In the process of my doctoral research, I found that a shift from reductionist thinking, to a focus on the relationships of the whole, led me to considerations of the Bio-Ecological Model and the importance of the individual-environment relation.

The Bio-Ecological Model

The theorist credited with the development of the bio-ecological model is Urie Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner's work has been described as dynamic and evolving over time, and that this evolution stems from him being one of his own biggest critics and open to continual learning (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). This description of Bronfenbrenner first piqued my interest to explore the ecological model and fit with my experience of the dynamic nature of teaching and learning. I have long believed that my own educational philosophy cannot be a static entity; it must continue to grow and evolve to be able to thrive. Just as society is in a constant state of flux, so too are students and schools, and to remain stagnant is dangerous. Bronfenbrenner held this belief to his theory, and as new information arose, adaptations to his theory were implemented.

With regard to refugee education, Bronfenbrenner's description of the many layers that influence a student, their ecological systems, poses great relevance (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner explored several systems of environment that

impact the individual. For example, his category the Microsystem, the environment

closest to the student is described as follows: In reflection on refugee students, the

microsystem could be explored through an examination of the evening work schedules of

refugee student's parents, and how this impacts the student's academic development. For

many refugee students, they often only have interactions with their parents on the

weekend. Since the work hours are through the evening, the parents are often sleeping in

the morning, and at work from the time school is done until the student goes to bed.

Therefore, a student can go a whole school week without quality interactions with their

parents. Although the relationships are generally good between parent and child, the lack

of regular and consistent access to what Bronfenbrenner called "proximal process", could

have significant effects. Proximal Process was defined by Bronfenbrenner (1999) as

follows:

> Especially in its early phases, and to a great extent throughout the life course,
> human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex
> reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving biopsychological human
> organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external
> environment. To be effective, the interaction must occur on a fairly regular basis
> over extended periods of time. Such enduring forms of interaction in the
> immediate environment are referred to as proximal processes. (p. 5)

Bronfenbrenner (1999) stated that the importance of quality, repetition and consistency of

these proximal processes have a great impact on human development. Bronfenbrenner

and Morris (2007) outlined the importance of frequency of proximal process on "teenage

syndrome", defined as:

> the so-called teenage syndrome, an escalating pattern of co-occurring behaviors
> including smoking, drinking, early and frequent sexual experience, adolescent
> pregnancy, a cynical attitude toward education and work, and, in the more
> extreme cases, drugs, suicide, vandalism, violence, and criminal acts (p. 807)

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The authors demonstrated that a link can be made between parental monitoring, the proximal process in this case, and sexual activity, the link to teenage syndrome. One begins to wonder if lack of opportunity to monitor student behavior due to work schedules has an impact on the refugee attendance issue, another result of the teenage syndrome, that I saw within my school.

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007) also outlined two corollaries for consideration infusing the bioecological model for research. These corollaries need to be explored in determining methodological decisions when utilizing a bioecological model. The corollaries of the bioecological model are as follows:

> 1. The specific components of Process, Person, Context, and Time to be included in a given investigation should be those that, from a theoretical perspective, are maximally relevant to the research question under investigation and complementary to each other in relation to the given developmental outcome.
> 2. From a theoretical perspective, the power of a PPCT design is most effectively enhanced by including more than one proximal process in the model. (p. 808)

The work of Bronfenbrenner and Morris is used in this study, not as a predetermined model of interpretation, but to inform the development of the lived experience interviews. Three proximal processes are explored: the students' interactions with teachers, Canadian-born peers, and their families. The people of focus are the refugee students, the participant researchers. In speaking with refugee students, the contexts explored of their high school experiences included: 1. school experiences within the classroom, focused on the teacher-student relations; 2. experiences inside and outside the classroom with Canadian-born peers; and 3. The relationship and expectations students experienced with their parents' while in high school. We discuss pedagogy, relationships of care, discrimination, and expectations the students experienced while in high school. With regard to time, it is an examination of the challenges and successes of refugee students

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who arrived in Canada at the high school age. Exploring these components of the participant researchers lived experience connects to the framework of individual-environment relations.

Ecological Systems Theory and The Individual-Environment Relation

Capra (1996) highlighted a shifting paradigm in science from reductionism—understanding the whole by investigating its parts—to complex systems theory, focusing on the relationships between the whole, its parts, and the larger environment of which it is a part. The author argued this view is particularly valuable in studying living systems, which have dynamic and interdependent systems at work, which are open and cannot be addressed as static, closed systems. For example, a refugee student will have many relationships between changing systems, both internal and external to the school, that will affect their ability to learn. As will be explored further, effects of previous environments will have impacted physical and mental health, previous educational environments will impact content and school structure bases, and the social and educational relationships in a refugee student's current lived reality—with classmates, family, and their teachers—will all be at play, and interplay, in determining their readiness and willingness to learn. Capra (1996) defined this focus on the relationships of systems as ecological living systems theory.

Ecological living systems theory, and its direct application to education was further explored by Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008). These authors underscored that rather than viewing humans, and their learning, as a system that can be understood by dissecting and isolating parts to understand the whole, a focus on the relationships between humans and their environments will better serve educators in understanding

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students' needs. Understanding refugee students' individual-environment relationships, and determining how to nourish healthy relationships, is a focus of this research. Dynamic, living systems, as opposed to closed systems, operate far-from-equilibrium. Living systems utilize self-organization, self-maintenance, and self-determination to explore the spaces of possibility in order to adapt and grow.

As Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008) state: "equilibrium is death" (p. 81) for living systems. In order to grow, students need to be challenged, placed in unique and new situations, and learn to adapt to those systems. With refugee students, these challenges are inherent in resettlement (MacNevin, 2012), and educators have the opportunity to utilize their role as part of the students' human environment, to assist refugee students in adapting and growing not only in their learning course content, but also their journey in transitioning to life in Canada. When applied to education, ecological systems theory moves away from static, inherent thoughts of learning and ability. Instead it recognizes intelligence and ability as dynamic and environmentally influenced rather than being innate within individuals.

Students' environments can influence their experiences through both positive and negative feedback loops (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Positive feedback loops serve as constructive interference: they reinforce or escalate a student's perception or experience. A negative feedback loop serves as destructive interference—deescalates or removes a perception. It is important to understand that positive feedback is not directly associated to 'good', or negative feedback associated to 'bad'. In fact, they can have the opposite effect from their label for the students' experience, depending on context. If a student is not experiencing care from adults at home or at school but enters a classroom

where the teacher is working to demonstrate care for the student, this would be a negative feedback loop that could diminish an opinion that adults are selfish and uncaring. As will be explored further, I see continued and resilient demonstration of care towards refugee students as being a positive stimulant to the student-teacher relationship whether it is part of a negative or positive feedback loop.

Barab and Roth (2006) explored an ecological theory of knowing in which they emphasize the individual-environment relation. The authors argued that a student's knowing is based in their *affordance network*—the material, social, and human capital available for students to address a problem: the environment; and their *effectivity sets*— the behaviors a student can enact to engage with the affordance network: the individual. The affordance networks and effectivity sets are relational to, and interdependent of, each other. For example, when faced with a difficult situation in a classroom, a teacher has the material, social, and human capital in his or her environment, and individual experience available, to navigate the situation. The more experience a teacher has may influence the environmental capital available and vice versa. This individual-environmental relation is unique to individuals and their context, their life-world. One's life-world can be defined as the environment from the perspective of the individual. With refugee students, there are significant differences in their life-world from their classmates. Therefore, in order to better serve their knowing, or learning, it is imperative to gain insight into their life-world, or lived experiences (van Manen, 1992). In investigating lived experiences, one can determine strengths and weaknesses, as well as the significant differences in both their *affordance networks* and their *effectivity sets* from their classmates.

Barab and Roth's (2006) work on the individual-environment relation is a key

component of the theoretical framework of this study:

> learning requires more than acquiring knowledge or even participating
> successfully in one context; it requires integrating (and potentially translating) an
> idea, concept, understanding, or extended network of participation as part of one's
> life-world so that it has functional utility in the world. (p. 8)

Refugee students translate, and they apply their effectivity sets to substantially different

affordance networks in their resettlement countries. For the affordance networks to be

useful "these networks require that an individual have relevant effectivity sets" (p. 8).

Refugee students may have effectivity sets relevant to navigating their relationships with

their families and culture in their homes, but even their homes are different in

resettlement. Therefore, in coming to understand their individual-environment relations,

through listening and not assuming, we may be better placed to support transitions and

translations.

The individual-environment relation is deeply connected to the bio-ecological

model and Bronfenbrenner's work:

> At the very core of an ecological orientation and distinguishing it most sharply
> from prevailing approaches to the study of human development is the concern
> with the progressive accommodation between a growing human organism and its
> immediate environment, and the way in which this relation is mediated by forces
> emanating from more remote regions in the larger physical and social milieu.
> (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 13)

In accordance with Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, and the premise that

relationships between individuals and their environment should be of focus, I argue that

supporting refugee students begins with a focus on exploring their individual-

environment relationships. The individual-environment relation served as a theoretical

framework for the development of what to explore in conversations with refugee

students. It provides a structure for coming to understanding the experiences and needs of refugee student: by listening with them about their experiences and relationships, while respecting the individuality of each student and what may be interpreted.

Science Education Research Literature: A Collection of Inferred Needs

Although the conclusions of this doctoral research are not focused in science education, experiences in the science classroom were explored in the interviews. The exploration of research literature pertaining to refugee science education was an essential step in determining the importance of speaking with refugee students. Aspects of that examination are shared here to frame an understanding of the lack of student voice research on refugee education. That point is salient, the majority of research has been done on refugees, not with refugees. In the language of care ethics, the focus was a collection of inferred needs of refugee students.

Within the research literature were suggested pedagogical strategies, stemming from researchers and practitioners, in Europe, Australia, and North America. A collection of recurring approaches and strategies for educators emerged from the research literature. Following this initial survey of the research landscape, I sought to further expand my understanding of what pedagogical principles could offer support to refugee students through other areas of educational theory and research on teaching and learning. Through this exploration, I noted that similar themes were presented to that of research specific to the science classroom. A need arose to shape my own thematic network (Attride-Stirling, 2001) of what the research literature promoted to effectively support refugee students. This network was strengthened by several other areas of educational research: Refugee education, inquiry science education, experiential education, research on teaching and

learning, inclusive and anti-oppressive pedagogy, and science as a subculture. Although this process led to an exploration of the participant researchers' experiences in science, the focus of this research has shifted from improvement of refugee experiences, to understanding their experiences. The development of the thematic network did however illuminate one important concept that was deeply explored in the interviews, the importance of teacher cultural awareness.

Teacher Cultural Awareness

For refugee students to have success, as with all students, they need to feel safe, welcome, and respected in their classrooms (Lee, 2005). Much emphasis has been placed on ensuring safe and caring schools in Alberta, including the legislation of Bill 24, in support of Gay Straight Alliances (Alberta Education, 2017). However, when teachers are unaware of cultural differences, refugee students can feel unwelcome. Lee and Fradd (1998) explored the impact of such occurrences and demonstrated that beyond not being able to relate their culture to Eurocentric science, ELL students may purposefully resist engaging with it. Cummins (2009) spoke to the power of affirmation of cultural knowledge, by including the students' background knowledge in class discussions it demonstrates that the students are valued. As Hollenbeck and Hristova-Hollenbeck (2008) attested, with more cultures entering North American schools, diversity must be embraced to avoid stereotyping and marginalization. The National Science Teachers Association's (NSTA) (2009) position statement also reflected on the importance of cultural sensitivity: "Science instruction should recognize and respect the linguistic and cultural experiences that English language learners bring from their home and community environments, articulate these experiences with science knowledge, and offer sufficient

educational resources and funding to support science learning." (p. 2). Cultural awareness becomes an essential component in making school a welcoming and safe space for students of differing cultural backgrounds. In educating themselves about the cultures the students come from, teachers are also better equipped to facilitate transitions between cultures (Jegede & Aikenhead, 1999).

Within the research literature focused on general refugee education, cultural awareness is also identified as a need for refugee students. MacNevin (2012) investigated the experience of refugee students in Prince Edward Island. The study, examined from the teachers' perspective, concluded that teachers need better training in supporting refugees, but also highlighted "it is important that teachers are sensitive to the students' experiences if the students are to experience success." (p. 52). McBrien (2005) undertook a review of literature pertaining to the needs of, and barriers for, refugee students. The review outlined two major needs of refugee students, psychosocial well-being, and language acquisition, and that these two needs are impacted by "experiences of trauma and the availability of parental and social support" (p. 344). The author concluded that meeting these needs requires segmented assimilation, allowing time for development in ESL classrooms, and that "recognizing and respecting cultural differences is important to refugee students' academic success" (p. 354). Both of these studies concluded a positive relationship between teacher cultural awareness and academic success for refugee students.

The theme of cultural awareness also is consistent with research supporting refugee students through restorative practice. Fuller (2016) found that "restorative teaching practice for students from refugee contexts can create a greater purpose for

school as teachers develop the tools to meet the personal and academic needs of students." (p. 147). The philosophy of restorative teaching is rooted in restoring students into learners in a new context and healthy individuals. Restorative practice allows for students and their families to adjust to life in Canada while honoring their past knowledge and acknowledging the traumas that they have experienced. It takes the focus off the local curriculum and allows for students to focus school efforts on connections to what they know, what they have experienced, and what they need. The philosophy balances power between student and teacher and is centered on communication, which develops both English language skills and understanding of student needs.

Research on teaching and learning reflects the need for teacher awareness of student needs, and the essential nature of relationships. Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1994), demonstrated that positive student teacher relationships "have a documented effect on school learning. The frequency and quality of these interactions contribute to students' sense of self-esteem and foster a sense of membership in the class and school." (p. 76). The importance of developing relationships through knowing the students, and respecting their needs is also brought to the forefront in research on experiential education (Butt, 1995) and anti-oppression pedagogy (hooks, 1994; Freire, 2014).

Cultural awareness was the third and final organizing theme I identified within my reconnaissance research literature review, but it became the most relevant. It is interconnected with language support and respect of past knowledge, and with the ethics of care and understanding the students' individual-environment relation. Here the findings from the literature demonstrated that educators need to understand students' backgrounds to be effective in supporting them. Although this theme was more sensitive

to the students' well-being, the need for cultural awareness was still presented as the teacher's need, not the student's, and still represents an inferred need for refugee students.

Contemporary Local Research in Refugee Education

In the timeframe that I was developing this thesis, new research about refugee education emerged within a Canadian setting. This research was focused on the experience of the recent influx of Syrian refugees to Canada. Although the background of this group of students differs in culture, language, and religion from the Nepali/Bhutanese students I have worked with, many aspects of their Canadian arrival are similar. Both groups have been forcibly displaced more than once and have arrived in Alberta to enter schools where the culture, language, and school structure differs from their own. Both groups have experienced multiple forms of trauma, and within each group, high-school-aged students have expectations, both academic and family responsibilities, that exceed that of the Canadian norm (Kirova, 2019). Therefore, I believe it is pertinent to review this timely research here to explore what new insights may be offered, and what former experiences of the Nepali/Bhutanese students has been echoed and reaffirmed.

The research literature I explored here was part of special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Education* (JCIE) on "Syrian Refugees' Encounters with the Canadian Education System" (2019). In her introductory chapter, Anna Kirova (2019) outlines some important statistics about refugees in general and specific to "Syrian Refugees in Canada" before exploring themes that she identified in the five research studies. Of note for refugees in general: "Schools are considered by scholars as sites for social-emotional support for refugees and war-traumatized youth (Sullivan & Simonson,

2015). Despite that, only 3.6 percent of the humanitarian funding worldwide is allocated to education, even in times of crisis (UN Children's Fund, 2017)" (as cited in Kirova, 2019, p. 1).

Kirova also highlighted the difficulties associated in the resettlement experience outline by Dryden-Peterson (2016):

> However, resettlement experiences are not stress-free. Handling the stress of resettlement can be especially difficult for refugees with school-age children as many have experienced pre-migration trauma (e.g., mass violence, living in extreme poverty, spending extended period of time in refugee camps, etc.). Whatever the resettlement path, the pre-migration experiences of refugee families significantly impact children's resettlement process (Loewen, 2004) and shape their educational and psychosocial outcomes. (as cited in Kirova, 2019, p. 1).

Kirova offered a call to *examine,* though I prefer the term *share* (given the preceding discussion on the ethics of care)*,* the refugee experience in our current political climate: "Recent refugees' resettlement experiences need to be examined in light of negative media depictions, partisan and political discourse, and the worldwide rise of nationalism" (Kirova, 2019, p. 1). Kirova (2019) then explored six themes from across the five studies that I will outline here.

"Triple Trauma"

Triple Trauma is a term created by Jan Stewart in 2017 to represent the reality of refugee student experiencing trauma on three levels—through the experience of being displaced, the pre-resettlement experience, and finally the resettlement experience in Canada—where "Each stage of the journey presented a different set of struggles and

sources of trauma" (Kirova, 2019, p. 3). Important to note is the continued trauma that

often occurs in Canada: "Moving on for school-age children and youth, however, may

also be filled with traumatic events such as bullying, racism and discrimination in school"

(Kirova, 2019, p. 3). The refugee students that I have worked with through the years have

spoken about this reality. The conception that the struggle of refugees is over upon arrival

in a first world country is not only grossly inaccurate, it could be considered offensive. A

whole new set of challenges begins in an attempt to navigate a new home.

Language as a Barrier and as a Facilitator of Integration.

The second theme identified was the obstacle of language in feeling included in the

school community:

> Making friends and overall social integration in the school environment or the
> larger society was recognized by all studies included in this volume as being
> related to Syrian refugees' ability to communicate in English. In the early stages
> of resettlement, learning to speak English was experienced by the participants as a
> burden and a barrier. (Kirova, 2019, p. 4).

In three of the studies in the issue, the students did not value their English Language

instruction but found great value in learning English from Canadian students:

> In all three studies, the English language instruction the students were receiving in
> school was described as ineffective in giving them what they need in order to both
> feel good about themselves and make connections with Canadian-born peers. In
> contrast, the role of Canadian-born peers in improving their language skills was
> prized highly. (Kirova, 2019, p. 4)

Within the refugee population I worked with, a sense of value was shared with me about

their language courses, with students often signing up for ESL classes even when they

could no longer gain credit for them. This desire could have come from the sense of

community experienced in ESL classes, rather than the value of the language instruction.

The refugee students within my school also expressed a wish for more opportunities to interact with their Canadian-born peers in hopes of improving their social language.

Academic Challenges

Language was also, perhaps obviously so, identified as a barrier to academic success, but not the only one:

> Academic struggles were exacerbated by Syrian students' level of English, but they were not the only reason for them. Educational gaps are well-documented in the existing research on Syrian refugee children (e.g., Sirin & Rogers-Sirin, 2015), especially for the 14-18 year old demographic whose schooling was interrupted not only due to the war in their home country but also because of lack of access to schools in the transition countries such as Lebanon, Turkey or Jordan. (Kirova, 2019, p. 5)

Here the interruption of schooling is recognized as an added academic challenge, especially for the high school aged students that this study is focused on. This echoes general research on refugee education, such as that of Dryden-Peterson (2016), who demonstrated the challenges faced by refugee students due to their educational experiences in pre-resettlement, which often included little or no formal schooling.

Language Learning, Linguistic Capital, and Identity Shifts

The concept of linguistic capital—that language ability is directly connected to opportunity—is outlined in these studies. The difficulty for the students is that academic struggles often lead to leaving school early: "As a result, some have opted out of school to join the workforce which leaves them with minimal training and limited English language proficiency that in turn severely limit their future earning opportunities beyond minimum wage." (Kirova 2019, p. 6). This is compounded by the aforementioned issue with non-value associated with their English Language instruction: The nature and content of the language instruction classes was perceived as being limiting rather than

empowering or enabling." (Kirova, 2019, p. 6). Therefore, Kirova concluded "The studies

included in this volume indicate that the current structure and content of the English

language courses for school age students and for adults are not meeting the social,

academic and/or employment needs of the Syrian refugees, and that new approaches must

be considered and implemented" (p. 7). When looking at the difficulties experienced by

the refugee students in my school, the impetus for this research, the reality of low

graduation rates was of upmost concern. Without a high school diploma, the types of

careers one can undertake, or further education to pursue, is limited or impeded.

Role of Teachers and Community Workers

This theme highlighted the importance of "Teacher Cultural Awareness" if

schools are to truly be "sites for social-emotional support for refugees and war-

traumatized children" (Kirova, 2019, p. 7)**.** Lack of training is an issue, but not the only

one:

> Because most Canadian teachers are white, middle class, as previous research has
> shown (Guo, Arthur & Lund, 2009), they don't always understand the realities of
> their refugee students and their families' everyday lives. Such lack of knowledge
> and understanding opens possibilities for negative misconception, based on
> stereotypes, and potentially for perpetuating discriminatory, racist and
> marginalizing practices. (Kirova, 2019, p. 7).

This research also reinforces the importance of including cultural brokers from the

community:

> All studies included in this volume that involved school-age children and their
> parents strongly recommend involvement of settlement workers, cultural support
> workers, community liaison personnel, and cultural brokers to bridge the existing
> gap between the school and the refugee students and their families. (Kirova, 2019,
> p. 8)

The importance of cultural brokers is essential in supporting refugee students. However,

as will be discussed, the role of cultural broker within refugee families often falls on the

shoulders of the eldest child, rather than a community member. When that student can be supported in their brokerage by someone within the Canadian system, a large external burden can be lifted from their shoulders and allow for their attention to be focused on school, and other adolescent interests.

Building on Strength to Foster Resilience

The last theme brings with it a message of hope, and reminds us to consider not only obstacles, but also the incredible strengths refugees bring to a classroom:

> While the focus on barriers and challenges, including language and mental health issues related to trauma is understandable in the early stages of resettlement, the disproportionate focus on such issues can prevent the recognition and support of the many strengths that immigrant and refugee families bring with them, such as resilience, hope, aspirations, strong community and familial networks, cultural wealth, first language, and bimulti-lingualism (Georgis et al., 2017, as cited in Kirova, 2019, p. 9)

Often, in examining the refugee experience, the focus is on supports and needs, here Kirova reminds refugee education researchers, and educators, of the importance of recognizing the strengths and capabilities students and their families bring to our country. In respecting their past knowledge, we must also respect the capabilities the students arrive with and utilize and celebrate those strengths in classrooms. This again reinforces the need to speak with students and hear from them where they feel their strengths lay, both academically and in their character, and to help uncover those strengths if they remain unknown to the individual.

Additional Insights

Although Kirova's (2019) examination of the themes of this volume of work clearly outlines the important themes, there are other specific insights offered by the other individual authors featured that should also be explored. The first of which was Yohani,

Brosinsy and Kirova's (2019) examination of the experience of Syrian refugee families

with young children. Although this article stated it was focused on families with young

children, it was actually focused on the perspectives of cultural brokers working with

Syrian Refugee families with young children. The cultural brokers—"individuals who

perform the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups or persons of differing

cultural backgrounds for the purpose of bringing about change and reducing conflict"

(Jezewski, 1990, as cited in Yohani et al., 2019, p. 18)—and their reflections on their

experiences working with Syrian refugee families with young children, through focus

groups and individual interviews was examined. Again, an inferred need approach, where

the needs of refugee students are being presented by someone other than the refugees

themselves. High-school-aged students often have younger siblings and are asked to be a

cultural broker for the family, so the perspective is useful, even if it is not directly

speaking with refugees. The authors noted:

> Schools, as critical settings for children's academic, social and emotional
> development, are also critical sites for refugee children's integration into new
> countries. Consequently, educators and other school personnel can play a crucial role
> in mitigating risks that refugee children encounter and support resilience and
> development. (Yohani et al., 2019, p. 14)

Focusing on challenges and strengths of refugee families, the ideas presented can be

extrapolated to high-school-aged students. This article was the first I have seen to

acknowledge language as a strength, as well as a weakness. Refugee students are

necessarily multi-lingual, and this is a strength, one that they use to support each other

and a means for educators to make connections and share in a reciprocal learning

experience. By learning some of the students' language, teachers can demonstrate that

they are making the effort, and struggle, to learn another language, that they value the

students' past and culture, and that learning languages is rewarding. Again, linking the valuing of passed knowledge to creating a caring environment for the students.

The authors concluded that it is important to recognize strengths of refugees alongside challenges, as explored in the initial themes, but these authors also demonstrate links to Bronfenbrenner and a cultural-ecological model, which relates well to the notion of the individual-environment relation. Most importantly, in conclusion the authors stated:

> the examples speak to the complex needs and strengths of families and children, and the need for holistic models to support children. That is, models that see children in context, including the various systems that provide supports and resources, the various barriers and challenges that parents encounter, and cultural values and expectations. It encourages educators to develop critical awareness of the multiple and complex conditions, contexts and factors that influence young refugee children's lives and development. In addition, it provides a way to interrupt the "at risk" discourse that positions them only as needy and powerless and promotes teaching and learning practices that intentionally integrate and validate the rich linguistic and cultural experiences and perspectives of children and families from diverse backgrounds. (Yohani et al., 2019, p. 27)

The context of the refugee student needs to be understood, and this includes the context of their family, their cultural values and expectations, their needs and strengths, and their available supports and resources to have a holistic understanding of how to support the student best, acknowledging their effectivity sets and affordance networks as not only deficiencies, but also as capabilities.

The second study in this volume comes from New Brunswick and is focused on the experience of seven refugee students from Syria and Iraq. Utilizing a theoretical framework shaped by critical pedagogy—amplifying the voices of the marginalized—the authors used a qualitative case study, and a reciprocal approach to understand the students' experiences through interviews, field notes, school and community documents,

and news articles. The authors identified five themes: 1. Building bridges between students, 2. Working through traumatic experiences, 3. Supportive relationships with educators, 4. Addressing initial fear and building resilience, and 5. Appreciation and Gratitude. A need to build resilience is a surprising theme to associate with refugee students. Resilience itself is a strength that most, if not all, refugee students bring by simply walking into a school—in a foreign land, in a different language, after surviving trauma on several levels. Although logically that appears to demonstrate incredible resilience, it seems to be contradicted by a statement the authors offered in response to hearing from a student, that he had demonstrated "wisdom beyond his years" (Massfeller & Hamm, 2019, p. 40). This feeling was a common experience for me in working with refugee students—wisdom and empathy—born from a life that has already demanded so much to mature students past their chronological ages. I would argue this represents a quality in their strength of resilience. Their experiences in starting at a new school, although understandably intimidating, can be considered a relatively minor thing compared to other experiences they have faced. Teachers should share this with students— to wear the label refugee with pride, rather than shame—who could say "I have endured far more at my age than you may be able to comprehend: come hear my story".

The authors conclude with recommendations for practice that calls for increased global awareness—teacher cultural awareness—for not just teachers but all people in the public sector working with refugee youth, to respond more effectively to the diversity of their classrooms and to support and empower the students. The students themselves wanted three things: **"**They want to feel safe, they want to belong, and they want to build

authentic relationships with their teachers and Canadian peers" (Massfeller & Hamm,

2019, p. 48). This translates to a need to be cared for by the teachers and peers.

The third study was focused on how to better support integration of Syrian

children into schools in Winnipeg and Calgary. The theoretical framework for this study

is grounded in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Model (discussed earlier) and the

researchers focused on the students as individuals and examined their relationships with

the school system, their family system and the interactions between these systems to

generate a holistic picture of the students.

> Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2001) believe that humans do not develop in
> isolation; rather, they develop in relation to the various contexts or systems to
> which they belong throughout their life, and are influenced by the connections and
> exchanges between people in these systems. Moreover, the individual and the
> environment have a reciprocal relationship whereby the person is both influenced
> by the environment and also influences that environment (Stewart, 2011). This
> fundamental principle was examined in this study as a means to better understand
> the direct and the indirect interactions that refugee children encounter in the
> various systems in which they live, and the challenges and successes that
> influence their experience settling in Canada. (Stewart, El Chaar, McCluskey, &
> Borgardt, 2019, p. 60)

This offers further reinforcement of consideration of the individual-environment relation

in this study. To investigate these systems and relationships the authors conducted sixty

semi-structured interviews with newly arrived Syrian refugee students and some of their

parents, and two focus groups, with teachers and settlement workers. The impetus for this

research was born from a desire to better understand the psychological and educational

needs of these students. This study demonstrated a key consideration for this research, the

concept of *triple trauma*, which is further explained and explored:

> Participants referred to a "Triple Trauma" effect, having experienced traumatic
> events in Syria, then subsequently in a second country of settlement such as
> Lebanon, Jordan, or Turkey and again in relation to adjusting to life in Canada.
> Although there was often a sense of reluctance or caution toward discussing the

events in Syria, we frequently heard that participants saw dead bodies on the street, experienced the loss of family and friends, and were witness to, or experienced, direct violence. (Stewart et al., 2019, p. 61)

Triple trauma includes trauma in their home country, trauma in transition—pre-resettlement experiences—and in resettlement. Additional challenges were uncovered including language acquisition struggles, interrupted schooling, under-prepared or unprepared teachers, and the experience of racism and discrimination in interactions with Canadian peers. All of these challenges are addressed within the interviews of this study, but this reaffirms the need to examine these aspects of experience.

The fourth study uses the work of Bourdieu to frame a study focused on the experience of Syrian refugee students in Regina, examining the intersections of language acquisition, capital and identity.

In Bourdieu's framework, the various forms of capital – economic, cultural, social and symbolic– are resources which individuals can draw upon to secure advantages in particular fields. Crucially, for the various forms of capital to be valued they must exist in a field or context in which they are recognized, appreciated and can be employed. (Ghadi, Massing, Kikulwe, & Giesbrecht, 2019, p. 72)

Bourdieu's work echoes the concepts of the individual-environment relation in understanding language as capital, and how that capital is part of both the affordance network—access to language development—and the effectivity set—the ability to use that language. *Habitus* is an acknowledgement of the individual-environment relation as a relationship, that the environment affects the individual, and that a change in the environment can deeply impact an individual's identity.

The study found that while the participants identified as hard-working, employed and independent; the realities in Canada have altered their identities due to the complications of limited language capital in finding employment opportunities. The

authors call for adaptive language training programs that will support refugees in returning to their professional lives. The study utilized a mixed methods study using questionnaires and focus groups to illuminate obstacles faced by new-Canadians and a second study focused in the experiences of Syrian refugees through focus groups (Ghadi et al., 2019, p. 72). This article was focused on adult English education and the connections between language, language capital and identity. It is useful in reconfirming ideas about the importance of language, and the impact of limited language on feelings of independence that refugees, adults or school aged, struggle with.

The fifth and final study, by Guo, Maitra, and Guo (2019), explored the experience of Syrian refugee parents' and junior high school students', integration into Canadian schools. Using focus groups interviews and inductive analysis by identifying domains that arose from the data, which contained subcategories grouped by a semantic relationship. The study found that the children find it difficult to make friends with Canadian-born students, and experienced bullying and racism. The result was disconnection from their school and schoolmates. The researchers call for developing educational strategies that meet the needs of these refugee students.

This study discussed several of the unique challenges of students arriving at the high school age, and included an often overlooked component of experiences of racism with school staff.

> What becomes evident … from our research is the anger and frustration that the children have to live with every day while trying to integrate to the Canadian school system. Most importantly, children's sharing of their experiences reveal, in their perspectives, the lack of empathy and sensitivity that some teachers seemed to possess towards the Syrian children. (Guo et al., 2019, p. 97)

Within the interviews with research participants for this study, questions about experiences of discrimination was explored, with both fellow students and school staff being considered. This article also offered re-enforcement of the regularity of refugee students witnessing of death, family loss, violence, and suffering.

The authors conclusions blend well with the framework of this thesis: "First of all, teachers and administrators need to listen more carefully to refugee children's needs." (Guo et al., 2019, p. 98), and that in

> making the views of these students explicit, we hope to provide a starting point for not only understanding their experiences in more detail, but also for developing educational strategies, resources and policies that might best meet the needs of these students and future refugee children and youth. (Guo et al., 2019, p. 100).

These conclusions mirror the aims of this research: to speak with refugee students, to come to know their needs and strengths directly from them, to empathetically understand their experiences in hopes of learning with refugee students about how to better support them.

A Call to Explore Expressed Needs
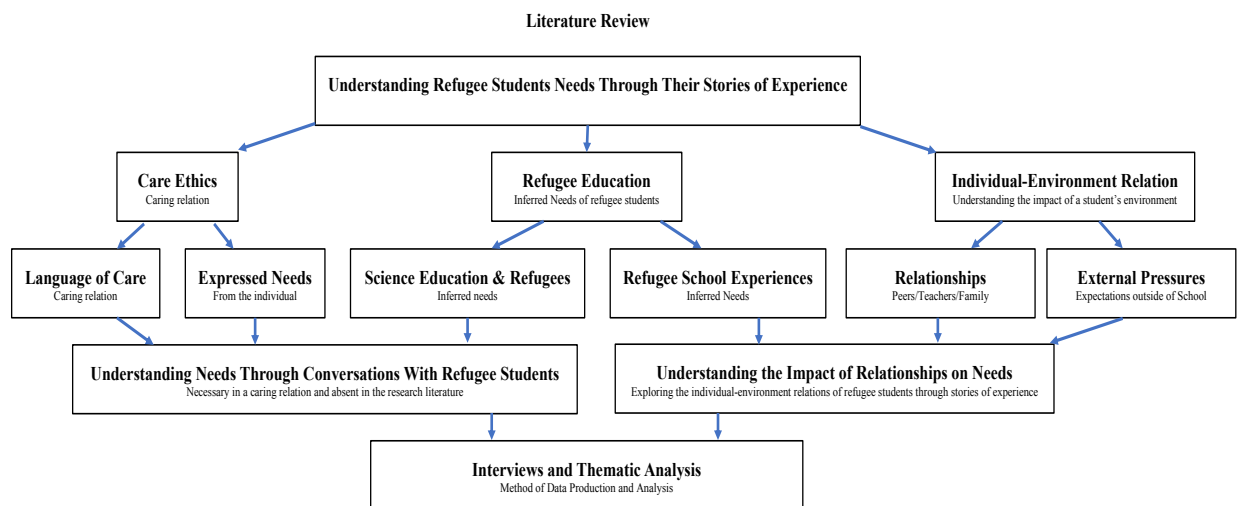
Figure 3. How the literature review shaped the methodology of this research.

Much of the research explored in this section reinforces the importance of a call to coming to know students, yet the studies themselves were primarily focused on what teachers and researchers recognized as important for supporting students. Therefore, the findings in most studies represent inferred needs of refugee students. Care ethics and the individual-environment relation provide the framework of what to explore, and the method to do so: the necessity of exploring the students' experiences and expressed needs through the students' themselves. *Figure 3* outlines how the research literature led to this call. Again, this research attempts to redress that gap in the research literature by talking to refugee students directly about their perceived needs.

In my own initial research experience, explored in the first chapter, it became apparent that expressed needs must be investigated alongside inferred needs to ensure that refugee students' needs do not go unmet and put them at additional risk and trauma as referenced by Kirova (2019). The findings of my first project demonstrated that local science educators see value in the pedagogical approaches outlined above. They agreed with the inferred needs offered by the research literature. In a second investigation, focused on the student perspective, the expressed importance of care was brought forward. This need was absent from the comments of the local educators. These two research experiences, alongside this exploration of research literature, further illustrate why I valued conversation with refugee students, to elicit stories of experience in high school, and use their own words to explore and uncover unmet and important needs. In the next chapter I document how I conducted this study to document those expressed needs and experiences.

CHAPTER 3:

EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS IN STUDENTS' WORDS AND VOICES

The Participant Researchers

The term *participant researchers* was chosen purposefully to represent the refugee students interviewed, as this research is meant to be research done *with* not *on* refugee students. Participatory research is a form of social justice research in which the participants in a project are involved in the research. Consent is ongoing throughout, and is focused on including marginalized voices (England, 2014). As these were all qualities expected of this study, the term participant researcher best reflects that the refugee students involved in this study were more than just participants in interviews. They had influence and control over the final stories and data drafted from their interviews, feedback, and reflections.

The population that was approached as participant researchers included refugee students who have graduated from my former school of employment. I intended to work with six to ten students, but due to unforeseen challenges in recruitment, five participant researchers were interviewed and continued with the process until the end. This available homogeneous population is comprised of Nepali/Bhutanese refugees exclusively. An additional parameter for the population was the arrival in Canada at high school age, which was the case for all but one of the participant researchers who was a thirteen years old upon arrival. In this population, the students may have a better ability to reflect on their self-defined successes, in high school, when looking at the opportunities that they have had experienced since graduation.

There were possible advantages in working with the Nepali/Bhutanese population. They came to Canada from similar refugee camps, and shared aspects of culture. The cultural awareness needed to be respectful and sensitive to the population was well known to me, having worked intensively with this community for the past ten years. I have been purposeful in coming to know their cultural norms, including personally travelling and professional experiences teaching in Nepal. This opportunity, while not necessary to support my students, deepened my understanding in the differences they experienced in educational norms within each nation. These former students have lived in Canada for a longer period now, so have developed their conversational English to a degree that allowed for comfort in an interview in the English language. Pragmatically, following approval of the University of Lethbridge Human Subjects Research application, I interviewed adult subjects and did not need to seek permission from a school district or parents. The participant researchers completed consent forms that included the right to withdraw at any time and stated that I was no longer in an academic power relationship with these participants. My goal was threefold: offer a platform for their stories, so that both teachers and students may benefit from listening to their lived experiences; gain a deeper understanding of expressed needs of refugee students in high school classrooms; and identify themes that can inform teacher practice.

There were also, perhaps, inherent limitations in working with a population that I have had previous influence over, as a significant power-relationship once existed between these students and me. However, the relational nature of interviews, and this thesis research itself, called upon consideration of working with a population where trust has already been established. Through that established trust, I received more detailed

answers than I may have got from unknown students, and I was able to invite deeper answers and sharing by already knowing the setting and characters in their stories. It appeared that the benefits of our trust outweighed the risks associated with the power-relationships.

Research demonstrates that our established relationships could have allowed for more authenticity in the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I also utilized member checking for multiple drafts, for feedback on what I wrote from our conversations to ensure accurate representation. I was prepared to make changes requested in seeking confirmation of accuracy in the drafts, but after meeting and discussing with the participant researchers, no changes were required upon completion of their reading/hearing the transcripts and writing. This consideration came from an overarching and extensive awareness and concern for not appropriating the participant researchers' voices. These words and stories belong to the students themselves, and if I had been asked to exclude any aspect or detail, ethically, I would have done so to honor the participant researchers' decisions. Fortunately, that was not necessary. These ethical decisions were grounded in reflection on 'power-over' versus 'power-with' (Bishop, 2015) relationships. As stated, I was once in a position of 'power-over' with this entire population, either as a classroom teacher or as the administrator in charge of ESL programming. I do, however, believe that the students involved in this research have known me as a caring teacher and administrator who helped them find academic and school success. This is an assumption, but one about which I feel confident. Although I no longer have 'power-over' the participant researchers in an academic relation, I do

recognize the power differential between interviewer and interviewee as stated by Weber (1986):

> What the researcher says does not often show up in print for the world to see. As long as it is the researcher who records, asks the questions, and decides how to deal with the interview material, the balance of power usually remains firmly in his or her hands. (p. 67)

As I weave my own experience with the narratives of these students, I believe the authenticity of the research is enhanced by the stories and experiences coming from the same setting.

The population approached included approximately seventy students. Initially, I assumed the number I interviewed would be dependent on the narratives that were generated from the interviews. In reality, five participant researchers chose to work with me, and that number was limited simply by the interest and willingness of students in the community to participate. The sample was also very dependent on locating and contacting these former students, many of whom were connected to each other. Therefore, the intention to be more purposeful in my sampling was overshadowed by the pragmatic reality of snowball or chain sampling (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), in which the connection to one participant researcher lead to establishing connections with other participant researchers through their network. I did have an established relationship with the local Bhutanese Community Association, which was first relied upon to gain updated contact information but proved a less effective means of gaining interest in the study. A discussion of the lessons learned in the recruitment phase of this research is explored later.

With regard to establishing a necessary number of participant researchers, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) offered this advice: "*How many interview subjects do I*

need? The answer to this common question is simply to interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (p. 140). I intended to interview students until I had collected the narratives needed to garner insight into the refugee experience, into reflections on needs and care, and into teaching and learning science for refugee students, from their own perspective. I do believe that these intentions were well met through the interviews of the five participant researchers.

Additionally, my intentions of interviewing students of multiple gender identities, that fell into three academic classifications, were met. In my proposal I had hoped to work with students from the population who have entered university, those who graduated from high school and may be attending college, and those who did not meet the requirements of graduation. The purpose of these groupings was to examine a variety of demographics within the population. The participant researchers included two identifying females, three identifying males, and at least one student from each of the educational groupings.

All participant researchers were initially contacted via email, although several other factors led to the students taking part, including word of mouth support from one participant researcher to the next, and a face-to-face meeting with a few participants at a cultural event. In accordance with the *Tri-Council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans* (Government of Canada, 2014), the formal research request for participants email included a synopsis of the intentions of the study, the interview description, the requirements of participation, and a consent form. The participant researchers were invited to respond to the email invitation if interested in participating. Once the participant researchers contacted me, we determined a time and place that was

convenient to them for their interview. Within the email, it was made explicit that taking part in the research was voluntary, and that they may withdraw at any point without prejudice, even after the interview, storying and analysis had been completed, at that point any data collected or created in relation to that participant researcher would be destroyed. There were no known or anticipated risks associated with their participation in this research.

Issues with Recruitment

For this research an adjustment in method of recruitment was required. The email initially sent to the participant researchers was drafted for the ethics application. This email took on the academic language of doctoral research (Appendix 2). In sending it to an ELL population, the research goals were lost in translation. Due to concerns with my power-over relationship with the students, the initial email was forwarded through a third-party community organization. This initial recruitment email did not generate a single interview. The first interview was initiated through a chance encounter with a former student. He asked about the email and stated he did not understand the study. I explained the goals of the research, and he immediately agreed to come for an interview. The other four participant researchers agreed to take part in the research in a form of snowball recruitment (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The first participant researcher shared his experience with community members, and I had a chance to clarify questions at a cultural event. Through this interaction, the other students agreed to participate.

In approaching this population, face-to-face social discussion was preferred as a form of recruitment. The academic language of the email had created an obstacle to the populations' comfort with the research. In a culture that treasures social interaction, a

seemingly random email, also does little to engage the community. They desired an opportunity to ask questions and gain further understanding of the research. This could be perceived as an inappropriate means of recruitment, but in understanding the population, it was not surprising this challenge was encountered. It spoke to the importance of trust in gaining participant researchers for this thesis. I do not believe the participant researchers would have volunteered without our established relationships.

This is an important finding of this research: researchers hoping to work with refugee populations need to consider that traditional forms of recruitment may be ineffective. It may require several different approaches and should include cultural and language considerations. The term interview can be intimidating, especially when the intent is a *conversation*. Institutions may need to be more flexible in methods of recruitment they approve of for refugee populations. Personal connections to a trusted researcher, and opportunities for the participants to inquire about the research in a face-to-face discussion, may be a far more ethical means of recruitment. Conversely, sending academic language-based emails to ELL refugees, could be perceived to have its own power-relationship abuse: It could be interpreted as a more formal *requirement* to participate. This is an important lesson for my own future research.

Considerations and Conversations: Recognition of Positions of Power by Researchers and Educators

In addition to the limitations and complications associated with the participant researcher sample outlined above, there were other factors to be considered. In speaking and collaborating on writing with a population of students who are English Language Learners [ELL], language proficiency needed to be addressed. I had to consider if the

participant researchers would be able to clearly understand my questions, give an answer in English that I could draw meaning from, and be able to read and reflect upon the written work as authentic. There may have been a need to bring in a translator for interviews, or for translation of the written work. This could have complicated the authenticity of the research, to be certain that my words, or the words of the participant researchers, were not compromised in translation. Likewise, the meaning of statements could be lost in translation. If I had limited my participant researchers to those that have developed their English enough to avoid translation, I may have brought bias into my sample and avoided the students who are struggling most, their needs would not be addressed. Fortunately, the participant researchers all demonstrated clear communication skills in English, and were more than capable in participating in the research without a translator. I am comfortable in my analysis of their comprehension as an English as a Second Language [ESL] educator as I have had extensive training and experience in benchmarking ESL students (Alberta Education, 2010). Although a language barrier was considered a possible obstacle, it did not interfere with this research.

In approaching a population that had graduated from high school, I was aware that asking for the recall of experiences in high school could pose a problem. I assumed for this research I would be able to write out their accounts of their experiences and needs, through focused interviewing. In practice, the students were able to define what they needed, and how they felt in high school, but were not always able to recall specific experiences in which their needs were met or not met. Therefore, the presentation of the data, and the form of analysis, needed to be adjusted to narrative anecdotes (van Manen, 1992), shorter stories of experience, placed alongside verbatim quotes of the students

themselves about affective experiences and needs. What stories the students told and what they remembered most were not what or how they were taught, but how they felt.

Polkinghorne (2007) argues that narrative research falls into a category of reformist research as opposed to the conventional research community. He argued that validity for narrative research, needs to be measured by the reader of research in "judgement about the plausibility of a knowledge claim based on the evidence and argument for the claim reported by the researcher" (p. 485). The written interviews, alongside the quotes, are offered as evidence to support that which I learned from the students about their secondary experiences with teaching and learning.

I have established relationships with many refugee students through my time working in schools. Through my experience interviewing Santosh for the reconnaissance study previously described, I saw a great advantage in the comfort and honesty the established relationship brought to our conversation. Bias and influence could also be increased due to this relationship, but the reward outweighed the challenge for this research, and in choosing to interview former students I was especially careful not to lead the participant researchers. I avoided questions or comments that they may agree with due to an established relationship, rather than stating their own opinion. Instead the questions were open-ended and designed to explore their needs and experiences and how they felt about their education. I was searching for their own personal information and experience, rather than shared or generalized thoughts. Of course, in only interviewing Nepali/Bhutanese students, I make no attempt to draw conclusions that are transferable to other populations, to refugee students in general, or even within the local Nepali/Bhutanese population. What one student expresses as a need may not be a need

for other students in the demographic, and what is a need for one demographic may not benefit another. What I am demonstrating through this research is a means to come to know about these specific students' needs, and what a valuable resource their stories can be to make us mindful about what students' experience. Cultural sensitivity and clarity that my conclusions are individual and not general were especially important when writing and presenting these results, accurately articulating what these particular students have to say.

As stories of systemic issues of discrimination were shared by the students, a challenge of interviewing students from my former school emerged. As I examined a school and school system that I was once a part of, the potential for bias, as I sought to protect the school and school system, was present. In order to navigate this hinderance I recalled the teaching of Ibram X, an American professor and writer on race and discrimination. Kendi (2019) teaches a focus on the policies and not the people, to examine the practice, not the person. In completing a thematic analysis that included an examination of the subtle and overt racism experienced by the participant researchers, I strove to honor their experiences. I did this through sharing their stories and examining the systemic practices and policies that classroom teachers, schools, and educational systems employ that create inequalities. Additionally, I endeavored, alongside the participant researchers, to offer considerations of alternate practices and policies to employ.

Lastly, I am a white, Canadian-born, able-bodied, heterosexual, male settler; I belong to many oppressor demographics: I have never been a refugee, nor have I ever had to experience education in a language other than my own. These are privileges that I must

address and continually ask myself in terms of how they could affect the stories and experiences that are shared with me. I chose this research field in hopes of creating a platform for the voice of a population who is underrepresented in educational decision making and in educational research. Through this direct narrative and interview research I offer one platform to create the avenue for sharing that, at least, significantly limits appropriation. Knowing the valuable information Santosh and I co-created in our reconnaissance project, I was careful and aware to avoid colonization of the expressed needs of these students by interpreting their needs through my own lenses. Even so I may miss some of my own biases but it is important to make the attempt to contribute to teachers' knowledge. All written accounts were returned to the participant researchers for their review. While I do recognize that a power-with relationship may be interpreted as power-over and influence the feedback received, that is not within my control. Deep reflection and consultation with the participant researchers was required to avoid distortion of any students' expressed needs.

Throughout this doctoral process Bishop's (2015) spiral model of learning for becoming an ally was very helpful in shaping the methodology of this research. An ally is defined by Bishop as: "a member of an oppressor group who takes action to end the form of oppression that gives them privilege" (p. 10). In her spiral model, one must locate, identify, and categorize themselves: to what (multiple) groups or cultures does one belong? This assists with later reflection and analysis of where each of us has been both the oppressed and the oppressor. Bishop calls upon the would-be ally to start with reflection on experience, beginning with our own experiences with oppression. Bishop believes: "that one must be in the process of their own liberation from one's own

oppression to become an ally in another's liberation." (p. 92). An analysis of oppressive

structures, how and why they exist and persist, is undertaken before exploring their own

role in oppression and power structures. Bishop's model then calls to form a strategy and

carry out action.

Bishop's (2015) model helped in considerations of how to reduce the power-over

relationship between the researcher and the participant researchers, and how to craft this

dissertation. This included the development and implementation of the interviews, the

crafting and interpretation of the stories, and the presentation of the findings. In each case

reflection on my own inherent bias of position yielded alterations to the process. For

example, a need arose to remove statements of "my refugee students" from this

document. There was no intent to place ownership in that statement, it was meant to

represent refugee students with whom I have worked, but language is an important aspect

of ally-ship (Bishop, 2015). In revisiting the stories and my interpretations with the

participants, they became participant researchers, and our relationship moved towards a

power-with approach.

Through the interviews, writing, and thematic analysis, this research has yielded

unique and new insights into the needs of students who are also refugees. *Figure 4*

outlines the methodology of this thesis, focused on understanding the lived experiences of

refugee students, starting with semi-structured interviews. As Weber wrote on interviews,

"It is through the seeing of that which is neither only *you* nor only *I* but is rather *our*

between that we learn about each other." (Weber, 1986, p. 68). Interviews with refugees,

therefore, provided valuable stories about the refugee experience, and demonstrate the

value of sitting with, and feeling with, refugee students as a means of understanding their expressed needs.

Methodology

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        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │  Understanding Refugee Students Needs Through Their Stories of     │
        │                          Experience                                │
        └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│   Care Ethics      │   │ Refugee Education  │   │ Individual-Environment       │
│  Caring relation   │   │ Inferred Needs of  │   │ Relation                     │
│                    │   │ refugee students   │   │ Understanding the impact of  │
│                    │   │                    │   │ a student's environment      │
└────────────────────┘   └────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────────┘

        ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │  Interviews, Data Development, and Thematic Analysis               │
        │  Method of Data Production and Analysis                            │
        └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│  Semi-Structured Interviews   │───────▶│  Transcription of Interviews      │
│  Data Collection/Initial      │        │  Authenticity of Stories/Further  │
│  interpretations              │        │  Interpretation                   │
└──────────────────────────────┘        └──────────────────────────────────┘

            ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
            │  Development of Stories of Experience                 │
            │  Narrative informed/Data Representation/Further       │
            │  Interpretation                                       │
            └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

            ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
            │  Participant Researchers Lived Experiences           │
            │  Their Stories                                        │
            └──────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Reflective Thematic Analysis                                                   │
│  Process of interpretation from Interviews to Discussion of Themes              │
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Figure 4. Research methodology for this thesis.

Speaking with, *Not For*, Students About Lived Experiences

Because it is important to hear from refugee students themselves, semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015) were used to develop conversations with the participant researchers who shared their lived experiences in high school. Their words serve as data to explore their needs, ideas, and experiences and to inform teachers and researchers of the lived realities of refugee students from their own perspectives. Along with the participant researchers, we co-produced the data, and those findings are presented in the following chapter. The data, both the stories and the transcripts, were used to code and develop themes of understanding using Braun and Clarke's (2006)

approach to thematic analysis. This research reveals the value of speaking with refugee students themselves, to better understand their own experiences and needs, and to inform more supportive teacher practices.

Semi-Structured Interviews – Data Collection

There are many forms of interviews utilized in research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). By listening to the participants' stories in the semi-structured interviews and documenting their transcripts, I was able to study "how interviewees connect their responses into a sustained account, that is, a story, brings out problems and possibilities of interviewing that are not visible when attention is restricted to question-answer exchanges" (Mishler, 1986, p. 67). Within our interviews, stories unfolded as the students elaborated on their experiences. Polkinghorne (1988) suggested that people naturally build experience, communicate, and understand meaning in the form of narratives and schemes "by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions" (p. 11). Polkinghorne also offered that narratives are a common development within interviews: "Narratives are a recurrent and prominent feature of accounts offered in all types of interviews. If respondents are allowed to continue in their own way until they indicate they have completed their answers, they are likely to relate stories" (p. 163). Brinkman and Kvale (2015) highlighted narrative interviews as a genre of interviews: "Narrative interviews center on the stories the subjects tell, on the plots and structures of their accounts." (p. 179). The research questions were designed to elicit insight into the experiences of students by encouraging the recounting of stories of need: "In a narrative interview the interviewer can ask directly for stories and perhaps together with the interviewee attempt to structure the

different happenings recounted into coherent stories" (p. 180). In addition, I was mindful of seeking out the needed components of stories themselves within the interviews by asking follow-up questions. The follow-up questions included consideration of both the cognitive and affective realms of experiences.

Semi-structured interviews did indeed prompt narratives from the refugee students, which shaped the writing of this thesis. The development of the stories was collaborative with each of the participants, from their initial telling, through checking transcripts (also interpreted accounts), to their reading of the final written representation. Their stories, and my initial reflections on them, were shared with each participant researcher to ensure the meaning portrayed was authentic to their experiences (Yow, 2005). This was completed before further study and interpretation. The interview questions were initially drafted to focus on the students' stories of their experiences in the science classroom, with additional questions to explore the wider high school experience. It became apparent quickly that the richer stories, and reflections, came from those stories focused on the students' evaluation of their own needs. This is clarified within each interview text, as to whose voice is central, by explicitly referencing the student's comments.

As noted earlier, in undertaking these interviews, it was necessary to be cognizant of the power relationship between myself and the participant researchers. Bishop's (2015) power-over and power-with models, informed reflection in my position of interviewer to work with the participant researchers to inspire deeper descriptions of their experiences and perceived expressed needs rather than to appropriate their voices by reporting on them. Within this collaboration, I also viewed roles in terms of Noddings' (2005) "ethic

of care": as interviewer I initially assumed mine was the role of carer, and the participant

researchers that of the cared-for. I would later come to see this relationship as reciprocal,

as the participant researcher also demonstrated care for myself and this research.

Awareness of power relationships was also called for by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015):

"If power is inherent in human conversations and relationships, the point is not that

power should necessarily be eliminated from research interviews, but rather that

interviewers ought to reflect on the role of power in the production of interview

knowledge" (p. 38). Interviews themselves can be "power-with" opportunities when one

invites, observes, and recognizes the inherent nature of collaboration in the process of

narrative interviews:

> The interviewee is the teller of the story, the interviewer the hearer. In this
> context, the story selected to be told can function to present a particular image of
> the teller and the kind of interview the hearer undertakes can affect the kind of
> story told. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 164)

To ensure the opportunity for a power-with relation, collaboration occurred within the

interview itself, including the context and setting and the set-up of the interview

(Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

The interviews took place in a mutually agreed quiet space where I could set up

the recording apparatus. For two of the interviews, that space was my office at the

university. Those two participant researchers chose that space as they were very familiar

with the campus. For the other three participant researchers, we met at a local public

library's bookable space, as this location was easy to access and familiar to all parties. In

all cases, the deciding factor on where to undertake the interview was the student's

preferred location. Regardless of where the interview took place, effort was made to

ensure comfort of the participant researchers. We spent the initial minutes chatting

conversationally before beginning each interview, to both understand what their current

realities were, but also to re-establish a caring relationship. A goal I set, which was met in

each case, was to ensure each student had a good laugh to put them at ease again with me,

in recalling a shared event, or in exploring their current reality. This discussion of current

realities was not recorded and included here, but documented through field notes

(Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

In conducting the interviews, it was important for me to be mindful to focus on

listening and avoid "invitations to counsel or teach" (Moules, McCaffrey, Field, and

Laing, 2015, p. 89). It is within my nature to want to teach, especially because that was

my previous role with each participant, but in the interview, I had to focus on listening to

the participant researchers. As Moules et al. noted: "We can listen to see if the other

person agrees with what we already know or we can listen to find the truth in what the

other person is saying" (p. 94). It was my goal to listen without interruption and I

reminded myself to focus on listening throughout all interviews. To assist in this

reinforcement, I included a cue in my interview guide (Appendix 1). In actuality, a

balance of listening and leading was needed in the interviews: to create a space for the

participant researchers to have freedom to explore their experiences, while offering cues

to return to the topic when necessary.

When initially planning this research, I had considered video recording my

interviews. In my limited interview experience, often body language, and gestures made

in silence, can offer additional insights to the text of a transcript. There are, however,

difficulties associated with video analysis: "Video recordings offer a unique opportunity

for analyzing the interpersonal interaction in an interview; the wealth of information,

however, makes video analysis a time-consuming process" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 205). In addition to time challenges, the anonymity of the participant researchers is of concern. Coming from a population who has experienced extreme vulnerability in refugee camps, I made an ethical decision to avoid adding this additional layer of possible exposure for the participant researchers. As Weber (1986) noted for any interview, there are

> very real risks involved in public exposure, pointing to the paradoxical nature of the interview: The interview is private and confidential, but it is also social and public. What begins as an intimate conversation between two people may soon find its way into the public arena. (p. 67)

In this research, the private discussion indeed progressed to the public arena, but this research also engaged in methods of protecting anonymity and confidentiality. In consideration of said methods, I chose to audio record the interviews, rather than videotape them.

I transcribed the interviews myself from the audio files, being aware of the relationship built with the text through this process. In previous interview studies, I had done my own transcription, and I found that this process created familiarity with the oral and written text that could not be gained by external transcription. This also assisted in the development of writing notes about their experiences expressed during the interviews, which began even before transcription. I made notes in my research journal immediately after each interview about the cognitive ideas and affective experience the interviews evoked, as well as observations about the participant researchers body language. Then, the immersion producing the transcripts deepened the process of enriching the stories with data not initially included. I also revisited the initial writing for each interview

following its transcription, which allowed me to quickly recall details and comments I wanted to add for more complete accuracy.

Brinkman and Kvale (2015) provided good guidance on transcription: "There is one basic rule in transcription—state explicitly in the report how the transcriptions were made" (p. 207). Cognitive of this, I journaled the process and consistently applied the same approach. This approach included Wengraf's (2001) suggestion to do a first transcription verbatim. In examining possible organizational forms for transcription, I chose to use an excel spreadsheet to enter the data. I separated entries by "Units of meaning" which Wengraf (2001, p. 214) described as sentences or paragraphs relating to a thought. Units of meaning allow for quicker reference when the conversation is dominated by one speaker. As the participant researchers' voices are the focus of the interviews and study, this approach was effective in organizing their comments, anecdotes, and ideas. In using an excel spreadsheet, I was also able to allow for a box on either side of the text for future work and interpretation. Full paralinguistic notation was not included due to the length of the interviews, with no intention of undertaking conversational or discourse analytics. I did however note pauses, points of emphasis, and used descriptions to clarify information within the transcript using notation adapted from Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) and Wengraf (2001).

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) also call on the interviewer to be cognizant of interviews being focused on experiences of the past. Therefore, considerations were made in the interviews to stimulate participant researchers' memory formation. This was essential for this research, as my sample consisted of students who have graduated, but were being asked to reflect on experiences from high school, which could have occurred

up to six years before the time of interview. The advantages and disadvantages of working with this population were explored above. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) offered several points of advice to support the recall of the participant researchers, which I employed, focusing on allowing time to develop stories and providing concrete cues about people, places, and times (p. 52). To determine what questions may elicit stories of past experiences, Brinkmann and Kvale also offer advice about the construction of the interview script, which is explored in the next section.

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

In undertaking this research to elicit stories of experience, semi-structured interviews seemed best suited to discovering participant researchers' experiences and needs. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) highlighted an essential consideration: "The stories may come up spontaneously during the interview or be elicited by the interviewer" (p. 179). In order to explore the unique experiences of refugee students, a series of pilot questions were developed. To serve the purpose of evincing stories, these questions directly asked for descriptions of experience, a recommendation of Brinkman and Kvale (2015). The design was mindful to include follow up questions about structural components of the narratives:

> Through questions, nods, and silences, the interviewer is a co-producer of the narrative. Being familiar with narrative structures, the interviewer may take care to unfold temporal sequences, focus on who the hero of the story is and who the antagonists and the hero's helpers are, and try to ascertain the main plot of the story, the possible subplots, and the elements of tension, conflict, and resolution. (p. 180)

Below are the initial questions designed for the pilot interview intended to invite stories and sharing of lived experiences. Following the questions, I have outlined where the

questions emerged from within the literature explored in the previous chapters, and within my own research experience.

Initial interview questions.

1. What was your school experience like before you came to Canada?

2. Please tell me a little bit about what it was like for you arriving at the high school after you came to Canada.

3. If you could imagine your first day in a Canadian school as a perfect day, what would it have been like?

4. Describe an experience or two where you felt connected to your high school.

5. Describe an experience or two where you felt disconnected or isolated in high school.

6. What helped you in high school? And how?

7. What do you think would have helped you more in high school?

8. How would you define success in school?

9. Describe an experience where you found success in high school science.

10. Describe an experience where you struggled in high school science.

11. What do you need to learn science better?

12. Describe an experience or two where you had your needs met by a teacher in science.

13. Describe an experience or two where your needs were not met by a teacher in science.

14. Describe an experience or two where you felt cared for in school.

15. What was your life outside of school like while you were in high school? (work, interests, family)

16. Was you family supportive of your efforts in school?

17. Did you ever feel like you were expected to do a lot outside of school during high school?

18. Describe an experience where these outside influences helped in school.

19. Describe an experience where these outside influences interfered with school.

20. If you could give advice to teachers about what refugee students need from their teachers, what would you like to tell them or want teachers to know and be able to do?

21. How do you think refugees can be supported to be comfortable to ask for what they need in school?

22. Are there any other stories or information you can tell me that might help other refugee students? Or teachers to meet learning needs?

Relation to research literature. Questions one to three were designed to explore the students' pre-resettlement experiences (Dryden-Peterson, 2016), and to demonstrate that past experiences are valued as outlined by Aikenhead (1996) and Østergaard (2015). Questions 4, 5 and 11 to 16 were intended to explore the individual-environment relation (Barab & Roth, 2006), through the relationships between students and their teachers, their school, and their environments, and their relationships external to school. Questions 6, 7 and 9 to 13 were crafted utilizing Noddings (2005) concepts of care ethics to frame the questions around the participant researchers' needs, and to provoke stories of experience (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Question 8 was included, not to elicit a story, but to qualify

what the individual students felt success in school is or was. Asked for this personal definition was an attempt to avoid an oppressive use of my own definition of success in school (Bishop, 2015), and to better understand the nature of the experiences explored thereafter. This definition could differ for the students depending on their experiences in school, and their pre-resettlement experiences. Questions 17 to 18 were designed around Noddings' (2005) focus on the importance of exploring students expressed needs but were open for the students to explore their own ideas about what they believe other refugee students may need based on their own experiences. The final question was included to create a place for the participant researchers to share their perspective on refugee education, not framed in this research. The decision to include this question was based on my experience in including a similar question in my reconnaissance study, which brought about the importance of care, and deeply influenced the direction of this doctoral research. From this question, there was an opportunity to find new areas of focus in supporting refugee students for future study, and possible reinforcement of aspects explored within this study.

The Interviews

In preparation for the interviews, I assessed the questions with a refugee student, Santosh, who I had explored a prior interview study with, and a former colleague. This was done to further develop the interview guide (Appendix 1). From these experiences, it was clear that allowances needed to be made for questions to evolve over the process of conducting interviews as additional information is learned mid research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The first pilot interview was undertaken with a former refugee student, and its purpose was to examine the questions: 1) to explore what may be absent, 2) where

there may be excessive focus, 3) the clarity of the questions, and 4) to determine if the questions elicit stories. From this overview, a concern arose for this former student that the stories may be interpreted by educators and researchers as refugees complaining. The student offered a perspective being concerned about people maybe thinking: *What are they complaining about? They should be thankful they get to be here!* This was a powerful insight and it echoed the concerns within the research literature of racist and discriminatory attitudes of teachers and other educational stakeholders (Stewart et al., 2019). Clearly this student and his community have experienced negative social reactions to their concerns. I assured him that this reality, that of a discriminatory attitude towards refugees, will be identified in this research as an ignorant and uninformed opinion. The student felt the questions about expectations placed on the students (Q. 20, Appendix 1) by their families would be impactful, important, and necessary. He also noted that this question could make the participant researchers uncomfortable. He suggested that a reminder of confidentiality at this point would allow for students to speak their minds and discuss if expectations were forced upon them, or—as in his case—were readily accepted as a necessity of the family.

The second examination of the interview questions was undertaken with a fellow doctoral student, and ex-colleague who has worked with the same population of students that I was working with. This pilot generated two important insights. The first was the addition of two sub-questions (Q. 1 & Q. 20, Appendix 1) into comparing experiences before coming to Canada to that of life in Canada. These are aspects not often explored in the research literature but could offer important insights into both the students' baselines and into the shift in expectations experienced by refugee youth. The added expectations

placed on high-school-aged-arrival refugee students is well documented (Guo et al.,

2019; McWilliams & Bonet, 2016), but the comparison to the experience before

resettlement, or the students' reflections on how those expectations make them feel, have

not been explored in the research examined. The second insight was the importance of

asking the last three questions in each interview (Q. 23-25, Appendix1). These three

questions allowed for student voice to come to the forefront and took parameters of the

theoretical framework and research literature away to allow the students to choose what

they felt was important to share.

Evaluating the questions in advance allowed for deeper reflection, extensions to

what was asked, and improvement on clarity. This proved to be important as the

modifications led to key insights and led to further refinement of the questions. This

highlights the importance of allowing for a dynamic interview guide as new

understandings are uncovered in individual interviews. In practice, as a semi-structured

interview, all of the questions were not asked of each student if they were already

answered in the normal flow of the conversation interview, and additional questions were

added as new ideas were shared. As stories and ideas began to take shape in each

interview, I listened until the participant researchers had completed their anecdotes and

all they wanted to say. The questions above were focused on cognitive responses, but

sub-questions accompanied these questions which explored the affective side of these

experiences (e.g. How did that make you feel?). As well, questions aimed at eliciting the

participant researchers' interpretations were included. This style of question is defined by

Moules et al. (2015) as interpretive questions to "invite the participant into some of their

own interpretations of the story/event/experience" (p. 96).

In conducting the interviews, the students shared limited focus on science education experiences. They spoke to their overall high school experience, which was somewhat expected. To honor what was shared by the students, it was necessary to shift the focus of this research away from narratives about science education. In the individual-environment relation, the student-teacher relationship became a focus. In this relationship, the teacher becomes part of both the effectivity set and the affordance network of the student. They play a role in helping the student develop their effectivity sets, by helping them exploit their strengths, and develop their areas of growth. They are also an essential part of the human capital that makes up a student's affordance network. Educators can help the student further add to their affordance network through their own connections. It was about student-teacher relationships, and the relationships with parents and peers, that the students spoke. In order to be a platform for the student voice, I needed to be flexible to that which was shared. The participant researchers truly became co-producers within this research, and they have shaped the direction of the design, interpretations, and conclusions of this research.

Immediately following each interview, I wrote initial drafts of what they said in a pre-conceptual state, based on what I recalled from the interview, as a primary step in examining the resulting narratives as data. This is a form of naïve storying (Fowler, 2006), as an early step in studying narratives attained from interviews. Through co-production of their stories, insights were gained into what these refuge students' needs were and are, the importance of care to them, and what we might gain as educators from exploring the student refugee experience. As Fowler (2006) noted: "research continues to offer particular truths in our deep understanding about the difficulty of being human and

what it is we still need to learn and practice in an environment of *educaritas*" (p. 190).

With the focus on care expressed throughout this thesis, *educaritas* is to me, the

demonstration of care and the emotion and will that drives the "courage to teach"

(Palmer, 2012). In working alongside the participant researchers, *educaritas* was both

employed and experienced by this researcher.

Thematic Analysis

In exploring how I would approach analysis of the co-created descriptions of

experience, I turned to Fowler's (2006) assertion that: "A narrative includes not only the

story, but also the teller, the told, the context and conditions of the story telling, and the

reasons and intentions for narrating" (Fowler, 2006, p.9). I intended to go beyond writing

the stories, a description of the events that the participant researchers had experienced, to

interpretation of what these stories could tell us about teaching and learning with refugee

students. Narrative experiences a conflict between analysis and aesthetics but seeks to

embrace a balance by redefining the goal of research: "The paradigmatic mode searches

for universal truth conditions, whereas the narrative mode looks for particular

connections between events" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 17). Polkinghorne defined the

paradigmatic mode as that favored by physical scientists. Narrative requires skill at

writing, but to truly do research, also requires a rigorous analysis, so both description and

interpretation were key elements of the data analyses in this research.

The method of analysis that I resonated most with was the work of Braun and

Clarke (2006), and their form of thematic analysis. Within this research, I am both

describing the experience and interpreting it, with a focus on teaching and learning, to

determine how educators may better support refugee students. The process involved thematic analysis of the interviews, individual experiences, and the overall study.

What is Thematic Analysis?

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a qualitative approach to research that offers a method of analysis that is adaptable to varying theoretical frameworks. It has evolved from a "poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77) method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79) to becoming a respected, flexible, qualitative research method (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017). It is sometimes portrayed as originating in grounded theory, while others argue that thematic analysis began as alternative, qualitative, approach to content analysis (Clarke, Braun, Terry & Hayfield, 2019) as a means of analysis of message content (Neuendorf, 2019). Dr. Richard Butt (1984) utilized a structured thematic analysis in understanding biographical data. His approach outlined a similar technique of generating and interpreting codes and themes from others' stories. It also included measures of validity in which multiple authors would explore the text to elicit individual themes that were then compared and contrasted: "a joint description and interpretive summary were constructed for each biography…This account was subjected to validity checks by the first two authors and each teacher biographer" (Butt, Raymond, McCue & Yamagishi, 1986, p. 15). A similar approach was used within this research in having interpretive discussions with my supervisors and the participant researchers.

Although its origin may be disputed, Clarke and Braun (2018) noted that contemporary forms of thematic analysis all include common assumptions: "typically that TA is a method, not a methodology, and flexible in terms of theoretical application" (p.

108). The authors emphasized that this does not denote TA as atheoretical, rather it offers

flexibility to be applied to a wide range of qualitative paradigms and theoretical

frameworks. Within this research this became advantageous as the interviews produced

data that required a flexible approach to analysis that aligned with the established

theoretical framework.

Clarke and Braun (2018) have demarked three broad approaches to thematic

analysis: Coding reliability, reflexive, and codebook and qualitative philosophy. Coding

reliability approaches focus on deductive, theory driven, data coding which emerge from

a more positivistic orientation. The authors also refer to this as "small q TA" (p. 108).

Reflexive thematic analysis approaches, the forms these authors focus on, which

"emphasize an organic approach to coding and theme development, with quality coding

resulting from depth of engagement ('Big Q TA')" (p. 108). Codebook and qualitative

philosophy-based approaches use structured codebooks or coding frames aligning with

coding reliability approaches while upholding a reflexive qualitative philosophy. For the

authors this is "medium Q TA" (p. 108), a sort of mixed-methods approach. Within this

research, due to the ontological and epistemological orientation, and the resulting data of

the interviews, a reflexive approach was adopted.

Choosing Reflexive 'Big Q' Thematic Analysis

The flexibility of thematic analysis allows for a variety of approaches, theoretical

frameworks and philosophical underpinnings, but the researcher must make active

choices (Clarke & Braun, 2018). Those choices need to be made, and defended, to form

the audit trail of the research (Nowell et al., 2017). "If readers are not clear about how

researchers analyzed their data or what assumptions informed their analysis, evaluating

the trustworthiness of the research process is difficult" (p. 2). Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun (2017) spoke to several decisions that need to be addressed within thematic analysis: 1. an inductive or deductive approach to data coding and analysis; 2. themes based on semantic or latent meaning; 3. experiential or critical orientation to data; and 4. a critical/realist, contextualist, or constructionist theoretical perspective. The theoretical framework for this research denotes a constructionist theoretical perspective. As a participatory exploration of experience, themes were primarily generated inductively, both manifest and latent, while respecting the influence of research literature and experience on their development.

The goal of this research was to go beyond describing the students' experiences, to find meaning in their stories about teaching and learning with refugee students. Thematic analysis provided a structure for rich analysis to move "from simple summation-based description into interpretation; telling a story about the 'so what' of the data." (Clarke & Braun, 2018, p. 109). Clarke and Braun (2017) noted that "the hallmark of this form of TA is its flexibility – not simply theoretical flexibility, but flexibility in terms of research question, sample size and constitution, data collection method, and approaches to meaning generation" (p. 297). For this research, it was necessary to locate a method of interpretivist and exploratory analysis that could begin with the interviews and continually returned to the students' voices, through listening, writing and reading. In exploring research literature on refugee education, care ethics, and the individual-environment relation, the desired method of data collection, semi-structured interviews, was evident. Narrative approaches were used to generate anecdotal narratives as data. Thematic analysis complemented those stories and interviews and allowed for a deep

examination of the needs and experiences of the students, and interpretation of how they can inform teaching and learning with refugee students. It provided a platform in which a constructivist, participatory paradigm could be employed, where the participant researchers and I co-created themes from their experiences.

As Clarke and Braun (2017) noted:

The aim of TA is not simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret, key, but not necessarily all, features of the data, guided by the research question (but note that in TA, the research question is not fixed and can evolve throughout coding and theme development). (p. 297)

This facet of thematic analysis supported this research, as the question has evolved from a focus on needs in science, and the student-teacher relationship, to a broader focus on the refugee experience. Thematic analysis supported an examination of these experiences at the classroom, school, and systemic levels. It also provided a process to explore themes within the individual stories of experience, and across them: "thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights" (Nowell et al., 2019, p. 2). Clarke and Braun (2017) highlighted: "TA can be used for both inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) analyses, and to capture both manifest (explicit) and latent (underlying) meaning…. Inductive approaches are particularly useful when exploring new terrain." (p. 298). Through inductive code generation I was able to honor their voices and their *explicit* expressed needs, while also interpreting the underlying meanings of their stories while being informed by the research literature.

Nowell et al. (2017) outline inherent disadvantages to thematic analysis, particularly its limits on making claims about language use. This research is focused on an experiential orientation to data and is not concerned with discourse analysis. The

authors also noted that the flexibility of thematic analysis can contribute to inconsistency and lack of coherence. The authors themselves offer that making the epistemological orientation explicit improves coherence and consistency. This aligns with the suggested proclamations of orientation suggested by Terry et al. (2017), undertaken above. Additionally, Nowell et al. state trustworthiness is improved through dependability, where researchers clearly outline a logical process of their thematic analysis.

Process of Thematic Analysis

In their landmark work, "Using thematic analysis in psychology", Braun and Clarke (2006) outlined six phases for thematic analysis:

1. Familiarize yourself with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming the themes
6. Producing the report (p. 87)

As Nowell et al. (2017) noted, although this is laid out as a linear process, in practice "it is actually an iterative and reflective process that develops over time and involves a constant moving back and forward between phases" (p. 4). Terry et al. (2017) stated: "it is iterative and recursive: the researcher often moves back and forth between the different phases" (p. 23). Like the development of the data itself, a continual return to the generating themes occurred throughout the process, as the themes were reviewed by the researcher, research participants, and my doctoral supervisors. What follows is an outline of how this method was applied and interpreted within this study. *Figure 5* outlines the process as it occurred and how themes were generated both through coding and writing.
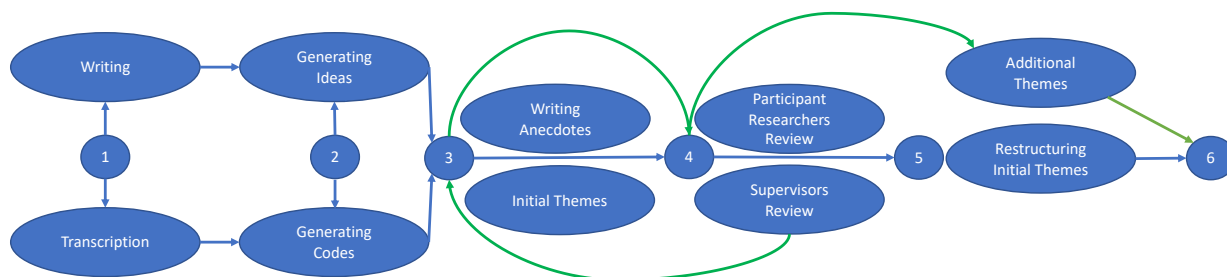
Figure 5. Conceptual Diagram of the Thematic Analysis Process.

Familiarization with the data. The approach to familiarization with the data was three-fold in this research. As was explored in the data development phase, immediately following the interviews, I began writing the students' lived experiences. One could argue that the analysis began with the asking of the first question, but the formal process began with this naïve storying. In that initial state I recalled that which the participant researchers shared that resonated deepest with me. In this process I did not only write down the anecdotes as I remembered them, but also began to consider possible themes that underlaid those stories. Although Braun and Clarke (2006) do not call for this as a means of analysis, the influence of Fowler's (2006) work, and the original intention of narrative analysis, inspired this initial writing. Augustine (2014) outlined how writing can be an effective first step of analysis: "Instead of coding data, what Charmaz (2005) called a 'first step in taking an analytic stance toward the data' (p. 517), writing became my first analytic stance toward the data" (p. 749). The author argued that analysis can be an assemblage of all writing and reading that pertains to the research: "analysis even happens at surprising times on dinner napkins and committing to focused reading— enable a different analysis. These analytic practices are part of an assemblage that potentially creates a space of becoming that is alternately striated and smooth" (p. 752).

The generative process of developing the stories of experience as data, and reading and reworking that writing, was all part of the thematic analysis process.

The second aspect of familiarizing myself with the data came in transcribing the interviews, which I was purposeful in completing myself. In listening again to the participant researchers, and in writing their words, the awareness of their responses was cemented. I could search for statements of evidence without aid of technology. Lastly, I returned to the original composition and added ideas, anecdotes, and key statements to the original draft of the participant researchers' stories. Throughout all these phases of writing, initial themes were beginning to form.

Generating initial codes. Within the transcript both semantic codes, obvious in their meaning, and latent codes, where an underlying meaning is identified, were generated. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that coding can be data driven or theory driven. In my initial coding I aimed for an organic approach that represented what the refugee students had shared. In this process I focused on limiting my bias, connections to theory, and expectations I may have held. Codes were identified by first looking to summarize the essence of the "units of meaning" (Wengraf, 2001, p. 214). Each unit of meaning includes a code, in the form of a word or short phrase, that highlights the meaning of that unit. These units of meaning were numbered to be used as a reference point within each interview transcript. For example, (KK, 34) represents the 34th unit of meaning from KK's interview. The meaning could be an emotion experienced, a beneficial attribute of experience, or an obstacle faced by the participant researcher. For example, in KK's interview he stated:

> The first week I was in English 9, in that class, and we were given a recording to listen to and then we had to write a summary of that. I was so lost, I could not understand what was said on the tape. (KK, 34)

The code I identified in this unit of meaning was a feeling of being overwhelmed. Although contributing to understanding, this individual unit, and its identified code, failed to encompass the experience as a whole. The surrounding units of meaning help to contextualize that this overwhelmed feeling stemmed from this experience occurring within KK's first week. His sense of loss of identity of being a top student, and how this eventually led to KK plagiarizing a fellow student's work, is something he had never done before. Due to his sense of need to project an identity of a successful student, for his teacher and for his family, he cheated. There is a complexity to this experience that cannot be identified in one unit of meaning, or code. These collections of codes were then contrasted against the initial drafts of the students' stories of experience to ensure the meaning of their statements and stories written, matched that of the codes. This was a reciprocal form of authentication, were I worked for a match between codes and the anecdotes they were attached to.

Generating, not searching for, initial themes. Over the past decade the third phase of analysis has developed away from the language of searching, to a representation of the active role the researcher plays in the development of themes. When identifying themes generated in an inductive manner, as most of the themes were in this research, it is important to acknowledge that it does not occur in a vacuum. The researcher's experience, training, and assumptions will interact with that data in the development of themes. Clarke and Braun (2018) stressed that themes do not emerge, and that active theme development can "unite data that at first sight might appear disparate, and often

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capture implicit meaning beneath the data surface" (p. 108). Terry et al. (2017) highlighted that the question needs to guide the development of the themes, and that the themes must tell a relevant story about the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) offer suggestions of how to develop themes, including promoting important codes, clustering similar codes, reviewing the data for themes, and using maps and tables to organize their development. All of these approaches were utilized within this research. Codes such as Identity were promoted from codes to themes, where other themes such as Resilience and Capabilities arose from a cluster of codes such as challenge, perseverance, past knowledge, challenge, and feedback. Clarke and Braun (2018) also encourage researchers to think about relationships between themes, and what those themes tell us about the data:

> In our approach to TA, themes can perhaps be usefully thought of as key characters in the story we are telling about the data (rather than collection pots into in which we place everything that was said about a particular data domain). (p. 108)

Within this doctoral study, the themes identified in the transcripts inform the answers to the main research question and to hopefully render the reader empathetic to the experience. As van Manen (1992) noted, the themes however true or accurate, are at best, a simplification, but still, the themes identify key aspects of the experience. The interviews are an attempt to encompass the aspects of the experience in order to make visible a more structured understanding of what refugee students live. The themes were then contrasted against themes identified within the research literature and theoretical framework and contribute knowledge about these participant researchers' lived experiences and expressed needs. Themes were also developed in the multi-step construction of the students' stories of experience. They represent the outcomes of coding, writing, reading and reflecting.

Review initial themes. In the fourth phase the researcher reviews each theme to ensure it is supported by quality evidence, does not overlap with other themes, and is connected to the story of the data (Terry et al., 2017). The validity of each theme is checked against the data extracts and the data as a whole (Nowell et al., 2017). This two-stage review process is argued to improve the quality of Braun and Clarke's (2006) form of thematic analysis. Nowell et al. (2017) noted that it is also possible at this phase that themes may be dismissed for being too diverse or lacking the necessary data to provide evidence. It is in this reflective phase that one may need to return to the data for further theme development or revisions, to ensure the themes are aligned with the question, are evidential, and are coherent with the story of the data. Themes that meet these parameters can then be finalized and mapped to the story.

This phase took on many iterations in the research. The initial themes generated from codes and writing were first encompassed into the participant researcher's story they originated from. Their story—the data—and the initial analysis—the themes—were shared with each individual to assure that their story was accurate, and that the themes resonated with them. The themes were then contrasted against each other and the entire data set, and similarities and differences were explored in an initial draft of the analysis which identified six themes across the data. This draft was then shared with my doctoral supervisors, who shared insights into the themes and data that returned the research to phase three for the development of broader themes across the data. After revisiting the data and codes, additional themes were identified which then returned to phase 4. This process is represented in *Figure 5* by the green arrows.

Define and name themes. The fifth phase is about "ensuring clarity, cohesion, precision, and quality" (Terry et al., 2017, p. 31). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested the researcher refine the name of the theme. They emphasize avoiding domain summary names that may summarize responses to a particular question, or are divergent in nature (Clarke & Braun, 2018). They highlighted the importance of writing a short description of the theme that offers the specifics and a connection to the story of the data. They allow for three levels of themes, overarching themes, themes and sub-themes. The data story of this research yielded three overarching themes, and seven themes in total, defined and explored in chapters five to eight.

Produce the report. The final phase is where the researcher makes the argument that the theme is authentic through commentary and data extracts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is an opportunity to connect the themes to the research question, the research literature, and the study as a whole. The authors also suggested that considerations be made about the order and organization of how the themes are presented in the report. It is also a final opportunity for analysis: "there is no clear separation between analysis and writing. In practice, writing-up involves assembling, editing and (new) writing, *and* further analysis, organisation and re-organisation of the themes and relevant selected data extracts" (Clarke & Braun, 2014, p. 1950). Within this research, the process of writing and re-writing the analysis of themes—identifying, connecting to the story, question, and literature—began with the first naïve storying and continued through the entire doctoral experience.

The presentation of the analysis of this research is an invitation to examine themes and information that can inform teaching and learning with refugee students. Within

discussions in subsequent chapters I contrast those themes against the theoretical

framework and existing research literature. From the discussions that follow, conclusions

are drawn to determine what has been found, what has been learned, and what

recommendations can be offered for research and practices going forward. Giving

accurate voice to a marginalized population and share their stories to demonstrate their

humanity and individuality, and to increase understanding of the refugee experience for

teachers and others.

CHAPTER 4: THESE ARE *THEIR* STORIES

Descriptions of Lived Experience

It became apparent after my first interview with KK, that rather than a long flowing narrative, or life-history, I was going to receive anecdotes of experience through my interviews. So rather than describing the life-history of each participant researcher, I moved to describe anecdotal experiences of the participant researchers. Van Manen (1992) described these as anecdotal narratives. Van Manen highlighted the value of anecdotal narratives:

> Anecdote particularizes the abstracting tendency of theoretical discourse: it makes it possible to involve us pre-reflectively in the lived quality of concrete experience while paradoxically inviting us into a reflective stance vis-à-vis the meanings embedded in the experience. (p. 121)

Writing research in plain language and story of the participants enlivens the research because it matches our natural innate ability to story our experiences to help us remember and reflect. This is precisely the purpose of this research, to present the experience of refugee students, through their own voices, and stories, for readers to first gain a personal connection to them. These stories are presented to the reader, told by the participant researchers, written down by this researcher, and confirmed by the participant researchers. *Figure 6* outlines this process. My interpretations of what they have shared, and what they have taught me about teaching and learning with refugee students, are explored in subsequent chapters.

Results

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Understanding Refugee Students Needs Through Their Stories of        │
│  Experience                                                          │
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        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │            Interviews and Thematic Analysis          │
        │            Method of Data Production and Analysis     │
        └─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                    ↓
          ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │       Development of Stories of Experience       │
          │  Narrative informed/Data Representation/Further   │
          │                Interpretation                     │
          └─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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          ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
          │            Participant Research Review           │
          │        Check for Authenticity of Representation  │
          └─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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        ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
        │       Participant Researchers Lived Experiences      │
        │                    Their Stories                     │
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Figure 6. Development of the participant researchers' anecdotal narratives.

KK

KK came to Canada in grade 9. He spent his first year in Canada at another school in Southern Alberta, before coming to our school in grade 10. I first met KK in my ESL class as a grade 10 student but would later teach him physics classes as well. KK was always a very positive young man, and a leader in the ESL classroom and his community. KK, now 23, is currently beginning graduate school, pursuing a degree in Social Work. He aspires to give back to his community and to support those who struggle and are faced with difficult odds. KK himself stated in our initial interview that his greatest strength is resilience, along with the many other admirable character traits I have come to respect.

KK has faced many obstacles that have called on his resilience. In addition to his lived experience of being a displaced person, and a refugee coming to Canada, KK's personal experiences have challenged him, yet he has refused to allow these challenges to

keep him from pursuing higher education and working towards helping others. KK's

mom has a physical disability, and his father left the family when KK was two years old,

so he has played a major role in supporting her.

KK spent the majority of his youth in a refugee camp in Nepal, and upon coming

to Canada was faced with many adversities common to refugee students, including

navigating a different and complex education system, in a language not his own. KK was

also expected to work upon arrival to Canada and had many external expectations upon

him during his high school years. This included acting as a cultural broker for his mother

and grandparents. This will be explored further in KK's story, but it demonstrates that

KK had many expectations placed on him, while taking on cultural dissonance and

working towards high school graduation. Handling all of these expectations would not

have been possible without KK's incredible resilience and commitment to success, two of

his biggest strengths.

Coming to Canada

KK arrived in Canada in grade 9, when he was 14 years old. He described the

arrival in Canadian schools as culture shock. Language, behavior, expectations, and so

many other aspects of school were vastly different from his previous experience. KK was

a top student back in Nepal, and he was determined to continue that success in Canada. In

Nepal, students are ranked within schools comparatively to each other, and these rankings

are publicly shared. When I taught in Nepal, the school I worked at had a bulletin board

posted above the front entrance that included photos of the top achieving students and

their academic scores. KK himself, was consistently in the top five students in his school.

Although much of his new reality was intimidating, KK fondly recalled his first realization that corporal punishment was not part of the Canadian system of education. In Nepal KK, and his classmates, would receive beatings for poor behavior and poor academic performance. When KK came to understand that corporal punishment is not allowed in schools in Canada, he saw this difference in approach as a positive change in schooling.

In regard to curriculum differences, KK did not feel there was much disparity between what was taught in school in Nepal and in Canada. In particular, math and science courses included much of the same material. KK had English classes, and many of the textbooks they used were also in English. The barrier of language in math and science classes was not as significant as the barrier he felt by not knowing conversational English. That barrier perhaps unfortunately affected his development of relationships with Canadian-born students. Explored in-depth below, KK saw the difficulty of establishing relationships with Canadian-born students as one of the biggest challenges for refugee students. He does feel that teachers and schools could, and should, do a better job of supporting refugee students in connecting with their classmates.

KK also spoke to how the dismissal of his previous experience and academic success was frustrating. He highlighted the importance of teachers coming to know about refugee students' previous experiences and successes and the importance of identifying strengths alongside the challenges faced by refugee students. He emphasized that one of the most common misconceptions of educators, and Canadians in general, about refugee students is: The belief that where the refugees came from was miserable, and that they

have somehow been saved by coming to Canada. In his own experience, he was very happy with life inside his camp.

The Teacher's Staff Meeting

Early in KK's grade ten year, an ESL colleague and I asked the students to put together a PowerPoint presentation about a topic related to the country they had previously lived in. The purpose of this assignment was to allow the students an opportunity to develop language, technology, and presentation skills. The focus was on topics that were personal and well-known to them, while at the same time informing us of their experiences. KK decided he would like to do a presentation on life in a refugee camp. We were quick to encourage this, as we felt we could benefit from understanding the students' experiences in refugee camps. Little did I know how this would shape my future approach to coming to know refugee students. It demonstrated the importance of hearing about the experiences of refugee students, which in turn has shaped this research.

The presentation that KK provided a few short classes later, truthfully changed my life. KK presented about both the hardships, which were beyond what I had known or expected, but also about the positive aspects of life in his camp. He spoke the violence and loss experienced before coming to, and in, the camps. He spoke of the challenges of finding sustenance, and of devastating events like when a fire broke out in the camp and destroyed much of what had been built. He also spoke about the kindness of the people, and the true sense of community in the camp. We were so moved by the presentation, that two grown adults were openly weeping in front of our ESL students. After reflecting on the impact KK's presentation had on us, we decided to approach KK about presenting his work to our entire staff.

Though nervous about taking on the task, KK was determined to share his community's story with our staff. His resilience and determination led to the most important professional development that our staff did with regard to refugee students. The immediate impact of his presentation resonated through our school. Teachers, who once may have resisted, or even complained about supporting refugee students in their classrooms, quickly altered their perception.

An emphasis emerged to reach out to the refugee students, who at the time numbered around 25 in our school. As the ESL teacher, I had a marked increase in contact from teachers about how to better support refugee students, and deeper interest in knowing about the students' stories themselves. I thanked KK and made sure he knew at the time that he had such an important impact on our school. Although KK had many positive experiences with teachers, he struggled far more in connecting with his classmates. KK's early experiences with Canadian-born students were challenging and impacted his perceptions of them in an unfortunate but understandable way.

Two Experiences of Discrimination

Early in his time in Canada, KK was enjoying an art class in his new school. Freed from the constraints of language experienced in other classes, KK was working on a drawing, exploring his own imagination, when a classmate dribbled some water on his work. Looking up he saw his classmate grinning down at him. Still navigating this strange new world of Canadian high schools, KK relied on his past experience within school to deal with this interaction. Knowing that often classmates would tease each other, he took this act not as an affront, but rather as an opening contact between strangers, a way of saying hello, he was smiling after all. For KK, this was exciting, he

believed that this student was reaching out to him, opening up a form of dialogue, a connection. The student moved on, back to their place in the classroom, and KK returned to his work, but he smiled wide and hoped that this may be the beginning of a friendship. At the end of class, the students needed to move their artwork to a drying rack in an adjacent room. KK took his work and placed it on the rack and in returning to the art room he was again approached by this other student, again with a grin on his face, this time however he threw a full cup of water in his face. This was not a friendly gesture at all, and it dawned on KK that the other likely was not as well. This was not banter between classmates, this was an aggressive provocation, and KK responded in a manner that was common to school back home—he fought.

His first move was to grab the other student by the throat and push him back against a wall. He expected punches to be thrown, the students to be broken up, perhaps a quick beating from the teacher, and a handshake to move on. This was a common reaction to fighting in school back home, not that it happened often. Instead the shock in the student's eyes, the teacher's face, and the classmates surrounding him, told KK that things might be different in Canada. And so, it was. KK and the other student were quickly separated by the teacher, and KK was escorted to the office.

KK was fortunate that the administrator who dealt with the situation had some empathy for KK's position. Instead, KK was faced with a severe warning. He was informed that such behavior is unacceptable in Canadian schools, and is usually met with suspension, or even expulsion from school. The administrator noted this may not have been his previous experience, and he did not receive a suspension. A clear message was

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conveyed that such behavior, should it happen again, would meet the most severe consequences.

Unfortunately for KK, there were other consequences for his actions, which were perhaps more devastating than a suspension. He felt from that point forward, students looked at him differently. A barrier of fear had been created in that moment. He found that Canadian-born students would not engage with him, concerned he might *snap* again. This saddened KK as he had always identified as a caring and popular classmate. For KK, a new perception emerged, one where he felt the student had chosen his actions because KK was *different*. KK stated that he knew he was different upon arrival, but this incident was an awakening to the fact that his difference could lead to difficulty in connecting with Canadian-born students, and possibly violent situations. KK did find a positive in this reaction: the students' fear of him would also make others reconsider doing anything to entice conflict with him. But this also instilled an aversion to interacting with Canadian-born students for KK. This feeling was unfortunately reinforced in a second event that occurred not long after.

KK's class had been taken on an excursion for physical education class in the local river valley. The students were playing a game of Tag, and KK was working to tag a classmate. Outside of the view of teachers and other classmates, he closed in on this fellow student. The student, in an attempt to block the tag, picked up a discarded plastic tray. What started as defense from the tag however, quickly turned to an attack on KK with the tray. He noted that the student at first blocked his hand, but then quickly used his shield to charge and shove KK. In the moment, KK looked for adult support, but found none. He backed away and met eye to eye with the other student, and in that moment, he

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thought: this is happening because I am different, he does not like me because I am different, and he is trying to hurt me. Rather than escalating the situation to a fight, KK recalled his stern warning, and he walked away. Unfortunately, as he stated, he walked away a changed human. In his perception, it had been confirmed that his difference can lead to violent confrontations.

In our interview, I pursued this with KK to see if he ever felt he had positive relationships with Canadian-born students, or if his experience was limited to negative encounters. He related a few examples and offered his own conclusion as to how he began to connect to peers: common interests. With the exception of the situation outlined above, KK generally felt most comfortable with his classmates in physical education. Physical education offered an opportunity to connect without a heavy dependency on language, and an opportunity for KK to participate on a level playing field. In fact, KK recalled that he often had a chance to take advantage of his strengths. He recalled fondly, that whenever they played soccer in physical education, KK was always one of the first players picked. As his soccer skills exceeded most of his classmates, he had an opportunity to be admired by his classmates and felt a connection with them in hopes of winning at soccer together.

Common Interests – The Stories of Friendship

KK's first friendship with a Canadian-born peer was established in his grade nine year. KK described the student as a bright, introverted young man who was focused on his academic achievement. KK's history as a top student drew him to reaching out to this student. As KK understood that grades and completion of tasks were important to this student, he felt he shared a common interest. His soon-to-be-friend was also uninterested

in the social melee of the classroom. For KK, this was also something of little interest, and difficult to become a part of. The two began to work together through assignments, and KK benefited from this relationship in understanding the norms of Canadian classrooms. It prompted more development of his English language skills, and positive interactions with other Canadian-born students. KK recognized that this young man was a kind person and asked if he would be interested in meeting KK's ESL peer group. The true friendship began as they would spend lunch times together learning about each other's cultures. They also joined together in playing soccer, a passion for many of the refugee students. Both KK and his friend made the transition to a new high school in their grade ten year, and the relationship continued, with KK being able to introduce his friend to another contingent of ESL students with Nepali roots.

I asked KK if he was still friends with this young man, and he said that he is no longer in contact. This loss of contact is not uncommon for many high school friends once they move on from school and KK noted there were no hard feelings. This led to his description of a second experience of friendship with a Canadian-born student, a student that KK continues to be friends with. KK met his second Canadian-born friend in a Biology class in grade 12. The student was new to the school, having recently moved. Transferring schools and cities in grade 12 can make it difficult for students to establish relationships. Many students have long established peer groups, and with graduation on the horizon, less interest in establishing new friendships. Understanding how one can feel isolated in coming to a new school, KK reached out to this student, and a friendship was quickly established. The humanity demonstrated here is another strength in KK, his compassionate nature. Not only does he strive to support his own community, but also

recognizes others that may feel isolated. It also demonstrates his resilience again, as although he had negative experiences with Canadian-born students upon arrival, he would not allow that to stop him from being welcoming to this newcomer. Identifying their common experience, he was determined to ensure this student did not feel isolated. In establishing this relationship, KK once again welcomed his Canadian-born friend into his peer group.

After that grade 12 year, this friend graduated high school, and went on to the college. KK returned for an additional year of high school to upgrade his classes, in hopes of gaining acceptance at the local university. At this point, KK assumed that this would be the end of their friendship. After that extra year of high school, KK decided to move towards the university through the college transfer program. In attending the college, KK and his friend were reunited, taking many of the same courses in route to entering the addictions counselling program at the university. Together they worked through courses at the college, successfully transferred to the university, and completed their degrees in addictions counseling, graduating on the same day. KK and this young man are still friends now that they have graduated. KK offered this story as a testament to how common interests, compassion, and taking risks, can lead to friendships between people of all backgrounds.

Care and Compassion in Biology 20

KK highlighted the importance of care and compassion demonstrated to refugee students by teachers throughout our interview. He described how one situation—where care was demonstrated by his teacher—led to an opportunity for KK to demonstrate mastery of curriculum, develop his communication skills, and experience a sense of

accomplishment. In his Biology 20 class, KK was asked to create a presentation about a curriculum topic. Although KK was able to recall this experience fondly, he did not remember what the topic was. Rather, he remembered his sense of accomplishment, and how he felt supported by his teacher in achieving that feeling.

For the project, KK teamed up with another ESL student, and together they were determined to create a quality presentation. Their teacher connected them with the student support center, who helped them develop their research and create their presentation. Additionally, the teacher checked in with the students regularly to offer advice and answer questions. This was done both in class time but also outside of class time. Alongside continual check-ins with students, the provision of a teacher's personal time is something KK identifies as a demonstration of care. KK also noted they were permitted more time than their classmates to compile their production, and they presented their work at a later date. They were not asked to present until they, alongside their teacher, were certain the work was above expectation. KK and his partner felt so confident that this work was well done that they presented to their classmates, despite being nervous about public speaking. KK described this as an experience of pride, which was shared by their teacher. Pride in their work and in the risk they took in presenting to the class, rather than presenting privately for the teacher.

In feeling care and compassion from his teacher, KK was enabled to believe in his capability, not only to compile the presentation, but also to present it to the class, despite his anxiety about speaking in a second tongue. Again, what KK remembers is not the topic, but the feelings: the emotions of pride and accomplishment, care and compassion, and the belief in oneself that often starts with others believing in us. Confidence is

something that KK sees as essential to be developed in refugee students, and he believes teachers can play an important role in that development by celebrating the strengths and accomplishments of refugee students. For KK, he believed in his work, and himself, because his teacher took the time to ensure him that he was producing quality work, and that she was proud of him for his accomplishment.

The Potlucks

One of KK's fondest memories in connecting with his school started as an ESL experience, but expanded into a school event, ESL Potlucks. The potlucks are also an important memory for me, as it was an important relationship builder for refugee students and the teaching staff, around an event with great food.

As a way of developing language skills In ESL class, at KK's original school, the ESL teacher had the students choose their favorite recipe and write out the steps to prepare their chosen dish. As a natural progression, they then chose a day to head to the school's food lab to create their recipes and share them as a class. KK recalled this experience when I asked him about the importance of teachers to refugee students, to which he responded: "I think teachers play a huge role" (KK, 151). He then elaborated about the importance of ESL teachers in establishing a connection to the school, and how their care for him was essential in that development. For KK, events like this potluck, where emphasis was taken off of the academic curriculum, and changed to a focus on community building and fostering relationships, were powerful demonstrations of care. It was clear the teacher wanted the students to not only develop English language skills, but also to create an atmosphere that was enjoyable for the students as they developed those skills.

The potluck class was such a success, the ESL class decided to do this more often. Recognizing that they could not always access the lab, or have the budget to undertake the potlucks, they decided they would bring food from home and celebrate in ESL class every few months. When KK transferred to the school I was working at, he and his fellow classmates brought this tradition along. We had our first potluck in ESL class, as an exclusively ESL event. Over time however, the students decided that they would like to invite other staff members, teachers of non-ESL classes, to the potlucks. The teachers they reached out to were teachers they felt had demonstrated care to them in their classes.

The potlucks became a common occurrence, happening several times a year, and were always looked forward to by both refugee students and by the teaching staff. Teachers wore their invitation to the event like a badge of pride, and this brought an opportunity to deepen relationships between the teaching staff and the refugee students. The students would continue to partake in this event even after completing ESL classes, and on occasion, we even had former graduated students return to enjoy some food and catch up with teachers. It is essential to note that the students engineered the idea of reaching out to non-ESL staff, developed their own process for undertaking the invitations, planned and carried out the preparation of the food on their own time, and paid for all of the food. This further demonstrates the resilience and generosity of these refugee students, despite all the challenging realities they faced, these students took the time to thank their teachers through this process, without expecting anything in return.

The potlucks continue at the school today, and even though KK and I have not attended one in many years, we both shared a happy memory in reflecting on the

importance of those events for both students and staff. KK recalled this as one of the most positive aspects of his and his classmates experience in high school.

Jacob

This participant researcher chose the pseudonym Jacob to honor a Canadian-born friend that he made in high school. I have had the pleasure of knowing Jacob for the last seven years. I have taught Jacob, supported his entrance into university, and come to call him a friend. Jacob and I met in a grade eleven physics classroom: I was the teacher, and Jacob the student. We were both part of the first year of a brand-new high school in Southern Alberta. We grew to know each other very well, and I think that Jacob taught me far more than I ever taught him. Jacob, now 24, is a fourth-year neuroscience major, and we continue to interact and share our experiences.

Nepali or Bhutanese?

A question was generated from the first interview about identity that I formalized into the remaining interviews, which asks the participant researchers how they identify culturally. As earlier explored, I have referred to this population as Nepali/Bhutanese due to my own experience with parents and adults generally naming themselves Bhutanese, while students who were born in the camps identifying as Nepali. The question intended to investigate an aspect of identity that is unique in this population. Jacob stated he saw himself as Nepali, and his parents identified as Bhutanese. For Jacob, he has no experience with Bhutan, or Bhutanese language or culture. His only connection is with his parents, which he respects, but his identity stems from his experiences of speaking and living Nepali.

School in a Refugee Camp

Jacob's initial schooling came in Nepal, in the refugee camp where he was living with his family. The school system was organized similarly to the Alberta system, with students attending elementary, middle, and high school classes, but there were a few significant differences Jacob explored. First, students in Nepal finished high school after the tenth grade. If the students continue their education after grade ten, they were considered to be in college. Second, in high school, the classes there are not divided into semesters or quarters, so the students take eight, year-long, courses. In order to progress to the next level, or grade, a student needs to be successful in at least six of the eight classes. Jacob noted this as a difference from the Alberta system, where students in high school can move on to the next grade, even if they do not pass subjects. Instead they can retake classes that they need at a lower level if they were unsuccessful. In Jacob's opinion, this impacts the development of relationships in the two school systems. In the camps, everyone moves along together, taking all the same classes. Jacob sees this as allowing for many meaningful relationships with classmates, something he did not experience in Canada. In addition, he noted that within the camps, within about a kilometer, there are about 20,000 people. This leads to continual contact with your school community. All day in the same class, in the same row, you are with your friends. When the school day is done, you walk home together, to homes in the immediate vicinity. In the Alberta system if you arrive in grade ten, as Jacob did, it can be a challenge to develop friendships when every class consists of different students.

In the refugee camps, each unit or sector, had its own school. Jacob studied subjects such as Nepali and Dzongkha, which is a Bhutanese language, as well as science

and math. Jacob described the science and math content as very similar to the content of the Alberta curriculum, but he emphasized that the method of delivery was quite different. In the camp, school was about memorization, instruction was primarily rote verbal repetition and note taking. He attributed much of this to what the school itself was, a bamboo thatch hut, with no technology, just a blackboard. Jacob recalled that before the school was constructed, school took place in the jungle, sitting on the ground with nothing but a blackboard for the teacher to work with. There were about sixty students in a class, sharing limited textbooks and resources. In the camp, until grade three, students were not permitted paper and pencils, they used personal slate chalkboards and chalk to do their work. Jacob, in describing classes once they were situated in the bamboo hut, recalled another difference between the systems.

In Nepal, the teachers came to their classes, they did not change classes, the teachers did. Again, he felt this contributed to the development of friendships, the classroom was theirs, they shared it, and it became a home away from home. A major difference described by Jacob was with respect to assignments. In Nepal, the students did not receive regular summative feedback on assignments, in fact all of their assessment came down to two exams in each subject, a mid-term and a final. Jacob believes that refugee students from Nepal may not initially understand that daily or weekly assignments need to be completed and submitted. Dryden-Peterson (2016) noted that some behaviors of refugee students can be misinterpreted as poor behavior, even when students are conducting themselves in a manner that meets the expectations of their pre-settlement experience. Teachers, therefore, need to be aware of differences in

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expectations, and coach refugee students on what proper conduct is within their classrooms, such as submitting assignments.

Jacob also spoke to the difference in the professional nature of teaching in the two systems. "Back home", as he continually referred to Nepal, the teachers were not professionals. Instead, teachers were graduates of grade ten, who had gone through the same system that they were now teaching in. No instruction would be received on educational pedagogy by the teachers, they simply built upon what they had experienced in school themselves. Jacob noted that new graduates, would not be teaching grade ten classes, and that there would be a hierarchy of teaching in which one moved up from the lower grades to the higher grades over time. He in no way diminished the ability of his teachers, just pointed out this pronounced difference between school in the camps and school here in Alberta.

Although the instruction of classes was in Nepali, there were English classes provided. Jacob, however, described those English classes as rather futile. He reflected that the students did not take English class very seriously. The students did not see how they would ever need to use English. Jacob stated that he had no idea that he would one day be resettled to Canada, and that his fellow students did not believe they would ever be resettled to an English-speaking country. In addition to this, English class focused on examining English stories, and the teachers would often translate the English to Nepali for the students. There was no focus on English grammar, reading, speaking or writing.

He described the classroom as being too small for the sixty or more students, with no desks, as they sat on a carpeted floor. Jacob recalls that it was difficult to help students

visualize anything, and that understanding interconnections, or big picture ideas, was very challenging.

Speaking specifically to science, when learning about the human body they would memorize the organs' names. They would be able to describe what the organs did, but would have no idea what it looked like, where it was located, or how it would interact with other aspects of the body. Jacob did admit that the ability to have visual representation, and to understand relationships in science, was of greater value to him in the long term, but the initial difference of expectation, from memorization to understanding, was one of the major obstacles he would need to overcome. Most of these differences highlighted by Jacob were aspects that he, and his teachers, would have to navigate in order for him to find success in Alberta high schools.

Needs in Science

Jacob, more than the other participant researchers, had thoughts on what and how he was supported best in science. Perhaps this is because Jacob continues to be a student of science and is still in need of considering how he best learns the subject. Jacob self-identifies as struggling with memorization. For him, a deeper understanding is needed to connect or root his memorization in some meaningful context. To remember what something is, he is best served by knowing what it does, why it does it, and how. He also recognizes for him, to do the actual work, and then to teach another student how to do something is how he best remembers. Lastly, he highlighted the importance of visual representations in his understanding, and memory of scientific phenomena: "I think with me, if I can visually see what I'm trying to learn, it stays with me for long time" (Jacob, 44). Jacob noted that for him to feel comfortable with a concept, and to retain it, he needs

to ask a lot of questions about the topic. In university he has adopted his own methods of coming about those answers, but in high school, it meant many trips to the teacher's desk. In those encounters Jacob highlights a consideration for teachers, their attitude is important. He recalled that teachers that were welcoming to his questions made him feel cared for, and those that demonstrated annoyance, caused him to decline asking questions.

Respecting Refugee Students Strengths

One of the considerations for teachers brought forward by Jacob in our interview, is the importance of teachers' considerations of students' strengths upon arrival. Often refugee students are immediately placed in ESL classes or limited formal schooling classes. Jacob saw great value in these classes but felt his abilities outside of English were disregarded. For Jacob, this was frustrating. As Jacob considered it, he felt that there is a need to allow refugee students to pursue their capabilities alongside English development.

Jacob felt that in subjects like math and science he was capable, and in regard to those subjects, he had wasted a year of his time. He recalled the story of when his capability in Math was first noted by his ESL teacher, unfortunately it came late in his first year of school in Canada. This anecdote demonstrates why his suggestion of allowing refugees to demonstrate their academic strengths has merit.

The Math Textbook

In recalling the experience of his first year, Jacob was thankful for his ESL class, as it provided a space for him to develop friendships and practice his burgeoning English. It was also in these ESL classes that Jacob's prowess at math was first identified. The

ESL teachers had brought in some Math textbooks for the students to examine, to begin to understand what they may be encountering within mathematics classes the following year. Jacob was thrilled by this development as he had gone a year without seeing a math textbook, and math had been his favorite subject back home. Jacob picked up one of the texts in some free time and began to work through some problems. For Jacob, this was an exhilarating experience, for the first time in a year he was not only doing math, but he was also easily working through the questions. It gave him a sense of accomplishment, and a connection back to his identity as student in Nepal. Back home, Jacob was a top student. Valedictorian of his grade 8 class, best of 160 students, Jacob was well known by staff and students as a top student. This was his identity, an identity that had been overshadowed by the difficulty and challenges of transitioning to Canada, a new language, and a new system of schooling. For the first time in Canada, Jacob felt proud of himself as a student, capable of solving the questions in front of him, without any need of help. Little did he know how proud he should be. After seeing how engaged Jacob was with the math text, the ESL teacher had his work checked, and as Jacob already knew, he was doing it all without error. What makes this situation even more impressive is that the text Jacob was working through was not a grade 10 text, his current grade, it was a grade 12 text for the most challenging level of math in Alberta. Quickly the ESL teachers recognized he was ready to take on math, and after challenging the grade 10 math exam, without taking the course, Jacob was permitted to take the grade 11 math course the following semester.

Don't Call Me Asian

Jacob's challenges were not limited to academics in his first years. He also experienced conflict with fellow students. He recalled an incident with a fellow student who had called him Asian on several occasions, despite Jacob repeatedly asking him not to. For Jacob, the term Asian, with his limited English, seemed like a slur: "I had very minimal English, and the word Asian it sounded very rude to me for the first while" (Jacob, 105). Jacob recognizes that he was perhaps not clear in his request to this fellow student and is unsure if it was ever meant with malice, but he does know that on several occasions he had attempted to communicate his displeasure with the term. In any event, one day this common occurrence deteriorated into a confrontation. Jacob, tired of trying to express his displeasure, choose to use his larger stature to make it physically clear. He did not strike the student, but he did raise his hand, and express on his face a deep- seated anger. The student's immediate reaction was as intended, he was frightened, and he withdrew and began to cry. Nothing more came of it that day, but the following morning Jacob was called down to the office. The student had come that morning with his father to express their concern, and the administration felt it was necessary to get Jacob's parents involved. Jacob's dad was called, and it was expressed to Jacob and his father that such behavior was unacceptable. He was unsure if any repercussions came upon the other student, but he recalled that he apologized to the student and his consequence was limited to a warning with an understanding that any further incidents would result in a suspension. This was a negative experience for Jacob, as he had always identified as a friendly and good student. He did note however, that he was never called Asian again, by that student or others.

Jacob was pleased he was warned rather than suspended, as the shame and difficulty that could have come from his family would have been detrimental. Instead, Jacob admitted this student became a friend over time, thanks in part to another Canadian-born friend. Jacob and these two young men developed a relationship that still exists today. The friendships were established through Jacob's willingness to support these two young men in his Math class. As Jacob put it: "We went to the same math class and he was really bad at math, and I was good at math, and I would help him" (Jacob, 108). Through his self-identified social nature, and desire to help others, Jacob was able to turn this negative event into a friendship. This is not always the case but speaks to the importance of connecting refugee students to Canadian-born students by providing opportunities for interaction, especially in spaces where refugees can demonstrate their strengths.

Two Experiences of Care

For Jacob, the most important thing for teachers to recognize for refugee students is the importance of care. His description of what care looked like was simple: talk to the students, find out about them, where they have come from, what their interests and strengths are, and to support their learning by checking in and encouraging them. Jacob outlined two anecdotes that he recalled from high school that outline this.

The letter. Jacob recalled a time shortly after his arrival where his ESL teacher asked the students to write themselves a letter, projecting what they thought they would like to hear upon graduation. A common practice in high school is to ask students to write such a letter when they arrive in high school, and then to give them that same letter upon graduation. This ESL teacher had the same idea for her students. Jacob recalled that the

teacher asked that they think about what they wanted to accomplish after high school and to write about that. Jacob began the activity thinking that he wanted to become an engineer, but as he was writing he had an epiphany: he did not want to be an engineer, something that complemented his strength in math and science courses, but rather his desire to help people prevailed, he wanted to work in the health care industry. In writing about being an engineer, he realized that although it may fulfill some monetary goals, the act of writing this future led him to realize he would rather work in a domain in which he could help people, a goal he is still working on today. Upon this shift in foresight, Jacob approached the teacher and asked if he could change his letter. She assured Jacob that he was free to do so, so Jacob returned to his letter and removed much of what he had written, leaving a few introductory lines and then began to write about a profession in health care. Upon completion of his letter, he submitted it to his teacher. When he returned to class the next day, the teacher approached him and gave him some feedback. She noted that although he had reworked his letter, he had missed a reference to engineering in the opening section that he had not reworked.

For Jacob, the fact that the teacher had actually read his letter, and taken the time to give him that feedback, and an opportunity to rework his letter, was a demonstration of care. These letters were, in his mind, for the students themselves, and the teacher did not need to read and give feedback, as the students would be the only people to see their written work. That fact is what surprised Jacob about this event, the teacher did not *need* to read their work, she *chose* to. Above that, she chose to take the time to carefully read the work, make note of the error, follow up with Jacob, and ensure he had an opportunity to complete the task without this error. Jacob felt that the teacher cared about what he

wrote, about his goals, and she wanted him to read a letter upon graduation he would be proud of. To Jacob, this was care, not a major effort for an educator, but a demonstration that what the students were doing was important to the teacher as well. I asked Jacob if he received the letter upon graduation, but because he transferred schools, he did not receive this letter. I thought perhaps it was a keepsake for him and this was why it stood out as a memory. Rather, that seemingly simple gesture of caring about the students' submissions resonated enough for Jacob to remember the event all these years later. Jacob highlighted the importance of feedback from teachers, positive or negative, as essential in supporting refugee students. That feedback was best in face-to-face discussions in which the student is able to ask for clarity on the feedback and given an opportunity to correct their work. Jacob recalled that this was helpful, and conversely when it was absent, it could create substantial challenges, as is outlined in the second anecdote.

Social studies paper. A second memorable moment about the care of teachers came in Jacob's grade 11 year. He had been asked to submit a paper for a social studies class. Jacob was a hard-working student and conscientious of what he submitted, so he knows that he put forth his best effort on this essay assignment. Despite his effort, when the paper was returned to him it was littered with red pen. He recalled this by gesturing a heavy weight with both his hands, stating: "it only had red marks, like I could barely see my writing, all it had was just red marks, everywhere" (Jacob, 339). This was difficult to absorb for Jacob, with so many errors, and without a face-to-face discussion about them, he was at a bit of a loss as to where to begin in reworking his essay. What came next outlines another important aspect of demonstrating care for Jacob: taking time, extra time, to work with refugee students. Instead of approaching his Social Studies teacher,

with whom he had less of a relationship, he approached his English teacher, someone he knew cared for him. Someone who had created a welcoming atmosphere for refugee students' questions. Jacob went to his English teacher to explain his situation and the teacher asked that he return at the end of the day so they could take a look the paper. At the end of the day, Jacob and his English teacher sat down and painstakingly, line by line, edited the paper. Jacob recalled it took quite some time to complete the reworking of the essay, and he recognized that this was the teacher's own personal time. For Jacob this was a clear demonstration of care.

Jacobs High School Responsibilities

Jacob's personal responsibilities in high school included much of the challenging expectations outlined by the literature. Jacob estimated he worked 37 hours a week in addition to his high school class hours. Additionally, he acted as the cultural broker for his family, attending all meetings for his family and absorbing all communication that came to their home in the mail or through email. As Jacob put it: "I had to look at different papers, I mean, I didn't understand anything either but I had to, I had to." (Jacob, 358). Jacob was driven to play this role in his family. He believed undertaking this responsibility would ensure his parents were not disheartened by the extensive amount of communication. This need to interpret and communicate for his parents was not an expectation he felt was forced on him, nor was the working schedule he took on. Jacob chose to do these things because he understood that his parents had sacrificed a lot in order for his family to come to Canada. He understood that they made a difficult sacrifice to improve his and his brother's lives. Jacob took on the role of cultural broker, and a

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full-time work schedule, as a form of thanks to his parents. Not only did he not resent these roles, he sees how they helped shaped the responsible man he is today.

Jacob was also the first to drive in his family, and therefore took on the role of family chauffer. He did take the written exam alongside his father but was the first to gain his license. This did not happen until Jacob's family had been in Canada for a year, before this his family relied on public transit, which leads to an anecdote of his resilience.

The Long Road Home

Jacob started working immediately upon arrival in Canada. Being 16 years old, he started where many teenagers do, in the restaurant industry. Jacob ended up working at a restaurant on the south side of the city, quite a distance from home. To get to and from work, Jacob utilized public transit. Although this created a fairly long commute, without any licensed drivers in the home, or the possession of a car, Jacob had little choice. He worked far from home only because it was the first available job he found after canvassing the city. Over his first few shifts, he managed the commute, worked his shift, and got home in time to get a few hours of sleep before the following school day. That was until the first Sunday that he worked. Jacob was unaware that the bus service to that section of the city ended early on Sundays. Jacob worked his shift diligently, finished up, and headed back out to the bus stop. After waiting for an extended period of time and realizing that not only had his bus not arrived, but no busses at all had come to the stop, it dawned on him that the busses were no longer running. Again, this was early in coming to Canada, and Jacob had no cell phone to call for help. In this moment, he thought about returning to work, but who could he call, and what help could be given? At home there was no car, nor anyone with a license. Could he ask someone for a ride? Being new to the

restaurant, new to Canada, and in many ways, new to English, he was not comfortable in doing so. Resigned to his reality, Jacob put his head down and took to his feet, determined to walk home. The task at hand required that Jacob walk from one side of the city to the other, across a river valley. In our interview I estimated this would take a couple hours at least, Jacob was quick to respond that it took longer than that. He had, after all, just worked for 9 hours and commuted for another hour to get to work before that. He was doggedly tired. He now laughs upon reflection of this absurd adventure, but he recalled at the time: "that was, that's the time when we would cry. [Laughter]" (Jacob, 443). This young man walked home, getting there after midnight to lay his exhausted body down for a few hours, before it was time to get up for the school day. For Jacob, this was not an isolated incident, but rather a reality of Sunday shifts on several occasions until he was able to find alternative transportation.

Dad's Reality

Jacob made a salient point about his parent's experience. Though this research focuses on refugee students' experiences, schools are "microcosms of our pluralistic society" (Lund & Nabavim, 2008). There is a relationship between Jacob and his parents experience that is important to explore. The choices refugee parents make in re-locating to countries they know little about, with languages they have little knowledge of, are often made in concern for their children. In Jacob's case, he never felt like he was being asked to take on responsibilities he did not want, but he knows he was completing tasks the average high school student is never asked to do. Regardless of his own challenges, he made it a point that his parents' story is a more difficult one. Jacob noted that his parents were far happier living in the refugee camps than they are here, even after living

here for ten years. The reality of our society, and the expectations we place on each other to consume, feeds the concern of Jacob's parents. They may not have had much in the camp, but as Jacob put it, they had what they needed. The needs of owning a home, a car or, or even a bike, were not *needs* in Nepal. In Nepal, his parents felt respected, had a large social group, plenty of time to enjoy life, and were comparatively well off. In Canada, they feel, and are made to feel, marginalized, poor, and wanting better. Jacob recognized the sacrifice his parents have made for him in coming to Canada. It is a major contributor to his desire to find academic and financial success in Canada.

Kishan

Kishan and I first met in an ESL class, and I also taught him in Physics. Kishan's English was fairly limited in high school, but he was always very engaged when in class and put forth an admirable effort in class. Kishan missed quite a bit of class time while in high school, but as revealed, this was not Kishan's choice: Expectations of his family required his absences. Kishan, now 23, is enrolled in a criminal justice program at the local college, with aspirations of becoming a police officer on the local force. His desire to fill this role relates to a traumatic incident that Kishan and his community experienced while he was in high school.

Tragedy to Opportunity

In July of 2012, a member of the Lethbridge Bhutanese society, Deu Raj Puri, was fatally shot at his home by Lethbridge Police Officers (Calgary Herald, July 21, 2012). The incident was a product of mental illness, intoxication, and unfortunately a language barrier. Kishan recalled this incident in our interview, and although difficult for him to talk about, he chose to share his personal connection with the tragedy. Kishan had been

with Deu Raj and several other members of the community earlier in the day. Deu Raj was a brother to one of Kishan's good friends, and they had been playing a Nepali game earlier in the day. The group was celebrating a visit from a Nepali friend now living in Ohio. Kishan recalled that Deu Raj had indulged in drinking a bit during the day, but they had separated several hours before the incident. What he knows of the confrontation, is that Deu Raj had been in an altercation at home later in the evening, and that the police had been called. Due to a lack of understanding of language, and actions taken by Deu Raj, lethal force was employed by the responding officers. Kishan, having been with Deu Raj earlier in the day, was brought to the police station for questioning. He recalled this event as being painful, frightening and confusing. Painful in the loss of a community member, and frightful and confusing to be questioned by police officers in English, a language that was still very much evolving for him. Kishan recalled how the investigators grilled him with questions, and how his limited English reduced his ability to co-operate, which in turn led to frustration from the officers. He recalled the bright lights shining down on him, the heat in the room, and the intense pressure he felt to answer questions he did not understand, and in cases, did not know the answers to. He recalled being angry with the police after leaving, for his experience, and for their use of deadly force. Kishan noted that much of the Nepali/Bhutanese community felt likewise. For Kishan, over time, this frustration became understanding of the police action, and this shift serves as another demonstration of deep resilience within this refugee community. Instead of distrusting police, Kishan has worked to understand why the police had acted as they did. Beyond this, Kishan also decided he wanted to become a police officer to ensure that his community would better understand the role of police, and the laws within Canada.

Kishan is currently working towards his criminal justice degree, and through this journey has spoken with his professors to better understand how and why the police acted as they did that day. Kishan believes that Deu Raj likely would have complied with the police, had the language barrier not been so severe. He aims to become a local police officer, to serve and help the greater community, but also to act as a legal liaison between his community and the local police service. Kishan is aware that many within his community still fear the police and are unwilling or cautious about interacting with them. He hopes he can bridge this gap, and improve the relationship between his community and the police. This incredible young man has demonstrated resilience in the face of trauma, not experienced in refugee camps but here in his resettled Canada. He is enacting actual change to move his community and the greater population forward in a peaceful and positive manner. The event described took place while Kishan was in high school, while he was managing a new culture and language, a new form of schooling, displacement, expectations of working to support his family, and acting as their cultural broker. It could have been so easy for him to succumb to the pressures. Instead he has chosen a path to improve the state of his community and future refugees.

School Back Home

When we discussed Kishan's experience in school in Nepal, two contrasting ideas emerged. For Kishan, the greatest enjoyment in school back home came through the social aspects of class. There he could easily communicate with his classmates, and that freedom to interact with everyone allowed for a large group of friends. Unfortunately, he also suffered beatings for mistakes, poor behavior, and missing assignments. Although the concept of corporal punishment came up in several interviews, Kishan was the most

visibly affected by this recollection. It was clear as he spoke about it, that he not only disliked this aspect of education in Nepal, he resented it. Kishan faced beatings from elders, teachers, and even friends at school. It was novel to understand what Kishan was meaning by beatings from friends.

When discussing what Kishan's identity as a student was, he stated that his good grades are what led to beatings from his friends. They expected him to share his work with them, and when he resisted, it led to fighting. Kishan confirmed that he never cheated, and as such, these conflicts with his friends were a common event. The combination of corporal punishment and concern of confrontations with classmates clearly left Kishan with a more negative outlook on school in Nepal. This discussion led him to state that he preferred school in Canada.

In contrasting his experience in Nepal, to his experience of school in Canada, Kishan much preferred the student-teacher relationships in Canada. Conversely, he noted the biggest difficulty, and hardest emotional part about school in Canada was the challenge he experienced in trying to interact with Canadian students. Kishan stressed on the importance of creating opportunities for new arrivals to interact with their classmates, clearly this was the most negative aspect of school in Canada for Kishan. For Kishan, therefore, school was not without a debilitating factor in either Canada or Nepal. The key factor in making his preference to Canadian schools related to his relationship with teachers.

A Fond Memory in Biology 20

Kishan is a self-proclaimed kinesthetic learner. He felt that what best supported him in science, and classes in general, was exposure to hands-on activities. Furthermore,

he felt that group work and projects best served his learning, especially when partnered with Canadian-born students. Kishan saw that his development of language benefited through interaction with Canadian-born students. As this was difficult to procure in class on his own, group work allowed an avenue in which interaction was necessary between him and his Canadian-born classmates. Kishan knows, for him, there is a direct correlation between his confidence and academic success, and that those two factors are linked to his understanding of the English language. In his own reflection, the best way for him to develop that language was through interaction with Canadian-born classmates. For Kishan, the formula was simple, interaction through hands-on group work led to improved English and enhanced understanding. This, in-turn, led to improved confidence in both communication and demonstrating knowledge, which equaled greater success in the classroom. In doing hands-on work, Kishan was able to understand phenomena in his own language. He could then bridge that understanding to English through the interaction with his classmates and improve his ability and confidence to communicate his understanding.

Kishan fondly recalled one such incident in Biology 20, where his group was asked to dissect a specimen and to then communicate their learnings to the class. Each group member was responsible for a portion of the specimen, to both dissect and to explain. For this particular project, Kishan was partnered with a fellow refugee student and two Canadian-born students. For Kishan this was an ideal grouping. He had a fellow language learner who spoke his native tongue to check his understanding with, and two native English speakers to assist in translating that understanding to English. As a group, they could work together to bridge that understanding into the language of science for

their presentation. Kishan recalled that he felt very confident in his aspect of the presentation because it had been vetted through a fellow language learner, two native English speakers, and his Biology teacher. This gave him the confidence to accept the challenge of presenting to his class. Challenge is important to Kishan, something he later emphasized as key to supporting refugee students. He felt they needed to be challenged in order to grow, but the teacher must work alongside the student to facilitate meeting that challenge.

For Kishan, this experience had all the key aspects for his success in mastering the content and the challenge of presenting, a pedagogical approach that could be beneficial for many refugee students: Utilizing hands-on group work, grouping refugee students with each other *and* native tongue students, and supporting progress by checking in, culminating in an assessment in which each group member has responsibilities to present. This approach both challenged and supported Kishan in being comfortable to present to his classmates, while simultaneously creating a positive opportunity for him to connect with his classmates. That interaction with Canadian-born classmates was something that Kishan struggled with, and these types of opportunities made him feel safe in trying to connect. As the next anecdote explores, Kishan had reason to desire the creation of safe opportunities for connection with Canadian-born students.

A Difficult Situation

Kishan recalled an incident in high school in which he was discriminated against by Canadian-born students. In between classes, Kishan visited the school cafeteria with a fellow refugee student. Along the way they stopped at a water fountain and paused for a drink. As he was finishing his refreshment, he was bumped into by a Canadian-born

student who had been jostling about with friends. Kishan looked up, expecting an apology, but instead was greeted with foul language and an aggressive demeanor. Kishan recalls that he did not understand what the student was saying to him, which he said was common, instead he looked to expression and body language. It was clear to Kishan that this student, and his friends, were aiming to bully him. Kishan was no stranger to fighting back home, as he said friends often did. These fights in school were usually followed by a beating, a quick handshake, and a return to work, as was also described by KK. Kishan, however, knew that here in Canada, fighting in school had severe repercussions. This was known to him from experiences of other refugee students who had chosen to fight, stories like those shared by KK and Jacob. He also knew that other students were unlikely to come to his aid. Stuck in this difficult situation with a young man towering over him, surrounded by his friends, spouting assumed insults, Kishan chose to walk away. He left questioning what had he done in this situation that was wrong? From his perspective, he had simply been taking a drink. For these students, however, it seemed that Kishan was not welcome to be in that place. Kishan felt that these students likely did not appreciate him being in Canada at all. This left Kishan feeling isolated, a feeling he often felt when he was not in class with refugee or ESL friends, or at very least, a kind teacher. This incident also created a perception for Kishan that many Canadian-born students were bullies. Kishan recalled this event and was clearly bothered by it, but also noted that this was the only such occurrence he felt direct discrimination in school. Limited as this experience was, it further served to isolate him in school, and made him hesitant in connecting with Canadian-born students.

A Level Playing Field

Although hesitant, Kishan did find opportunities to develop positive relationships with Canadian-born students. Kishan stated that when he developed those friendships, he felt more connected to the school. For Kishan, physical education was a particularly positive space, and in our interview, we explored why he felt so encouraged. Kishan determined that it was partly the reduced need to constantly be engaging with English, and partly his natural athletic ability. This ability helped him excel academically and socially in physical education. He fondly recalled being cheered on by his classmates. He had many experiences of being chosen by team captains, before their close friends, in games like baseball, floor hockey, and soccer. Although there was another refugee student in the class, he was often absent. Kishan was often the only Nepali speaking student in class. This, however, did not infringe on his ability to play the games, or his interest in participating. It is that shared interest, he noted, that assisted him to connect to his classmates. He even recalled being invited to travel to off-campus activities with other students and going for food together afterwards. He was truly part of this class, not an*other* which is a feeling he often experienced in other classes. He felt wanted, and valued, and he felt that way because he had an opportunity to demonstrate some of his strengths. Kishan also noted that he did not experience any bullying in this class. Bullies, the type of person he had learned to ignore, were not present in that particular class. When I asked why he thought that was, he established that the teacher created an atmosphere that eliminated bullies. The teacher modeled compassion and care.

Caring Teachers

Kishan fondly remembered several teachers from high school and the impact they had on him. He credited several teachers with whom he felt a caring relationship. For Kishan, this was best demonstrated in taking the time to speak with him and working to understand what he was saying. In high school, Kishan's English was fairly limited, and he felt that the teachers that cared were those that were patient with listening to him. Those that would listen to what he needed, learn about his past, and provide feedback to challenge him to improve. As a language learner, he knew he was not always clear on his message in his first attempt to communicate. These teachers worked to support his language development by seeking clarification of what he had said. They offered possible words or phrases he was looking for, and rephrased his comments to ensure their understanding of his meaning was correct. Kishan recognized that this takes time, and that teachers have many responsibilities.

Kishan appreciated when teachers would provide him with extra time to complete assignments and exams. He proclaimed himself a kinesthetic learner and highlighted that when teachers allowed him the time to work with material, at his own pace, he found the most academic success. Like many of the other participant researchers, Kishan did not define success in school as passing courses, or academic success. He saw success as interacting with others in the class, both students and teachers. "Successful?…I would say interacting, interacting, yeah" (Kishan, 328). The teachers that provided Kishan opportunities to interact with others were the most beneficial for him. Being able to demonstrate his strengths within physical education classes made interaction easy, but even where he struggled with content, he valued the opportunity to interact: "Yeah, so

more interaction, because the speaking language could improve" (Kishan, 340). Kishan named several teachers alongside his favorite physical education teacher as people who provided opportunities through project and group work. Again, he stated he did not need mastery of the content to gain from this: "Yeah, because we used to have group projects, so me, and other three or four Canadian people talk, even if I don't understand, I would know by their expression, by gesture" (Kishan, 429).

Much of Kishan's academic struggle was in navigating the language barrier, but he still valued constructive feedback from teachers he knew cared about him. He also emphasized that no feedback, which may come from a concern of discouraging refugee students, actually presented to him as a lack of care.

Name That Tune

In one of Kishan's math classes he felt a severe lack of connection with his teacher. This was brought on by several factors, including lack of extra time for assignments, and limited engagement and feedback. His feeling of marginalization was, however, mostly focused in feelings of discrimination. When reflecting on the experience and the teacher, he stated: "Yeah, I was really frustrated. Like even now I get really mad about her" (Kishan, 376). Within this particular math class, Kishan stated that they would occasionally play "name that tune", and he believes they were graded on this activity. "Name that tune" is an activity in which a short clip of a song is played and the participants have to try to name both the title of the song and the artist that performed it. Unsure of how this activity connected to math, Kishan did not see the relevance of grading it, and was frustrated by its inclusion in class. Furthermore, the songs that were played stemmed from Canadian popular culture. Being a new arrival, Kishan was

obviously at a disadvantage in this activity, even though he claimed that he is quite good at name that tune within his own popular culture. While his classmates were scoring a perfect twenty of twenty around him, he would score only two or three correct. Math was a subject in which, comparatively, Kishan expected the language barrier to have less of an impact. Yet here he was facing a different cultural barrier, one not clearly connected to the curriculum. The experience left Kishan feeling marginalized.

Expectations

Like his contemporaries, Kishan had many expectations placed on him once arriving in Canada at the high school age. Kishan began working shortly after beginning at school and continued to work throughout his high school career. Being the oldest child, he also played the role of cultural broker at home. Unlike the other participant researchers, Kishan had also played a major role in supporting his family in Nepal. His mother suffers from an undisclosed medical condition, and Kishan has served as her main support since he was seven years old. Though not new to expectations, new challenges associated with those expectations emerged upon arrival.

The difficulties associated in communication when taking his mother to the hospital in Canada, created a new frustration for Kishan. An expectation he had become accustomed to, became a challenge all over again. Kishan recalls that he had to take his mother to the hospital two or three times a week, and at first, he had to secure transportation from within the community to do so. This became an occupation within itself, calling and organizing rides, travelling to and from the hospital, waiting with his mom, and then working as the translator between his mother, the hospital staff, and his

family. Kishan is aware that this negatively impacted his schooling: "Yeah I had to miss a lot of class, and that's why I failed two or three classes" (Kishan, 509).

Added to this weekly responsibility, Kishan acted as the cultural broker for his younger brother and father as well. He interpreted communication from government officials, immigrant services, and their landlord, all while admittedly having limited English. In his household, as in many others, these responsibilities fell to him simply because he knew a little more language. At the time, Kishan recalls these responsibilities were frustrating for him, as he had little time to himself. He also felt a lot of pressure to try to understand that which was beyond his capability, in both language and maturity. Kishan now feels that this challenge was positive, as it developed his understanding of Canadian laws and culture, and improved his language: "Impacted me? Yes, but now I know that was good, because I know a lot of things, from that experience" (Kishan, 503). Kishan was forced to grow up quickly, and take on many responsibilities he was underprepared for, but rather than feeling resentment about these expectations, he sees them as essential lessons in crafting his personal character. Like many of the other participant researchers, he also further valued everything his family has acquired since arrival, because he was a large contributor to its procurement.

Zoya

Zoya and I first met when she transferred to our school after spending two years in Vancouver. Zoya, now 22, is an extremely positive and resilient young woman. Although she did not receive her high school diploma, which she relates in her story, she has recently gained a health-care diploma. This young woman sees her future full of growth and education. At that time when she first arrived at our school, I was Vice

Principal and oversaw the programming of refugee students. Zoya quickly became part of the Nepali/Bhutanese community in our school. Unfortunately, Zoya and her peer group struggled with attendance in her first year with us. We explored this in the interview where she stated that this had little to do with lack of engagement, or lack of understanding, but was a choice: she preferred social time with her friends. As Zoya's attendance was an issue, she was unable to complete Alberta Education's requirements for graduation. Her experience of the convocation ceremony at our school, however, was one she recalled as a story of care.

Convocation

I asked Zoya if she recalled any incidents in high school in which she felt cared for by a teacher. After a brief pause she stated, "I think you" (Zoya, 515). She was referring to how I intervened to ensure she could participate in our convocation ceremony. It is not the intent to highlight aspects of my own work, but in this case, we can learn from Zoya how the impact of care—a gesture of good faith—can impact a refugee student. Below I also recount this story from my perspective, as I knew aspects of this situation that were not shared with Zoya. In Zoya's words: "Yeah you did something! I knew that!" (Zoya, 523).

With convocation approaching, Zoya was in a difficult situation that many refugee students find themselves in at the end of Grade 12. She was short on requirements for graduation and was too old to return to our school the following year. She would therefore not be graduating at the end of her time with us. We had encountered this in the past but had always made an exception to allow refugee students to walk the stage at convocation, even if they did not meet the requirements for graduation. Those

requirements, in Alberta, are no different than any other students' requirements. They require the successful completion of 100 credits, alongside a variety of specific expectations in those credits (Alberta Education, 2019). For the refugee students I worked with, the minimum expectation of completing Social Studies 30-2 and English 30-2 was a common impediment. These two courses include a diploma exam, and each has a multiple choice and essay portion. Both portions require the students to complete the exam in three hours, though ESL students were granted double time. Even with the double time, many students struggled to complete the reading comprehension exam. In their defense, six hours of reading and re-reading excerpts and questions is a challenge for anyone. The essay portion needed to be written on the spot, with the support of only a dictionary and thesaurus. No translation, no grammar support, no opportunity to revisit the work. The diploma exams in these courses were and are a challenge for most refugee students. Zoya fell into this grouping, and without these courses, she had not met the requirements of graduation.

The school's expectation for students to participate in convocation was that they met provincial graduation requirements. In the past, refugee students had been exempted from this expectation. This exception was seen as a reward for the perseverance of the students in completing several years of high school in a foreign country, in another language. Regardless of credit totals, the refugee students were permitted to partake in convocation. Our administration team, at the time, had begun to reconsider this. Several of our current refugee students, including Zoya, had been regularly avoiding classes. We were concerned that the message being sent—that the students could skip classes, not meet expectations, and still walk the stage—had issues of fairness to other students.

Our administrative team decided to reflect on this in preparation for convocation about a month in advance. At that time, I went to find Zoya to let her know she may not be able to participate. She was devastated, as she had expected to be able to, and she knew that was also the expectation of her family. For her and her family, this would be an embarrassment. It is important to note that Zoya had dramatically improved her attendance over the last semester but was still missing several requirements. She was also at a disadvantage having spent two years in Vancouver, gaining minimal transferable credit. Recognizing this hindrance on her ability to meet expectations, that her attendance had improved significantly, and that an abrupt change in our policy may itself be unfair, I petitioned my colleagues to allow Zoya to participate in convocation. The administrative team agreed and decided that the change in policy would be enacted the following year after being made clear to the students. Once confirmed, I quickly went to search out Zoya. She recalled that I found her in her math class, and I let her know the good news. It was a surprise and a relief for her, and one she is thankful I advocated for.

This is the story she recalled when asking about feeling cared for in school. The act of good faith: being permitted to participate in convocation, believing that she had learned the importance of attending class. Believing in her was the demonstration of care. When I asked her what she would tell her high school self now, she said: "Try to focus on class, in school, rather than going out, and hanging out, instead of skipping the class." (Zoya, 678). She had learnt that her attendance issue was the major hinderance to her meeting graduation expectations. I did not feel that embarrassment and resentment from her family was a necessary addition to not graduating. In fact, I was concerned the effects of declining convocation could negatively impact Zoya's relationship with education, and

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educational institutions. Zoya now has completed a post-secondary diploma, and is a happy, independent contributor to society in the health care industry.

Nepali or Bhutanese?

Zoya's reflection on her cultural identification was a highlight of this interview for me. Her description of how she sees herself was inspiring for me in becoming an ally to refugee students. Zoya's identity is not as Nepali or Bhutanese, but as both in addition to identifying as Canadian. She proclaimed herself: "Yeah, I'm Canadian! So, I consider myself Bhutanese-Nepalese-Canadian now." (Zoya, 106)

Isolation on Arrival

Zoya spent most of her first two years in Canada in a school in Vancouver. In recalling what her experience was like in first coming to Canadian schools, Zoya expressed that she felt isolated. She recalled that she was very nervous: "Oh, I was so nervous that time, 'cause of the language thing, the new people around you, and then everyone is talking a different language, it's kind of weird to be around with them. It's so difficult for us" (Zoya, 59-60). The *us* that Zoya is referring to is the population of refugee students from Nepal that she came to know at our school. She was aware that she shared many of the same difficulties as her friends. The obstacle of communication, and the feeling of isolation, was enough for Zoya to wish she could return to the refugee camps in Nepal. Zoya's lived reality has improved over time, but it was very challenging at first. She also understands that the transition could have been worse, and she highlighted the importance of the support of immigrant services upon arrival.

The role immigrant services play in refugee students' lives over the first years of resettlement is as important as the role of schools (Stewart et al., 2019). Zoya

remembered the significance of immigrant services in transitioning to a Canadian school. As a new-comer, Zoya and her family became clients of immigrant services, and one of their roles is to assist in enrolling school aged children in schools. Zoya knew the essential role that the liaison played in this situation and was overtly thankful for their assistance.

Color Day

When I asked Zoya to recall a favorite memory from her time in high school, her response was insightful. The event she recalled was the last day of classes, where our school would have a color day. On Color day, everyone dressed up in school colors and costumes, and it was a day without classes. We would celebrate the years accomplishments and participate in a *Lip Dub* organized by a group of staff and students. A lip dub is a video recording in which participants lip-sync a song. The song is then dubbed over the audio of the recording in order to create a music video. A tradition at the school over the years was to create a lip dub video that included all the people. The students and staff were organized in groups as a videographer walked through the halls, in and out of classrooms, with a few volunteers that participated as the main actors—notably none of whom were from the refugee population. We would rehearse a couple of times, loudly playing the song over the intercom, and then film it in one run through. Afterward, the audio-video club would work frantically to put the video and audio together as the students attended an assembly in the gymnasium. The assembly was a celebration of student accomplishments over the year, and its finale was the presentation of the lip dub. The lip dub would then be uploaded to YouTube so that students and staff could access it in the future. With over 1000 students and more than 100 staff members

this was always quite a feat to organize and produce, while also bringing incredible energy to the building.

The lip dub tradition quickly became a student favorite, and this was indeed the case for Zoya. She recalled the energy in the building, and the festivity of it all. She likened this festivity back to celebrations that were a regular part of school in Nepal. They had many days where they celebrated and danced to recognize students, teachers, and religious and national events. This was something she felt did not happen enough in Canadian schools. It was interesting that Zoya's reflection on the event included regret that she had not been more involved in the school before that day: "OH YEAH! That day made me feel like we should not miss class before. We felt that, but we were too late …Yeah, we missed lots of classes… I feel regret right now" (Zoya, 153-155). Zoya's regret was that she had not become more ingrained in the fabric of the schools' culture. Regret that she did not have a bigger connection to her classmates, that she did not belong to more student groups.

Resilience in Health Care

Zoya is now working as a health care professional, supporting elderly patients at home. Though she recognizes that aspects of her job are challenging, she has demonstrated her strength in navigating difficult situations, and in encouraging her colleagues. In reflecting on her training experience, Zoya shared that although she faced adversity, she was determined to be successful. That determination led to her inspiring her fellow students to persevere through the more difficult and unpleasant aspects of the job.

Although Zoya does not intend to remain in this position long term, she has embraced that it is a means of income and is continuing to consider further education and opportunity. Zoya could have relegated herself to working without a high school diploma, but instead, and despite this challenge, she pursued avenues of higher education. She is proud to be a working taxpayer who contributes to society.

Wisdom Beyond Years

Two years ago, the local Nepali community, and my former school's community, lost one of our own. A former Nepali student was driving home after a late shift at work on the outskirts of town with a close friend who was working at the same establishment. Upon entering the highway, the two were involved in a fatal crash, the driver losing his life, and his friend requiring emergency airlift and months of recovery. This event astounded the Nepali community, and my former school's ESL community. The accident was simply that, an accident, but working long hours through the night could be considered a factor. This was another tragic loss of a young member of this community, another tragedy that could likely have been avoided. Zoya was a very close friend to this young man, and they spent much of their time in high school together. His passing came up in our discussion, initiated by Zoya. It is a difficult topic for her community, and another stark reminder that trauma does not end for refugees upon resettlement. She stated that this experience is still difficult to speak of.

Expectations

Zoya's external expectations from her family while in high school were less than that other participant researchers. She attributes this to not being the oldest child of her family. Zoya has two older sisters, whom she credits with playing the primary roles of

cultural broker, breadwinner, and family chauffeur. Zoya did however accompany her sisters on most of their undertakings, which she gladly recalled help prepare her for adult life, and for her current responsibilities. Zoya's oldest sister recently got married, and has moved away, thus Zoya has now taken on many of her roles.

Zoya did work full time in high school. Her earnings were her own, though she worked to lessen her burden on her family, not wanting to have to ask for money. Although Zoya did not have heavy expectations placed on her in high school, she did agree that her sisters had an exorbitant number of expectations placed on them, expectations she now undertakes. She also noted that her friends in high school played many of the roles for their families her sisters did for hers.

Depika

Depika arrived in Canada in grade seven and did not meet the original parameters of this study within the senior secondary level for high school. Due to the limits of recruitment, my familiarity with her story, and her willingness to participate, I chose to include her story. Where Depika does fall into congruence with some of the other participant researchers is that she is the oldest child in her family. She, therefore, had the expectation of being the family's cultural broker placed on her at an even younger age. Depika had some attendance issues early in high school, but after an additional year of high school, and a refocus on her education, she graduated meeting all of the requirements. This fact is something that Depika is clearly proud of, and knowing her struggle, I believe she should be. Depika, now 21, is working in the health care field, after gaining certification from a post-secondary institution. Depika has always wanted to be a

nurse and she intends on continuing her education to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) in the future.

Holi

One of Depika's fondest memories of high school was the celebration of the Hindu spring festival of Holi. Holi is primarily celebrated in India and Nepal but is prevalent wherever Indians and Nepalis can be found. The students described Holi as the festival of love, but is also known as the festival of colors, due to the event of Dulandi (Chana, 1984). At our school, the Nepali/Bhutanese students celebrated Holi in the form of the color festivities. The students brought powdered paint to school and adorned each other and many staff members with the paint. Depika could not recall Canadian-born students wearing the colors, but she did recall that many Canadian students would enjoy the spicy food the students brought in abundance to share with each other, staff, and other students. For Depika, this was a favorite day of the year, and one that made her feel very connected to the school, and proud to be a part of it. By the time Depika was in our school, many teachers took part in this day, but this was not always the case.

I recall the first color festival at our school. That day the students came with their powdered paint and let me know what they were celebrating. They donned each other, the ESL teacher, a fellow administrator, and me in color. Being the *follicly challenged* man I am, the students took great joy in painting my entire head with bright green, red and pink. It was explained to me that this was an honor, for someone to color you, and so I wore it with pride that day, despite the awkward glances. Unfortunately, in their great pleasure, the students failed to note that their paint had left an unexpected chore for our custodial

staff to clean. The first Holi celebration was enjoyed by the students but created a minor negative reaction from staff.

The students and I sought to improve upon the celebration the following year. The students were mindful of where the paint was applied, and to clean up after themselves. Additionally, I had a conversation with our head caretaker in which he stated it was worth the extra work, if the students were able to celebrate. We also shared an email about the festival of Holi with our staff. From this, our second Holi festival included many more staff members. Over time, Holi became a well-accepted and enjoyed event by our entire school, despite the minor mess it created. Channa (1984) noted that in India, Holi is a festival in which everyone is supposed to freely participate, in which the caste system is ignored, and where "barriers of interaction that exist in daily life are broken down" (p. 139). It therefore was a fitting celebration for students and teachers to take part in together, to celebrate the comradely love of mankind, to be thankful of each other. With our staff cognizant of this reality, the festival began to be one in which staff members actively participated in and looked forward to.

By the time Depika was at our school, Holi was widely accepted, and for her, teachers accepting paint sent a message that they embraced her culture, and therefore her. In our interview, she highlighted this as a memory in which she felt most connected to our school: "Yes, Holi, everybody used to enjoy it, so that's where I felt really connected" (Depika, 83). Although there was some initial push back, this event, and its impact on Depika, speaks to the importance of embracing refugee students' cultures, and taking time to celebrate with them in school.

Arriving in Middle School

As stated earlier, Depika arrived in Canada at the middle-school age, which makes her experience different from the other participant researchers. Depika was also unique in having fond memories of her experience of arrival. For Depika, the first days still held challenges, but she warmly recalled being quickly welcomed into her classroom by her teacher and classmates: "First day, I think it was first day of my class in [School], some of the students were really helpful, they would teach me how to do the home work, and make me understand the words" (Depika, 47). This difference in experience with Canadian-born classmates could have been affected by countless factors, but Depika felt that it stemmed from the structure of middle school. In her school, students were assigned to a home room grouping, in which they remain for all of their classes.

As she had the same classmates for all her classes, she found it was easier to develop friendships. She also felt that the teachers and staff worked to cultivate those friendships. Depika found that the teaching staff was very welcoming and interested in her, which left her feeling comfortable in her new surroundings: "Teachers were nice too….And then they were asking about how did you get here, and then they wanted to know more about my culture" (Depika, 65-67). It was clear from our interview that Depika felt very welcome, if not at home, in her new school.

Depika recalled that she had several Canadian-born friends while in her middle school, which she attended for two years. I asked if that continued to be the case once she came to high school, and she replied that although those friends moved to the same school, they did not remain close. She believed that these relationships waned due to a difference in schedules rather than any events, or disagreements: "I think, you just got

different classes and different subjects and that's why" (Depika, 125). This different scheduling, and an increase in fellow Nepali students, led Depika to creating a new social group. She noted that this was not due to a dislike of Canadian-born students, or any feeling of isolation, but rather the ease of communication with her Nepali classmates: "Because…I think we had the same language, and I thought it would be easier" (Depika, 131).

Nepali or Bhutanese or Canadian?

Depika's reaction to my question about cultural identity was again unique. For her, this question brought on laughter. She found it humorous that I had asked this because she was aware of the variety of responses this draws from her community. In this interview, I included Canadian as an option of identity after my reflection on Zoya's interview. Depika identified as Nepali, though she also recognized her Canadian citizenship: "[Laughter] When somebody asks me, I would say I'm Nepali, but now I'm citizen to Canada, so… I just say I'm Nepali living in Canada." (Depika, 391). Depika stated that her parents would identify as Bhutanese rather than Nepali, because they were born in Bhutan.

Teachers Who Care

When I asked Depika to recall positive relationships with her teachers, and why she felt the relationships were positive, she stated that she had positive relationships with all of her teachers, and that she could not recall any negative experiences. Depika felt that her teachers were doing the best job they could in supporting her. She did, however, have a few thoughts on the strategies some of her more effective teachers used. When asked to

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recall specific teachers, and what they did to support her, Depika recalled two teachers, an ESL and a social studies teacher.

Depika recalled a time in which she was struggling with family issues at home. Her ESL teacher, at the time, took note of her changed demeanor in class, and approached her to inquire if she was okay. In this encounter, Depika disclosed much of what had been troubling her, and how that had been affecting her at school. The act of the teacher coming to her, and checking in, was a clear demonstration of care for Depika. Her acceptance of that care was demonstrated in her sharing her private troubles. It was, however, what the ESL teacher did after this discussion that really resonated with Depika. She recalled that this teacher sought her out several times after their conversation to check in on her. What was impressive to Depika is that the teacher did not just check in on her in ESL class. Rather, the teacher continually came to her in other classes, and in the hall, until Depika had returned to a positive space. Depika felt that this over-and-above demonstration of care really helped her navigate her challenges and supported her return to a healthy relationship at home.

The second teacher that Depika recalled was a social studies teacher, and she admitted that this influenced her selection of social studies as her favorite subject. When asked why she felt positive about this teacher, Depika cited the teacher's demeanor of care, his support in and outside of class time, his commitment to engage with her, and his use of group work. She truly felt that this teacher both cared about her and wanted her to be successful in class. She, in-turn, cared about being successful in his class.

Expectations

Despite arriving at middle-school age, Depika still had many expectations placed upon her by her family as the oldest child. Depika worked at least three days a week once turning fourteen, was the first in her family to drive at sixteen, and acted as the cultural broker for her family upon arrival. She continues to do so. When asked if she felt she had a lot of responsibilities placed on her while she was in high school, she responded: "Yeah, life was pretty busy back then. [Laughter]" (Depika, 360). Like many of the other participant researchers, when she was asked to reflect on her responsibilities in high school, she came to laugh. Perhaps this is part cultural, laughing about past difficulties once overcome, but the students all seemed to also laugh at the absurdity of it all: being in charge of important family business at such a young age, with such limited language.

A Discussion of Format

Interpretation is unavoidable at all points in any research, including presenting what each participant had to say in response to questions and about their own ideas of supporting refugee students. With that in mind, I was purposeful in choosing to present each participant researcher's collection of experiences as separate sections within this chapter. It is important to honor their voices and stories individually (Bishop, 2015). Each one of these students is a unique member of a community. Some of their cognitive and affective experiences were shared, but each experience was still uniquely theirs, so there were also some significant differences in their experiences, with many different factors at work including place and role in the family, financial burdens, trauma, loss, individual capabilities in such areas and skills like physical education or mathematics, and social needs. In reflecting back to the theoretical framework, in both care ethics and the

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individual-environment relation, the relation is with an individual and their macrosystem, mesosystem, and microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, it was both prudent and ethical to articulate these stories garnered from interview conversations not as a thematic anthology, but as means for the reader to appreciate each individuals' life world.

In the following three chapters, the themes that were generated from these stories of experience and their corresponding interviews will be presented. The themes will be identified and described, evidence will be provided, alongside a discussion of how these themes relate to existing research literature. Through inductive theme generation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) this research has garnered findings that extend beyond the fields of care ethics, and incorporates individual, school and systemic considerations. The discussion is presented in three overarching themes, relating to the individual-environment relation: 1. Effectivity Sets of Refugee Students, 2. Inequality in Affordance Networks, and 3. Microsystem Relationships.

CHAPTER 5: EFFECTIVITY SETS OF REFUGEE STUDENTS

Themes About Teaching and Learning With Refugee Students

The purpose of this research was to interview secondary student refugees directly to listen to their words and experiences, in order understand their expressed needs with the goal of improving their educational journey and ultimate success in finishing school. Seven themes were generated from these interviews and the following three chapters explore those themes. The development of the themes is outlined in *Figure 7*. Again, the goal of this research is not to generalize about refugee students from the interviews of a few individuals, but to understand and contribute to knowledge about refugee students' needs and experiences in order to offer insights about teaching and learning with them. As Fowler (2006) identified, when we: "confront the difficult places in teaching, together we can consider why we are teaching and how we might Be as we are teaching" (p. 141). Here, the difficult places are those of learning, surviving, and ultimately thriving, for refugee students. The themes garnered from what they had to say are partly focused on why we are teaching and how we might *be* in teaching, but also asks us to consider *whom* we are teaching. From addressing themes common across these few interviews, several important points of reflection arise. The findings of this dissertation already have impacted my relationships with *all* students and will continue to guide educational decisions I make, from designing lessons, to implementing them in class, and in designing authentic assessment. I encourage teachers, and other readers of this research, to consider how the findings and conclusions of this research have potential to improve their practice of coming to know and better teach refugee students, and perhaps, all students.
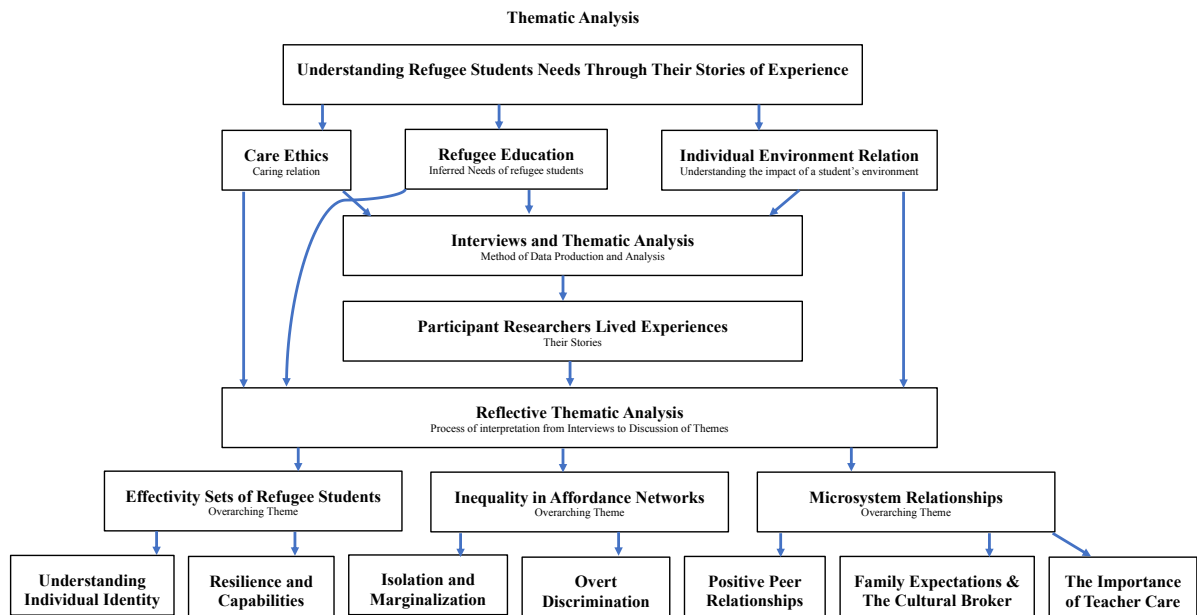
Understanding Refugee Students Needs Through Their Stories of Experience

Care Ethics Caring relation	Refugee Education Inferred Needs of refugee students	Individual Environment Relation Understanding the impact of a student's environment

Interviews and Thematic Analysis Method of Data Production and Analysis

Participant Researchers Lived Experiences Their Stories

Reflective Thematic Analysis Process of interpretation from Interviews to Discussion of Themes

Effectivity Sets of Refugee Students Overarching Theme	Inequality in Affordance Networks Overarching Theme	Microsystem Relationships Overarching Theme

Understanding Individual Identity	Resilience and Capabilities	Isolation and Marginalization	Overt Discrimination	Positive Peer Relationships	Family Expectations & The Cultural Broker	The Importance of Teacher Care

Figure 7. Themes generated through thematic analysis.

Effectivity Sets of Refugee Students

Barab and Roth (2006) described a student's effectivity set as including: "those behaviors that an individual can in fact produce so as to realize and even generate affordance networks" (p. 6). In coming to understand refugee students' effectivity sets, it is arguably more important to ensure that the students are included in examining their capabilities, than with their classmates. Refugee students often arrive without transcripts and report cards. Even if they do, it is unlikely they will they have completed the same curriculum as their classmates. Without any prior knowledge of their skills and attributes it is challenging to know students' academic potential, and where they should be placed for greatest success. To understand who they are, their identities, and what they can do, their capabilities, there must be discussion and conversation *with* them. As Freire (2014) noted:

> One does not teach what one does not know. But neither, in a democratic
> perspective, ought one to teach what one knows without, first, knowing what

those one is about to teach know and on what level they know it; and second, without respecting this knowledge. One begins with that which is implicit in the reading of the world of those about to learn what the one about to teach knows. (p. 120)

Freire calls for knowing and valuing past knowledge and experience and speaking with students. The first overarching theme that was generated from the interviews, transcripts, and stories, is the importance of understanding these attributes, the effectivity sets of the students. The participant researchers continually noted the importance of respecting their knowledge, the negative impact when ignored, and power when identified. This overarching theme, centered on the individual and their effectivity sets, includes two themes explored in depth within this chapter: Understanding Individual Identity, and Resilience and Capabilities.

Understanding Individual Identity

As Ghadi et al. (2019) emphasized, the impact of forced change in environment for refugees can have a profound negative effect on their sense of identity. The participant researchers consistently contrasted their experiences back in Nepal with their experiences in Canada. When describing those experiences, the students also referred to their identities within their two life-worlds. In each case a fluidity of identity was required from the students to shift how they saw themselves in Nepal, to a new identity in Canada. Additionally, since high school, these identities have continued to evolve. Bottrell (2007) discussed the negative impact an identity struggle can have:

> This struggle derives from two distinct forms of belonging to identifiable groups: that which is claimed and desired, or 'chosen'; and the 'unchosen' identity, which is ascribed by others and defined by social position. Young people's struggles to be, and be seen as, who they are, may be seen as struggles for chosen, and against unchosen, social identities. (pp. 607-608)

In exploring this with the participant researchers, it became apparent that their loss of identity in moving to Canada had a negative effect on their transition experience. A theme representing an expressed need arose from these discussions. Understanding individual identity: the importance of coming to know refugee students' individual identities.

Plural Identities

Loss of identity was a difficult aspect of each participant researcher's experience. For KK, Jacob, and Kishan, who were all strong students in Nepal, there was a loss of identity as a top student. This was frustrating for all three and added to the stress of a new school experience. For Zoya and Depika, the loss of an identity of popularity and kinship with classmates was difficult, though for Depika this was offset until she reached high school. Jacob also highlighted the difficulty his parents experienced in coming to Canada and losing a sense of pride in themselves from their status within the camps. In each case, the participant researchers were required to adjust their identity, often losing key facets of their chosen, or known identity, being replaced by an unchosen, unknown, social identity of refugee student.

This an important consideration for educators in coming to know students: who are they to themselves, what was their own sense of personal, social, and cultural identity, *back home*? Having a better understanding of a student's identity, and possible conflict within it, will assist teachers with supporting a positive transition, and in reclaiming a strong sense of self in integrating their new identity as Canadians (Keddie, 2012). For Kishan, the identity of once being a popular student was challenged arriving in Canada, but as we saw in his description of his experiences in physical education classes, he

returned to that sense of belonging. He emphasized that sense of belonging returned confidence to him as a student, confidence of who he was and is.

Through the interviews, a question about how the students identified culturally also emerged. As it is important to understand how the students perceived themselves back home, it is equally important to understand how they perceive themselves currently. Their individual responses on this topic were unique, and it was interesting to hear the impressions of the participant researchers about their duality of identity as Nepali/Bhutanese. Although the question was not originally part of the interview guide (Appendix 1), it emerged during my second interview and then became a standard question through the last three interviews. This experience demonstrated to me the importance of flexibility with interview guides, as an important insight about the students arose through adding this question. Jacob's response to this question of identity outlines the flexibility that is required of refugees' identity:

> Jacob: So, my parents call me Bhutanese because they're from Bhutan, but they came to Nepal, and I was born in refugee camps. I've never been to Bhutan, so I consider myself Nepali because I do not have anything that represents Bhutan: I do not speak Bhutanese language, I do not have Bhutanese culture, I've never been to Bhutan. It's just because my parents were born there. That's why I'm Bhutanese refugee, it's because I was born in a refugee camp.
>
> DC: Right.
>
> Jacob: Right, so that's why. That's the only reason why I'm Bhutanese. But everything I have is Nepali. I was born in Nepal, I was raised in Nepal, I did Nepali language classes, I practiced Nepali culture just as the Nepali people do, so

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I consider myself Nepali. Like Nepali, but at the same time I don't want to forget

what my parents come from…I respect it. (Jacob, 12-19)

This refugee population has a dual identity in origin, they are refugees from Bhutan but many of the younger people were born in Nepal. They seem to manage this dual identity through a respect of where each individual identifies, without expectations to hold one identity or another. There is an understanding that the experience and the connection of each individual is unique and respected. When I made my trip to Nepal, there was also the same kind of respectful relationship between Hindus and Buddhists there, which are the two religions of the majority of the Nepali people (Dahal, 2003). I observed and was fascinated by the fact that every sacred Buddhist site included a place for Hindus to worship, and at every Hindu place of worship, a space was provided for Buddhists. Much could be learned from this respect for individual beliefs and identities in the current political and social climate in Canada. For Jacob, identity is fluid or at least it became necessary for his identity to adapt to his new experiences in coming to Canada. Though this forced fluidity was frustrating for Jacob in high school, he has come to appreciate the value in being unafraid of change as an adult.

Zoya's and Depika's responses to this question of national identity uncovered two biases of this researcher, which needed to be addressed, explored and required an alteration of language used in this dissertation.

DC: I have a question for you that I've asked the other folks too. Do you consider

Bhutanese or Nepali?

Zoya: Um… I'll say Bhutanese.

DC: Yeah?

Zoya: And Nepali too. …Because my parents born were in Bhutan, so my parents nationality is Bhutan, right, Bhutanese. But we born in Nepal, we don't have, like we didn't get our citizenship there but still we're born in Nepal so I consider that, Nepali and Bhutanese both….I don't know how other people consider.

DC: I've had everything, I've had students say I'm Bhutanese, parents are Bhutanese, that's what I am, and others, I was born in Nepal, why would I call myself Bhutanese, right?

Zoya: [Laughter] Exactly, and now I got citizenship and everything here so…

DC: Now you're Canadian!

Zoya: Yeah, I'm Canadian! So, I consider myself as Bhutanese-Nepalese-Canadian now. (Zoya, 93-106)

This exchange outlines a bias I held, one essential for me to be aware of, and other educators to consider. I should have included Canadian as an option in all of the interviews, and did so afterward, but it was a staunch reminder that I have to reflect on my own labels within this research. If refugees would like to be recognized as Canadians or New Canadians, they should be. One only needs to ask. What was also powerful for me in this exchange was the celebration Zoya pronounced in including her Canadian citizenship after we spoke to it. Her pride is strong, despite the challenges she faced, and continues to face, in this country. It reminds me that although there is room for improvement in supporting refugee students, there has also been quality work done to make students feel welcome and included.

In my interview with Depika, I noted her exclusive use of Nepali, rather than a use of the terms Nepalese and Nepali interchangeably. Her exclusive use of Nepali

required that I revisit the appropriate language to use in this study. In beginning this doctoral program, my understanding was that Nepali represented the language, and Nepalese the people, though I had heard the terms used interchangeably by the students. Although I am unable to reference where this understanding had arisen from, I felt I needed to revisit its authenticity. In investigating the proper use of these terms, I struggled to find official documentation. My guidance on this matter, therefore, comes both through discussions with the research participants themselves, and the *National Geographic Style Manual* (2016).

After this conversation I moved to using Nepali to represent the language and the natives of Nepal, with Nepalis as plural. My new understanding is that Nepalese is an outdated representation that should only be used in proper names that have not changed to this new nomenclature. Therefore, adjustments were needed to be made to all of my former work to reflect this more respectful usage. Again, this insight was not an intention of the question, but every time I visited this topic with my participant researchers, I learned something new or received a reminder about bias. It came to be one of the most important questions I asked, this exploration of identity. A question that was not formulated but was generated through the process of listening to the participant researchers.

As demonstrated, many of the younger members of the community see themselves primarily as Nepali, as they were born in Nepal, and that their parents, after being born in Bhutan, considered themselves Bhutanese. What I learned was that the community is accepting of whatever one identifies as, regardless of age or birthplace and appreciate that many of the students also added Canadian to this identity they brought

with them. What we can learn from this as educators is a simple lesson of acceptance: ask students how they identify, value that identity equal to others, and support the fluidity of identity for refugee students, and all students as they mature into full personhood.

A Refugee Identity – Deficit or Potential?

In reflecting on these responses, it is imperative to note that none of these students identified as a *refugee*, yet this is a label they receive upon entry to the country and is perpetuated through their schooling. It has already been reflected in this work that the term *refugee student* has issue, and that this research is using this term to identify a marginalized population with some common characteristics, understanding that the participant researchers are unique. The emphasis is on the individual experiences within this work, yet refugee is still used as a qualifier. The term refugee is often strongly rejected by students with refugee backgrounds due to its negative perceptions (Kumsa, 2006; Uptin, Wright, & Harwood, 2016). This label carries with it many assumptions, as experienced by the participant researchers, that are often unfounded and unfair. For example, KK was deliberate in describing the misconception that life is better for refugees in Canada:

> When I think about my refugee experience, I had lot of fun, I had so much fun, my childhood was awesome. I was a well-known kid in school, I was you know. Because I did not know what life in Canada was like. I always lived that and it was: this is my life, it was awesome. So, it's not like: oh, it's all obstacles. (KK, 379-380)

As Stewart (2017) observed, refugees often experience "triple trauma" with the third trauma occurring in the resettlement country, where culture shock, discrimination, and

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unfair expectations can serve to further traumatize refugee students. KK, and the other participant researchers, described facing as many challenges in Canada as they had in Nepal.

KK's words speak to another issue in refugee education and research, a tendency to adopting a deficit mindset when thinking about, working with, and researching refugee students (Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). The impact of this deficit mindset on the refugee experience will be further explored in the next section, but here its impact on identity is important to explore. Shapiro and MacDonald (2017) argue that deficit discourse around refugee students "tends to render invisible the forms of agency that are central to a student's sense of identity" (p. 80). Instead they argue for asset discourse, that "emphasizes the resources and strategies that refugee-background students employ toward their goals both inside and outside of educational settings" (p. 81). This was evident within Jacob's journey, and the frustrations he felt around the assumption made that being in language-based classes for an entire year was what he needed because he had a deficit in language:

> Jacob: That's the other negative part about the schooling, they did not let me take
> any of the other classes for the first semester. Or even the second semester. It was
> grade 10, that's why I had to go back to high school one more year...Do you
> remember that I went back to the school?
> DC: Yes.
> Jacob: That was because I was in grade ten when I came to Canada and all I had
> was ESL classes for the first year. I think it would be fair if they would have done
> some kind of examination or something to see how some of the students might

know a little bit of other classes. But there was nothing, no such thing done.

(Jacob, 120-126)

Jacob is right in calling on educators to work with refugee students to know their

identities. Jacob identified as a top student, and as a strong math and science student. If

he had been allowed to demonstrate that, he would have been able to reclaim a piece of

his identity back home and would not have been forced to, yet again, adjust his identity,

and reciprocally, his self-worth.

Uptin et al. (2016) also noted the importance of coming to know refugee students,

and to avoid deficit discourse around the students themselves. The authors noted that

when refugee students explore their challenges as experiences of character building, self-

efficacy becomes part of their identity:

> For some of the young people however, schooling was an important space for
> exerting agency, for constituting themselves as 'students' and 'learners', despite
> the circumstances of their lives in refugee camps. These recounts of schooling,
> exhibit a level of self-reflexivity about how they responded to their circumstances
> and in describing their struggles they described the ways they negotiated shifts in
> their own identity to create ways to endure and find a better life. (p. 605)

These findings echo that of this research, all of the participant researchers, in reflecting

on their high school experiences, exhibited pride at the people they have become. This

was outlined well by Jacob: "It would have been easier, for sure, but again I don't mind. I

think those are the things that made me who I am today" (Jacob, 500). Jacob's identity

has evolved through the challenges he has endured. The argument of this theme is that

some of those struggles, and the subsequent evolutions of identity, could have been

avoided, had his view of self been explored early on. As Fruja Amthor, and Roxas (2016)

emphasized:

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> When the wider discourses are imbibed with antiimmigrant sentiment, or when the racialized social structures impose a sense of constraint on youth's positive identity development and transition, schools could provide the space where educators have an important and powerful reach to impact adaptation and well-being. In these spaces, alternative contexts of reception can be generated, emerging out of careful attention to the youth's needs and out of a sense of possibility towards their tremendous potential in the new society. (p. 161)

The role of schools and educators is to create spaces for refugee students to struggle, adapt, and develop within an environment that promotes a positive self-image. The requirement of flexibility of identity is adopted by refugee students, but that same expectation of fluidity is not placed on Canadian-born students. As will be explored, systemic considerations need to be made to ensure refugee students have the opportunity to develop positive identities and reach their tremendous potential. This starts with a societal and school-based move from discourse about refugees as deficit, to refugees as potential.

Resilience and Capabilities

This theme focuses on the resilience that was demonstrated throughout the participant researchers' stories. The research literature often calls for fostering resilience within refugee students (Pieloch, McCullough, & Marks, 2016; Yohani et al., 2019), in this research it is seen as a character trait the participant researchers possess. This research also highlights systemic injustices that demand continued resilience for refugees after resettlement. In understanding and valuing refugee students' strengths and experience, educators can better support them against systemic challenges. A critique of fostering resilience is explored, and a shift to a capabilities approach to supporting refugees is suggested. A capabilities approach requires an examination of the affordance networks available to refugee students, and the inequalities that exist. This theme

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concludes with evidence of the importance of honoring the characteristics and experiences that refugee students bring to the classroom.

Trauma and Resilience

This thesis is not centered on an exploration of refugee trauma, but as outlined by Kirova (2019), trauma is pervasive and all levels of the refugee experience: forced expulsion, pre-resettlement experiences, and resettlement. Refugees can experience multiple stressors over extended periods of time, at each level, which can lead to complex trauma. Examples of stressors that refugees experience include: loss of family; exposure to war, torture and mass violence; rape and sexual violence; unsafe living conditions; denial of rights; culture shock; discrimination; and loss of identity (Pieloch, McCullough, & Marks, 2016). Complex trauma impacts mental and physical health and can lead to revictimization. As Cook et al. (2005) noted "A comprehensive review of the literature on complex trauma suggests seven primary domains of impairment observed in exposed children: attachment, biology, affect regulation, dissociation (ie, alterations in consciousness), behavioral regulation, cognition, and self-concept" (p. 392). Each of these domains has several associated symptoms that include: social isolation, increased medical problems, difficulty in communicating wishes and needs, impaired memory, self-destructive behavior, problems with processing novel information, and low self-esteem. All of these symptoms create additional challenges for refugee students in learning, communication, and in social development. Cook et al. (2005) offer a six-fold approach to treating complex trauma focusing on: safety, self-regulation, self-reflective information processing, traumatic experiences integration, relational engagement, and positive affect enhancement. It is not the role of educators to treat complex trauma, but there is value in

being cognizant of the impacts, symptoms, and aspects of intervention that can be supported.

As trauma is a coexisting factor for refugee students, it has to be acknowledged in this research, particularly its relation to care ethics. Due to their experiences, refugee students may be less inclined to accept or acknowledge care, impacting the caring relation. Care may also need to be demonstrated differently for refugee students experiencing complex trauma. As noted by Cook et al. (2005), one impact of complex trauma can be difficulty in communicating wishes and needs. Guidance and extra time may be required in efforts to hear expressed needs. Additionally, promoting discussions of experience with refugee students creates the possibility of revisiting trauma. Educators are not necessarily equipped with navigating those discussions fully, but care ethics would suggest they listen, and have a duty to act (Noddings, 2012c). This could result in referral to specialized counselling. As Hutchinson and Dorsett (2012) demonstrated, it is important to not only assume that is a need for all refugees without speaking with them: "many 'new arrivals' [refugee people and families] were routinely referred for specialist trauma counselling services. These routine referrals seemed to be based on an assumption of trauma." (p. 57). We must use both inferred and expressed needs to inform our decisions in care ethics. Although trauma has been experienced, not all refugee students will be seeking specialized support:

> There is no dispute that some refugee people do experience ongoing mental health distress from trauma, and that they also benefit greatly from the support they receive from specialist trauma counselling services…The trauma story influences the assessment and intervention process and ultimately a practitioner's capacity to assist clients in bolstering resilience. (Hutchinson & Dorsett, 2012, p. 67).

These authors suggest taking a "not-knowing" stance, an anti-oppressive approach that does not assume need of trauma counselling or ignore the resilience of the individual. This highlights a common approach in the research literature on supporting refugees experiencing trauma: fostering resilience.

There are many definitions of resilience, but in focusing on refugee students, this definition seemed most representative: "the capacity of a dynamic system (individual, family, school, community, society) to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threaten its stability, viability, or development" (Masten, 2011, p. 494). Within this research I am exploring the individual refugee student, and challenges that are not only significant, but continual (Kirova, 2019). Pieloch et al. (2016) examined what fosters resilience in refugee students through a substantial research review. They concluded:

> It is promising that there are overlapping factors that promote resilience for refugee children despite their vastly different cultural contexts and migratory experiences. These factors include social support (from friends and community), sense of belonging (including having positive ethnic identities), valuing education, positive outlooks/optimism, family connectedness, and connection to the home culture. It is important to note that there appears to be a strong connection between engagement in the school context, feelings of belonging, and positive adaptation across cultures. (p. 337)

Engagement in the school context and feelings of belonging are factors that educators can influence. These authors demonstrated that this is an effective means of fostering resilience. In my experience, refugee students arrive with an excess of resilience, they have survived so much already. Rather than *foster*, perhaps the terminology should be *acknowledge* and *encourage*: educators should celebrate the resilience of refugee students and encourage them to apply that character to their new challenges. The concept of fostering resilience is also critiqued within research literature.

The Problem with 'Fostering' Resilience

When viewing fostering resilience as a key means to overcome trauma, including

that experienced in the resettlement country, it makes systemic issues faced by refugees

acceptable. Additionally, it furthers a deficit approach to understanding the refugee

experience. Paul Michael Garret (2016) exposed that while fostering resilience is now a

popular topic in social work, it may serve as a reinforcement of systemic injustices. In

education, and psychology, the concept of fostering resilience is often upheld as a means

of counteracting the obstacles faced by refugee students and the traumas they have, and

continue to, experience (Pieloch et al., 2016). As Garret (2016) noted:

> Social work interventions, informed by the research on 'resilience', might assist
> young people 'such as those in care, to "join or re-join the mainstream"'. Yet, this
> 'mainstream', its margins and exclusionary modalities and practices are left
> unexplored: similarly, phrases such as 'pro-social behaviour' and 'world of work',
> despite being politically infused, are not interrogated. (p. 1910)

What Garret calls for is an examination of why the resilience is required of marginalized

populations, while the same level of resilience is not asked of the general public: "This

dominant narrative depoliticises and diverts responsibility for dealing with crisis away

from those in power and more embedded structural considerations" (p. 1919).

Resilience has become a popular topic in education alongside social work

(Pieloch et al., 2016). That connection, a movement to foster resilience in marginalized

populations, is one that connects societal issues with educational disadvantages. As

Bottrell (2009) shared:

> Fostering resilience has become an important objective in education and social
> policy and practice, particularly in work with disadvantaged young people,
> families and communities. Resilience work has developed out of research that
> aims to understand healthy development or positive adaptation despite adverse
> conditions more commonly associated with negative outcomes. Research
> grounded in psychological perspectives has investigated increasingly specific

elements, mechanisms and transactions that constitute risk, vulnerability, protection and resilience in order to inform intervention strategies. (p. 322)

If we fail to address the systemic issues facing refugee students, a call to foster, or even celebrate resilience falls flat. Instead, a push to both support students within and outside the classroom, by examining how we can reduce the *need* of resilience in refugee populations *once* resettled is essential. This research includes some initial reflection upon societal challenges within the next chapter and calls for a further systemic examination.

Within this theme, resilience is explored as a trait of the participant researchers, to highlight the challenges the students have faced, and persevered through. The purpose is to illuminate the challenges refugees face and humanize their experience. From an exposition of the evidence, we move to an examination of how valuing the capabilities of refugee students, including their skills, traits and experiences, is an expressed need that benefits the caring relation. Hutchinson & Dorsett (2012) note that a strength-based approach: "stands in opposition to a deficits approach" (p. 66) as it focuses on the capabilities of the individual and avoids disempowering them. This relates to the effectivity sets of the individual-environment relation (Barab & Roth, 2006). When educators are supporting the development of a refugee student, it is essential to identify the student's strengths through conversation and celebrate those gifts. This can support the student's confidence in applying "old tools" to "new jobs", in utilizing their existing effectivity set in their new affordance network. Pieloch, McCullough, and Marks (2016) also noted the important role educators can play in supporting refugee student mental health through celebrating strengths: "Beyond being a referral source for mental and physical health services, teachers can implement school programs for children using creative modalities to promote hope, social competence, and resilience" (p. 336).

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Methods of promoting hope, social competence, and celebrating resilience are explored through the evidence provided by the participant researchers.

Evidence of Resilience as Characteristic

Through the collaborative process of listening to and writing the lived experiences, one characteristic of the participant researchers continually came to light: their resilience. The students demonstrated an incredible level of resilience through their stories of experience, their reflections on those stories, their current realities, as well as their outlook moving forward. This quality of resilience in dealing well with so much challenge and change served as a valuable reminder to learn and respect what the students bring to a relationship. To avoid a focus solely on deficit thinking about what they cannot do or do not know, understanding the needs of refugee students fosters a shift in teacher outlook that includes a capabilities approach to learning (Nussbaum, 2011). A section focusing on the importance of valuing students' capabilities will follow, but resilience is a key theme that was generated from the interviews, and common among this group of refugee students.

There are several examples in the participant researchers' experiences where the students demonstrated resilience. Kishan had a desire to be a police officer, despite having a close community member fatally shot by the police. This is a powerful example, where it could have been so easy for Kishan to fear, or even hate, law enforcement. When combining this shocking loss with all of the other trauma Kishan had experienced in coming to Canada, it would be understandable for Kishan to feel an incredible sense of injustice and anger. At first, he did feel injustice, but rather than letting it defeat him, he decided to take action, both for himself and his community. His goal—of becoming a

police office—is to bridge the gap between his community and the police, in hopes of ensuring this tragedy is never repeated.

Jacob's management of expectations is another example of resilience. His story is a common experience for many high-school-aged refugee students. They work, either expected by their parents, or chosen by themselves, to contribute to their families. The work is the same as that of other teenagers, low paying and often menial. What is different is that the hours are often full-time, or close to it, and are undertaken while maintaining school expectations, adjusting to life in Canada and Canadian schools, learning English, and serving as their family's cultural broker. In Alberta, the provincial government recently decided to reduce the minimum wage for workers under 18 (The Globe and Mail, May 27, 2019). It seems little consideration was given to the realities of teenagers, refugee or not, who are actually working to support their families, rather than for disposable income. Jacob summarized his experience of workload in high school as such:

> I still work 16 hours a day even now, but I was working more than that back when I was in high school. Like high school eight to three you go to school, and then from three to ten, I would work. And then assignments, and then after that I would have to go over the papers that came to my house, and different emails. I would have to call landlord if something goes wrong, I'd have to go to immigrant services in between high school, like on school time. I was busier then, for sure, than I am now. (Jacob, 424)

Jacob was busier then, as a new arrival, learning a new system and language than he is now as a university student, working full time and volunteering for his community.

Jacob's anecdotal narrative of "The Long Road Home" is another key example of resilience. In relaying this story Jacob spoke of how experiences like this, in the early days after arrival in Canada, were the times where his family would cry. Regardless, Jacob would get up early that next Monday morning and get on the bus to school. Later that week on Sunday, knowing it was his fate, he would simply accept there was no alternative and walk home. He did this each Sunday for a few months. He could have given in to this aggravating challenge, he could have quit work, but instead he steadied himself and kept his resilience by maintaining "do it again" or "can do" consistency of character and action. This attitude is prevalent with these students, a *this too shall pass,* that to persevere is to be alive, so best get to the task at hand.

When I asked KK to speak to the teaching staff about his experiences in refugee camps, another demonstration of resilience occurred. He overcame a fear of public speaking, in knowing the difference it could make:

> Yeah, it was nerve racking, because I was public speaking and I was anxious given that experience. But I also think felt that need of teachers need to know where I come from, or where myself and my friends come from, and what experience they had been in. How that can affect their experiences here. I think they needed that. That's why, even though I'm not very good at public speaking, I felt that need and desire to do it, so I accepted that proposal. (KK, 353-354)

KK knew the impact was worth the challenge and demonstrated his selflessness in supporting others.

KK had several other anecdotes that exemplified his resilience, but his development of relationships with Canadian-born students is a very important one.

Despite experiencing negative, and even racist interactions with Canadian-born students, KK continued to work to develop positive relationships. He could have chosen to simply withdraw, engage in conflict or discriminate against Canadian born students himself; instead he sought out others that may feel marginalized or lonely, and worked to embrace them in friendship through common interests. For KK, it was important to show that compassion, even though he had not necessarily received it himself.

Zoya's experiences demonstrate resilience in her approach to her health care profession. She knew there were going to be difficult days, but she was driven to gain her own employment, and support her colleagues in finding that success as well. She sees her current employment as a step on a path to further opportunities. She recognized the importance of struggle in growing (resilience), and commented on this throughout her interview:

> First day of training, it's really hard for me, but from [the] second day I was like: boom! I can do it… Yeah, and my instructors say: oh, you can do it, you are very good at it… Our last practicum, I did it just by myself, because I have to do it right. If I do the course, then I have to do it right… I encouraged my friend too, she almost left the course, and then I said: you paid lots of money for this, you need to do it, you will do it, don't worry, it will be [hard] for a couple days, and then you'll be good. So yeah, I encouraged her too. They almost left… But I never thought about quitting this course, because I thought, we need to do like something in our life too, right? (Zoya, 323-334)

I share this aspect of Zoya's story, which is external to her high school experience, to address a perceived societal bias. The participant researchers were all frustrated by social

media that portrays refugees as choosing to live off of taxpayers, to *live off the system*.

Zoya, who I would have argued was failed by the school *system* before our conversation, instead has demonstrated a devotion to improving herself. She is overcoming *the system*, through her own hard work and perseverance. These systemic issues are explored further in the following chapter.

Zoya's positive attitude and resilience were key in her journey. These characteristics were also essential in navigating the loss of a community member:

Zoya: Yeah, never knows, you heard about [Student] right?

DC; Yeah, I did…

Zoya: Yeah, it's kind of sad…it's kind of…

DC: That was tough.

Zoya: It's tough for us, every time we went somewhere from class, [Student], he was with us. It's kind of hard, we never know what will happen tomorrow, right? So just go with the flow.

DC: Was that really tough on your friend group?

Zoya: Oh yeah. Actually, tough for all of us.

DC: And still is?

Zoya: It's just, especially for [Friend], they were really close, even though we don't talk for like two years with [Friend], and then he was always there for her so, it's kind of hard for her. But now we are all back together…

DC: Yeah, I was very sad, very sad to hear about [Student].

Zoya: Yeah, it's kind of sad… You know it's been a year. A year and some month now, February, March, yeah. Sometimes we go there, in the grave, and stay there for a bit, me and [Friend]. (Zoya, 346-370)

This event is another demonstration of how trauma does not end for refugees upon resettlement, outlined in the concept of triple trauma (Stewart et al., 2019). Zoya described many struggles in her short time on earth, yet she perseveres with a continued positive attitude towards taking lessons from her challenges. This again demonstrates an exemplary level of resilience, and I deeply respect her for it. For educators, this resilience, so common to refugee students, can be acknowledged as a core strength, an essential part of the student's effectivity set. Their resilience is also a means to cultivate development by offering challenges in school to help students grow, while clearly demonstrating care as we unfold those challenges.

Depika was tasked with being a cultural broker at an even younger age than the other participant researchers. Although this had a negative impact on her attendance in school, she blames no one but herself for those decisions. This ownership of her own mistakes, accepting them, and moving forward into her own role in health care shows another form of resilience. She could be frustrated with a system that asked so much of her at such a young age. Instead she demonstrates resilience in not allowing her past to determine her future and forging ahead in a positive way with what needs to be done, even if it takes several attempts.

In each case these students had many opportunities to quit or get angry at injustice in their experiences. Instead, they each chose to overcome those injustices, those challenges and difficulties, accept their reality, and persevere with generative resilience.

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Instead of anger in reflection, they reflected on these experiences with laughter, something that assists them in maintaining a healthy and balanced perspective.

Laughter was a big part of our interviews, an advantage of an established relationship. With these students, laughter was also an aspect of their cultural values. To laugh at the absurdity, the past pain, to not let it overwhelm and debilitate was central to remaining resilient and able to move forward. Laughter in reflection was, and is, an important part of their growth. Continually the students highlighted the value they placed on the hard lessons they had to learn, the negative experiences, and the challenges. Each participant researcher saw these as opportunities for growth, to learn, and improve. Adversity is opportunity. Beyond that, it is through the adversity that they came to value that which they have.

Depika, KK, and Kishan also spoke to how the challenges they have faced have shaped the people they have become and made them grateful for what they have earned. Jacob explored this in depth in his lived experiences, noting the challenges and sacrifices he had made, but also highlighting that which his parents have had to experience as well. What his parents had lost was also a driving force for Jacob, rather than a frustration. Knowing what they had given up, for him, encouraged him to take on all the challenges, and to keep persevering, to be resilient.

All of these stories relate to the concept of triple trauma outlined by Stewart et al. (2019). These experiences are the third place of trauma, occurring after resettlement, through the challenges associated with it. These are challenges experienced in Canada and demonstrate the need to reflect on systemic inequities causing these traumas rather than fostering resilience. In hearing these stories, co-producing them, and revisiting them

again here, how the students have faced their trauma with such grace is inspiring. As I wrote this chapter, because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been suggested that all people capable of working at home to do so. Schools, restaurants, and athletic facilities were closed. People, quite frankly, are scared. There is solace here as I reflect that these students, and their community, were also deeply afraid but still demonstrated resilience through so much more than the inconveniences many are experiencing. These lesson I learnt from them: to carry on, accept challenge as experience, do the best you can, walk home, laugh, *this too shall pass*.

Throughout the interviews, the participant researchers' words continually demonstrated the importance of coming to know individual students. To know their stories, their individual strengths, and their expressed needs. Educators can reflect on these experiences and develop opportunities to hear stories of resilience from their own refugee students. Personal strength is required to get up each day and come to a school where one's peer group is limited, the language is not their own, the culture is new, the system is different, and one could well experience discrimination. This is irrespective of the traumatic events that brought the students to Canada and is a daily reality for refugee students. To continue to get up and go to school, even if supported by parents, requires a substantial level of resilience, justly or not.

Understanding and Valuing Past Experiences and Knowledge

In the literature review, pertaining to working with refugee students in science, teacher cultural awareness included the importance of valuing past experience. This was born of the work of anti-oppression pedagogy, and Freire (2014) offered a succinct

argument for why we need to come to value the experience students bring to the classroom:

> I refer to the insistence with which, for such a long time now, I have argued the need we progressive educators have never to underestimate or reject knowledge had from living experience, with which educands come to school or to informal centers of education. (p. 75)

The participant researchers called for educators to value their past experiences and knowledge throughout the interviews. It is important to discern that the participant researchers saw this not as a pedagogical approach, but rather a means of demonstrating care to establish a relationship. The students not only gain opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and strengths when we bring their experiences to the fore front, they also feel valued by the teacher themselves. If we do not seek out those strengths, or create spaces for the students to demonstrate them, they feel neglected and disconnected from the classroom and school. This is the effect of a deficit mindset about refugee students, and they can sense that mindset in an educator.

A deficit mindset is a view that refugee students are helpless, or only bring needs to the classroom. Instead the participant researchers ask that educators recognize the strengths that are being brought into the classroom. Jacob's story of "The Math Textbook" is an example of a refugee student's capability being missed, and his identity being negatively affected. As noted, Jacob was a top student in Nepal, and he felt there was importance in allowing refugee students to challenge themselves beyond the ESL classroom. Although he likely would have been successful in a math class, he noted even if he was not, he would have been happier if the opportunity had been presented:

> You know what I think: if I go to a math class, it is certain that I learn something. I might fail at the end of the course, but I guarantee that I'll learn something. No

matter if it's in English or not, even with the numbers, I learn something, right?

And it's important to understand the interests of the students. Just because I don't

have English, doesn't mean I don't have anything other than English. I have a lot

of other [skills] that do not need a lot of English. (Jacob, 137-138)

Jacob did not leave this discovery of student strengths as a teacher's responsibility alone,

he stated that he, and other refugee students, have a role as well:

I think it's important for teachers to understand students. And also, it's important

for students to speak up: hey, I know I can do this. But at the same time, it's hard

right, when you're new and you're just starting to go to the school you don't want

to come up to your teacher and say hey, give me this or give me that. So, I think

it's important for both parties, the students to speak up about what they like and

what they want to do, and also teachers to ask and try to understand where the

students are at. (Jacob, 139-140)

Jacob, however recognized that for refugee students, communicating their own strengths

will be difficult at first. As will be explored further in Jacob's recommendations to

teachers, he felt if the teacher can create an atmosphere of care, the students will be more

inclined to share their interests as more opportunities will arise in conversations between

students and their teachers. When we ask about interests, we can also explore strengths,

talents, and unique skills that students have. This includes hearing their stories of

experience prior to coming to our classrooms and exploring their capabilities.

Capabilities Approach

Placing emphasis on strengths, or capabilities, fits well within the individual-

environment framework (Barab & Roth, 2006), as it requires more reflection on the

effectivity set of the students: the individual. This also relates to the field of capability

approaches, and in particular the work of Martha Nussbaum (2011). Nussbaum stated that

a capabilities approach aims to explore two simple questions: "What are people actually

able to do and to be? What real opportunities are available to them?" (Preface, para. 3).

She said that although the questions are simple in statement, the complexity of the

subject, humans, and the multitude of components that make up their quality of life,

delude the simplicity of answering them. The connection to the individual-environment

relation is apparent in this opening description of the approach. A capabilities approach

aims to account for complexity through the

> context of human lives, showing how it makes a difference to what policy-makers
> notice in these lives and, hence, to the ability of policy to construct meaningful
> interventions that show respect for and empower real people, rather than simply
> reflecting the biases of intellectual elites. (Preface, para. 5)

Nussbaum is clear of the need to come to know peoples' stories to have true human

development.

Nussbaum contrasted a capabilities approach to other "dominant theoretical

approaches in development economics: They equate doing well (for a state or a nation)

with an increase in GDP per capita" (Chapter 1, para. 25). She demonstrated that research

like the Sarkozy Commission shows that GDP increasing factors such as foreign

investments, have no impact on raising average household incomes. Examining countries,

or populations, as a quantitative whole, leaves individual needs unmet. It loses the ability

to respect the dignity of individuals. A capabilities approach is sometimes described as a

capability or human development approach. Nussbaum (2011) is purposeful in using

capabilities as her identifier, as she emphasizes the plurality of significant aspects of

quality of life, and that those significant aspects cannot be evaluated through a single

measure, such as GDP. Instead, "Capabilities Approach can be provisionally defined as an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about basic social justice" (Chapter 2, para. 4). The focus is on individual freedom to choose which capabilities to value and employ. Beyond that focus, the approach is centered on ensuring that freedom of choice is equitable in a given population. That not only does the approach examine what capabilities are valued, and the freedom to employ them, but also whether or not that freedom is universal to each individual.

Nussbaum (2011) defined capabilities as the answers to the key question of the approach, what people are able to do and be, the individual's "opportunities to choose and to act" (Chapter 2, para. 7). She then differentiates between *internal capabilities*, those skills a person has, and their affordance to apply those capabilities in their given environments, the external factors. *Combined capabilities* are "not just abilities residing inside a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment" (Chapter 2, para. 7). The concept of combined capabilities ties nicely with the individual-environment relation, the concept of effectivity sets, the internal capabilities, and the affordance network of political, social, and economic environments. The individual-environment relation is, therefore, deeply related to the combined capabilities of a person. Nussbaum argued that a role of society is to develop internal capabilities, and education is one means to do such. In order to develop or unlock capabilities, it is essential to know what students are capable of, and what they hope to be, what they value. Understanding students expressed needs informs educators of what supports are needed to develop those capabilities.

Societies may do well at promoting freedoms to utilize capabilities but struggle in developing internal capabilities. Conversely, a society may do great work at developing capabilities, but impede the ability to exercise those capabilities. Such societies would not be ensuring the appropriate threshold of combined capabilities for a dignified quality of life (Nussbaum, 2011). A capabilities approach serves to expose those barriers and inequalities, and work to support overcoming them. This relates to Garret's (2016) call to examine the systemic barriers faced by marginalized populations, rather than fostering resilience within the individual. One may try to simplify the refugee experience in Alberta as the lack of internal capabilities of the students themselves, or the development of those capabilities, but this is a simplification, and unfair one. Instead, I would argue, that refugee students are capable of critical thought, but have less privilege to speak critically; have the opportunity to realize literacy in English, but economic environments may limit this realization. The values are plural, the capabilities are plural, and singular solutions will not meet the needs, offer the basic dignity, or permit the realization of individual capabilities. Therefore, educators must better understand the individuals, what they value, what they are capable of, and what they want to be capable of. From that understanding, the barriers to realization can be exposed, and supports to overcoming the obstacles for individual students determined. The role of educators and education is to assist refugee students in attaining those unrealized capabilities by supporting development of internal capabilities *and* recognizing and addressing external, systemic, barriers.

Nussbaum (2011) also explored *Basic capabilities*: "the innate faculties of the person that make later development and training possible" (Chapter 2, para. 12). Though

she cautions: "the attitude toward people's basic capabilities is not a meritocratic one—more innately skilled people get better treatment—but, if anything, the opposite: those who need more help to get above the threshold get more help" (Chapter 2, para. 13). My justification for this research is based in a perceived inequality from my experience with refugee students: that the students were not having their educational needs met, and they may in fact have deserved more help than their classmates.

The purpose of exploring a capabilities approach here is as a means of reframing refugee education. Through an awareness of a capabilities approach, educators can move past a deficit perspective, a focus only on unmet needs, to a capabilities account in which they also honor the capabilities refugee students come to the classroom with. Within this research, rather than making an attempt to create a generalized list of valued capabilities of refuge students, I see this theoretical underpinning guiding an exploration of what the individual students' value. What capabilities they have and value in coming to Canada, which do they value but need support in utilizing here, and which are they still aiming to attain. This unites with expressed needs, as an internal capability can be a need, but a need can also be an external, environmental factor, necessary to realize a capability of which their current environment is not permitting.

The focus is on individual opportunities and freedom of choice and action. To improve that freedom and opportunity, educators need to know both what the individual can do and what is restricted, and why. This is the essence of the capability approach: Have conversations about where the students have come from, where they are at, and where they hope to go. That exploration uncovers both that which the individual is capable of and that which they are not yet able. It also allows exploration of why they are

not capable, be it internal or external barriers, and what is needed to attain and use those abilities.

This approach is suggested by the students themselves: that teachers come to know them, create opportunity for them to demonstrate their strengths, and most importantly that educators believe their students have strengths. As was explored earlier, one of those strengths could likely be resilience, so rather than focusing on the trauma experienced, teachers can help the students focus on the strength and resilience they have demonstrated in coming to our schools, in surviving. As Kishan put it so well: "we've been kicked out of our country, twice, we've seen so much loss, one piece of negative feedback isn't going to hurt us" (Kishan, 568). What educators can do is emphasize that resilience as a characteristic the student holds and celebrate it as a strength, alongside all of the other strengths refugee students are bringing to the classroom.

The Importance of Feedback and Challenge

As was just explored, Kishan had no fear of negative feedback, and it was Kishan's thoughts that point to a sub-theme: an expressed need for refugee students to have positive challenges in school. Kishan calls for refugee students to be taken seriously—with capabilities and specific needs—like any other student in a new education system. In reminding the reader, Kishan emphasized that for him, receiving critical feedback from teachers was preferred to receiving no feedback. Kishan interpreted a lack of feedback as a lack of care. Educators may be concerned about negative assessment upsetting refugee students. This may be coming from a place of care, but as Kishan noted, the students may not understand that as a demonstration of care, or worse, interpret it as the opposite. In the caring relation, an assumed demonstration of

care is not actual care; the care needs to be acknowledged and accepted for authentic care to occur (Noddings, 2012c).

Kishan highlighted that refugee students' past experiences often include trauma and challenges. He noted that the resilience required from those experiences far outweigh the impact of critical feedback. Kishan was speaking to his own experience, but he underlines the importance of treating refugee students with the same academic respect as other students. He also emphasized how refugee students will know, in many cases, that they are not performing at the same level as their classmates. Masking that reality in pleasantries is condescending, dishonest, and it can further marginalize the students. For Kishan, it sends a message that not only are you struggling, you are too inept to know that you are struggling, and not capable of improvement. Kishan argued the importance of improvement through feedback is crucial for refugee student success. He felt there is also an essential need to be challenged.

The importance of challenging refugee students was perhaps the most powerful insight emerging in these interviews for my own practice. In reflecting on my own work with refugee students, I regret to admit this was a major fault of mine. I focused far more on supporting refugee students, eliminating challenges and obstacles, than I ever did at pushing them. With my background in coaching rugby, I am well aware of the positive impact that challenges, when attainable, can have on performance. It helps the athlete focus on areas of growth and establishes goals. In working with refugee students, I was passive in the process of goal setting, rarely pushing for higher aspirations. In Noddings (2005) terms, this need of challenge was truly learned as an expressed need; I had not inferred it through my own experience.

The importance of challenging refugee students was not a sentiment that was only shared by Kishan, but he was the most forthright in explaining it. The other participant researchers also spoke about the importance of challenge. In each case, the students had faced challenges, been resilient in overcoming them, and thankful for the growth that occurred. Unfortunately, in most of these cases, the challenge was not related to academics or inspired by a teacher in a safe space. Instead, the challenges were experienced in the students' expectations placed on them by their families, their interactions with Canadian-born students, or in negative relationships with teachers. While these experiences were undoubtedly adverse, and invaluable in the growth the students experienced, they are not the type of challenge that Kishan is implying. He is speaking to positive challenges for students that come from a teacher where the caring relationship is established.

Determining appropriate challenges for refugee students starts with conversation. The importance of dialogue with refugee students cannot be stressed enough in this research, here the conversation is about setting goals *with* refugee students. Again Freire (2014) highlights the importance of speaking with students:

> Even when one must speak to the people, one must convert the "to" to a "with" the people. And this implies respect for the "knowledge of living experience" of which I always speak, on the basis of which it is possible to go beyond it. (p. 20)

Here, in determining how to challenge refugee students, from a place of care to encourage growth, we begin with a conversation. The challenges and educational goals developed with a refugee student must be co-produced. Included are the areas of growth the student identifies and what the teacher professionally plans. The teacher and student determine the implementation, development, and assessment timelines, based on their

shared knowledge of the student's strengths and abilities. As Noddings (2005) outlined, it is important to include students in the discussion of what they will, and are able to, contribute to their own success:

> The student who wants good grades must be willing to work for them. But notice that, in the matter of grades, we rarely ask what the student is willing to contribute. More often, we arbitrarily set the conditions for an A, B, or passing grade. Some children just cannot meet the conditions, especially if the grades are to be awarded competitively. In failing to negotiate the conditions to meet this student want, we miss many opportunities to convert vague wants into felt needs. Instead, the vague want becomes a hopeless longing and the student gives up. (p. 150)

In order to set out challenges that allow for growth, are attainable, and maintain a caring relation, teachers must co-produce these education goals. Without involving the refugee students, educators risk instilling hopelessness. In offering critical feedback, and in developing goals and challenges for growth, a caring relation is essential. To assist educators in understanding approaches to establishing caring relations, suggestions are offered by the participant researchers in Chapter 8.

As Nussbaum (2011) calls for with combined capabilities, and Garret (2016) in critiquing resilience literature, we must also explore the systemic barriers that challenge refugee students. What are the affordance network obstacles that inhibit the ability for refugees to choose and act? What systemic challenges can be addressed that call for continued resilience in refugees? In the current social climate, it is essential that we discuss the barriers created by racism and discrimination. An examination of the impact of overt and covert forms discrimination on refugees' students and their families is called for. This is explored in the second overarching theme of Inequality in Affordance Networks.

CHAPTER 6: INEQUALITY IN AFFORDANCE NETWORKS

Combined capabilities include the individual's abilities, and their opportunity to use those abilities in their environment (Nussbaum, 2011). Likewise, the individual-environment relation proposed by Barab and Roth (2006), examines the relationship between the individual, their effectivity set, and their environment, their affordance network. Thus far the thematic analysis has concentrated on the individual, within this overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I shift the focus to the environment. In reviewing the students' transcripts and stories, codes formed about marginalization, being lost, isolation, loneliness, hate, anger, and discrimination. These codes displayed an inequality in the affordance network of refugee students as compared to their classmates. From these codes two themes were generated: Isolation and Marginalization, and Overt Discrimination.

Noh, Kaspar, and Wickrama (2007), illuminated the difference between forms of subtle racism, which comprises part of the theme of Isolation and Marginalization, and that of Overt Discrimination. In their study the contrasted subtle or indirect forms of racism: being treated unfairly, refused service, ignored and discrimination experienced by family and community members; to that of overt racism: physical violence, being threatened or insulted and being treated rudely. Noh et al. (2007) noted that experiences of subtle racism have a deeper effect on students' mental health—as they must question if their poor treatment is because of individual characteristics or because of prejudice towards their ethnic group—and a deep impact on a sense of belonging. Lennartz, Proost, and Brebels (2019) highlighted that as levels of overt discrimination lower, levels of subtle racism increase due to moral licensing. An example of this could include claiming

that because the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has been undertaken in Canada, discrimination against Indigenous Peoples in Canada is no longer an issue. An investigation into subtle discrimination, and its inducement of feelings of isolation and marginalization is undertaken as a separate theme from overt discrimination. The participant researchers all experienced forms of subtle and covert forms of discrimination, while only some of the participant researchers shared experiences of overt discrimination in school.

Isolation and Marginalization

The participant researchers continually explored feelings of isolation, marginalization, being lost, ignored by teachers and classmates, and being silenced. Kishan felt so isolated at times that he likened his experience to that of a person who does not speak: "But coming in here, experiencing a new language, you know it's like… the Mute thing, Mute people" (Kishan, 148). In developing the stories, and in coding the transcripts, the systemic issues that initiated these feelings of marginalization came to light. A theme exploring these codes was generated, Isolation and Marginalization: forms of subtle and covert discrimination experienced and perceived by the research participants.

Evidence and Discussion of Isolation and Marginalization

Both KK and Kishan explored the differences between school in Nepal, and their experiences in a Canadian high school. In both cases the students noted an appreciation for the absence of corporal punishment in Canadian schools. KK noted:

We got beatings in school. Teachers, they would give us materials to memorize, and they would ask the same questions next day, and we would come back to

school and they would ask us questions, and if we were able to answer them we don't get beatings, if we are not able to answer we'll get beatings though. And that was that. (KK, 8)

In my own experience teaching in Nepal, I was aware that corporal punishment was still widely used, though the school I was working at had recently disavowed the practice. Instead their model of punishment included physical fitness and humiliation. It was made clear to me by the students in Nepal that they preferred these consequences to physical beatings. I asked KK how he felt when he realized corporal punishment was not part of schooling in Canada, he responded:

I felt it was awesome. Being back in Nepal, I remember telling myself that if there were no beatings in school, I would educate myself so much because, that was always a problem, and remember praying that I wish there was such school where there was no beating. Then I come, it's like there's no beating, I'm like, WOW, that's so incredible, that's awesome you know? I was really happy about that, when I found out that there are no beatings in schools here. (KK, 20)

Despite this positive difference about school in Canada, KK still felt that there were negative realities in his new home:

I definitely went through culture shock. Back in Nepal I was a well known kid in school because I always participated in speech competitions. I also had the experience of being a classroom captain. All the teachers knew me because I was one of the bright students. Then I came here, and nobody knew I was having hard time. I was having so much trouble communicating with peers. I did have fun In

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ESL classes. That gave me confidence. But as soon as I stepped out of that ESL

class, to go to mainstream classes, I would lose that confidence. (KK, 30-32)

Communicating and connecting with his peers became a real challenge in Canada for

KK. This feeling of isolation from peers, and the frustration associated with it, is common

in the research literature about refugee students (Kirova, 2019). Kishan shared a similar

reflection: "I would say 50/50 like good and bad. Because if we did miss something, we

had some elder, and we used to get beating by elders, by the teacher" (Kishan, 7). When I

inquired what the good aspects were, Kishan shared it was his connections to classmates:

> Back home, interacting with friends, that's all. It's hard to interact here with the
> Canadian people. Because of language, right? Back home it's kind of easy because
> we share the same language. (Kishan, 16-18).

Kishan was identifying the language barrier as the main burden to his ability to connect

with his classmates, but when I asked if it has become easier for him now that his

language has improved, he explained that the challenge is still prevalent:

> Friends? Yeah, I still have that challenge, now in college. I still have the challenge
> of making and interacting with friends here. (Kishan, 26-28).

As Lund and Nabavi (2008) illuminated, the school is a microcosm of our larger society.

The challenges that KK and Kishan were, and are facing, in fostering relationships with

Canadian-born peers extends beyond a language barrier. It is part of a larger systemic

xenophobia towards new-comers in general, and refugees in particular.

As Kirova (2019) well noted, negative social media, divisive socio-political

rhetoric and shift towards nationalistic thinking propagates stereotypes about refugees

that are neither fair or accurate. I would add a concern about the rise of overt white

nationalism in response to current events, and the Black Lives Matter movement, adding

to the challenges refugees face in public opinion. All of this misinformation clearly

impacts many Canadian-born students desire and willingness to reach out to refugee

classmates. Therefore, teachers, schools, and government institutions need to work to

share refugee stories to improve and promote empathy to the refugee experience. It is

important to note, in these two responses, KK and Kishan were equating the loneliness

experienced due to isolation from their peers to the physical violence and fear associated

with corporal punishment. That is the level of pain they felt from isolation, and a clear

reason to explore ways to negate, or at least mitigate, these experiences.

The research literature continually acknowledges that refugee students often feel

isolated from their native classmates (Due, Riggs, & Barclay, 2016; Kirova 2019). Many

researchers have noted the importance of helping to bridge this divide (Guo et al., 2019;

Massfeller & Hamm, 2019), but few have offered methods to do so. In our interview, KK

offered two insights: First, that educators need to create spaces where refugee students

can demonstrate their talents, generally where language is less important. Second, that we

need to determine the interests and goals of refugee students and connect them with

Canadian-born students who hold those same interests. Clearly, within schools, efforts

need to be made to develop the anti-racist pedagogy and activism promoted by Lund and

Nabavi (2008) over a decade ago. Methods to support the development of positive peer

relationships are explored in the next chapter. Here, I also examine the impact of feelings

of isolation and marginalization enacted by teachers.

Jacob explored the impact of feeling ignored by teachers, and how their demeanor could influence his desire to seek support. In reflecting on seeking support in the classroom, Jacob shared this:

> Because I had to go up to them so many times, and probably because they had so many other things going on as well, the first time I went and got a response. Second time I went back it was not the same response I got the first time, at least not the same attitude. Third time I went back it was a different attitude, so after that, I thought, you know what I think I'm just irritating my teacher [Laughter]. I'm thinking I'm just blocking myself from getting extra help next time, so after that I didn't bother. (Jacob, 231-233)

As a teacher I have had many students, of all backgrounds, who were continually in front of me asking questions. I admit at times it can be frustrating, but I also know the power of a welcoming face, and risk of losing a connection with them without it. This observation by Jacob reinforces that, and is a good reminder for educators of the impact our body language and attitude can have on students. As Jacob noted, it is essential to present a welcoming persona: "Even if you're acting, that works" (Jacob, 529). It is well documented that teacher burnout is correlated to the demands of the occupation (Mérida-López & Extremera, 2017). Navigating conversation with language learners is only one challenge faced by educators, but refugee students deserve the same care and attention as other students.

As Kishan noted, when that attention has an imbalance, it is noticed and creates further barriers to growth for refugee students. He viewed the act of providing him time and attention as a clear demonstration of care:

They would give me extra time to complete my assignments, and then understand what I was saying. They want me to focus on the things that I want to…Yeah, and then [they] kept coming and giving me company. That was really good. (Kishan, 284-286)

Part of that attention is ensuring that refugee students are receiving the feedback they need for growth in the classroom:

DC: …you felt that those classes you loved, were because you felt like teachers were coming to you and giving you feedback.

Kishan: Oh, yeah, they would give me feedback, even if they said bad thing I would take that as a good thing. Cause I know how to totally improve that.

DC: Right. So even if they gave you negative feedback, you didn't feel negative about yourself.

Kishan: Yeah, no.

DC: And why do you think that was?

Kishan: Cause, if teacher say nothing, that would like impact me more.

DC: That's more of a negative impact?

Kishan: Negative. Right? But if teacher give the negative thing, people take as positive and then we improve that you know? (Kishan, 401-409)

This offers an important reminder for educators: Not offering feedback, to avoid criticism, is not only detrimental to the student's development, it can be perceived as discrimination. If feedback is not given, it can create a sense in the students that they are not valued in the classroom. Feeling valued by a teacher was essential for Kishan in a caring relation.

When I asked Kishan what his advice for teachers would be, he emphasized the importance of remembering to challenge refugee students:

> interact with them, so the student will learn more… And helping, I would say helping. Not just specifically helping but giving more challenges…. I could feel discriminated by that, you know [not receiving attention]. Even if I did a good assignment… And don't just focus on the Canadian people, focus on the other people too. Do 50/50 so that the students are not *lost*. (Kishan, 543-549)

Lost has a power in this statement that connects us back to isolation and marginalization. Kishan was deliberate in his emphasis that not receiving feedback leaves a student feeling lost. That feeling, in a place meant to be safe for refugee students, is a difficult addition to all of the other experiences in which the students are feeling lost within a new country. It is essential that schools provide refugee students opportunity to find connection and belonging (Uptin et al., 2016), when this is not supported by teachers, it amplifies injustices faced by refugees in the larger community.

Zoya shared that she felt regret about not connecting more with her school. She noted how she missed substantial amounts of class, and that this impacted her connection. Zoya expressed this regret when reflecting on one of her favorite memories from school:

> Yeah, one day, color day, always second last day of a school…we came late that time, but it was really fun, people were walking all the hallways and like throwing papers, balloon and everything… OH YEAH! That day made me feel like I should not have missed so much class before. We felt like that, but we were too late. Yeah, we missed lots of classes, I feel regret about it now. (Zoya, 145-155)

Although Zoya offers this regret, it should be noted that she, and her refugee classmates, were not asked by any organizers of the event to play a larger role. The clubs and groups highlighted within these videos never included an exploration of the ELL students in the school. This is a common issue, non or limited representation of minority groups in school clubs (Cerezo & Bergfeld, 2013). Adult staff overseeing such activities need to consider representation of *all* students in any activities that are meant to represent their schools. In lacking that representation, feelings of marginalization, isolation, and not being valued are understandably provoked.

Depika also had feelings of regret from not engaging more with school activities. She had some insightful advice for new-comers about attendance: "I would say go to classes right away, and then try talking with everybody, don't just sit in corner…Be friendly…Yeah, if I did not sit in corner, and then talk to everybody, then it would have been more nice" (Depika, 421-425). Engaging with Canadian-born students was a difficulty for Depika, but it is a challenge she wished she had taken on more in high school. She saw the reward for this risk as two-fold: your conversational English will improve, and that you will foster more friendships. Furthermore, she felt these relationships would also help refugee students to understand Canadian high school, and local social norms, which would reduce feelings of isolation. Depika offered that teachers can assist students in fostering relationships with their classmates by including group work, something that she deeply valued.

For Depika, going to class, and interacting with her Canadian-born classmates were both things she regretted not engaging with more readily. I know that for all of the students with attendance issues, refugee or not, a conversation of the importance of going

to class was one that was often futile when coming from an administrator. Perhaps the reflections of former students, closer in every way to our current students, may be more powerful. It could be of value to have graduated refugee students come back and speak to new arrivals to offer such advice.

These reflections from Depika and Zoya are a reminder of the importance of encouraging refugee students to participate in co-curricular activities within the school. The reality of refugee students' external expectations can make this difficult as after school hours are often loaded with responsibility. Our school, however, also had a plethora of lunch hour clubs that the students could have taken part in. The refugee students could also have been supported in organizing clubs around interests they have. Developing clubs based on refugee students' interest is a means to connect refugee students with their classmates. Investing in the development of anti-racist activism clubs, as explored by Lund and Nabavi (2008) is one possibility of creating a space where the refugee experience can be further shared, appreciated, and acted upon: "these accounts and analyses offer a revealing glimpse into the lived experiences of racism and the efforts of those who try to challenge it from within schools in communities" (p. 15). To understand racism, we need to understand the experience through the eyes of those experiencing it, share those stories, and build empathy towards the human beings impacted. This also keeps the focus on individuals and their stories, which are all unique, rather than generalizations used to discriminate.

One of the most interesting moments in my conversation with Zoya occurred when I asked her about any negative experiences she had in high school. The question I

posed to her was framed around overt discriminatory experiences with teachers or students:

> Zoya: No, not here.
>
> DC: Really?
>
> Zoya: NO!
>
> DC: Really?
>
> Zoya: No, I enjoyed classes and everything
>
> DC: You're not going to offend me.
>
> Zoya: No, no, no.
>
> DC: Honestly?
>
> Z: Yeah!
>
> DC: Never? Not one bad thing?
>
> Zoya: Honest, but I feel guilty because I skipped the class, that's the only reason…I should go to the school before I guess, but yeah, at least I enjoyed a lot for like one year, and a lot. (Zoya, 280-292)

This exchange highlights another of my own biases. I was so sure that all of the refugee students had been frustrated by at least some teachers, and that they had all experienced overt racism in our school. As will be explored in the next section, several of the other participant researchers did experience overt racism, but this was not Zoya's experience. She demonstrated to me that my belief that all of the students see overt racism was misguided, and perhaps discriminatory in itself. It also reinforced the need to explore more subdued forms of discrimination that support systemic challenges for refugees (Bishop, 2015).

Another form of marginalization common to the participant researchers'

experiences was an assumption that they preferred living in Canada. As was explored in

the chapter on understanding identity, KK stated how he preferred life in the refugee

camp to that of Canada, at least initially. Zoya echoed the sentiment that life in Canada as

a refugee is not necessarily preferable to the refugee camp. Upon arrival, and in her early

experiences in Canada, she often wished she could go back to pre-resettlement:

> I feel like, [I want] to go back to my country [Laughter]. Because I didn't know,
>
> nothing was right, so it's kind of hard to understand their language and stuff like
>
> that, and then sometimes they don't understand what we are trying to say to them,
>
> and then they are like: oh no! (Zoya, 62)

When I explored who it was that she felt was not understanding her, she replied that it

was both students and teachers:

> Oh, teachers and students both, 'cause they talk, they have bigger word than ours,
>
> so we use small words, but they use the bigger words, so it's kinda hard to
>
> understand big words, like meaning of those word…Yeah hard to
>
> communicate…yeah it's kind of hard to communicate because of the bigger
>
> words, we don't even know the meaning of those words, so we can't even say like
>
> oh yeah, yeah, right? (Zoya, 62)

An important lesson I have learned through my time working with refugee students is that

they do not always see life in Canada as better, especially in their first few years. It is a

common misconception that refugees would be happy to have been *saved* from the

refugee camps. Instead there is often further trauma experienced in resettlement (Stewart

et al., 2019). The concept that they have been emancipated by being transported from a

third world country is quite colonial in nature and assumes the reality of a refugee camp to be worse than life in the resettled country.

For one, the language and culture is so different. Two, though there is arguably more opportunity for the families in Canada, those opportunities do not guarantee actualities. In the terms of the individual-environment relation (Barab & Roth, 2006), the affordance network may be greater in Canada, but without the necessary individual effectivity sets—including language mastery—life can actually be more difficult in Canada. Upon arrival, one needs to: learn language; adapt to cultural differences; seek, procure and maintain employment; and further one's education. All this must be undertaken before beginning to approach the quality of life enjoyed by most Canadians.

To assume a universal refugee experience, even for those individuals with similar backgrounds is unfair, unfounded, and prejudiced. I have chosen to share these individual stories, rather than thematic collections, to recognize the individuality of experiences for each specific person, with all its messiness. I should, therefore, be aware of the uniqueness and hesitate to assume experiences. It reminds me to be humble in this process, mindful of my own set of inferred needs and assumption, and to not act as, or burden the responsibility of, some kind of a *savior*. I am not a savior, either in this research, or in the field. I am working to become an ally (Bishop, 2015) in supporting the needs of refugee students, and acting as a platform for their voice. The responsibility I hold is not to assume experiences to be universal, but to listen to each individual's experiences and help highlight them. Zoya reminded me of this through this interview, through her deep resilience and positivity against events that I may have perceived as slights, but she clearly did not. For example, the school did not successfully support her

in gaining her high school diploma, but this is not something she blames the school, or me for. She was never asking to be saved from an unfair school system. Rather, she accepted ownership in her role, and acknowledged that she should could have attended class more regularly. Despite this inspiring attitude, the expectation of this resilience exists for refugee students, which has its own discriminatory undertones.

In the stories of experience shared by the participant researchers, they were continually called upon to demonstrate resilience. These are further examples of systemic marginalization. Phan (2003) explored the experiences of Vietnamese students in Vancouver: "They all experienced either covert or overt forms of racism, which contributed not only to their views of school and society in general, but also to how they viewed themselves in relation to others" (Phan, 2003, p. 564). In creating an atmosphere where refugees are looked at from a deficit, and unfortunate perspective, refugees are faced with yet another obstacle to success. They now have to convince others they have value to simply access the same affordance network facets others appreciate, such as teacher's attention and classroom comradery. As Phan noted:

> There are social psychological effects to being a member of a racially subordinated group. Freire (1973) explains: "In order for cultural invasion to succeed, it is essential that those invaded become convinced of their intrinsic inferiority. The more invasion is accentuated, and those invaded are alienated from the spirit of their own culture and from themselves, the more the latter want to be like the invaders: to walk like them, dress like them, and talk like them" (p. 151). As long as they play the role of the "good minority," they will be rewarded by the dominant group. (Phan, 2003, p. 559)

The participant researchers all had to work at the role of good minority, adding another distraction to focusing on learning English and the content of school. Unlike many of their privileged classmates who received guidance from teachers, and acceptance from

classmates without needing to first demonstrate their value to the classroom, school, and larger communities.

Refugee families not being financially supported in a manner that places the family above the poverty line is another form of systemic marginalization: "Research has found that many immigrant minority children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at risk for academic failure" (Phan, 2003, p. 556). This socioeconomic reality drives students to work earlier, and with greater time commitments than most of their classmates. Additionally, the parents are less capable of supporting their academic success (Paat, 2013). This all negatively impacts the students ability to attend post-secondary institutions (Phan, 2003). That restricted access perpetuates through generations, and has negative effects on families, refugee communities, and the greater society, as Anderson (2020) highlighted:

> At its very core, university and other postsecondary participation and completion serve as vessels of socialization into not only English-medium academic discourses and communities required for academic and professional success, but into the broader Canadian society and economy as well. (p. 11)

Phan (2003) also highlighted the importance of school to refugees as a means for upward social movement:

> School seemed to emerge as a place where the youths attempted to attain their goals. For these youths, acquiring an education and getting good grades were linked to the dominant ideology of achieving upward economic and social mobility. School success was also seen as providing a way to pay back parents for the sacrifices they made in coming to Canada. However, they also addressed what they perceived as being the oppressive nature (with racist overtones) of the educational system for themselves and other Vietnamese-Canadians. (Phan, 2003, p. 558)

The racist overtones create, imbed, and perpetuate feelings of isolation and marginalization within schools and the larger society. This is why systemic changes need

to be sought to better support refugees through honest representation of their experience. There is also a call for diligent obliteration of misinformation and rhetoric about refugees. Educators can support refugee students by listening to the stories of experience, sharing and creating platforms for their voices, and having representation within schools and larger systemic institutions (Cerezano & Bergfeld, 2013). This all serves to combat the underlying racism experienced by the participant researchers. Those experiences also included overt discrimination, and an examination of that theme and its implications for refugee learners is also essential within this research.

Overt Discrimination

Within the interviews, there were several anecdotal narratives that demonstrated experiences of overt racism and discrimination. The descriptions of these incidents included feelings of fear and injustice, and experiences of hate, abuse, violence, threats, and discriminatory practice. This aligned with many of the descriptors offered by Noh et al. (2007) in describing overt discrimination. Their work included terms like hit, threatened, insulted, and treated rudely. Lennartz, Proost, and Brebels (2019), offer a description of overt discrimination as "openly expressing prejudices toward certain groups" (p. 129). Overt forms of discrimination within this research invoked different emotions than that of isolation and marginalization. Therefore, this second theme is explored, Overt Discrimination: experiences of explicit discrimination.

Overt Discrimination with Peers

All three of the male participants in this study experienced overt discrimination. Why the female participants stated that they did not experience the same forms of explicit racism is interesting and could be a topic for future research. It may be conceivable that

gender differences exist with regard to attitudes towards refugees, but a study by Hughes and Tuch (2003) that explored a similar question concluded that there were "very small or nonexistent gender differences in attitudes about racial minorities" (p. 394). Though gendered *attitudes* may not have striking differences, I wonder if the *acts* of overt racism are more common within high school boys than high school girls. Phan (2003) noted gender differences in how the male and female Vietnamese refugee students viewed themselves in light of experiences of discrimination. The females "resisted the impulse to see themselves as victims" (p. 563). Perhaps the female participant researchers did not view their experiences with discrimination in the same manner. Regardless of this gendered split, within this section I will revisit the experiences of the three male research participants.

KK offered two anecdotal narratives of discrimination. In his first encounter he was initially excited by an interaction with a Canadian-born student, which speaks to the intense isolation these students felt from their classmates:

> There was one experience I encountered as soon as I came to Canada. This was
>
> back in when I was in 9. I was in art class and what happened was, I was drawing
>
> something and then this other kid threw water, like not a whole bunch of water, it
>
> was like just drops of water on my artwork. And I thought he was like, just
>
> teasing with me. He was Canadian kid. I was happy about it, because someone
>
> was interacting with me. Joking around, teasing me, right? (KK 78-79)

It unfortunately, quickly became apparent this was not a friendly jest:

> And then it was almost the end of the class, so we usually put our artwork in a
>
> different room, there was a storage room. So, I went into the room and put my

artwork, then I was coming out, HE THREW WATER in my face. I was like:

"okay this is not okay, this is stepping out of bounds, this is not okay, this is

crossing my boundary… and then I got mad about it and…(KK 80-81)

KK goes on to explain how he ended up in an altercation, and based on his school

experience in Nepal, this was normal. He was quickly escorted to the office where it was

explained to him that in Canada, physical violence is not the norm, and not simply settled

with a handshake:

Then I was reminded of Canadian norms, what happens if you do such a thing. So

basically, I did not get suspended, but if I was to do that again I would suspended

from school. So, after that I never fought. (KK, 84)

Jacob's story, "Don't Call Me Asian", ended in a similar manner as he too experienced

discrimination early on, and reacted to the confrontation in a similar manner, as that was

his norm. He then also met with school administration. From my own experience it is not

uncommon for refugee students to meet *standard* consequences for their actions, before

being provided a clear picture of norms in Canadian schools. It is also documented that

refugee students often feel they face racism from administrators (Guo et al., 2019).

Thankfully, in both cases, Jacob and KK were permitted an explanation before meeting a

serious consequence. What happened to the other students, the perpetrators, is unknown

to the participant researchers, and to this author. In places, like school, where

institutionalized racism can be prevalent, it is possible that no consequences came for the

other students, despite being the instigator. In athletics, particularly in contact sports, a

common coaching point for athletes is to not retaliate to foul play, as the referee

commonly observes the reaction and not the action that inspired it. In schools, similarly,

these issues can occur, especially if the initial act is verbal or non-violent and the re-action is violent. Systemic racism is on full display when parents demand a consequence for a refugee student, without investigating their own children's actions. This was the case in Jacob's story, as the other student's parent demanded that the school act. Revisiting this story caused the recollection of one of the most unfortunate incidents I have heard of between a school and a refugee in our community.

Several years ago at a school I did not work at, an Afghani refugee was expelled from school for threatening to attack a group of students' family members. He was expelled, despite the fact he took no actual action other than the verbal threats. He was defending his sister, who was in grade 9, and had been verbally assaulted by this group of young men. Their tirade included racial, sexual, misogynistic, and violent language. Those boys, in grade 12 carried on with their schooling without consequence. The refugee boy in grade 10, who I had taught the previous year, never returned to school. The systemic inequalities are thorough in this situation. A group of white students, and their parents, pressured school and district administration into the expulsion of this student under threat of exposing a biased recollection to the media. The Afghani family took no recourse as they had no financial, language, or cultural capital to defend themselves. I was made aware of this incident through teachers that worked with the unfortunate boy in this story. I question why both sides of this story were not investigated, and appropriate consequences served. This was an opportunity for a school to bridge communities and explore discrimination, instead they propagated it. Systemic issues allow for this kind of injustice, and these inequalities in affordance networks put refugee students at a further disadvantage.

KK's initial experience was followed by a second experience of overt discrimination. In this second occurrence, he *knew* to walk away, but was not comfortable in following up with an adult to ensure the other student's behavior was addressed. This is a result of marginalization, a belief that more danger would come if he complained, meaning that KK had learned to always be the one to walk away, and to remain silent. He learned that as a refugee, he is silenced. The Canadian-born instigator is privileged in being able to come to an adult if confronted, or if a violent reaction occurred. This is systemic racism, this is privilege. Kishan's experience at the water fountain in "A Difficult Situation" also echoed this reality, and he chose to walk away and not pursue justice. His choice was based in the lessons learned, and communicated to him, from friends like KK and Jacob: That *we* cannot fight, and *we* should not go to adults about this and possibly bring on worse events for ourselves, our fellow refugee students, and our community. This is the trauma of resettlement spoken to in Stewart et al.'s (2019) concept of triple trauma. Resettlement is supposed to offer safety and sanctuary, for these young men it offered fear, injustice, and silence. The participant researchers did not label these experiences as traumatic, perhaps because of the things experienced previously, but there were obvious impacts:

> So that was not good experience, because, I realized what not to do, but then also I felt that sense of other people disconnecting from me. I didn't want that I wanted other people to connect with me. When they saw that, other people looked at me weird. I was like: oh, what have I done, what did I do. (KK, 87)

KK defended himself, that is what he did. If refugee students cannot defend themselves, or seek support in these situations, they have a distinct inequality on their affordance network.

Overt Discrimination in the Classroom

The experiences of overt discrimination in school were not limited to interactions with the students' peers. Kishan included a story in which he felt discriminated against by a teacher, "Name That Tune". I include it here, despite the feelings of marginalization it also depicted, because this anecdote was the only one to receive the code of *anger*. Despite all the challenges, and the stories of trauma and discrimination already described, this was the only time that any of the participant researchers expressed anger. Perhaps this is because the participant researchers have chosen to leave the past where it is, and have forgiven the transgressions of youth, the behavior of their peers. The anger in this case may come from a belief that teachers should be better, that teachers should not be prejudiced. That is a justified anger. Within Kishan's interview, his anger was still palatable, it felt traumatic: "Yeah, I was really frustrated. Like even now, I get really mad about her, you know" (Kishan, 376).

It is not the intention, nor the purpose, of this research to critique the pedagogy of this teacher. The intent of this research is to offer suggestions of how to better support refugee students. This story is important to share to remind educators that we can learn from mistakes. To ensure being culturally sensitive in our classrooms to create a better atmosphere of inclusion. This teacher may have been using "name that tune" simply as a means of engaging students, and I cannot confirm that the scores were calculated into students' grades. The problem is that Kishan believed they were and did not understand

the purpose of the activity. Kishan, who spoke to how isolated he felt in general in coming to Canadian high schools, was further isolated by an assumption that all students would be engaged by western popular culture. In the interview, I joked with Kishan that it was likely the teacher did not include any Nepali songs. Though we both had a laugh, in reflecting on the transcript, that is exactly what this teacher could have done. If she had included a Nepali song, it would not only include Kishan, but allow for a teachable moment. His classmates could gain insight into his culture *and* empathetically understand how difficult this game may be for someone who did not grow up in a given culture. Adjusting to include refugee students not only demonstrates that they and their culture are valued, it can serve to build bridges between refugee students and their classmates. Including connections of culture can strengthen openness and relationally supportive education.

As Guo et al. (2019) explored, refugees experience racism in the classroom, despite beliefs that teachers should be empathetic to students. Systemic issues of race still exist in Canada, and schools are not an exception to this. As Phan (2003) demonstrated, the students perceived racism as a common problem in the classroom:

> Their stories revealed the classroom to be a place where they learned about the unequal power relations between racial groups. They said they were silenced, marginalized, or even criminalized, while others received privileged treatment. (p. 560)

Though silenced and marginalized, the students in this study, like the participant researchers, persevered:

> They stated that through individual effort, determination, and a positive attitude, they could overcome discrimination and reach their goals. In fact, their experiences with racism may have contributed to their academic motivation and sense of personal efficacy. They staunchly believed that their situation, though frustrating at times, was never hopeless. (p. 564)

While impressive in their determination, it again demonstrates that a systemic racism

exists in schools. This needs to be identified, addressed, and efforts made to teach about

anti-racism.

As Angela Davis stated: "In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we

must be anti-racist" (as cited in Mapedzahama, 2019). Programs like those examined by

Lund and Nabavi (2008), that include the students in anti-racist activism is one step

schools can take:

> Developing proactive educational approaches to the cultural diversity brought
> about by immigrant and refugee students' needs to honor Li's reminder that
> integration is not simply about confining people to rigid expectations and norms;
> rather, "integration is about giving newcomers the right of contestation, the
> legitimacy of dissent, and the entitlement to be different" (p. 330). (as cited in
> Lund & Nabavi, 2008, p. 4)

There needs to be a move to invite new-comers to partake in social justice and anti-

racism clubs. Their participation in these clubs, and in sharing their stories, should serve

to enlighten Canadian-born students of the challenges faced by refugee and immigrant

populations. With hope, this can lead to empathetic understanding and the fostering of

healthy peer relationships between all students. Examples of projects undertaken by these

clubs include creating videos for combating racism, refugee experience simulations, and

creating awareness of multiple forms of oppression. These clubs do not come without

challenges, as to be expected in a discriminatory system:

> Specific challenges to the young activists' work in schools included a variety of
> social struggles with peers while undertaking projects that address racism and
> other discrimination. Throughout their interviews the students addressed the
> widespread apathy they noted among many of their peers toward issues of
> diversity. (Lund & Nabavi, 2008, p. 10)

Beyond clubs, provincial curriculum designers should be including more anti-racist focus in development. Organizations like Teaching Tolerance offer free online support for teachers, including lesson plans and activities for teachers to use in the classrooms (Teaching Tolerance, 2020). Administrators need to support teachers in developing and implementing anti-racist pedagogy across subject areas. Lund and Nabavi offer many other considerations for schools in supporting anti-racist work:

> insights into educational reform, including the need to address non-discriminatory hiring practices, adequate representation of marginalized groups in curricular materials, culturally sensitive educational programming, respectful parent and community engagement, and other specific approaches to attaining equity and social justice for all students. (Lund & Nabavi, 2008, p. 4)

Similar to Bishop's (2015) work on becoming an ally, Utt and Tochluk (2020) offer a framework for white teachers to develop effective anti-racist pedagogy:

> *Understanding oneself*
> 1. Analyzing privilege and microaggressive behavior
> 2. Exploring ethnic and cultural identities
> 3. Engaging with history of White anti-racists and multiracial struggles for justice
> 4. Developing intersectional identity
> *Accountable action in community*
> 5. Building White anti-racist community
> 6. Demonstrating accountability across race (pp. 130-131)

This is just one example, there are many steps that can be taken, and an ever-growing resource base. The suggestion of this author, in recognition of the Black Life Matters movement, is that anti-racist pedagogy will improve the quality of refugee students' experiences in school, and in quality of life. As all students experience this pedagogy, misconceptions and inaccurate beliefs about refugees can be addressed. This should reduce the experiences of overt racism refugee students experience from their peers. It will also serve to reduce the inequality in affordance networks of refugee students as it highlights those inequalities need to be addressed.

Overt Discrimination in Society: Revisiting Kishan's Story

In light of the realities of 2020, it is important to also revisit another of Kishan's

stories, "Tragedy to Opportunity". With the events of George Floyd's death—and many

others including Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery—the Black Lives Matter

movement has been a dominant topic in public discourse. This has spurred many

discussions about police work and police action across the globe. Canada is not exempt

from this discussion, nor should it be. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)

are disproportionally victims of fatal police encounters in Canada (CBC, 2018). It is hard

to know if the events described by Kishan were racially motivated, and Kishan himself

has come to understand that the police acted as their procedure expects. However, if the

police have systemic issues of discrimination built into those policies and procedures,

simply ensuring they are followed does not help the refugee community. It is important to

reflect that Kishan believed that the incident would have been different if the language

barrier had not existed: "Yeah, if he knows the language then he would not have got shot"

(Kishan, 97). Could this situation have been deescalated? Was deadly force the only

solution? Kishan noted a difference in this approach to that of Nepal:

> Back home, like even if someone got drunk and then grabbed a knife or, like a
>
> spear, or anything, police used to shoot them in the leg, or fire in the air, so you
>
> know, the people, they go to the ground. (Kishan, 107).

In Kishan working to become a police officer himself, he can help to support language

and culture challenges between his community and the police. This is one aspect,

representation, that can work to avoid tragedies like this experience. It may also call for

systemic considerations of use of force, and perhaps means of redefining police. Jean

(2020) offers several suggestions of steps that may reduce incidents of fatal police encounters:

> This includes enhancing funding to strengthen institutions that can actually help to reduce crime in the long and short term (e.g., education, housing, mental health treatment).[14] Going beyond these proposals, I suggest complete redefinition of the role of police in communities. Instead of having one standardized number to call for every emergency, there should be a ranking of the type of emergency, ranging from immediate/life-threatening to a civil dispute that could be handled without law enforcement. (p. 2)

This is an emergent situation in Canada, and many local, provincial, and federal police force reviews are being undertaken. It is not the intent of this research to investigate these measures. It is within this research, however, to suggest actions to include the voice of new-comers, and refugees in these reviews.

Canadians often enjoy a personification of being the "all-round good guy" in popular culture (Trifonas, 2019, p. 10). This stereotype, however, offers the type of moral licensing that allows an increase in covert racism as explored by Lennartz et al. (2017). Canadians, especially white Canadians, need to review this fallacy and understand how it supports systemic racism that perpetuates inequalities in affordance networks for all marginalized populations. Lund and Nabavi (2008) explored this:

> Canada remains one of the few nations with multicultural ideals entrenched in national government policy, although it is often seen as being about preserving the status quo, viewing (non-White) immigrants as in need of assistance to assimilate to mainstream norms…ignoring issues of systemic racism and intersections with other oppression…. A contemporary collective denial that ignores the abiding existence of racism in Canada is refuted by a long history of discriminatory government policies and practices. Since Europeans began arriving, systematic discrimination has been practiced against individuals and groups based on racist ideologies and ethnocentric views, beginning with the colonization of this continent's indigenous peoples. (Lund & Nabavi, 2008, pp. 2-3)

This research calls upon an examination of systemic racism in Canadian government institutions, schools, and classrooms. A move to inclusion of anti-racist pedagogy,

content, and extra-curricular participation are first steps. This should improve the quality of life for all Canadians, at the very least through economic impacts as refugees become contributing taxpayers (Anderson, 2020), and positively impact the school experience of refugee students.

CHAPTER 7: MICROSYSTEM RELATIONSHIPS

The final organizational theme brings together three themes focused on the immediate relationships of refugee students: with peers, family, and teachers. Peer and family relationships are explored within this chapter, and the student-teacher relation in the following chapter. In focusing on these microsystem relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), ways to support connections to the school, manage family expectations, and demonstrate care are explored. These ideas, co-produced with the participant researchers and contrasted with the research literature, are offered as means of alleviating some of the inequalities of affordance networks explored in the last chapter. Additionally, in utilizing approaches of care ethics, students are better able to maximize their effectivity sets and further develop their affordance networks. Microsystem Relationships includes the themes of: Positive Peer Relationships, Family Expectations and The Cultural Broker, and The Importance of Teacher Care. Although focused on these immediate relations, this overarching theme will also explore school and governmental supports that were called for through the generation of the three themes. Within this chapter the themes of Positive Peer Relationships and Family Expectations and the Cultural Broker are presented.

Positive Peer Relationships

Throughout the interviews, there was a consistent message from all participants that building relationships with Canadian-born students was challenging. For each of the male students, this challenge included experiences of discrimination from their Canadian-born peers. Not only did they feel it was difficult to relate, they were made to feel they could not relate. Despite this, they continued to attempt to make connections with

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Canadian-born students, and found some limited success. It each case the participant researchers recalled these relationships and experiences very fondly. All of the participant researchers expressed, in reflecting back on high school, that they wished they had developed more friendships with their non-ELL classmates. These stories of positive peer relationships with Canadian-born students, and a desire for more connection with peers, generated a theme of expressed need for the participant researchers. Positive Peer Relationships: a need to be supported in developing relationships with non-refugee classmates.

Successes and Challenges in Developing Peer Relationships

Depika and Zoya found less success in developing positive peer relationships in their high school experience. They also shared that they had less interest in finding those connections. This could be attributed to their experience occurring once the school had a larger population of students from Nepal. They both expressed it was easier to communicate with the other Nepali students. For these two, the effort and the risk of being unsuccessful was not worth the reward. They did express regret with not engaging more, in missing an experience of feeling more connected to the school, and in slowing their language development. All of the participant researchers provided that the difficulty in building connections with their Canadian-born peers was one of the most challenging aspects of high school. Language is acknowledged as one barrier, but within the students' stories and advice for educators, there are several comments from the interviewees for teachers to consider.

KK identified common interests as driving the relational development of his two friends. In the first case, a desire for academic achievement, and a lack of interest in

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engaging in non-productive social aspects of the classroom led to a friendship. In the second case, a shared experience, and common career path. In both of these cases there was another common factor: KK initiated contact and he worked to develop the relationship. This is again a testament to both the resilience and the compassion deeply steeped in this young man, but also an important insight for educators. Not all refugee students are willing to take that risk, especially if initial contacts are similarly disappointing as those shared events by KK. Educators can play a role in supporting connections with Canadian-born students, and as KK highlighted, this is something he feels should be done to meet the needs of refugee students:

> DC: Lastly, is there any other or are there any other stories or information that you could tell me that might help other refugee students or teachers of refugee students?
>
> KK: So, what can help is helping them make a friend, even one or two. One Canadian-born friend so that they can integrate, they can learn to integrate into Canadian lifestyle in school. Having that one friend, if teachers can support, like kind of a host friend, if they can provide with a host friend, then that host friend can teach new students how things are done, and how to integrate into [the] larger school. (KK, 392-394)

Educators can support this establishment of relationships by identifying the interests and passions of refugee students and connecting them with students in their class who share those interests. It is important that both the refugee and Canadian-born student have choice in pursuing the relationship, as a forced relationship could be detrimental to the

experience. Providing opportunity to share a passion, however, can allow for the possibility of connection.

In KK's experiences it is interesting to note that both students he connected with were also facing isolation and marginalization. This was a common bond that KK noted and used to connect with his classmates. It could be concerning, in considering the discrimination face by these students, that students who are socially connected did not pursue friendships with KK. The experiences of Jacob and Kishan, however, demonstrated that refugee students sharing interests and strengths with Canadian-born students can connect regardless of social position within the school.

For Kishan, within his physical education classes, he felt connected not with one or two students, but connected to the classroom community as a whole:

> More connected?... Gym class. I was really happy, because I had a friend [in] that gym class…. and I had a lot of friends during [Teacher's] gym class…. I used to like joke around with them, because whatever I say, they would understand me…
>
> So, yeah, I felt really connected. (Kishan, 207-213)

Kishan travelled with these students to off-campus events, and shared meals with them at local establishments after class. He was part of this group, and he felt connected to the school community through it.

At a macrosystem, school level, educators need to look to develop opportunities for positive peer relationships to develop between refugee students and their classmates. In Kishan and Jacob's experiences, the relationships came from space to demonstrate their strengths, for KK, in finding shared interest and experiences. It is important that schools do not expect the refugee students to assume all the risk in developing these

relationships. Methods of creating opportunities for students to connect will be explored below, but Depika's unique experience in middle school, and Jacob's thoughts on school back home offer one possible consideration, a cohort-based approach to classrooms.

Jacob felt that connections to students in Canada were difficult to make in comparison to school in Nepal. He felt that the nature of Canadian schools—moving from one class to the next every hour, to be with a different group of students—did not create an atmosphere that promoted a community within the classroom. In Nepal, the students formed a cohort, and were together throughout the day. This model, in his estimation, allowed for the deep development of relationships and an interconnectivity in the classroom.

Depika's experience at the middle school upon arrival was one where she felt quickly absorbed into a community, a community that utilizes a cohort model. Whereas when she moved to high school, and each class brought new classmates, she quickly aligned herself with the other refugee students and pulled back from connecting with her other classmates. While there appears to be a desire of the refugee students to further integrate into the school community, the comfort of seeking out classmates of similar backgrounds is an obstacle to that integration. Depika shared that she regrets not making more attempts to make Canadian-born friends. Yet, as most adolescents and people generally do, she chose to pursue the friendships that came easiest. This is despite having past success in cultivating friendships with Canadian-born students. This emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role in encouraging, challenging, and facilitating refugee students' connections with their classmates. Refugee students, even when successful, may avoid seeking out their own opportunities to connect. Opportunities to develop

relationships may need to be facilitated through classroom activities and school based co-curricular activities. A cohort model could ease the development of these relationships.

I was unable to locate any research literature pertaining to the effect of a cohort model on refugee students, marginalized students, or the experience of high school students in general. There is a plethora of research about the challenges associated with larger high schools (Darling-Hammond, Ross, & Milliken, 2006). There is also substantial evidence that these large schools add to disadvantages for low socioeconomic students (Heyman & Vigil, 2008). This research has led to alterations in approaches to structuring large urban high schools in the United States. One approach, that includes aspects of a cohort model, are Small Learning Communities (SLCs). SLCs are programs "designed to promote academic achievement in large schools, typically those of 1000 or more pupils. Students are usually grouped with other students that have similar interests or career aspirations." (Ruggerio, 2011, p. 5). While this does work to develop a community within a community, which promotes the development of relationships, the design does not promote inclusion. Instead students are grouped by ability levels, and refugee students and ELL students would likely be grouped together for all classes, further isolating them from their peers. While the model has merit in supporting a sense of belonging within the SLCs, it would not support the development of relationships between refugees and Canadian-born students. It does however represent an alternative system of design for large high schools, and shows promise in connecting students and improving academic performance (Ruggerio, 2011).

A large body of research is available with regard to cohort models being utilized in teacher education (Beck & Kosnik, 2001) and graduate studies in education (Barnett,

Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). Within this research social justice is often connected to the cohort model (Horn, 2001), and benefits of such programs for students include:

- becoming "more like a family," developing "deeper personal interaction," and "lasting ties"
- feeling and giving "emotional . . . logistical" and "peer support" having a "shared" and "collective commitment"
- engaging in "collective learning" and "learning from each other"
- developing "sensitiv[ity] to the needs of others and seek[ing] to serve one another" (Horn, 2001, p. 320)

A cohort model for high school students could represent a possibility for overcoming some of the obstacles the current system presents to refugee students in developing positive peer relationships with their classmates. As a former high school administrator, I am well aware of the challenges associated with developing time tables, and a cohort system would be an additional challenge in a traditional high school. In a Quarter-model system, in which the students only have two classes a day, a cohort model may be more readily adaptable. It is a recommendation of this research that an investigation into the efficacy of a cohort model for marginalized populations should be undertaken.

Supporting the Development of Peer Relationships

The participant researchers offered several insights into how to best support the development of relationships between refugees and Canadian-born students. KK highlighted the importance of bringing students together over common interests such as sports, music, and food. KK formed strong bonds through a shared interest in focusing on success in school, and his experience of feeling isolation helped him connect with a student new to the school. Jacob also found connection through common interests, and through having the opportunity to demonstrate his strengths. His most memorable friendships were born out of his ability in mathematics, where his support of others led to

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connections. Likewise, Kishan's connections came through common interests, physical activity, and through his strengths, many of the sports undertaken in physical education classes. These three also highlighted the importance of being grouped together with Canadian-born students in class, to create opportunity for dialogue.

This was also an important consideration for Depika and Zoya. Depika noted the need to consider Canadian-born students interests when pairing them with refugee students. She also suggested engaging outgoing interested students who are welcoming and who will not view working with refugee students as a burden. This is an essential consideration: if groupings are forced, there is a risk of creating further isolation for refugee students. If students share no interest and are not inclined to support other students, being paired with a refugee student could be looked at as a disadvantage, or even worse, a punishment. The resentment experienced by that student could then be directed at the refugee student, rather than the teacher that created the pairing.

Zoya also brought up the need for refugee students to get involved in co-curricular activities. Although external expectations placed on refugee students can obstruct participation in after school activities, many schools have a myriad of lunch time clubs. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, and Allen (1999) did extensive research on improving the educational experiences of racially diverse students through meaningful engagement. The authors demonstrated that inclusion of diverse backgrounds in co-curricular activities improves the educational experience of all students. Their work was utilized by Cerezo and Bergfeld (2013) in arguing for the importance of representation for LBGTQ students within schools as a means to move from a focus on protection of LBGTQ students, to that of agency. Likewise, refugee students being representatives of

the school on clubs, teams, student government, and other co-curricular activities raises the awareness of the valuable contributions the students make to the school. It offers a space for refugee students to demonstrate their strengths and share their interests. Unfortunately, in both the aforementioned research findings, a resistance exists for marginalized students to join these activities as they are *not* represented within them. Teachers can play a role in supporting participation by: 1. ensuring the refugee students know about opportunities happening in their school, 2. encouraging participation, and 3. creating clubs around the interests of the refugee students that may be shared by others. An example from the participant researchers would be a soccer club. The students would have been able to both share an interest and demonstrate a strength, and many Canadian-born students share an interest in soccer.

The last idea generated by the students was to share their own culture with Canadian-born students. Celebrating important events as a school, like Holi, which includes inclusive activities for students. This improves a feeling of connection, and allows for the refugee students to be the experts on culture. In recalling Kishan's difficult experience with Name that Tune, teachers can consider where they can include pop-culture from the refugee students' cultures in class. In doing so, educators expose other students to new ideas, which provides an empathetic moment for the students to see what it is like to learn something about a new culture or language.

The following ideas, based on the suggestions of the participant researchers, are ways to support refugee students in developing relationships with their Canadian-born peers. First, come to know what the refugee student's interests, passions, and strengths are. Being cognizant of a varying level of language proficiency for newly arrived students

is key since language is the central tool for communication. This interests and strengths inventory could take the form of a written piece; a discussion, facilitated with a translator if necessary; or even the use of visual and virtual resources to have students select things they are interested in.

Once interests are established, consider opportunities within the classroom, and school to connect refugee students with other students. Within the classroom, look to pair refugee students with students who share interests. Be considerate of the student's willingness to engage in the pairing. Wherever appropriate, create spaces for refugee students to demonstrate their strengths to their classmates, be it academic, physical, or talent-based. Where they are comfortable, work to create opportunities for sharing their experiences and culture with their classmates. Teachers can also encourage and model for students the struggle of learning a new language. Learning a handful of words and phrases from the refugee students in their first language is one effective way to do this.

Within the larger school level, teachers can connect refugee students with clubs and programs they may be interested in, encourage their participation, and help them build connections with the adult leader of these activities. Lastly, educators can look to create inclusive clubs and programs around their interests, which will bring students with similar interests together. These are several ways that we can *support* the relationship development between refugee students and other students. There is no way for educators to *make* the relationships form, and the students themselves stated that is not what they want, as when it is forced, it is usually resented. Rather, through these suggestions, the participant researchers are offering ways that teachers can support these relationships by

offering opportunities for them to flourish more naturally in safe spaces, where the refugee students can demonstrate their strengths and capacity for friendship.

Family Expectations and The Cultural Broker

As was discussed in the literature review, the term cultural broker commonly occurs in the research literature to represent community members that bridge understanding between groups, or individuals, of different cultures (Yohani et al., 2019). When thinking about the experiences of former refugee students who had arrived at the high school age, it seemed to me that this description—someone working to bridge a gap between cultures—aptly suited the students themselves. Their common requirements to: 1. attend meetings with immigrant services, 2. doctors' appointments, 3. interpret and answer household mail and emails, and 4. work with landlords on behalf of their families, clearly has the students serving as cultural brokers. As the participant researchers noted, a belief existed in their extended families that they were best suited to this role. This belief stems from their supposed advanced understanding of social norms and language, acquired at school, where their immersion in the culture far exceeded parents' experiences at work. Though, as several participant researchers noted, they were far from fluent in language or culture.

I have adopted the term cultural broker within this research to represent the role these students played in their families during high school, and the expectations placed on them. These expectations are part of the family dynamic and important to consider in the relationship between home, the students, and school. In interviewing the participant researchers, it became apparent that this role of cultural broker, both impacted their needs, but also developed many capabilities. Through the interviews, codes such as

expectations, work, family support, external challenges, pride of accomplishment, and contribution to the family, led to the generation of this theme. Family expectations and the Cultural Broker explores how the role of cultural broker is impactful on the relationship between high school aged arrival refugees and their families, and their experiences in school. It is not presented as a deficit, but as something to be mindful of in the refugee experience, and something that both impacts needs and capabilities.

Challenges of Expectations

The participant researchers had many expectations placed on them by their families, which often included extended family members living in the home. With only Zoya as an exception, they played the role of cultural broker for their families while trying to find academic success, despite the challenges they faced at school. KK's words about his expectations and his role of cultural broker are shared here as they were not shared in his story. His words echo that of the other participant researchers' experiences as explored in their stories, and offer insight into the expectations and challenges faced by many refugee students.

KK started working when he was 14 years old, shortly after arrival. On top of school and work, KK had a lot of responsibilities around the house in caring for his family, including his uncles and grandparents:

Because my grandparents and my mom did not know how to use the stove, or use the laundry machine, and stuff like that, I had to do all of it initially. I taught them how to use the stove, but they still don't know how the laundry machine functions. So, I had responsibilities at home, I had to do their laundry and also, I help out with vacuuming, chores, and also grocery shopping. What I used to do was go

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with my uncle because I have large family, so, I went shopping with my uncle. And there was one year I was living with just my grandparents and my mom. And it was just four of us, so during that year I had lot more responsibilities. (KK, 297-299)

He also played the role cultural broker on a consistent basis:

I was better [at speaking English] because I was young. I picked up fast enough, when I was living with my grandparents and my mom they were not speaking English, so there was definitely role reversal in the family. Yeah, I did a lot, going to appointments and stuff. I'm still taking on that responsibility of taking them to the doctor's and any appointments they have. (KK, 302-306)

KK worked at home to help out with his family's comfort, and went to work to help out their financial needs. He did all this while attending school, but not without an impact on school:

I think [it impacted school], I think so because my mind was divided, so it's not just school, it's also responsibilities at home, and if things are being taken care of at home. (KK, 338)

The reality that KK had many expectations outside of school did not limit the expectations his family placed on him in school:

Growing up they knew that I was bright kid in school so there was an expectation. They expected, no matter what, they expected me to go to university…. They did not know that it was lot harder for me to go to university than they thought it was.…Yeah, we had conflict because my uncles were very devastated [about not initially attending university]. They used to make fun of me saying: "Oh you're

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going to 'go to Sun'" because everybody was working at Sunrise [Poultry

Processors]. They were like: "You're like going to go to work at Sunrise, you

didn't study and you let the family down." That was harsh, you know? (KK, 317-

330)

KK was expected to play the role of cultural broker, support his family financially, and

still meet expectations of entry into University. Many English speaking, Canadian-born

students, who experience Alberta public schools from kindergarten until grade 12,

struggle to meet the expectations of university entrance. Few would also be asked to play

the kind of roles KK was asked to while in high school. The external pressures added to

the already challenging process of finding academic success. As an English language

learner, and arriving at the high school age, KK's eventual success in entering university

is inspiring.

The participant researchers did not express a need for support in managing family

expectations. However, in hearing their stories, and generating this theme, it is apparent

that this external burden should be addressed. Educators, schools, and governments in

Canada need to support refugee families, so the students can focus on their education. In

doing so, a better life for the refugee community is supported, and in turn, a healthier

society (Anderson, 2020).

In the classroom. An educator's awareness of the external pressures faced by

refugee students is important. In understanding the time commitments many refugee

students have outside of class-time, teachers should minimize the amount of work they

are asking the students to do outside the classroom. If reduced external workloads are not

feasible, educators can work with the students to supply extra-time to complete their

assessments. Flexibility in how homework is completed is an important consideration for every students' individual needs (Vatterott, 2018), but with the added demands faced by refugees, it becomes an imperative. All of the participant researchers spoke to the importance of being permitted extra time to complete assignments when needed, something they also noted as a demonstration of care as will be explored in the last theme.

With the load of external expectations placed on the students, and the time demands associated with them, a possible impact on refugee student academic success arises: absenteeism. This insight came to light in my interview with Zoya and her description of her external expectations in high school. From her story, it occurred to me that Zoya's forty-hour work week outside school classes left her with limited time to spend with friends, who worked similar hours. Perhaps a desire for social time with her friends, which was the driving force of her absenteeism, was related to her full-time employment. Zoya neither confirmed or denied this fact, but I believed it needed to be considered, and it was explored in my final interview with Depika.

I recalled that Depika missed many classes during my time working with her. I was aware of the need for many refugee students to be absent from school to act as a cultural broker. I also recognized the health effects of malnutrition in the camps added to increased doctors' appointments for the students. I was not oblivious, however, to the fact that many of these classes were simply *skipped*. I had always assumed that this abnormal absentee rate was based in feeling of isolation from classmates or frustration with the language barrier. Depika, like Zoya, did not feel that she chose to miss class because she

was frustrated or isolated, she simply stated it was a choice to spend more time with friends.

In discussing this with Depika, I asked if she felt the absentee issues in class stemmed from a sense of overwhelming expectations outside of school, rather than internal classroom factors. She readily agreed that this had a major impact on her choice to miss class for increased social opportunities. When high-school-aged students have no time to socialize outside of school, school time becomes the opportunity to do so. I struggled with an attendance issue for many refugee students in my role as vice principal, despite consistently supporting engagement. Before this research I believed I understood why, that the students were not happy with their progress, and did not see value in attending classes. After this discussion, I still have a sense of understanding, and compassion about the absence, but a much better understanding of why. It was not what was happening in class that was pushing these students away, it was instead the lack of time outside of school that drove their need to find social time during the school day.

Depika's interview offered an important insight for me, and it again reinforced the importance of talking to students themselves to hear their expressed needs and experiences and gain understanding instead of making assumptions or inferences. It deepens my understanding that what is being done in the classroom is not the only factor impacting refugee students' attendance. This resonates with the individual-environment relation (Barab & Roth, 2006), and the complexity of the student experience. It also demonstrates another component to consider in supporting refugee students: working with families to manage expectations on the students. To support the families, alongside

community partners like immigrant services, in creating a balanced life for refugee students outside of class.

School based supports. When seeking to support refugee students and their families in navigating their needs and expectations, schools should play a role as well. Schools in Alberta have a variety of means to support low-income families, and in many cases refugee students access these supports. However, school supports like breakfast programs are sometimes less prevalent at the high school level. High-school-aged arrivals may be unaware of, or lack access to these same supports. School administrators and staff who oversee refugee students should ensure that refugee families are aware of school-based nutrition supports.

As many refugee families are less likely to engage with the school due to cultural differences, it is this authors suggestion to connect with families through home visits. Immigrant services provides a great connection to the families in Alberta and should be utilized to assist in this process if possible. Zoya commented on the value of immigrant services:

> Oh, there was one lady who helped us… it's much easier for us to go there, because she did everything for us, and she's from China I guess, and she's a co-worker for us. So, it's much easier for us to go the high school because she did everything for us, and, you know we just have to go to the school and then introduce our self. That's all we needed. (Zoya, 131)

Even in registering for school, the parents may not come on school property, therefore a home visit may be required to initiate contact. Immigrant services can provide translators and cultural understandings to support administrators and other school staff doing home

visits. In connecting with families, honest conversations about the realities of school for

high-school-aged arrivals is important. Managing expectations, and describing common

working hours for a high school student, are essential in these meetings to ensure parents

and extended family members understand what is manageable for a high school student.

It is also a place to inform families about what school and community-based supports are

available to them and their student(s).

Immigrant services was an invaluable resource for me, as both an ESL teacher

and as a school administrator. The role they played as a liaison, between the families of

students and the school personnel, helped to overcome language difficulties. This is the

style of cultural broker as defined by Yohani et al. (2019). Their importance in

connecting with parents is well demonstrated by Georgis, Gokiert, Ford, & Ali (2014):

> Being intimately familiar with the pre- and post-migration histories of the
> families, the cultural brokers worked hard to address the barriers that prevented
> participation…they utilized culturally familiar and relational ways of
> communicating with families on school-related topics (e.g., oral and face-to-face
> communication), which turned out to be a more effective way of engaging parents
> than conventional, written-based forms of communication. (p. 25)

The youth liaisons, that work directly with student-aged immigrants, came regularly to

our school to check on the students and to support the school in easing transition.

Alongside the youth liaisons, we were first able to explore the students' stories, and better

understand their hopes and dreams after completing high school. These liaisons were

always welcome in our school. There are also models of collaboration between schools

and immigrant services that are further integrated, providing more consistent support. In

Calgary, schools with larger populations of immigrants house the local youth liaison in

the schools' wellness center alongside the counselling staff. These liaisons offer

availability to students throughout the school day. This is a possible mode for how to

further utilize youth liaisons in schools. It would take cooperation between school districts and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, where the funding exists, if not the space. To have youth liaisons consistently available would offer an additional support and connection for refugee students. Paired with an ESL teacher, and space accessible to refugee students during school hours, refugee students' academic and social-emotional needs could be better met.

Systemic supports. In Canada, refugees receive support from the federal government for three years as clients, but only for one year financially. It has been widely misrepresented in social media that refugees receive large sums of money for extended periods of time (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2013). In fact, the minor sum is not enough for most families' monthly expenses:

> We looked after our grandparents, it was a financial burden. Officially when you first arrive, the government would provide money for a year, but it was just a limited amount, so that creates pressure in the family to work. (KK, 300)

Jacob also described this: for his family $1400 was suppled monthly for a family of four over their first year. Their rent was $1000, leaving $400 for food and utilities, clearly not enough to survive with four people in the house. Additionally, the expense of their transportation to Canada needed to be paid back to the Government. Like KK, and the other participant researchers, this led to Jacob needing to find employment early in his time in Canada. The difficult story of "The Long Road Home" outlines the reality this created for Jacob. At a minimum, the government should be supporting and subsidizing work programs for refugees to ensure they live above the poverty line. Secondly, eliminating the transportation loans, with interest, should be considered (Canadian

Council for Refugees, n.d.). Thirdly, the government of Alberta needs to reconsider its exemption policies for people under 18 receiving the minimum wage of $15 to include refugee students, even though they are still in school (Government of Alberta, 2020). Preferably, funding should be in place so that high school aged arrivals can focus on the already extremely challenging process of obtaining their high school diploma and entrance into post-secondary education. Again, in the long run this both benefits the entire refugee community and the larger society as the path to productive citizenship is accelerated (Anderson, 2020).

Another systemic issue that these participant researchers faced was the need to transport and support extended family members for medical visits. Some provisions need to be made to ensure that refugees with heath complications and elderly refugees have access to health care. That they can find transportation to and from the hospital and other healthcare facilities without requiring their teenage family members to miss class in order to accompany them. As Kishan recalled:

> Yes, I did [need to miss class], that was the reason I failed some of my high school classes. My brother, he was a small kid, and my mother used to get sick, like every day. I used to take her to the hospital, every couple days, like two or three times a week. And my dad he was busy working to provide shelter. (Kishan, 483-484)

If governmental institutions better support refugee students and their families, they can focus on the still challenging adjustment to life and school in Canada, and pursuing academic success. Such supports could work against attendance issues as well, as students would now have more time outside of school to socialize. I recognize the current economic strain on governments across Canada, but this investment in the potential of

refugees enhances their ability to contribute back to the economy. This investment expedites the generational challenge of post-secondary attendance as well. Hou and Bonikowska (2016) noted that refugee and immigrant populations are more likely to attend post-secondary if their parents did. In working to ensure the first generation of students have the opportunity to purse post-secondary by investing in them, we connect those students, and their future offspring, to more lucrative jobs.

Strength in Meeting Expectations

Despite the challenges associated with the expectations placed on them, the participant researchers never described this as unfair, or a burden. In fact, they mostly saw their experience as essential in developing them into the people they are today: "It was my desire to help my family... That's why I respect what I have now" (Jacob, 492-500). For Kishan, his experience allows him to navigate government agencies, educational institutions, and health care providers with ease: "[The expectations] impacted me, yes. But now I think that was good, because I know a lot of things, from that experience" (Kishan, 503). Massfeller and Hamm (2019) described how, in speaking with refugee youth, they often seemed to demonstrate a wisdom beyond their years. Zoya, in explaining how her struggle in high school helped form her current capabilities, demonstrated this to me:

> You need to struggle to get something. Without struggling you can't achieve
> nothing. So, we need to do something… [Laughter] Yeah, if we don't struggle
> then we can achieve nothing. If we do something, some struggling thing, then we
> remember that, how we did that thing. Then we can do better and better and
> better. I think struggle is an important thing in life. (Zoya, 393-397)

The participant researchers refused to succumb to the struggles imposed on them by systemic inequalities. Phan's (2003) study of Vietnamese youth in Vancouver noted a similar perspective, the participants:

> refused to be defeated by the racism that echoed through their stories. They refused to be passive, instead developing a "resistance stance" as a way of guarding against the erosion of their self-confidence and the wounding of their spirit. Each student had discovered ways of responding creatively to injustice. (p. 565)

These incredible young people have faced many injustices, yet they see this as a path to growth. It is not the intent of this researcher to suggest that we remove all the barriers that refugees face, as the participant researchers themselves have valued their challenges. What is suggested is that so many compounded challenges are systemically unfair, and require these young people to have an innate resilience. Though these individuals overcame their trials, policy makers cannot assume that all refugees will be able to overcome these obstacles, and should not accept their external challenges as fate. In education, and in government, more can and should be done to lessen the burden faced by high school aged arrivals so that they can focus on adjusting to life and school in Canada, and to pursue their dreams and desires alongside their classmates.

CHAPTER 8: THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER CARE

The Importance of Teacher Care

Although this final theme falls within the overarching theme of Microsystem Relationships, it is presented here as a stand-alone chapter to honor the voices of the participant researchers with respect to the role of the teacher. Each interview concluded by asking the participant researchers what their advice for teachers supporting refugee students would be. The importance of talking to students about their needs drove this question. As Freire (2014) noted: "This is the certitude, always, of the authoritarian, the dogmatist, who knows what the popular classes know, and knows what they need even without talking to them" (p. 106). This resonates with Noddings' (2005) concepts of inferred needs versus expressed needs. In an attempt to avoid an authoritarian approach towards determining the needs of refugee students, I simply asked them what those needs were. The codes that were generated from their responses were consistent: being made comfortable, the importance of care, or methods in which to demonstrate care. These codes led to the generation of this theme: The Importance of Teacher Care, an expressed need to feel cared for by teachers. Within this last theme, ideas of how to demonstrate care are explored for teachers to consider implementing into their classrooms and their relationships with refugee students.

KK's Advice for Teachers

KK offered insight into how teachers could better serve refugee students throughout his interview, At the conclusion of the interview, I asked him directly what he would want teachers to know or be able to do. This is how he responded:

Understand where [refugee students] are coming from, and, again back to being

compassionate. Understand what and where they come from, what they have been

into, what they have seen. [Otherwise] we will retraumatize them. So, I think that

there is a need to understand their background before we put a lot of like pressure

onto them, and then getting frustrated if they do not understand something. (KK,

360-361)

For KK, there is an emphasis for teachers coming to know refugee students. To know

where they are coming from, what they have experienced before coming to the

classroom. For him, this is how teachers can demonstrate care and compassion.

To follow-up this question I asked KK what a teacher could do *after* they come to

know refugee students, how to support them in achieving their goals. For KK, the next

step for teachers is identifying, with the student, individual strengths and weaknesses, and

developing a plan to improve their capabilities:

Well I think because we all have different strengths and weaknesses, breaking that

down into individual levels, and understanding: okay, where is this student right

now, in terms of school work, because some students back home, they are the

bright students, some students are not very bright. And I think teachers need to

look into individual students and see their strengths, see their weaknesses, and see

what they need and go from there. Because some students are capable of taking

the extra pressure and taking the mainstream classes, and they have desires for

careers. Sometimes what happens is teachers misunderstand their capabilities and

put them into ESL class, where they want to rather do mainstream classes and get

a diploma and go into university or colleges and achieve their career. (KK, 368-

370)

KK also put an emphasis on the importance of teachers fostering the confidence of

refugee students:

[When] my hard work is being noticed, I think that fostered my confidence.

Because what they are lacking is nothing confidence, confidence because they

feel like: okay, first of all I cannot understand the language, and I'm having

difficulty in school because of language. It's not the work, because especially

science-based courses and math courses are very similar to back home, and we get

that, but it's that confidence, if they have the confidence then I think they will do

fabulous job. It's just that confidence and how we can gain it. I want to emphasize

confidence because in my experience that is huge. If I had the confidence, well

not if I had, if I felt confident then I think I would do a lot better than how I did. I

think confidence is huge, and how we can boost that confidence is by recognizing

hard work and effort. Then they will feel: okay, they are noticing my hard work.

(KK, 384-386)

Celebrating student success, no matter how small, is one way that KK saw as effective in

fostering confidence. He also noted that praising the strengths of students can bolster

confidence, as sometimes the belief of another is what is needed for the individual to

believe in themselves.

KK values teachers coming to know their individual students' experiences, their

strengths and weaknesses, and to know what their desires are. This is how teachers can

show they are compassionate, and that they care: by expressing interest in learning more

239

about their refugee students, their culture and background, but also their individual characteristics and hopes. Too often educators are faced with best-practices for groups of students, the lumping together of marginalized populations, and this is no different in refugee education. KK raised, and highlighted, the importance of seeing refugee students as individuals. While common approaches to understanding a student's needs may be effective, some of what those needs are will likely be unique, and therefore require individualized support. Here we return to Noddings (2005) and the importance of working with students to determine expressed needs, which may not always align with generalized, inferred needs. For example, it can be inferred that all refugee students need support in language development—as all students do—but some refugee students may require language focused classes, while others may require only in-class support. In speaking with refugee students, they can express what they need as support, informing programing decisions. When school personnel quickly group newcomer students together because of a common background, without coming to know the students, and exploring their expressed needs, the dignity and respect of the individual is ignored and needs may go unmet. This serves to further marginalize these students, to reduce their ability to pursue their learning, passions, and goals.

For teachers, it is important to pay attention to the emphasis that KK places on assisting refugee students in the establishment of relationships with Canadian-born classmates. KK saw common interests as one key factor in establishing relationships with Canadian-born students. Educators can facilitate the development of relationships between students by providing spaces in which refugee students can demonstrate their strengths and interests alongside their classmates. Finding opportunities to pair refugee

students with classmates with shared interests requires teachers coming to know the students, which should be beneficial for all relationships in the classroom.

Therefore, the recommendations offered by KK, are supported by the research literature, and by this author's experience. Educators need to know refugee students as individuals: where they have come from, where they are currently, and what they hope to learn and accomplish. From this understanding, teachers can explore individual strengths, inferred *and* expressed needs, and formulate success plans *with* the students, based on the students' individual definitions of success. Additionally, in knowing the students' interests, teachers can foster relationships between refugee students and their classmates by allowing opportunities for shared interests to be explored and giving refugee students openings to demonstrate their strengths. This insight was important in this research as it highlighted a consideration that I had not placed enough emphasis on as a teacher: helping to connect refugee students with their Canadian-born peers through shared interests. These relationships will further the confidence of refugee students through the care and compassion felt from their classmates, alongside that which they experience from their teachers.

Jacob's Advice for Teachers

Jacob outlined the importance of care throughout his interview, in particular when he shared his two anecdotal narratives about care. In the second story, the "Social Studies Paper" what Jacob recalled was not the topic of the essay, the grade of either the first or second draft, or even the name of his social studies teacher. What he recalled was that his English teacher gave his own time, and care, to Jacob to help him complete a task for another class. To Jacob, this was the above-and-beyond aspect of care. This may be a

challenging aspect of care for teachers. It is difficult to continually go above-and-beyond for all students, but this is the impact: six years later this young man is vividly recalling the effort of this educator and is still thankful. It is these kinds of experiences that Jacob credits to supporting him becoming the man that he is, someone who is willing to go above-and-beyond for the benefit of others.

Jacob also had some direct suggestions for teachers who hope to better serve refugee students:

> DC: If you could give advice to teachers about what refugee students need from their teachers, what would you like to tell them, or what would you want teachers to know?
>
> Jacob: I don't see any other things that will hinder them from succeeding. If you show the care then they feel they belong, and if you support them, then they understand and they get a chance to learn more, and if you encourage them then they get that desire, they get motivated to do more. …And the confidence. So, I think care, support, and encouragement. (Jacob, 505-509)

Jacob went on to express the means of how to demonstrate care by continually engaging with students. In this engagement a teacher needs to ask about academic work, but also needs to come to know the students: their past, their present, and their hopes for the future. Jacob recognizes that this may be difficult at first with the language barrier, but teachers are a safe place to practice and develop language. The more the teacher comes to know the student, their history, interests and strengths, the better suited they will be to support and encourage them academically. He also highlighted the importance of feedback, both positive and constructive:

Going up to them, asking them, giving them feedback on the work they're doing.

You don't have to say that they're doing great, like sometimes you did really

bad…It's also important: if I know that I SUCKED at this assignment and you

come up to me and say you did great, then I would think like what's going on

here? [Laughter]… I know I got 60% and then you say that I did great, so that's

not really great…Just feedback, whatever is reality, just telling them, just

motivate them, just give them the real feedback and ask them the ways that they

can help. I think that's the care for me. (Jacob, 512-518)

It is clear that Jacob values the relationship between student and teacher, and that the

relationship built on demonstrating care creates an environment that allows for academic

and language development alongside comfort, honesty, trust, and a feeling of safety.

In closing, Jacob had a powerful message about how educators measure success in

school. Although he was academically successful despite all the challenges he faced, this

is not what he sees as most important for teachers. To honor his voice, and his formidable

thoughts, here are his direct words that I hope to uphold:

Jacob: If I was a teacher, I wouldn't only care about the academic successes of my

students. Just because they didn't have enough credit, does not mean that they

didn't come out as a good people, a good person, right? To me, if someone is

learning from their experiences, trying to make friends, trying to become a good

person, someone is helpful, just getting a good understanding of their reality, and

if someone comes out as a good person, I think that is something for every teacher

to be proud of. If the student with 98% comes out a jerk that's no success. To me,

that's no success at all…. In life, I think the good student would come out as a

good person and, and that's for every teacher to proud of. I would be proud if they come out as a good person. To me, being a good person is more important than getting a high school diploma. (Jacob, 532-539)

For me, this response is a stark reminder that there is more to teaching than ensuring all students find academic success. Developing students who care, is more important in Jacob's view, than that academic success.

Kishan's Advice for Teachers

Kishan also highlighted the importance of coming to know the student's background. He believes care is demonstrated through time and attention in support, feedback, and challenges for the student. If a teacher chooses to ignore or not engage with the refugee student—perhaps because they are well behaved and do not ask questions— Kishan feels they are demonstrating a lack of care. Furthermore, if they are offering more time and attention to other students, he sees this as discriminatory. I know many well-meaning teachers who struggle to engage refugee students, who would be horrified to be labeled as discriminatory. Therefore, educators need to be diligent in attempting to connect with and support refugee students. Kishan understands that taking the time to know the student—their background, needs, and strengths—requires time and attention and can be challenging with a language barrier. But it is that time and attention that demonstrates care reduces feelings of marginalization. Teachers who had the patience to understand Kishan's communication also motivated him to work harder to apply their feedback and take on further challenges.

Kishan's emphasis on challenging refugee students is important. I was guilty of being overconcerned with further burdening refugee students, and not presenting enough

challenge for some. Kishan noted that if we do not challenge refugee students, they will not be able to grow. This is where he saw the importance of including refugee students in group work. Even if they do not master the content, the interaction is a challenge and offers an opportunity for language development. Kishan knew his language was correlated to his confidence, and that the language and confidence were in turn correlated to his academic success. He also noted that refugee students have faced worse challenges than classroom assignments and have the resilience to take on that pressure. That they understand pressure leads to growth. This pressure must be managed through communication between the student and teacher. A balance of meaningful pressure and reasonable expectations can be found through speaking with refugee students. From Kishan's perspective, that communication is a clear demonstration of care.

When I asked Kishan directly about the importance of care in supporting refugee students, he offered me a restaurant analogy:

> Kishan: Yeah, for example if you go to the restaurant and the service is not good, you would say no, I don't want to go again…But if the food is bad, but the service is good, then you would say, 4 out 5.
>
> DC: You're making an analogy to teaching, right? Even if you don't necessarily understand the material, if the teacher cares about you, that's more important.
>
> Kishan: Yes, and then we [can] show that we know, we will have more confidence in doing things. (Kishan, 292-298)

This is an important insight for educators. Teachers, including myself, can become fixated on achievement results for all students, including refugee students. What Kishan is expressing here—like Jacob did above—is that care is more important than grades.

That knowing your teacher cares about you; relationship is more important than knowing

the content of the course. Additionally, for those teachers who are concerned about the

attendance of refugee students his restaurant analogy can be read more directly: If you

want them to come back, you better demonstrate care, right from the start.

Zoya's Advice for Teachers

Zoya's advice for teachers mirrored that of the other participant researchers. She

saw advantages in group work, both to support learning and to develop language. She

also deeply valued one-on-one support from teachers, either in class time or outside of it.

Zoya also really enjoyed teachers that used narratives and funny anecdotes as part of their

teaching. Recalling one such teacher:

> [Teacher] is my favorite. I loved him, he taught us so nicely. He told us stories a
>
> lot, so that makes us, I think all students, happy. It was really good, we weren't
>
> bored or anything like that…. That way we could understand more, because
>
> sometimes, if teachers keep teaching, teaching, teaching, then students get bored
>
> right, they fall asleep…. So, if they tell a funny story, or something like that, in
>
> between, then we get a fresh mind, or something like that…. We can get more, I
>
> think that way, students can enjoy it more. But I don't know about others. (Zoya,
>
> 189-199)

Much of what is effective for refugee students, is that which is effective for all students,

and engaging students with novelty and humor is one such method.

One aspect that Zoya continued to highlight throughout the interview as important

to her learning was that of teachers slowing their speaking: "That's the big thing, because

if they talk really fast then [refugee students] can't get it, what you are trying to say,

right? Because of all the big words" (Zoya, 636). As Zoya continually emphasized the importance of teachers speaking slowly, I asked if she ever approached any of her teachers to ask them to speak slowly. She told me that she had not, and when I pressed why, she responded with this: "I just didn't want to. Because, later on, I went to them and then ask them the question. So, I didn't feel [a need] to ask in front of the class" (Zoya, 636). Her hesitancy to ask in front of the class was not based in embarrassment or concern of speaking English publicly, but rather as a means of respect for the teacher and her classmates who she assumed were following along. As someone who has been identified as a fast talker, this insight is important for me to consider when lecturing in classes that include language learners. It is also essential to be cognizant of when working one-to-one with refugee students. This understanding was another clear demonstration of how educators can learn to improve their pedagogy through speaking with students directly about what they need.

Depika's Advice for Educators

Depika outlined two stories of care from teachers that she recalled from high school. In both cases she was animated with joy in her recollection of those individuals. When describing her favorite social studies teacher:

> Depika: So, he would let us work in a group, and then he would just let us explain most of the things and tell us to come in flex time if we need extra help.
>
> DC: And you would go?
>
> Depika: Yes! (Depika, 233-235)

This outlines the importance of teachers continually working to connect with refugee students. Depika remembered these two teachers, and she remembered them because they

cared. Depika struggled to recall specific anecdotes of how her social studies teacher supported her, but she remembered how he made her feel. He remains her favorite teacher, and social studies her favorite subject.

A former administrator of mine once said that, given the choice, students do not take subjects, they *take* teachers. In his thirty plus years of experience, he recognized that students sought out the teachers they had relationships with, regardless of the content matter being taught. In his view, most students prioritized relationships above courses or content, relationships where trust was established both ways, relationships of care. Depika did not list pedagogical strategies, activities, or accommodations when I asked her how she was best supported by teachers in school, she gave two examples of teachers caring for her.

At the conclusion of our interview, Depika had several key thoughts about how to best support refugee students. Some applied to the classroom, and others could be of value for administrators. When I asked her directly what advice she would give teachers to help support refugee students, she responded: "I think, in my opinion, make them feel welcome, at first talk to them slowly, and try using simple words…Give them extra help and ESL class…And explain to them [the] words" (Depika, 402-405). For Depika, talking slow and spending time on vocabulary was very important. She mentioned that at first, bigger and subject specific words, will be very difficult to understand. By using common, simple language, the students have an easier time both developing their conversational English and following the teacher's instruction. She noted that it would not be possible to always stop and define words in classroom instruction. Instead she was describing working one-to-one with refugee students. She felt that it is important to break

down language as you work through content, checking for understanding with the students.

One-to-one instruction was deeply valued by Depika, and opportunities for students to get that individual support both inside and outside of class time. Like Kishan, she also stated that once students have been in Canada for a few months, it is important to begin challenging them. Additionally, Depika noted the importance of extra-time for exams and assignments. For refugee students, the time needed to process, translate, and generate assignments is understandably longer. Depika felt that was an essential consideration for refugee students, but also noted it was one they commonly received.

Depika also offered some programing advice for administrators. She recalled that in grade nine she was without a Nepali classmate in most of her classes. That experience was very difficult and isolating for her. As an administrator, I endeavored to place at least two Nepali/Bhutanese students in class together wherever possible. I knew that although this may cause some distraction, and provide less forced opportunity to communicate in English, it would also offer comfort to the students. Depika echoed the importance of this consideration for administrators in admitting her difficulty, but also offered some advice for teachers to consider about those paired students. For Depika, she saw it as being essential to include a friend in class where possible, but also noted the importance of separating that friend in class. She felt that if separated, the students will have an easier time focusing on the teacher's instruction, and more pressure to communicate with their other classmates. The friend would provide someone to work through assignments and study with outside of class time: "Have that person so they can be support outside of class when you're studying and those kinds of things. And then in class, do not sit together"

(Depika, 457). She also noted the importance of group work in developing relationships with Canadian friends, and she felt it was best if those groups did not include their friend: "Yeah, if there's 2 Nepali and 2 Canadian, then we would just talk in our own group you know?" (Depika, 457-458). Depika also stated that it was important for teachers to consider those groupings, consider the interests of the students, and try to match the refugee students with a group who were welcoming.

The scheduling of as many ESL classes as possible was also valued by Depika. She suggested to include an optional space in the students' schedule where they could choose to get support when needed. She noted this would require a physical space with an ESL teacher to support their classes: "And then instead of sitting in *spare* in extra time just go to ESL classes, so you can learn better" (Depika, 506). Creating a space for marginalized students is not uncommon in Canadian schools, Indigenous student spaces, Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) safe spaces, and support centers for students with learning challenges exist. What Depika is calling for is something similar for ESL students. Financial constraints may make this difficult in many schools, but in schools with large ESL populations it may be of great value in supporting both students and teachers.

Demonstrating Care

It is always important to reflect on the uniqueness of each refugee student's worldview, and their unique individual-environment relation. From the perspective of care ethics and the student-teacher relationship, there is also a second worldview and individual-environment relation to consider, that of the teacher. Each refugee student has a unique context, as does each teacher, and so these are not universal approaches guaranteed to succeed. Instead, the participant researchers and I offered considerations

for teachers looking for advice in supporting refugee students. What follows is a summary of ideas and considerations for teachers, in conversation with the participant researchers, to clearly identify demonstrations of care:

1) Upon arrival in your classroom, converse with the students, welcome them, and try to get a sense of their language competency.

2) Soon after arrival, set aside time for individual consultation using translators where needed, to ask about their experiences in coming to Canada: Ask about their hopes and their fears about life in Canada, what they were best at in school back home, their interests and strengths, find out some words and phrases in their native tongue and promise you will learn and practice with them as they practice English with you. Set one attainable goal for the student—writing their name in the English alphabet, a welcoming phrase, or word, be sure to give some instruction—for your next conversation. Reassure them you are here for them and that this conversation will continue. Be sure to revisit that goal in your next meeting and celebrate that accomplishment.

3) Check in on them daily, and not just academically: ask about life outside of school, their transition, and their emotional well-being. You may not get much response at first, but be consistent any way.

4) Practice a few words of *their* language, make mistakes, and laugh with them.

5) Create spaces and opportunities in your classroom for the students to demonstrate their strengths and share their culture.

6) Utilize group work in your classroom, pairing refugee students with Canadian-born classmates who may share interests and are welcoming in nature.

7) Work in the school to create opportunities in clubs for refugee students, either connecting the students with existing clubs or creating clubs that meet their and other students interests. Bridge the first meeting with teachers/adults in charge of clubs.

8) Have monthly meetings to review established goals, and to set new goals—challenges that are co-created and agreed upon.

9) Provide feedback, both positive and negative. Remember that offering no feedback can be considered a lack of care, and honor the resilience of the students. Clear statements about improvement needed help shape goals

10) Be aware of your body language and demeanor with students, especially those with less language skill, that is where they are getting their communication from you.

11) Find out about external expectations, communicate with home, visit if appropriate, and help the students navigate reasonable expectations with their parents.

12) Connect students with community organizations who may be able to relieve some of the burden they are feeling from being the cultural broker.

A practicing teacher can reflect on these, choose to try those they are comfortable with, determine their effectiveness, and ask students which ones are effective. This set of suggestions can also be used to generate more ideas for educators that better match their own context, classroom, or school.

As Nodding (2012c) noted, caring is not just a feeling, care needs to be demonstrated, and that care needs to be authentic. In simply *following steps*, that

authenticity can be lost. The key idea, coming from the participant researchers themselves, is to avoid using *only* inferred needs to support refugee students. It is essential *also* to figure out their expressed needs, and their personal strengths and interests, by talking with them. Above all, they stressed the important and effectiveness of talking with refugee students and hearing their stories. The caring relationships will develop from there, into their own unique individual-environment relation. As this thesis has demonstrated, much can be learned about individual refugee students, and how to contribute to their success by speaking with them regularly from the beginning.

All of the themes generated from this research were co-produced with the participant researchers. Their stories of experience gave light to the needs and capabilities of high-school-aged arrival refugee students. From their interviews, and the thematic analysis of their transcripts and anecdotal narratives, the importance of teacher care continues to be essential in supporting refugee students. This research has also uncovered the need to examine systemic inequities faced by refugees, and means in which educators, community members, and policy makers can positively impact the refugee experience for the benefit of all Canadians. The final chapter will outline implications and recommendations from this research not already shared. The focus will be on teachers, teacher educators, and future research.

CHAPTER 9: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS, TEACHER EDUCATORS

AND RESEARCH

Curriculum and Pedagogy: Learning With Refugee Students

In undertaking this doctoral thesis my central research question was: What insights into needs of refugee students can be understood through their own words about their lived experience in high school? So, what have I learned through this journey, through an exploration into the lived experiences of refugee students, and more importantly, what am I going to do about it?

What these high-school-aged refugee students need to best support them in the classroom and the school is caring relations. Caring relations with their teachers, peers, and administrators, and caring supports within the school system and broader community. The participant researchers expressed that supporting them starts with developing a positive relationship with them. Before educators can concern ourselves with pedagogical approaches like including literacy objectives, inclusion of hands on activities, group work, and visual representations—all methods with evidence to improving refugee students' cognition and language acquisition—teachers must begin with their affective domain. These students want to feel appreciated for their strengths and experiences, cared for in their classrooms and schools, and to be part of the discussion about how to best support their learning. To meet these desires, the students were clear: come to know the students and listen *with* them to their stories of their journey to the classroom. Listen with them to their current challenges in transition, both in school and outside. Listen with them about their goals, aspirations, interests, and strengths to co-produce success plans to meet those goals. Through this essential process educators can build contextual understanding

of the students individual-environment relations and their specific expressed needs and capabilities. Alongside these unique attributes we can then use the knowledge of inferred needs and pedagogical approaches that have been shown to support refugee students to design an individual plan, with them, for their learning needs.

Finally, educators' supports of refugee students must extend beyond the cognitive realm, to consider and act upon the expressed needs, interests, and strengths of the students to support their emotional well-being, and to assist in their social development by supporting connections with their Canadian-born classmates inside the classroom and out. In supporting the students this way, we are truly demonstrating care. In "going above and beyond to help" (KK, 177), we not only meet a need, but the students also experience authentic care. As Noddings (2012c) stated care is not a "fuzzy feeling—it is a moral way of life" (p. 56). To me, care is not a pedagogical approach, it is a way of being as teacher, it is the Tao of Teaching.

One last statement kept surfacing from my initial reconnaissance research. This is the statement that brought me to a focus on students, their voices, their experiences, their expressed needs, and the importance of care. This quote comes from the first interview I ever did with a former refugee student and these are his words:

> Everybody wants people to care about them, right? Not just teachers, but everybody. Obviously, you want to feel cared about, when you go to school, you want to feel that you're valued. If you go to [the] classroom and you have no friends, nobody to talk to, and your teacher doesn't care how you're doing, and nobody ask you nothing, obviously, you don't want to go to that class. Chances are you'll skip that class. So obviously, I think teachers should care about their students, not just the ESL students, all their students, but it's just for the ESL students, you have to show them that you care, because they are from different backgrounds, right? *The way they show care back home can be different than the way you care here.* The culture, not just cultural, so many different things you have to consider. You might be caring, but at the same time the students should *know* that you're caring. That's important I think, I just want my teachers

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to care about me, and to see how I'm doing, and to know why I'm doing what I'm doing. That is all I would want from my teacher. (Checkley & Pelech, 2019, p.140)

This quote outlines the starting point, and minimum requirement, for educators in their journey of supporting refugee students: *All* he would want from his teacher is to be cared for.

Implications for Teachers Working with Refugee Students

Implications from this research for practicing educators includes the development of individualized programs, consideration of social supports, and establishing positive relationships with refugee students. The approaches to demonstrating care presented in the previous chapter can also inform teacher preparation programs and professional development as part of essential expectations of classroom teachers. Individual Program Plans (IPPs), Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Inclusion and Intervention Plans (IIPs) are common approaches for classroom teachers to supporting students within Canada. All three of these approaches are designed to create individualized programs for specific students with learning needs designated by the provinces. The creation of these plans are done by the teachers themselves, often supplemented by lead teachers, school psychologists, parental input, diagnostic and assessment data as part of an educational team. In Alberta, this takes the form of IPPs, and students who are coded as refugees and English Language Learners (ELL) require IPPs to be created (Alberta Education, 2004).

In Alberta, creating IPPs should include: "parents and, *when appropriate, students* [emphasis added] and other professionals in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of students' IPPs" (Alberta Education, 2004). When teachers are developing IPPs for high school refugee students, the plans should be created with the

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students. Refugee students can share their expressed needs, their goals and definition of success, their identity, and their capabilities in this process. The teacher can then integrate this information to co-develop a plan that both the teacher and student, in a relational manner, can commit to for learning and teaching.

In these pedagogical conversations, there are also opportunities to explore information the refugee student feels is important for the teacher to know. In coming to know about their lived experiences teachers will have a better understanding of the students. Educators may uncover social-emotional needs, physical or mental health concerns, or even trauma for which a teacher can facilitate procuring supports. Understanding these experiences and needs also leaves teachers better equipped to support connections between refugee students and their Canadian classmates, and also increase positive development of the student-teacher relation. The students' interests and passions can be helpful in connecting students with others with similar interests, as well as for demonstrating care, one of the core qualities identified by the participants in this research.

All of the participant researchers spoke about the importance of the student teacher-relation. This is not only essential in demonstrating care, but also in ensuring that the students are challenged enough to feel growth. In creating IPP's with the students, and understanding their interests, teachers should be able to craft meaningful learning opportunities and authentic assessments that reflect an appropriate challenge for the students' growth and knowledge while remaining relevant. In resisting the removal of obstacles, and instead leaving manageable challenges, educators can support student growth.

The key implication of this research for practicing teachers is the necessity of demonstrating authentic and ethical care for refugee students. They must also ensure the care is received and acknowledged (Noddings, 2012c). This research confirms the effectiveness of exploring lived experiences, and understanding expressed needs, in creating a caring relation. Teachers especially can focus on coming to know refugee students through dialogue with them about their needs and capabilities. This may be challenging to accomplish with teachers' current workloads, but schools should support teachers with the necessary release time to complete success plans, or IPPs, with refugee students. Professional development, planned and implemented at the school and district levels, should also be an ongoing part of teachers' work to become aware and skillful about supporting refugee students from first meeting through their entire time at the schools. Although we sometimes associate with this extra level of care at the K-6 grade level, it is just as important in secondary school as we educate young adults soon to be voting and participating citizens.

Implications for Teacher Educators

If it is essential for teachers to understand the importance of ensuring a caring relation through coming to know refugee students, it is equally important that they are prepared to do so in teacher education programs. Teacher educators, professors, instructors, and supervisors also need to understand the value of care ethics in education. Promoting methods of demonstrating care in their own classes, and ensuring they are modeling caring relations is essential. As is teaching in a direct and deliberate manner about the importance of supporting refugee students, who remain a vulnerable secondary student population at risk for failure and high dropout rates. Active work by all education

sectors is needed to increase refugee student success. It is also essential that teacher educators demonstrate the importance of valuing refugee students capabilities, interests, and culture as to not promote deficit thinking about refugee students.

This research is not calling for specific courses on the ethics of care, but rather suggesting that it be modeled and explored throughout teacher education programs and included in assessment of student teachers both on campus, and in their practicum experiences. Noddings (2012c), in her concept of virtue caring, validates the importance that teacher educators going beyond discussing the importance of care. Investigating the importance of expressed needs in determining how to demonstrate care, and observing acceptance, is required. If teacher educators ask student teachers to care, without demonstrating care, hypocrisy is the only lesson learned, so modeling active care is also essential.

This modeling is done by coming to know student teachers—their expressed needs, strengths, and interests—and meta-pedagogically emphasizing that you have done so with intent, in order to demonstrate care. Most teacher educators, like teachers, would claim they care for their students. This research suggests they should be reflecting upon whether they have evidence that their students acknowledge that care. It is also suggested that the dialogue around care be promoted with student teachers in their own classrooms. In assessing practicum work, preliminary and post-observation discussions should include student-teacher relations, care, and expressed needs. If student teachers are unsure how to support students, supervisors should be questioning if they have asked the students themselves, directly, about their needs. This research further establishes the value of doing so especially with high-school-aged-refugee students, along with

Noddings (2005) whose research exhibits the value or exploring expressed needs for all students.

<center>**Implications for Schools, School Systems, and Governmental Supports**</center>

When I began this investigation on how to better support refugee students, the focus was on the classroom. While the participant researchers' stories have provided important insights into the student-teacher relation, it also illuminated systemic issues that cause inequalities in refugee students' affordance networks. These systemic challenges need to be addressed to better support refugee students. Adjustments need to occur at the school district, and governmental level, and within the broader community.

Within schools, considerations of how we place students need to be revisited. Refugee students need an avenue in which they can demonstrate their capabilities upon arrival. At a minimum, schools should be undertaking interest inventories with their new-arrivals and provide opportunities to explore academic courses to situate themselves. Administrators and ELL educators need to revisit with refugee students continually in their first years to explore their expressed needs about their educational path. Schools should also be promoting anti-racism in their schools and educating students about their refugee peers to build empathy and bridge understanding and relationships. Refugee students should be approached about extra-curricular clubs they may be interested in, and clubs should be developed that match their interests to that of their Canadian-born peers if they are not already present.

School districts, and the provincial government, need to ensure that dollars allocated for refugee and ELL students are being used to support those students. Through our experience in this pandemic, systemic inequalities already faced by refugee students

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have been amplified. Refugee students have been documented to have less access to technology for online learning, and to be less likely to return to school post-pandemic, particularly female refugees (UNHCR, 2020). Education funding should be allotted to ensure that refugee students have access to technology, whether learning online or face-to-face. School boards need to co-ordinate with schools to visit with refugee families and encourage the return to school of all school-aged children. Community supports like immigrant services should be further connected to schools. Conversations about schools housing immigrant services youth liaisons should be undertaken. This author recommends creating spaces in schools where refugee students can find a caring adult they trust throughout the day. This space may include ELL teacher, educational assistant, and immigrant services youth liaisons on a rotational basis. Access to immigrant services supports access to language translation, transportation, and cultural connections. Having this access readily available not only better connects the students, it supports the family connection to immigrant services to ensure the health and well-being of all family members.

Designing and implementing anti-racist curriculum should be undertaken for the benefit of all students. As Lund and Nabavi (2008) demonstrated, there has been a need for curriculum that supports newcomers right to dissent and to be themselves for some time. In the current social-political reality, this type of curriculum would support Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) students as well as new-comers and refugee students. It has become essential as the mainstreaming of white nationalism is occurring across Canada and the United States (Fording & Schram, 2020).

Refugee students and their families need to receive adequate funding and employment support that limits the amount of time high-school-aged refugees need to work. High-school-aged students should be able to work as a choice, rather than a need. As has been explored, many academic challenges exist for refugee students in school due to their developing language. These challenges should not be exasperated by economic demands on the students outside of school. This limits time for study and social interactions. As was demonstrated, when the students are working 40 plus hours, attendance can be negatively impacted. Refugees repay the money invested in them over time (UNHRC Canada, 2019), and improved support could actually expedite that process as improved education can lead to improved economic status (Anderson, 2020). High-school-aged arrival refugees deserve an equitable chance to focus on school, and that requires appropriate funding in starting out these future Canadians.

Implications for Researchers and Future Research

This research focused on the participant interviewees own words has established a connection between the importance of care to refugee students, and the value of coming to know those students with whole lives and complex histories. Although the results of this qualitative study included only a small sample of participant researchers, its findings generate several implications for future research: the necessity to talk to the refugees themselves; the importance of doing a study *with,* not *on*, refugee students; and respectful methods for doing so. Additionally, it calls for investigation of systemic inequalities faced by refugee students and their families. It is clear that differing populations have different needs, but it is also evident that within populations, individuals' needs will be different. Likewise, in avoiding a deficit mindset, individuals also hold unique

capabilities that equally require exploration through dialogue. It reminds researchers to be careful about being attentive to and respectful of particular needs and capabilities, to avoid exclusive consideration of inferred needs and to emphasize the importance of expressed needs. To understand expressed needs and capabilities of refugee students, researchers must speak with them directly and study what they actually say. Those research interviews, conversations, and discussions may require guidance from theoretical frameworks, but it is essential to be open to shifts in focus and practice in response to the input of participant researchers and interviewees.

In undertaking research with refugees about their expressed needs and capabilities, co-production is presented as key to authentic findings. To be co-produced, researchers must be flexible in the direction of the research: its question, its theoretical framework, and its methodology may be informed by and adjusted based on emerging data. Research about lived experience has its own complex individual-environment relation. With many inputs, and many sources, it is doubtful that a rigid framework can be authentic, or ethical, in representing the lived experiences of others. Instead, qualitative researchers must search for meaning and structure within the chaos. While informed by theory, method, and research, it is necessary to be open to the differing world views of individual participant researchers. This includes frank and open discussions around privilege, bias, and positions of power. To truly have a power-with relationship, the researcher and the participant researcher need to be symbiotic, empathetic, and respectful of each other's lived realities. It was this researcher's experience that this was best accomplished through continual conversations, and where

the role of the researcher was primarily listener and recorder first, before writing and sharing the interview data within a larger research context.

Because this study was focused on a small sample size, future research should explore larger samples, other refugee populations, and other locations. Experiences of different groups and individuals, in different settings, would likely unmask new and unique expressed needs. Further examination of refugee strengths, interests, and values would further inform avenues of connection between refugee students and their peers. Future research may also include an exploration of the perspectives of the other components of the refugee students' individual-environment: their teachers, their families, and their peers. In understanding these contrasting expressed needs and lived experiences, studies like this one would further inform support for teachers of refugee students, their families and the refugee experience, including how Canadian-born peers can find connection with their refugee classmates. Lastly, further research needs to be undertaken to uncover systemic challenges faced by refugee students and possible solutions and restructuring that can be done to remove inequity in affordance networks. This not only benefits refugee students, but all marginalized students, and in improving those experiences, the experience of all students, and our society, advances.

The next step for this research agenda will explore more about the lived experiences, expressed needs, and capabilities of current students who are refugees in local schools. There is a need to consider means of supporting the connections between refugee students and their Canadian-born peers. This was stressed by the participant researchers as an area of challenge that had a negative impact on their social, emotional, and academic experience. An exploration to find programs that are having success in

connecting refugee students is called for, alongside an examination of their methods. Continuing conversations with refugee students about their experiences and needs will continue be the focus. Studies are needed to examine if these findings and themes, within a homogeneous population, extends to other refugee populations. I would also hope to look further into the experience of the other half of this caring relation by investigating teachers' expressed needs in supporting refugee students. From this research I hope to develop a network of supports for refugee students and their teachers in the local, and provincial jurisdictions.

As a teacher educator, I also foresee research with student teachers and their experiences developing effective teacher-learner relations during teacher preparation experiences with refugee students. Whatever the direction chosen, the importance of exploring individual expressed needs through power-with research is a key focus. Research that values the individual human spirit, is conscientious about attending well to power dynamics, offers hope for increased refugee student success, and promotes compassionate and mindful understanding of others, should be employed.

The Importance of Relational Education

This research has become a deep and powerful study of the importance of relational education, especially with refugee students. The individual-environment relation and the caring relation formed through the theoretical framework was confirmed in the content of the interviews. The methodology was shaped from a power-with relation to interview and amplify refugee students' lived experiences and expressed needs in better supporting their educational experiences in their own words. The results can be shared with educators to improve their own student-teacher relation with refugee

students. For educators the conclusion is clear. We need to act on the need for establishing a caring relation with refugee students concerning their capabilities and expressed needs where:

> notice is paid to what actions of care may be open to us, what healing may be possible. We can notice the opportunities for social justice, healing, and renewed education. We can consider benefits for students within their communities. We can invite peaceful ways of being within disagreement and diversity so that productive collaboration may move human beings more toward authentic well-being. (Fowler, 2013, Restorative Education section, para. 6)

In interviewing and revisiting the conversations with the participant researchers, and sharing their collections of lived experiences, I believe there was some healing experienced by both the participant researchers and me as a lead researcher. For the participant researchers revisiting their experiences, painful as some of them were, had healing aspects. Noting that they were contributing their stories as research to support future refugees, not only created a sense of social justice, in some it seemed to create an authentic sense of pride in helping others. For me, the experience was healing, as I let go of some superficial burden of responsibility for these students. They are fine without me and would likely have been fine without me in high school, after all they are *resilient*. Through this experience, the authentic caring relation I have with these students has come full circle, though I will continue to care about them. It has become abundantly clear through their participation in this journey, the participant researchers also care about me. Our caring relation is officially reciprocal.

One of the most powerful meetings came with Kishan. After completing our review of his story, we simply sat and chatted for a few minutes. In this time Kishan shared with me a fear he had for his community's elder population. He had a genuine concern for their isolation and mental health and mentioned high levels of suicide. He

offered that this was likely due to the difficulty of the aging population to develop

English, and the younger generations lack of desire to speak with them. In that moment

Kishan and I shared a renewed mutual education. This time, Kishan was teaching me, and

we agreed to look into how to support these vulnerable members of his community

moving forward. Although a difficult topic, what Kishan was demonstrating was hope,

hope that life could be better for these marginalized people, and a goal to do something

about it. It was a similar hope I set out with in this doctoral research, inspired by the

words of Freire:

> Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without
> the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns
> into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need
> for a kind of education in hope. Hope, as it happens, is so important for our
> existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it
> in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip toward hopelessness and despair.
> Hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or
> immobilism. (Freire, 2014, p. 3)

Resilient, compassionate, and selfless: these characteristics have continually been

modeled to me by refugee students through teaching and learning with them, and in

sharing in this research. I started out this journey wanting to give hope to refugee

students, and the teachers that support them. Through this journey it is now apparent that

it is the refugee students, instead, that give me hope. Hope that together we can work to

improve the experience of their community, future refugee students, and the experience

their classmates and teachers. Hope that we can build a better Canadian society as we

work together against systemic racism.

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Refugee Students' Needs in High School Science
Narrative Interview Guide
Participant Researchers
Spring 2019

Interviewer: Doug Checkley

Introduction:	I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. The interview should be no longer than 2 hours. I will be audio recording the interview because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Because we're on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we don't miss your comments and try to avoid using identifying information like your name or teachers' names. All responses will be kept confidential. To do so I am going to ask you to pick a pseudonym. What would you like your name to be in this study?
o Thank you o Purpose o Confidentiality o Duration o Recording o Informed Consent o State pseudonym o **WATER BOTTLE** o **NOTEBOOK**	Through your participation in this study, I hope to better understand what your experiences in high school were like, your strengths and needs, and how science teachers can better support refugee students. I would like to hear and produce stories of your experiences. To do so I will ask questions about your experiences in coming to Canada, and in high school in Lethbridge, with a focus on the science classroom. Following the interview, I will create a first draft of your narrative and ask you back to the U of L, if convenient, for an hour-long meeting. In this meeting, you will be able to give me feedback on the story, and let me know if there is anything you would like me to remove or change. After applying your feedback, you will be invited for one last meeting in which you can hear the final story, give any thoughts about it, and confirm if you are comfortable with it being shared. This last meeting will again occur at the U of L, if convenient, and will take about an hour. The total time of participation is four hours. By participating today you are not committed to the other meetings, though I will ask if I can still use your data. You are free to withdraw from this research at any point including during this interview and you do not need to answer any questions you are not comfortable answering
	Are there any questions about what I have just explained?
	_ --------- are you willing to participate in this interview?

• Turn on Devices	
	Thank you. Now we can get started with the questions.

Non-verbal probes:
  ○ eye contact
  ○ nodding
  ○ smile
  ○ facial expression
 	
Verbal probes:
  ○ ***How did that make you feel?***
  ○ ***Can you tell me a story about that?***
  ○ Can you provide an example?
  ○ What was that like for you?
  ○ Was that frustrating?
  ○ Was that helpful?
 	
Remember!
  • **Two ears, one mouth**
  • **Pauses can say as much as any words**
 	
Interview Notes
  • **Notes on physical communication**
  • **Emotional responses – their's and mine**
	1. What was your school experience like before you came to Canada?
	  • What kind of student were you before you came to Canada? Did you like school?
	
	2. What did you hope to be/do after you were done school before coming to Canada?
	
	3. Please tell me a little bit about what it was like for you arriving at the high school after you came to Canada.
	
	4. If you could imagine your first day in a Canadian school as a perfect day, what would it have been like?
	
	5. Describe an experience or two where you felt connected to your high school.
	
	6. Describe an experience or two where you felt disconnected or isolated in high school.
	
	7. What helped you in high school? And how? (check for transformational if transitional is what is offered first)
	
	8. What do you think would have helped you more in high school?
	
	9. What would you describe as your strengths were in high school as a student, or in general? (Work ethic, subjects, family support, resilience)
	
	10. How did these strengths help you in school?
	
	11. How would you define success in school?
	
	12. Describe an experience where you found **success** in high school science. (insert their definition in q.12/13)
	
	13. Describe an experience where you **struggled** in high school science.
	
	14. What do you need to learn science better?
	
	15. Describe an experience or two where you had your needs met by a teacher in science.

Non-verbal probes:
  o eye contact
  o nodding
  o smile
  o facial expression
 	
Verbal probes:
  o ***How did that make you feel?***
  o ***Can you tell me a story about that?***
  o Can you provide an example?
  o What was that like for you?
  o Was that frustrating?
  o Was that helpful?
 	
Remember!
  • **Two ears, one mouth**
  • **Pauses can say as much as any words**
 	
Interview Notes
  • **Notes on physical communication**
  • **Emotional responses – theirs' and mine**
	16. Describe an experience or two where your needs were not met by a teacher in science.
	
	17. Describe an experience or two where you felt cared for in school.
	
	18. What was your life outside of school like while you were in high school? (work, interests, family)
	
	19. Was you family supportive of your efforts in school?
	
	20. Did you ever feel like you were expected to do a lot outside of school during high school? (prep them and remind them of confidentiality on this q.)
	  • How did that compare to before coming to Canada?
	
	21. Describe an experience or two where these outside influences helped in school.
	
	22. Describe an experience or two where these outside influences interfered with school.
	
	Always asks theses three Questions:
	23. If you could give advice to teachers about what refugee students need from their teachers, what would you like to tell them or want teachers to know and be able to do?
	
	24. How do you think refugees can be supported to be comfortable to ask for what they need in school?
	
	25. Are there any other stories or information you can tell me that might help other refugee students? Or teachers to meet learning needs?

Closing: o Thank you	I will now **turn off the recording devices.** Thank you so much for sharing these personal stories of experiences. I hope to honor them within your narrative and create a place for your voice and perspective to be amplified for teachers, researchers and students to learn from and gain hope from. This concludes the interview. I will contact you again once I have transcribed the interview and completed the first draft of your narrative.

Email Recruitment Script

Email Subject Line: Univ. of Lethbridge Study – Refugee Students' Needs in High School Science

Sent on behalf of Doug Checkley,
Please respond directly to him (email below), if you are interested in participating. I will not be made aware of your participation or choice not to participate.

Hello,

My name is Doug Checkley. I am a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge studying how to support refugee students in the high school science classroom. I am inviting refugee students who have graduated from ██████ ███████ to participate in a narrative interview study that will take approximately four hours over three meetings. The hope of this research is to improve the experience of refugee students in high school.

Participation in this study is voluntary. As I will be asking you to share stories of experience, personal details in stories may be shared, but all names will be changed. In sharing personal stories, some negative events may be visited, but you can stop at any time in the study if you are uncomfortable.

If you have questions about the study or are interested in the findings, you may contact me at doug.checkley@uleth.ca or 403-329-2459. You may also contact the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Lethbridge at research.services@uleth.ca or 403-329-2747 if you have questions about your rights as a participant. This research has been reviewed for ethical acceptability and approved by the University of Lethbridge Human Subject Research Committee.

If you would be interested in completing the interview, please email Doug Checkley directly:
doug.checkley@uleth.ca

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Doug Checkley
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403-329-2459
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