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Exploring the School Experiences of a Syrian Refugee Student in a Windsor, Ontario Secondary School: A Case Study

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Exploring the School Experiences of a Syrian Refugee Student

in a Windsor, Ontario Secondary School: A Case Study

By

Fatima Fakih

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

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Exploring the School Experiences of a Syrian Refugee Student

In a Windsor, Ontario Secondary School: A Case Study

by

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ABSTRACT

The Syrian refugee crisis has displaced millions of people and left many children without proper access to education. More than 1,300 Syrian refugees have made Windsor, Ontario their home since the start of the conflicts. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of Syrian refugee children in the public school system in Windsor, Ontario by interrogating this issue through the eyes and voice of a Syrian refugee secondary school student. The study is guided by the theoretical perspectives of multiculturalism and culturally responsive pedagogy. Through a blended approach, this case study employs a narrative inquiry and phenomenological approach to explore the secondary school experiences of one Syrian refugee student. A review of the literature reveals the value of positive teacher-student relationships in the school experiences of refugees. Furthermore, it reveals that many teachers feel unprepared to teach refugee students, and that refugee students are often perceived through a "deficit lens". There remains a limited understanding of the lived experiences of Syrian refugee students in a Canadian context. Data analysis was conducted through the process of "restorying" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 332), in which the participant's experiences are combined and retold through a "three-dimensional space approach" (p. 339). Five themes emerged from the data: *passion for education; maturity and resilience; community: attachment to the familiar; life as teacher; teacher as champion.* Recommendations for teacher practices include facilitating a welcoming and inclusive environment for students from refugee backgrounds. Producing resources and professional development programs for educators that facilitate an understanding of refugee-student experiences and needs is also recommended. Recommendations for future research include deeper exploration of the lived experiences of Syrian refugees in various Canadian contexts as well as an investigation of the nature of teachers' culturally responsive practice.

DEDICATION

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate

I dedicate this work, first and foremost, to my parents, Hani and Zahra Fakih, who arrived in Canada 30 years ago as refugees and who sacrificed everything to give me and my siblings the best opportunities possible. Your love and support are what enabled me to see the value of education, and to pursue my dreams.

I also dedicate this work to the students who I had the honour of teaching, albeit on an occasional basis, across the City of Windsor. Your trust in me sparked my desire to conduct this study and to give a voice to those who remain unheard. In addition, I dedicate this study to all refugees across the globe who remain without a voice.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to Karam, with whom I built an unbreakable bond over the stories we shared, and without whom this work would not be complete.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my thesis advisor and mentor, Dr. Clinton Beckford, for his unrelenting support and guidance through this journey. Thank you so much for everything you have taught me about the research process, and about myself as a researcher. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Susan Holloway for her encouragement and support in arriving at a final draft of this work as well as Dr. Cheran for being part of my defense process. Thank you to my family members and friends who supported me through the process of writing this paper and who encouraged me along the way.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

"I used to feel that I was teaching children who were old for their years. The

spark in each of them seemed to have been ignited by the harsh friction of

contact with a rough edged life. In class, the movement of their eyes seemed

like the reflection of small windows looking out from mysterious, dark planets.

They kept their lips firmly closed, as though they feared to let loose the string

of curses that would otherwise issue from them. The class was a miniature

world, a microcosm full of misery of a heroic kind. I felt alien to their shared

characteristics, a feeling that made me only the more determined to get to their

feelings and thoughts" (Kanafani, 1966/2004, p. 80).

The words of Ghassan Kanafani (1966/2004) transport me to when I first began working

as a secondary school occasional teacher for the Greater Essex County District School Board

(GECDSB). At the time, I did not foresee myself encountering any critical issues in the schools

where I taught. I expected minor teacher-student conflicts and some confusion during my first

days in this new position regarding classroom locations or daily routine of occasional teaching.

Having qualifications in English as a Second Language (ESL), I was often assigned to ESL

classes, many of which had a high enrollment of Syrian refugee students. Reading Kanafani's

words, I remember the feelings of wonderment at these individuals who *did* seem older than their

own age. Having heard news stories about horrific events of the Syrian conflict, I wondered,

each time I entered a classroom, whether these students lived through anything as intense, or if

they escaped before the monster of a war reached them. Much like the narrator in Kanafani's

tale, I wanted to know more about these students of mine; I wanted to look into the windows of

their past and uncover the mysteries that lay within. I was interested in how this insight into their

lives would help me better meet their needs. Unlike the students in Kanafani's tale, however,

mine didn't stay silent. Their voices roared when they felt it was safe to do so.

During those initial days, Syrian students approached me as though they had known

me for a very long time. I think the presence of a hijab-wearing teacher was a comfort to them.

The greetings directed at me felt sincere. I felt an automatic connection with many of them, and

their reactions suggested that the feeling was mutual. The initial greetings were followed by an

overwhelming amount of confidential information being shared with me, as well as questions

regarding personal issues at home and school. Before long, some students were sharing

unsolicited information about bits and pieces of their experiences in the Syrian war. As I returned

to these classrooms on different assignments, students became more familiar with me and I

became a confidant to many of them. Soon I found myself hearing complaints about school

experiences - misunderstandings between these students and their teachers and issues regarding

academic achievement. While typical student matters were shared with me, what stood out were

issues that I felt had no place in an inclusive educational setting, namely perceived unfair

treatment they received at the hands of their teachers. I began to question what the nature of

these students' relationships with their regular teachers looked like and whether their unique

issues were being addressed. I also questioned how reliable the students' claims of mistreatment

were. This self-questioning was reassured by the words of a wise friend: "Any individual's

perception of an event is their reality, and with that comes at least some truth" (Personal

Communication). I understood this to mean that the claims made by a student are not invalidated

simply by their status as a student. I spent a lot of time in conflict with myself – I did not want to

undermine the professional integrity of my colleagues, but I felt as though I was faced with a serious underlying issue.

As time went on, our relationships were nourished by the mutual perception of one another as "the same", each of us validating the other's ethnic identity. My physical appearance resembled many of the young girls I came in contact with, and at times I felt it gave them a sense of confidence in wearing their hijab. We shared the same first language, Arabic, which facilitated many of our conversations. We understood the same type of humor, ate the same food and essentially came from the same part of the world. Although these characteristics may seem irrelevant, they have merit in providing insight to the relationships and bonds that were formed. What I continue to question is, apart from our similarities, what led these students to approach me? What is the reason these students confided in me about their personal and educational issues? Were they discussing these issues with their regular or fulltime teachers? If not, why? I had to presume that there existed barriers in the school setting they attend; otherwise, why would they feel the need to reach out, sometimes in such desperation, to an alternate source for help or comfort? Is it simply because we resemble one another and speak the same language? Or is there more to it? What role does feeling welcomed, valued and included play in their trust in me?

Background of the Problem

Upon first meeting Mohamad, I was overcome by his energy. He had a response to every remark made by myself and other students; he wanted to be seen and heard. I enjoyed teaching him; although it was a challenge to get him to produce any work, his personality was one that kept me on my feet. One particular encounter with Mohamad resonated with me. He shared the frustration he felt towards a number of his teachers who, he believed, did not give him

a chance and who overlooked the challenges he faced with his limited English language proficiency. He felt it was the language barrier that crippled him and prevented him from performing to the level that his teachers expected and to the level he hoped to reach, but that his teachers did not understand this. Mohamad expressed all of this to me in Arabic, but the same was not possible between him and his teachers. Instead, he felt they singled him out because of his unruly behavior, while in reality he was frustrated with the barriers preventing him from understanding and from being understood. As mentioned before, Mohamad was in constant need of attention; perhaps he felt silenced and was looking for someone to hear him. I listened, and I heard him recollect his final days in his beloved Syria. He described the details of this day after expressing that his teachers just don't understand him, and instead, they say things like "I am not here to teach you how to read and write. I am here to teach you some respect" (Personal Communication).

Expectations of an inclusive society.

Canada prides itself on its inclusive, multicultural society and promotes diversity and inclusion throughout public institutions including the public education system. Since 1971, under the federal government of Pierre Trudeau, Canada committed to the principle of multiculturalism, with a goal to "protect and promote diversity" (Burnet & Driedger, 2011). To "protect and promote" is a strong statement, giving diversity a high level of reverence and putting Canadian morals on a high platform as a model for other nations. This also gives Canada a reputation of being a highly inclusive and equitable nation, making it admirable to newcomers. For instance, the efforts made in educating newcomers in the Canadian province of Ontario have gained international recognition (Ontario, 2009, p. 5). Thus, coming to Canada and settling in

Ontario holds with it a promise of an inclusive education through which students can grow and learn while maintaining their individuality and cultural values.

Identifying student-vulnerability.

Brewer (2016) highlights the importance of distinguishing between refugee and immigrant youth in the discussion of educational policy for refugee students. She suggests that educators may miss the significant impact of the refugee experience as a result of grouping all minority students into a single category (Brewer, 2016). Refugee children and youth experience a very unique set of circumstances that educators might not always take into consideration. These circumstances greatly influence the characteristics of the group. Furthermore, everyone acquires his or her own set of characteristics that are unique to him or her and which affect their educational experience. Thus, an equitable approach is necessary for helping students to succeed "personally and academically" (Ministry of Education, 2019, para. 7). These tenets are echoed in Article 26.2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as well, where it states, "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality…" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948, p. 5). Not only is this a right of students in Canadian schools, but it is also a universal human right.

A certain level of understanding and empathy from educators should be established when working with refugee students. In the past decade, news outlets and social media platforms have been flooded with information and statistics about the Syrian refugee experience, giving consumers a glimpse of what the circumstances are like. However, while one can certainly sympathize, this should not be misconstrued as true understanding of the conditions experienced by refugees. Furthermore, for individuals, like myself, who have been exposed to marginalization or discrimination, it can be easy to assume understanding of what refugee

students must be going through. There remains, though, a "lack of knowledge" (Dippo, Basu &

Duran, 2012, p. 46) that disadvantages refugee students on a social and academic level. Thus, it

is important to clearly define terms such as refugee and immigrant in order to minimize

misunderstanding and unhelpful assumptions about students and their circumstances, as well as

to maintain empathy and consideration toward all students. Ratkovic et al. (2017) echo this

concern regarding careful identification of marginalized students. They suggest "educators,

school administrators, policy-makers, and research" should all distinguish between these terms

"to generate rich, comprehensive, and relevant education knowledge in an era of forced

migration and globalization" (p. 21). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) defines a convention refugee as

> "someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of
>
> persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution
>
> for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a
>
> particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do
>
> so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees
>
> fleeing their countries" (USA for UNHCR, n.d.b).

This definition encapsulates the vulnerability of an individual with refugee status, who

experiences "fear", is "afraid" and was "forced" to leave their home. This definition also

emphasizes the complexity of the status. To assume the statuses of refugees and immigrants as

the same would do both groups injustice; it would ignore the suffering that brought the

individual to become a refugee, while falsely attaching a set of circumstances to an individual

who willingly relocated to another country. Statistics Canada (2010) defines an immigrant as "a

person who is, or who has ever been, a landed immigrant or permanent resident. Such a person

has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently" (Statistics Canada, 2010, para. 3).

Clarifying the distinction even further, The Government of Canada (2019a) asserts "an

immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country. Refugees are forced

to flee" (Government of Canada, 2019a, para. 3). The distinction is, thus, a matter of *choice* and

force. Looking at this definition from a more personable perspective, Vigil and Abidi (2018)

state, "being a refugee means being in a contradiction: it means being vulnerable and having to

show this vulnerability in order to receive protection, while, on the other hand, having to show

resilience" (p. 56). In a school context, this sheds light on how students might feel like they exist

between two difficult realities. These feelings might be intensified for Students with Limited or

Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) whose vulnerability can suddenly intensify upon their

entry into Canada. When educators begin to understand or empathize with the experiences of

refugee students, they can begin to facilitate an equitable experience in the classroom.

    Initial challenges facing refugee students globally.

    I met Ali in his ESL classroom, but our encounters were not limited to that

environment. One evening I had the pleasure of seeing him and meeting his mother at a local

park. We recognized each other immediately and Ali didn't hesitate to tell me about their most

recent ordeal. His family was struggling to integrate into their Syrian community and were

experiencing grief due to the circumstances that befell their family members in the refugee

camps of Jordan. What Ali told me before we parted ways still lingers with me today. With

frustration in his voice, he declared that he would rather be back in Syria, living through the war

with his entire family united, than being here, where nobody wants to help them and where they

were constantly worried about the fate of their relatives back home.

Students face many challenges at the secondary school level. Fitting in with social groups, maintaining academic achievement and being understood by their family members, their peers, and their educators can all contribute to a stressful secondary school experience. Faced with these typical struggles, the stress of secondary school for refugee students and SLIFE is compounded with the addition of language and cultural barriers, as well as effects of pre-migration and migration experiences that may still linger. Clark's (2017) study involving Canadian teachers of Syrian refugee elementary school students reveals that educators found "socioemotional factors related to hygiene, health, and school readiness… [and]…the language barrier" (p. 25) impacted student involvement in the classroom. Home responsibilities may also increase the strain for those who assume financial responsibility to support their family, and others who help care for younger siblings. Wilkinson (2002) uses the term "intergenerational conflict" (p. 175) to describe the challenges faced by some newcomer families. The ability for young refugees to adapt to a new society quicker than their parents often causes them to inherit the responsibility for "adult tasks" (Wilkinson, 2002, p. 175) which can compete for their time while enrolled in school. Similar trends were found in Nofal's (2017) study of Syrian refugees' school experiences in Ottawa, in which participants reported that the eldest children often sacrificed their schooling in order to work and help provide for the family (Nofal, 2017). For some students, the effects of war and the migration process may have a large impact on their wellbeing. While there are various programs in place to mitigate the challenges anticipated for newcomers, underlying and less obvious challenges may go unnoticed. In fact, it has been found that the level of social inclusion or exclusion experienced by refugee youth in Australia had a large impact on their wellbeing, particularly during the first few years in a new country (Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010, p. 1406).

A common challenge faced by refugee children during the integration process in a new country is adapting to a new education system (Clark, 2017; Cohen, Denov, Fraser & Bilotta, 2017; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Ficarra, 2017; Government of Canada, 2016; Grigoleit, 2006; Karam, Monaghan & Yoder, 2017; Skidmore, 2016). As a result of conflict back home and often a long-lasting forced migration process, children often miss out on educational opportunities for a large portion of their childhood (Wilkinson, 2002). SLIFE are widely recognized as having unique needs that many "schools and teachers are not prepared to meet" (DeCapua, 2016, p. 226). Upon arriving and finally settling in a new country, the readjustment into an education system can be extremely difficult. Some of the challenges that these students face can be easily identified, while others may be hidden. Skidmore (2016) presents several barriers facing newcomers including language, customs and religious practices. In addition, Cohen, Denov, Fraser & Bilotta (2017) identified the challenges facing refugee students, as well as SLIFE, in Quebec, Canada during their transition to formal schooling. These challenges were reportedly "due to different learning styles, new systems of rules, and the reality that many children had little or no knowledge of French" (p. 164). Identification of these types of challenges can help prepare teachers to help bridge the gaps in their schooling experience. Furthermore, having knowledge of the challenges facing their students of refugee backgrounds and SLIFE can allow teachers to understand behavioural difficulties they face in the classroom. In keeping with the sociocultural perspective from which SLIFE are considered, Cummins and Early (2015) assert that teaching these students involves moving "beyond a transmission approach" to facilitating language acquisition and instead, presenting a "social constructivist pedagogical orientation that enables students to participate in constructing knowledge and acting on social realities" (p. 58).

These principles are aligned with Banks' (1993) dimensions of multicultural education, which are discussed later in this chapter.

The process of integrating into a new society, even with a supportive family structure, can be challenging for the entire family. When they enroll in a formal school setting, children face new challenges independently of their families. This new school environment, often being very different than the home-environment as well as from prior school settings they have engaged in, or the limited schooling they have received, can present a compounding effect on the existing challenges that students face. Some teachers have identified that refugee students are usually "isolated and quiet" (Save the Children, n.d. p, 7) in the classroom setting, while also pointing out the importance that time plays in their education: the longer refugee students remain out of school, the harder it will be for them to return with enough enthusiasm to make up for lost time (Save the Children, p. 5). This returns our attention to SLIFE and the implications that their limited schooling might have on their school experiences after final resettlement. Furthermore, inappropriate grade level placement has been found to be a frustrating element in the return to school for refugee students (Karam, Monaghan & Yoder, 2017; Wilkinson, 2002). In a Canadian context, SLIFE are often placed in English Literacy Development (ELD) programs in which, Montero et al. (2012) state, "students' socioemotional or psychosocial needs… [are not] … normally considered" (p.7). In Lebanon, Syrian refugees are often placed in grades lower than their achievement level in Syria due to the language barrier; Syrian public-school curriculum is taught exclusively in Arabic while in Lebanon, public education is offered in either English or French (Karam, Monaghan & Yoder, 2017). Wilkinson (2002) confirms these occurrences, describing how the limited English language proficiency most often leads refugee students in Canada to be assigned to classes that are inappropriate for their age level (p. 176). It is clear how

this can be disheartening for young students who are simultaneously dealing with the process of cultural integration in their new country. In addition to inappropriate grade placement, refugee students are vulnerable to exclusion due to their refugee status and racial identity. Ficarra (2017) cites Schroeter and James' (2015) study who demonstrate how African-Canadian refugee students were viewed by their teachers through a "deficit lens" (p. 76) and that teacher practices limited student motivation by racializing and excluding them. Ficarra goes on to question the nature and effect of "special refugee programming" (p. 78) and what educators can do to reduce the harm of such exclusionary practices.

Positionality

Growing up in a predominately white neighborhood and attending a predominately white elementary school as a child, I attained my education through the hands of white Canadians. My teachers did not look or speak like me. They did not know much about the language I spoke at home, or the cultural practices that my family valued. They did not know how I spent my evenings, watching the news with my parents, usually hearing stories of the wars going on back home in the Middle East. They did not know that I saw images of the brutality these wars afflicted, and that I constantly worried about the children who were in danger while I lay safely in my bed each night. While I maintained high respect for my teachers, I was subconsciously aware of the boundaries that existed between us.

My parents, refugees from Lebanon, maintained an attachment to their homeland throughout my upbringing. I inevitably inherited that connection. However, my attachment to Lebanon was extended to the surrounding nations that were constantly under siege as well. These nations collectively became my 'back home' and I felt I could identify with anyone from this part of the world. Not only did I identify with their cultural and linguistic values, but also the

oppression they endured became my own, and the wars they overcame became my triumphs. These attachments had a big impact on the rest of my life, and eventually made their way into my teaching career.

Teaching Syrian refugee students reminds me of my childhood memories of the wars back home. Knowing that many of these students may have experienced devastation throughout the displacement and forced migration process as Syrian refugees, I often found myself imagining what the process must have been like for them. This process aided in forming a perception of my relationship with these students. While I imagine, I become one of these students leaving my war-torn home behind and arriving in a foreign country. Everything I heard about this country has been positive: there are opportunities to learn, to work, to live freely, safely, and without fear. I soon discover a language barrier; it cripples me and makes me think twice about having come to this place. The people around me look different, they sound, dress, and behave differently. Then I see someone who looks familiar. As I approach them, they even sound familiar. As we engaged in some conversation, I learn that they share some similarities with me, and in fact they come from the same place I call "back home". They can understand the things I am talking about. They can answer my questions about the unfamiliar. Life does not seem so bad now, now that someone understands me and now that I know I am not the only one of my kind.

There are gaps in my perceptions of students' experiences, but they are filled with pieces of stories I have heard from my parents – hiding in bomb shelters or leaving their pants in "turnout" position for easy access in the event of an overnight air raid. The daughter of refugees, I have always sympathized for others who struggled in this way. Without knowing it, I engaged an intrinsic sense of obligation to individuals who have experienced and fled from war or

persecution. The late Roger Simon (2000) described this type of obligation as a Jewish practice called *zakhor*, which literally translates to "remember". The practice involves four promises of adherence: "to learn it, to teach it, to keep/preserve it, and to do it" (Simon, p. 11). In the practice of zakhor, one is required to remember the struggles of their ancestral past, of events that they did not experience, but which are nonetheless part of their existence due to an apparent attachment to a culture, a faith, or a people. I realize that this feeling that overcomes me is deeply rooted in the origins of a historical past that I had no part in or control over the war and destruction that I witnessed from afar as a child and the suffering of 'my people'. To that end, I remember the images I saw as a child, and this serves as an explanation for the obligation I feel that I owe the students who confide in me. Although the practice of zakhor has its significance rooted in Jewish cultural and theological history, for me it is a practice that can be used to illustrate an essential part of the human condition.

Syrian Refugees in Windsor

Since the start of the conflicts in Syria in 2011 and the resulting mass migration of refugees around the globe, Canada, among other countries, made a commitment to share the responsibility of resettling Syrian refugees. Canada's goal of welcoming 25,000 refugees was surpassed by 1,172 individuals by the end of February 2016 (Government of Canada, 2017). This number climber to over 39,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016 (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019). Consequently, the city of Windsor, Ontario has welcomed more than 1,300 Syrians. This population is divided into three type of refugees: government assisted refugees (GARs), privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) and blended visa office-referred refugees (BVORs) (The City of Windsor, n.d.). Most newcomers are GARs, receiving financial support from the government of Canada (The City of Windsor, n.d.). A small Syrian community has

since developed in the area, adding to the already diverse population. This is evident throughout

the city, mainly in the downtown area where Syrian families have invested in small businesses

and restaurants. Syrian children have been enrolled in primary, secondary and post-secondary

institutions, adding to the diversity in educational settings as well.

Adjusting to the cultural climate in Canada can be challenging for Syrian refugees, but

efforts have been made by local organizations and institutions to ensure a smooth transition

throughout the resettlement process. Upon initial arrival, the Windsor Resettlement Assistance

Program (WRAP) provides support to the newcomers in areas including finding temporary and

permanent housing, opening a bank account, finding transportation, shopping, making

appointments, and general information about the local community (Multicultural Council of

Windsor and Essex County, n.d.b). Similarly, the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex

County (MCC) offers services varying from language instruction to employment support and

facilitates after-school programs for children and youth (Multicultural Council of Windsor and

Essex County, n.d.a). The New Canadians' Center of Excellence (NCCE) offers programs to

newcomers of all ages, assisting with the integration process. The organization employs

settlement workers who work alongside the Greater Essex County District School Board

(GECDSB) to further assist newcomers with the resettlement process (New Canadians' Centre of

Excellence, n.d.). Since the arrival of Syrian refugees in Ontario, the provincial Ministry of

Education has made efforts in preparing educators to welcome young children and youth into

their classrooms. In doing so, they remind educators to demonstrate the "inclusive" (Ministry of

Education, 2015) nature of Canadian society in their classrooms. Furthermore, the Ministry of

Education in Ontario provides ELD programming for Syrian refugee students in secondary

schools who have limited prior schooling. The goal of these programs is to help fill the gaps created by limited access to education (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Impact of the Syrian Conflict on Children and Education

Since 2011, more than 5.6 million Syrians have fled their country due to the conflicts that began during the 'Arab Spring' throughout Middle Eastern nations (Coughlan, 2017). Clashes began after protestors called for reform of the government. Widespread violence occurred from multiple armed groups in the area, leading to millions being displaced (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015, p. 3). Forced migrants sought asylum in neighboring Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, as well as European and North African countries. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states that most refugees lived in urban areas while only around 8 percent are accommodated in refugee camps (UNHCR, 2019a). In Germany, where more than one million Syrians sought refuge (Lupieri, n.d.), children's access to education is limited (Guterres, 2014). While there are efforts to create learning opportunities for all refugee children, the unfortunate reality is that there are many families living in refugee camps and even more who live outside of camps, as in the case of 80 percent of Syrian refugees living in Jordan (UNHCR, 2019a) resulting in limited educational opportunities for children.

Prior to the conflicts, Syria was known to have one of the most well-educated young populations in the Middle East (Al Hessan, 2016; Teschendorff, 2015; UNHCR, 2013). In the last decade, millions have been displaced internally and were forced to flee to neighbouring countries. Consequently, more than 2 million school-aged children's education has come to a halt inside of Syria (Deane, 2016; Teschendorff, 2015; UNICEF, 2018) and more than double that amount have no access to educational programming outside Syria (Teschendorff, 2015). Throughout the country, schools have been destroyed during the war (UNHCR, 2013), have been

transformed into shelters for displaced people, or even taken over and used for military purposes (UNICEF, 2018). There remain functional school buildings in both government- and opposition-controlled regions; however, each of these has its own difficulties in terms of access. For example, the stability in government-controlled regions attracts many families, causing classrooms to be overcrowded (Al Hessan, 2016) and putting a strain on the availability of resources and teachers. In contrast, the unpredictability of conflict in opposition-controlled regions has limited the enrollment of both students and teachers while also disrupting the maintenance of daily attendance (Al Hessan, 2016). These circumstances present major challenges for students to access schooling, often forcing families to choose between attending dangerous school settings or foregoing school altogether.

Outside of Syria in neighbouring countries, asylum seekers face a set of different challenges. While they are safe from the destructive forces of the civil war, many children remain out of touch with stable educational programming. In Lebanon, where over one million Syrian refugees have been welcomed (Human Rights Watch, n.d.), half of which are school aged children (Charles & Denman, 2013, p. 98), two thirds of the population of children have no access to any form of educational programming (Karam, Monaghan & Yoder, 2017, p. 449). While there are efforts from the Lebanese Ministry of Education to ensure provision of educational services to all children in Lebanon despite their legal status (Charles & Denman, 2013), the reality is that the large number of refugees has put a strain on available resources and personnel making it difficult for schools to function to their usual standards (Charles & Denman, 2013; Karam, Monaghan & Yoder, 2017; Karkouti et al., 2019). In Turkey, where over 3.6 million registered Syrian refugees currently reside (UNHCR, n.d.) a language barrier exists for Arabic-speaking Syrian refugees. This has led members of the Syrian refugee community to

teach a "modified Syrian curriculum" (Deane, 2016, p. 37) on a volunteer basis due to policies

preventing Syrian teachers to be compensated (Deane, 2016). Families who have settled in a

final country of residence might also be facing difficulties integrating into their new society.

Ferfolja (2009) brings to light the case of African refugees settling in Australia with limited

schooling. She describes challenges such as learning a new language, becoming familiar with

new social and cultural expectations, establishing and integrating identities that fit their new

social environment as well as dealing with discrimination on different levels (Ferfolja, 2009).

Within the realms of the refugee experience, one can see how these challenges can have

implications on the feelings of belonging these families have in their countries of asylum or final

resettlement. More specifically, these feelings can manifest in the form of alienation from their

peer-groups, especially in a school setting.

Apart from the direct impact of the war on the provision of educational opportunities for

children, a more subtle yet dire issue lingers amid the Syrian refugee crisis. As a result of the

devastation caused by the war, the quality of Syria's human capital is "dislocated, dispersed, and

currently virtually unaccounted for" (Deane, 2016, p. 49). In Harbison's (1971) early work on

the importance of human resources he identifies human beings as "the active agents who

accumulate capital, exploit natural resources, build social, economic, and political organizations,

and carry forward national development" (p. 426). Without the ability to develop and maintain

these resources through its young population, Syria's future and any hopes of the new generation

rebuilding the nation are uncertain. In fact, Deane (2016) refers to this young generation as "the

lost generation" (p. 35), alluding to the precarious circumstances in which Syrian children are

living. Charles and Denman (2013) concur, pointing out "a disruption to education can

potentially have detrimental effects on future income, resulting from a loss of human capital" (p.

100). While this image of Syrian refugees exists amongst several studies, Lamba and Krahn (2003) assert "although refugees typically arrive in Canada with limited financial capital and often undervalued human capital, they bring with them and maintain considerable stocks of social capital" (p. 342). Cultivating and sustaining these strong social connections is important for Syrian communities to flourish. Lamba and Krahn have identified the strength drawn from social networks by refugees who have limited forms of capital otherwise. These findings demonstrate the importance of having access to various social structures and systems, including education in which these sources of "social capital" can be harnessed in ways that promote resilience and social competence within a Canadian context.

While international efforts are in effect to mitigate the effects of the war on children, the fact remains that their vulnerability surmounts proper access to safety and education, the basis of developing any population's human capital. Berti (2015) confirms the state of vulnerability in which Syrian refugee children are currently in, indicating the various ways in which they are exploited: child labor, sexual violence and recruitment by armed forces are the fate of many children living in and out of the conflict zone (p. 43). Being exposed and subject to such atrocities, the fate of so many children is unfathomable, and such is the future state of Syria. Further, for children who found the means to escape these circumstances and resettle safely elsewhere, their fate depends on their resilience and on the services and social support provided in their new homes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of Syrian refugee children in the public secondary school system in Windsor, Ontario. The study interrogates this issue through the eyes and voice of a Syrian refugee secondary school student. With a focus on culturally

relevant pedagogy and multiculturalism in the Ontario education system, the study will explore

Canada's deeply rooted goal to "protect and promote diversity" (Burnet & Driedger, 2011) in an

educational context.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the proposed study are:

1. What is the nature of Syrian refugee secondary school students' educational

    experiences?

2. What are Syrian refugee secondary school students' perceptions of the Ontario

    education system with regards to multiculturalism, inclusive pedagogy, and

    equity?

3. How can educators better meet the needs of this vulnerable population?

Significance of the Study

The Syrian refugee crisis has affected millions of people world-wide. A major key to

mitigating the effects that this crisis has had is the provision of educational services to all

children and youth affected. Educating Syrian refugees has become a global commitment and

teacher education is also a crucial component. With teachers at the forefront of the integration

process for young Syrian refugees and their families, they should be well prepared to welcome

these students into their classrooms. This study provides one student's perspective that can serve

as an illustration for educators about the potential needs and circumstances of resettled Syrian

refugee secondary students and can provide a better understanding of the challenges refugee

students might face at school. The study provides a foundation for creating a comprehensive

system of strategies that address the existing needs of children affected by conflict. It gives one

student a platform to share their experiences of the education system they learn in. For policy

makers, this study offers insightful perspectives to adopt when creating goals for inclusive and equitable teacher practice, as well as for making revisions and modifications to current policy regarding teaching refugee students. Currently, most of the existing literature focuses on the experiences of refugees in Europe and Australia. Ratkovic et al. (2017) indicate "in Canada, there have been few studies focusing on refugee children from war-torn countries and their transition to Canadian schools" (p. 2). The perspective presented in this study will begin to fill this gap and will contribute to the limited but growing literature addressing the educational experiences of Syrian refugee students in a Canadian context and will add to the existing literature on educating refugee youth.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was granted by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB) for the purposes of this study. There are several ethical issues to consider within the scope of this study including student vulnerability, informed consent, confidentiality, and protection from emotional harm.

The participant in this study is considered vulnerable on two accounts: as a child under the age of 18 and as a refugee who may (or may not) have experienced or witnessed conflict. Due to their young age, verbal consent from family was obtained. In keeping with the nature of the study, there were no direct questions administered about the student's experiences with conflict, limiting the possibility of re-traumatization. One interview question (question 3 in *Appendix C*) engaged the participant in recalling and discussing the nature of their educational experiences prior to arriving in Canada. However, as it is clearly stated in the letter of information and student consent form (*Appendix B)*, the participant had full liberty to reject answering any questions that they did not feel comfortable with answering.

According to article 3.2 of the Tri-council Policy Statement (2018) (TCPS2-2018) concerning informed consent, "researchers shall provide to prospective participants, or

authorized third parties, full disclosure of all information necessary for making an informed decision to participate in a research project" (p. 30). Furthermore, the TCPS2-2018 states that in addition to seeking informed consent from participants, the researcher should maintain "ongoing consent" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2018, p. 6) throughout the duration of the study. Verbal, ongoing consent was sought from the participant throughout the study to ensure that participant continue to feel comfortable and willing to participate. Before beginning the interview, the participant was informed that he is free to exit the study, without penalty, at any point during the process, up until starting the data analysis process. In addition to informing the potential participants of their role in the study, the family of the participants was acknowledged as well. With the knowledge of cultural norms and values of the Syrian community, namely the close familial connection and parental involvement in children's affairs, the participants' family was asked for verbal approval of their child's participation in the study.

According to article 5.1 of the Tri-council Policy Statement (2018) concerning the confidentiality of participants in a study, "researchers shall safeguard information entrusted to them and not misuse or wrongfully disclose it" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2018, p. 60). This was achieved by using pseudonyms to identify the individual in the research report. Furthermore, all electronic files including interview transcriptions and typed memos were properly safeguarded in a locked computer. After the study is over, the research report completed and defended successfully, these files were deleted.

Limitations of the Study

The study had potential limitations including the possibility of the participant withholding information during data collection stage, the possibility of altering the meaning of the translated research instrument, and the limited generalizability of the study. In addition, several

uncontrollable factors might have affected the quality and nature of the participant's responses during the interview.

Due to the nature of the study, namely exploring the school experiences of Syrian refugee students, the participant may have felt reluctant to share their true opinions, feelings, and accounts of experiences in their school setting out of fear of 'outing' any members of their community or school teachers. In order to limit this from becoming a limiting factor, the participant was told they can withhold the names and characteristics of any individuals who are mentioned in their responses.

The participant might have felt intimidated by the presence of the researcher during the interview process. These feelings of intimidation may have influenced the quality of the participant's responses. Furthermore, this might have led the participant to over-report their satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with their school experiences, depending on their perception of what the researcher 'wants to hear'. Furthermore, the knowledge that interviews will be recorded, and that the researcher will making memos during these procedures might have resulted in nervousness and hesitation to voice their true feelings and/or opinions.

The translation of the research instrument, the un-structured interview questions, into Arabic might have modified the original meaning of the questions. The translations could also have contributed to the participant's misunderstanding of the original meaning of the questions.

The nature of this case study limits the study from being generalized to a larger population of refugee students. The findings of the study will be limited to the single participant. However, the results of this study still have the potential to inform teacher practices of the challenges facing refugee students based on the overlapping findings between this study and existing literature.

Theoretical Framework: Multiculturalism and Education

Canada's multicultural society today is a result of the long processes of colonization and settlement (Brosseau & Dewing, 2009). The landscape of diversity in Canada has changed

considerably since the earliest waves of immigration (The Historical Background, 2004). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) helped legitimize the enactment of multiculturalism in Canada (Brosseau & Dewing, pp. 4-5). Noteworthy in the context of this research is the intention of the Canadian Multicultural Act to "assist in the preservation of culture and language, to reduce discrimination, to enhance cultural awareness and understanding, and to promote culturally sensitive institutional change" (Brosseau & Dewing, p. 5). Thus, multiculturalism has, at least in an ideological sense, become part of the fundamental beliefs of Canadians, as well a central tenet at the heart of inclusive educational policy.

These beliefs about the positive influence of multiculturalism are not held by all; Granatstein (1998) cites Schlesinger (n.d.) and argues "Canadians…have never developed 'a strong sense of what it means to be a Canadian'; instead, and wrongly, they 'inclined for generous reasons to a policy of official multiculturalism'" (p. 91). Although this is a dated source, the notion that Canadians "wrongly" embraced multiculturalism implies that the current state of Canada's ethnic diversity is a mistake. Furthermore, this would devalue the cultural and linguistic diversity that is currently the reality of Canadian society. This is aligned with the beliefs of Phillips (2007), cited by Kymlockaiw (2014), who refers to the notion of multiculturalism as "a cultural straightjacket" (p. 12) which, rather than liberating minority cultural groups, forces minorities "into a regime of authenticity, denying them the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves" (p. 12). Malik (2007/2002) agrees, calling this an ironic characteristic of the political process of multiculturalism. He argues that while a multicultural society naturally engages people in political dialogue which involves exploring different cultures and making judgements about

them, multiculturalism also aims to prevent these judgements from being made for the sake of maintaining "tolerance and respect" (Malik, para. 25).

Multiculturalism is an immense idea and can be portrayed in many ways. Ghosh (2002) describes a conservative perspective which refers to the understanding of multiculturalism as a discussion of "anything that is not white" (p. 1) and a liberal point of view that stresses the importance of "ignoring difference" (p. 2) in light of a diverse society. Several authors describe multiculturalism as a pluralistic concept by which all children, regardless of their ethnic, racial, social, economic, religious, class, or gender-based characteristics, have equal access to educational opportunities, and that these opportunities promote a prejudice-free learning environment (Banks, 1993; Banks, 2013; Dilg, 1999; Ghosh, 2002; Johnstone, 1981). Furthermore, Banks (2013) describes multiculturalism as being "at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process" (p. 4). Again, multiculturalism, and multicultural education, is a fundamental part of the idea of being a Canadian and it begins as just that: an idea. For the concept of multiculturalism to be effective, this educational model requires a transition from being an idea or concept to engaging in a process. Through that transition, perhaps a reformation takes place, as with the 1960s American Civil Rights Movement, which was the genesis of multicultural education as a movement (Banks, 2013). It is not enough to simply admire the idea of multicultural education. Ghosh (2002) concurs, reminding us of its objective "to teach all children critical consciousness so that they can question the conditions in society that allow inequalities to exist within the democratic rhetoric of social justice" (p. 2). By engaging students in critical thinking, multicultural education aims to influence young people to become active agents of change in a world where discrimination is inherently present. Banks (2013) points to an important truth about *fully* achieving educational

equality through multicultural education: it cannot be done. To at least some degree, discrimination of "the other", the minority, the marginal, will always exist.

According to Banks (1993) "multicultural education is a complex and multidimensional concept" (p. 25) and it should not be considered as "merely content integration" (p. 25). For it to work effectively, that is, for educators to successfully prepare all children for living in a diverse society and for embracing diversity, including students from refugee backgrounds and SLIFE, Banks proposes five dimensions of adherence, which will be used as a framework in this research:

1. content integration,

2. the knowledge construction process,

3. prejudice reduction,

4. an equity pedagogy,

5. and an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1993, p. 5).

The first of these dimensions, content integration, is probably the most familiar for educators. In fact, this is likely what most people think of in the discussion of multicultural education – providing educational resources that reflect the students' diverse backgrounds. This is powerful in and of itself, and Dilg (1999) identifies how influential the integration of diverse texts can be for all students:

> "I had … witnessed, innumerable times, the powerful effects that works by writers of color could have on students. For students of color, the texts often succeeded in making literature meaningful, in giving them back their history or in explaining that history to their classmates, in helping them feel less alone in their life experiences, in making them feel part of the educational and dialogical process

in classrooms, or in giving them role models or directions for their future. For many

White students, these works opened up new worlds and new perspectives" (p. 6).

It is not enough, however, to rely on content integration to successfully engage students in a

multicultural education model. In Dilg's observation above, the final statement leads into the

next stage of Banks' continuum – knowledge construction. By integrating diverse texts in the

classroom, students were exposed to an alternative perspective, possibly opposing the dominant

discourses existing in the educational setting. In this second dimension, Banks stresses the

importance of focusing on "the ways in which the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of

reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the construction of knowledge"

(p. 25). In other words, an attempt to challenge hegemonic forces within society is a pivotal step

in educating young people. In the context of SLIFE and students from refugee backgrounds this

practice can enable teachers to facilitate a learning environment that considers students' diversity

as a valuable resource. Next, prejudice reduction comes into play, by which educators create a

space where students' attitudes towards racial identities other than their own become more

positive. Banks (2013) present Allport's (1954) "contact hypothesis" to describe guidelines

through which students can improve relations within a diverse context and avoid prejudice

assumptions about one another. This hypothesis is marked by four conditions: "(1) equal status,

(2) common goals, (3) intergroup cooperation, and (4) support of authorities such as teachers and

administrators" (Banks, 2013, p. 18). Through such contact, students can be prepared to

intrinsically accept the differences they see in their peers. Prejudice reduction is a pivotal stage in

the multidimensional continuum of multicultural education. Here, educators can engage

themselves and their students in processes that actively work to challenge their limiting thoughts

about diversity. The next dimension of multicultural education is what Banks (1993) calls equity

pedagogy. Educators have a responsibility to facilitate diverse-student achievement through their own teaching practice (Banks, 2013, p. 18). Engaging an equity pedagogy begins with understanding the individual needs of each student, as well as their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. With a focus on bilingualism, Coelho (2006) maintains,

> "you can turn linguistic diversity into an asset by acknowledging and celebrating it throughout the school environment, by providing opportunities for students to use their own languages and learn about other languages in the classroom, and by using community languages to work with parents" (p. 29).

Integrating such resources into educational content and practice will give students the tools to achieve to their fullest potential while maintaining a connection with their cultural values. This leads to the next and final dimension of a multicultural educational model, which seeks to create an empowering school culture and social structure. (Banks, 1993). An empowering school culture and social structure requires that all members of the school community examine the variables that are potentially causing discriminatory practices and determine effective ways to challenge the practices in place (Banks, 2013, p. 18). Educators and administrators are in a position to question common practices, their own and those of their colleagues, and to identify the most suitable interventions for making amendments. Furthermore, when concerns and suggestions are welcomed and accepted, this practice encourages active parental involvement and offers opportunities for the out-of-school community to be involved.

        In the context of this research, the theory of multicultural education will serve as a framework that will guide the exploration of multicultural teaching practices from the perception of Syrian refugee students. Their pre- and post-migration experiences might lend an important perspective in the discussion of multiculturalism in Canada. Although the sudden influx of

Syrian refugees caused a great deal of stress on the public education system in Windsor, Ontario, when analyzed carefully it can provide important insight into the implementation of multicultural education policy, which in turn will benefit all students' school experience.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

"In order to ensure that all students feel safe, welcomed and accepted, and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning, schools and classrooms must be responsive to culture" (Capacity Building Series, 2013, p. 1). This statement brings a number of questions to mind, and perhaps there is a need for deeper examination of some of the terms involved. How can educators ensure that students do in-fact feel safe, welcomed and accepted? What does feeling *safe* entail? Is it simply guardianship from physical danger? Does feeling *welcomed* revolve around the greetings given and received upon arrival to school each day? Is *acceptance* merely the receipt of students in the learning environment? How can educators facilitate a learning environment in which students feel *inspired* to succeed? What does a school or a classroom look like when it is truly *responsive to cultures*? What is culture?

Culturally responsive pedagogy became an educational movement through the work of various educational theorists (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Richards, Brown & Forde, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The term has been used interchangeably with the similar culturally *relevant* pedagogy; a term coined by Ladson-Billings in 1995. For the purposes of this research, the two terms will be used interchangeably, as they have been shown to reflect the same core principles in the research developed throughout the last few decades. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching "as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching" (p. 106). As indicative in its name, a culturally responsive pedagogy requires teachers

to actively *respond* to the circumstances of students, both at school and at home or in their community. Thus, Gay examines five important elements of culturally responsive teaching:

1) becoming knowledgeable about cultural diversity,

2) choosing ethnically and culturally diverse content to use in the curriculum,

3) demonstrating caring about cultural diversity and building effective learning communities,

4) communicating properly with culturally and ethnically diverse students, and

5) responding to cultural and ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction (Gay, 2002, p. 6).

Although it is not a comprehensive system, Gay suggests that successful culturally responsive educators begin by practicing these elements, noting that these are steppingstones for preparing educators to work with diverse students, students who "are not part of the…ethnic, racial, and cultural mainstream" (p. 114). Almost a decade before Gay's publication, Ladson-Billings (1995) published her work in which she coined the term *culturally relevant teaching* through her examination of teachers working with African American youth. Through her exploration, Ladson-Billings celebrated the successful teaching practices she observed in American educators and identified three central tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy:

1) teachers held high expectations of all students to achieve academically;

2) teachers had, and encouraged students to demonstrate, cultural competence; and

3) teachers guided students to develop critical consciousness.

What Gay (2002) proposes as starting points for educators and what Ladson-Billings (1995) has identified as successful teaching practice coincide to develop a more cohesive model which, when applied with care, has the potential of yielding constructive results.

Ladson-Billings' and Gay's work led the way for others to explore this area of focus in more depth. While the work of such scholars focused on the cultural and ethnic aspects of teaching, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) introduce the important dimensions of race and racism into the discussion of culturally relevant pedagogy. They imply that race and racism are embedded in society so much so that educators must engage in their discussion and actively challenge the ways in which they are systematically fixed in the educational institution (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In fact, Kugler and West-Burns (2010) assert that in Toronto, which houses Canada's largest foreign-born population (Statistics Canada, 2011, p. 10), systemic inequality is to blame for underachievement and lack of engagement of the city's marginalized and racialized student population. This brings to mind Banks' (1993) fifth dimension of multicultural education, which involves creating an empowering school culture and social structure. The amalgamation of these two theoretical notions brings forth the salient need for a critically conscious approach to teaching and learning in a multicultural learning environment. The discussion of critical consciousness momentarily brings to the forefront the work of Freire (1998) who was cited in the work of Willis and Harris (2000) for resembling what they call "political awareness" (p. 76). Whichever way it is termed, *political awareness* (Willis & Harris, 2000), conscientização (Freire, 1998), *social and political consciousness* (Richards, Brown & Forde, 2007), *critical consciousness* (Kugler & West-Burns, 2010) or simply *developing critical perspectives* (Ladson-Billings, 1995), the point remains that culturally responsive or relevant pedagogy requires a critique of the overarching systems of power and knowledge production and

how they are closely intertwined with the field of education, namely the education of culturally and ethnically diverse students.

Delving deeper into this theory, Richards, Brown and Forde (2007) identified three features that comprise culturally responsive pedagogy. They suggested that institutional, personal, and instructional dimensions (Richards, Brown & Forde, 2007) were involved in creating a "learner-centered context" (p. 64) in which the funds of knowledge that students bring to the classroom "are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement" (p. 64). At each level of this model, student identities are affirmed when they can see themselves reflected in the school setting, not only within the classroom walls but also by way of the deliberate affirmative actions of administrators and educators. Furthermore, the identities of their peers are affirmed, encouraging an environment where students celebrate one another as unique and whole individuals. The goal of this model is what Ladson-Billings (1995) wishes, for "kids [to] leave school multi-culturally competent, but at minimum bi-culturally competent" (Lynn Brusnahan, 2018). Barrett and Noguera (2008) point out that the notion of cultural competence is most often portrayed as a "matter of understanding the culture of children in terms of racial identity, heritage, and family background" (p. 97) but understanding these elements of a child's identity is not sufficient in culturally relevant and multicultural pedagogy (Barrett & Noguera, 2008). Furthermore, they assert that teacher-training is an essential component in promoting multi-cultural competence (Barrett & Noguera, 2008). Teel and Obidah (2008) agree, adding that this ongoing process enhances other teaching competencies such as "classroom management, curriculum, lesson planning and delivery, and assessment" (p. 3). Such a versatile model, cultural competence involves educators in an ongoing process of getting-to-know their students. Grant

(2008) cites the State of Ohio's (n.d.) definition of cultural competence, which offers a comprehensive look at the gravity of this practice:

> "Culturally competent teachers see differences among students as assets. They create caring learning communities where individuals and cultural heritages, including languages, are expressed and valued. They use cultural and individual knowledge about their students, their families, and their communities to design instructional strategies that build upon and link home and school experiences. They challenge stereotypes and intolerance. They serve as change agents by thinking and acting critically to address inequities distinguished by (but not limited to) race, language, culture, socioeconomics, family structures, and gender. Beyond using images, literature, and other forms of expression that represent students' diverse cultures and backgrounds, teachers understand, affirm, and use students' home and primary languages, communication styles, and family structure for learning and discipline" (p. 45).

One can see the multiple dimensions of cultural competence; it involves much more than delivering curriculum and assessing student knowledge. Rather, it involves uncovering minute details that impact who students are and how they learn by reaching out and exploring even into the students' communities. Imparting these skills to students is a challenge inherited by the culturally responsive teacher. Kite (2015) cites Mio, Barker-Hackett and Tumambing (2012) who offer a set of teachable skills that help develop multi-cultural competence in students. These skills include "developing an awareness of one's own cultural values and biases; learning to value others' worldviews; and developing a set of culturally appropriate interpersonal skills"

(Kite, 2015, para. 2). When both teachers and student adopt these skills, they collectively contribute to transforming the school environment to one in which all members feel they belong. Furthermore, these skills can be maintained outside of the school context where students can continue to engage productively in a culturally diverse world and where they can challenge inequities that threaten the integrity of a diverse society.

COVID-19 Pandemic Statement

In March 2020, the Ontario government ordered the closure of all publicly funded schools due to concerns about the COVID-19 outbreak. At the time, the general public did not know how long this closure would last. Due to the length of this closure, the originally planned procedures for conducting this study were compromised and the study put on hold for an extended period of time.

The proposed methodology prior to interruptions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic called for a purposive sampling procedure to be employed for the selection a sample of 10 Syrian refugee students from the Windsor and Essex County region. With conditional approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB), the intent was to contact Catholic Central High School (CCH) and the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board (WECDSB) for assistance with the recruitment process. Due to school closures, as well as the University of Windsor's suspension of all in-person research, it suddenly became extremely difficult to access participants for the purposes of this study. There was also difficulty gaining contact with CCH and the WECDSB, which interrupted any possibility of moving forward with the study at that time.

A new methodology was eventually put in place, and similarly, this methodology took some time to take action due to general fears brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. This new

methodology included posting recruitment posters around the City of Windsor which asked for

participants to willingly volunteer to take part in the study. One participant expressed interest

and volunteered to take part in the study. In order to continue with the research process and forgo

additional interruptions, the intended 10-participant study became a case study focusing on the

experiences of one participant. This participant fit the original criteria set out at the start of the

study. This new approach received ethics approval from the Research Ethics Board at the

University of Windsor.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The literature review will discuss some of the existing literature surrounding various aspects of refugee experiences. These topics that are discussed are: access to education; teacher-student relationships; teacher preparation and challenges; boundaries in teacher-student relationships; education during and after conflict; refugees in Canada; refugee school experiences in Canada; Canadian educational policy and special refugee programming; refugee drop-out rates.

As of 2018 the global population of refugees reached 25.9 million individuals (USA for UNHCR, n.d.a). Two thirds of this population originate from only 5 nations: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia (UNHCR, n.d.). Refugees face many challenges throughout the processes of migration, initial settlement and resettlement. Even after resettlement, families and individuals are susceptible to unexpected challenges; one of the most challenging for children and youth is education.

Refugee Education Globally

Education has been officially mandated as a right for all children by a number of international organizations (United Nations, 1989; United Nations General Assembly, 1948). It is widely recognized as an integral way of maintaining proper development of children's personal, mental, physical and social well-being (United Nations, 1989; United Nations General Assembly, 1948). One hundred ninety-four countries uphold the United Nations Convention to the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Human Rights Watch, 2014), making it a universally recognized treaty and holding most of the world's leaders accountable to the proper treatment of children. Furthermore, the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugee (UNHCR, 1951) addresses children's rights on another level, specifically focusing on the rights of refugees and

refugee children. Thus, refugee education has become a major global concern with more than half of the world's refugee children with no access to schools (UNHCR, 2019).

Accessing education - discrimination and exclusionary practices.

The Syrian refugee crisis is the largest international crisis of our time (Government of Canada, 2018). Millions have been displaced, almost half of which are under the age of 18 (Sirin & Sirin, 2015, p.1). As these young people and their families search for somewhere to call home, they lose valuable time that could otherwise be spent in school. Although international laws are in place to ensure proper treatment of refugees (The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol), not all participating nations adhere to the laws in full capacity (Dryden-Peterson, 2016, p. 474; Milton et al. 2017; Pinson & Arnot, 2010). Milton et al. (2017) discuss unavailability of educational services for undocumented Rohingya refugees who have fled persecution in Myanmar. In addition, the study indicates that undocumented Rohingya refugees residing in refugee camps in Bangladesh have reported an inability to move freely to and from the camp. Dryden-Peterson (2016) presents the example of Egypt, where Article 22 of the 1951 Convention is not upheld since it requires that refugees be considered "as equal to the national" (p. 475). This provides a glimpse of the perceptions held about refugees in some host countries. These perceptions can have adverse effects on the provision of quality schooling for refugee children, further perpetuating the problem of interruptions in schooling due to displacement. In some cases, forced migrants are not officially granted refugee status in the host country, leaving them vulnerable to being arrested and deported by local authorities (Dryden-Peterson, 2015, p.7). Such is the case in Malaysia, where asylum seekers from Rohingya are not allowed official refugee status (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). This, in turn, has prevented children from access to the national school system out of fear of encountering Malaysian authorities (Dryden-Peterson,

2015). Karanja (2010) presents cases where families *were* in fact officially registered as refugees with UNHCR-mandated certificates and still had difficulty accessing educational services in Kenya. She points to the ongoing presence of discrimination and stigmatization of people with refugee status.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2016), low school access can be attributed to a variety of other factors including "...low absorption capacity in local schools, the distance a child has to travel to get to the classroom, and a plethora of social, cultural and economic factors..." (p. 11). With the majority of the world's refugees being hosted in developing countries (Sinclair, 2007; UNHCR, 2016, p.4), it is conceivable why little can be done to remedy these circumstances. In developing nations, resources will most likely be prioritized for the use of locals before they are used to aid incoming asylum seekers. In Kenya for instance, where free education policies were introduced for local children in 2003 (Mulinya & Orodho, 2015), refugee children are deprived of such services due to limited available space (Karaja, p. 148). Furthermore, these free services are often forbidden from refugee students due to administrative decisions to preserve spaces for Kenyan children (Karanja, p.148), further perpetuating the presence of discrimination towards refugees. These practices have been confirmed by a more recent study on the inclusion and exclusion of refugee students in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, 2019). In Kakuma, refugees and impoverished nationals share access to the refugee camp's educational facilities as a result of illegal tuition fees being requested at government schools (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, p. 224), suggesting discrimination between those marginalized populations and wealthy families who are willing and able to pay fees. Furthermore, the study revealed that although there were instances of discrimination towards refugees and disadvantaged nationals,

within the context of the refugee camp, chauvinism between ethnically different refugee groups

was more prevalent, (Bellino & Dryden-Peterson, p. 229) signifying the sense of national pride

carried with forced migrants even through their displacement. Though forced migrants often

leave everything behind in their besieged homelands, an intangible possession, their identity, is

brought along. This indicates the attachment to identity, and its importance in the construction

and honouring of the self. Furthermore, it brings attention to the fact that the identities of these

individuals are ever changing. Maalouf (1996/2000) points out that identity is composed of

numerous elements and I will add that the value of these elements is renegotiated with time.

Thus, the forced migrant who arrives in a refugee camp with strong allegiance to their country of

origin may leave the refugee camp paying allegiance to some aspect they came to acquire as their

own. These renegotiated identities are important when considering the healing and growth that is

necessary to these individuals upon their eventual final resettlement.

  The United Nations Children Fund (2000, August) offer a divergent perspective on the

nature of education that provides some insight to the decision-making processes excluding

refugee children from accessing education. What they call "the uneven distribution of education"

(p. 9) falls into one of the "two faces of education", a negative and a positive, and is considered

to have a large impact on the future of an excluded group (United Nations Children Fund, p. 9).

In the negative face of education, they assert that there is a certain level of power in the hands of

the state that "is used to advance the interests of one group at the expense of others" (p. 9).

Unfortunately, the "others" are often an already vulnerable group of children who depend on the

support of their host countries.

  With discriminatory procedures affecting the experiences of refugee children in

countries of first asylum, the expectation of similar treatment in a location of final resettlement

can be discouraging. Dryden-Peterson (2015) concurs, stating that "these pre-resettlement experiences of discrimination in school settings may influence the ways which refugee children perceive school and the relationships they have with peers and teachers" (p. 12). Upon final resettlement, the accumulation of these experiences with discrimination may play out in the form of mistrust by families and young refugees. Existing research provides some insight into the development of this premonition, revealing through interviews with refugee families that fear and mistrust were commonly felt as a result of past experiences during flight (Hynes, 2003; Weine et al., 2006). Thus, upon enrolling children into school in their country of final resettlement, feelings of mistrust can exacerbate the experience of refugee families (McBrien, 2011), even extending to the experiences of children in the school setting. These feelings of mistrust are sometimes compounded by ill-advised practices by schools and teachers who are unprepared to meet the needs SLIFE and students from refugee backgrounds.

Teacher – student relationships.

Studies have shown the important role that schools play as one of the first systems that newcomers encounter after their arrival in a new country (Cole, 1998; Matthews, 2008; Pinson & Arnot, 2010; Rousseau & Guzder, 2008). During this stage in their migration process families can become overwhelmed by the unfamiliar environment they find themselves in. Families assist with the school enrollment process, but children are the ones who engage most of their time in these spaces, independently interacting with their peers and teachers. They build cultural and social awareness through these interactions and they begin to form a deeper understanding of the expectations of them, as well as determining their expectations of others. Negotiating their identities as students in a new environment, especially for SLIFE who have limited-to-no prior exposure to a school setting, becomes a daunting task. Thus, teachers play a crucial role in the

reception and integration of these students into the learning environment. By identifying and harnessing the "wealth of prior knowledge and experience" (Cummins & Early, 2015, p. 128) that SLIFE and students from refugee backgrounds possess and bring to the classroom, teachers have the ability to "enrich the knowledge and understanding of all learners" (p. 128). Teachers' awareness of these assets facilitates positive relationships between them and their students, which in turn also enhances students' senses of belonging to the school community.

It is encouraged, through a culturally responsive pedagogical lens, for educators to get to know their students in order to facilitate a welcoming learning environment. Educators who teach refugee students might find this to be challenging due to language and cultural barriers that exist in their classrooms. It is essential that these challenges are overcome and that a welcoming and inclusive environment be created for refugee students. Several researchers have identified the connection between a welcoming environment and the role of a teacher (Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Hatala et al., 2017; McHugh et al., 2013; Montero et al., 2012; Raufelder, Scherber & Wood, 2016). Drolet and Moorthi (2018), in their study on the settlement experiences of Syrian newcomers in Alberta, carefully define a welcoming environment as one in which students felt "a sense of security, feeling connected to a broader community and vested in the core institutions of society" (p. 106). Hatala, et al. (2017) confirm the value of a welcoming environment in their study on Canadian Indigenous youth, describing the importance for youth to feel a sense of belonging and to form meaningful relationships (p. 1337). In addition, McHugh, Horner, Colditz and Wallace (2013) describe autonomy, competence, and relatedness as components of a student's basic needs in the classroom. Relatedness was similarly found by Montero et al. (2012) to have significant implications on the feelings of belonging at school, specifically when refugee students' first language was validated in the school environment. By attaining these

fundamentals, a student can then begin to feel at home in their classroom (McHugh et al., 2013). The active role of the teacher should be recognized as a major player in students' ability to attain these attributes. Studies have identified the value of this specific component of a student's educational experience. In one study, Raufelder, Scherber, and Wood (2016) identify that "teachers have the greatest social impact on students' motivation and learning processes, even above their peer relationships, their class environment, and parental influences" (p. 737). With this knowledge, prioritizing the establishment of strong connections should be realized as a precursor to academic achievement, for it can facilitate a students' willingness to work towards success in the school context and also extending into their social lives.

In the discussion of refugee students' education, a supportive teacher can help these students overcome initial fears associated with integration. A key component in creating a nurturing relationship is building what McHugh et al. (2013) refer to as "bridges" between teachers and their students. Identifying commonalities is one way to facilitate this task, however building bridges begins in a different place, at another level of mutual agreement revolving around power and the perceptions existing of one another. Teachers tend to rely on their position of power to enforce rules and demand obedience from students. Temporarily, this will ensure a smooth-running classroom, but in the long run a lack of authentic caring diminishes any chance of establishing a trust-relationship. Hoy and Moran (1998) describe trust as being "the reliance on others' competence and willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one cares about" (p. 336). In the context of refugee education, "things" include the tangible but more importantly the intangible things such as memories, challenges, and insecurities, and the need for motivation and support. Lee (2007) points out "a trust relationship has been found to function as a motivational resource when students are faced with difficulties in school because trust relationships help

adolescents develop positive psychological and emotional perceptions of themselves" (p. 210). Positive student self-perceptions can be lucrative for all students, not to mention war-affected students who are navigating a new life.

Working with students of refugee status, the emphasis on trust can involve unforeseen complexities. As previously discussed, Dryden-Peterson (2015) points out the prevalence of mistrust that lingers after refugees' resettlement, often resulting in boundaries being established on social and personal levels. For refugee students these boundaries are extended to the school setting, creating a distance between them and their peers and teachers. The existence of trust in a relationship acts as the foundation on which the relationship is built; without it the relationship is merely one of acquaintance. It is solely dependent on each participant to administer trust to the other, as "each person in a relationship holds a unique perspective and assessment of the relationship" (McHugh et al., p.14). This element, especially when paired with the realization of commonalities between a student and their teacher, can also function as a way for students to develop a powerful sense of identity at school. This alone can have outstanding effects on an individual's school experiences.

Teacher preparation and challenges.

"A teacher who manages a classroom that includes refugee learners will walk into perhaps the toughest classroom in the world" (UNHCR, 2016, p. 14).

Educators have an incredible amount of influence on a student's school experience. As the initial source of interaction at school, students seek educators for support. Teacher preparation is increasingly important when it comes to working with students from refugee backgrounds. However, it has been found that educators do not feel prepared to work with refugee students and their families and feel the need for more preparation (Amthor & Roxas,

2016; Bacakova, 2011; Clark, 2017; Dippo, Basu & Duran, 2012; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019, p. 13; Karkouti et al., 2019, p. 31). In fact, in one study, a refugee student participant reported that he "recognized the situation... may be somewhat beyond teachers' control when they teach both afternoon and morning shifts, the equivalent of two jobs" (Karkouti, p. 28, 2019). Despite this level of understanding from students, and with language and cultural barriers, difficulty interacting is expected between Syrian refugee students and their teachers. However, the self-reporting practices of teachers' ill preparedness that are evident in the studies cited above are a positive step towards becoming more confident and comfortable working with this population of students. It demonstrates the willingness for professional development and adoption of new skills and pedagogies.

Refugee students may have witnessed armed violence leading to injuries or death, witnessed their homes being destroyed, been victims of sexual violence or even been recruited to join armed forces themselves (UNHCR, 2016). These circumstances not only have implications on the way they experience education in a new country, but also on how educators experience these students' presence in the learning environment. Through Bacakova's (2011) study on developing inclusive learning programs for refugee children in the Czech Republic, teachers reported having no prior experience teaching culturally and/or linguistically diverse students in the past, revealing a level of "insufficient teacher experience and qualification" (p. 167) working with refugee students. Similarly, teachers self-reported having a lack of knowledge about refugee students' circumstances in Dippo, Basu and Duran's 2012 study on refugee students' settlement and schooling experiences in Toronto, Canada. This is problematic because, as Bacakova and Closs (2013) establish, teaching refugee students "calls for greater support, emotional empathy, understanding and wider cultural and linguistic knowledge from schools, teachers and teacher

educators than even those with prior experience of working with immigrant children may have acquired" (p. 214). This should not be misinterpreted as a call for assuming an overly empathetic attitude while teaching refugee students, as it would risk doing more harm than good. Rather, students of refugee status need teacher-support to affirm their already-established willingness to be successful in school. Stewart (2011) expands on this point, arguing that, "although the refugee student will have challenges that a Canadian student will not have, evidence clearly supports that the majority of refugee students have a tremendous worth ethic and a drive to create a successful life in Canada" (p. 293). Thus, a balance must be established between showing empathy and understanding and being a supportive teacher for these students who have experienced trauma and suffering, but who see it in themselves to persevere.

While the aforementioned studies address the vulnerability of refugee students and the consequential need for teachers' sensitivity and empathy, Rodriquez (2015) cautions us of the possible "dangers of compassion" (p. 114) in teaching refugee students. She argues that the way refugees are portrayed in an educational research context depicts them as "victims" (p. 113) and asserts that research depicts these students from a "deficit model of thinking" (p. 119) portraying them as broken individuals who need fixing (Rodriquez, 2015). Coinciding with these warnings, Block et al. (2014) recognize that practices which "homogenise refugee-background students" (p. 1350) and victimizing these students can threaten their wellbeing. Block et al. and Rodriguez's concerns regarding this deficit model of thinking are fueled in part by the possibility of rendering refugee students vulnerable to being disadvantaged, namely, the lowered expectations that teachers develop of these students in relation to their white peers (Rodriguez, 2015, pp 113-114). This can inadvertently disadvantage refugee students, creating for them a lowered sense of self-potential and resilience. In fact, Schroeter and James' (2015) study showed

how teachers' homogenizing practices, as well as the deficit lens through which they viewed their students, limited students' motivation. Teacher expectations play a significant role in the performance and sense of self-worth of their students. Ladson-Billings (1994) points out "when students are treated as competent, they are likely to demonstrate competence" (p. 123), highlighting the key role of the teacher in delivering culturally relevant content while maintaining student dignity. More concerning, however, is the power dynamic evident here and its potential to perpetuate the problem of marginalizing this vulnerable group of students. In her study of one Australian school's practices in refugee education, Keddie (2012) interviewed teachers who acknowledged, "how educators' racialized positions can reproduce oppressive narratives" (p. 209). Furthermore, one teacher participant identified how this can be considered "… 'another kind of racism' – where dominant racialized norms shape educators' interpretation and (mis)recognition of these students" (p. 209). Furthermore, Pieloch, McCullough and Marks (2016) place emphasis on the role of the educator in encouraging resilience through their active engagement of refugee students in meaningful and dynamic school programs (Pieloch, McCullough & Marks, 2016). Stewart (2011) affirms the importance of the teacher's job, asserting, "it is the teacher's challenge to uncover the various strengths, gifts, and talents of each individual" (p. 293). Echoing Rodriguez's concerns about the dangers of a portrayal of helplessness, Pieloch, McCullough and Marks conclude, "to help promote resilience we must first see children as children and as refugees second" (p. 337). This poses a challenge to educators who must find the fine line between being overly empathetic and being constructively supportive towards refugee children. These studies speak to the sudden impact that resettling refugee populations has on educational institutions globally. To have a firm understanding of what such populations' needs are, training programs must be provided to educators.

Boundaries in teacher-student relationships.

A common theme that emerges from the literature on student-teacher relationships is what McHugh et al. (2013) call boundaries: factors that hinder the chances of building a strong relationship. Ozer, Wolf, and Kong (2008) explored such factors and revealed that most students felt no desire to "talk to a teacher about a nonacademic problem" and that "help with personal problems was not part of a teacher's role" (p. 454). This perceived boundary and reluctance to engage with the teacher could be attributed to several things. Naturally, boundaries exist between people who have nothing in common. The authority associated with teachers also acts to limit the amount of non-academic interaction between the two parties involved. It can be held, then, that "when a teacher does not take the time to inquire about what may be going on in the students' life, the student may interpret teachers as just interested in one particular, de-contextualized aspect of a student, in this case learning" (McHugh et al., p. 20). Maintaining such an objectively informed relationship with students offers no sense of authentic consideration of the student as a person and dismisses the personal challenges that the student may be facing. This is exacerbated when the student has experienced trauma, hardships during the migration process and during resettlement and integration. In one study, Verhulp, Stevens, Thijs, and Pels (2019) claim "it could be expected that the quality of the teacher-student relationship is weaker for ethnic minority than majority students" (p. 2).

Education During and After Conflict

The effects of conflict on education appear clear at first glance. Through the media, we see the remnants of conflict in the demolished school buildings; we know that armed violence claims many young people's lives; countless studies explore the psychological effects that linger long after conflict is over. However, the actual impact that conflict has on education remains

"largely unreported" (UNESCO, 2011, p. 13). What remains is a mostly fragmented society with hopes to move forward and to find the means to rebuild. Furthermore, efforts to reconstruct and reconfigure a broken education system are often met with roadblocks in the form of "political instability and uncertainty, and low levels of capacity" (UNESCO, p. 20) to influence change.

Educating children in conflict zones.

> "Perhaps more than at any time in history, schoolchildren, teachers and schools are on the front line of violence. Classrooms are destroyed not just because they are caught in the crossfire, but because they are targeted by combatants. Young girls living in conflict-affected areas are subject every day to the threat of widespread, systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence. Children are abducted and forced into military service. And resources that could be used to finance productive investment in education are wasted on unproductive military expenditure" (UNESCO, 2011, pp. 124-125).

This illustrates the brutal reality in which many children live across the world. Prasad and Prasad (2009) bring to light the high mortality rate of children in conflict zones, not only as a result of direct contact with armed violence, but also due to indirect factors such as malnutrition and the spreading of disease. These conditions, which under normal circumstances could be addressed and prevented, are intensified by the influence of conflict in a variety of ways including "the blocking of access" to services, "the diversion of food relief, the poisoning of wells and the forced abandonment of farms" (Prasad & Prasad, p. 167). Children who do survive these circumstances face another set of difficulties in the conflict zone. Prevalent among these challenges is limited access to schooling due to the threat of children's safety and "increasing teacher absenteeism" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010, p. 5). In addition, these children

are more likely to drop out of school as a result of their "displacement, military recruitment, or economic hardship" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010, p. 5). Military recruitment has been found to be a common fate for many children who are often deliberately "abducted from classrooms" (UNESCO, 2011, p. 145) and recruited as child soldiers. Consequently, this generates fear amongst community members, perpetuating the issue of educational access even further.

The quality of education suffers greatly in conflict zones. UNESCO (2011) also reports "in several long-running conflicts, armed groups have used attacks on school children and teachers to 'punish' participation in state institutions" (p. 143). The political implications of war are evident here, putting innocent civilians in danger and severely damaging the prospects of developing and maintaining human capital. When it is accessible, the *quality* of education is affected by armed conflict. This is mostly a result of a lack of resources including educational supplies (UNESCO institute for statistics, 2010). This is especially prevalent in areas that receive large incoming populations of displaced people, including children (UNESCO Institute for Statistics). The large number of displaced people trying to access education increases the need for educational resources, which in turn becomes scarce and perpetuates a cycle of unavailable educational services.

Post-conflict education.

The limited literature on the issue of educating war-affected children after relocation indicates the lack of knowledge and understanding of the matter from an educational perspective. Rather, a more substantial body of literature from the field of social work lends a complementary perspective on working with war-affected children and families. The direct relationship between social work and education gives merit to the reliance on this body of literature.

School-aged children who have been deprived of education due to conflict usually consider education a priority for rebuilding their lives, and often "equate education with a hopeful future" (Bragin & Opiro, 2012, p. 159). Betancourt and Khan (2008) indicate how the "restoration of opportunities to study or develop vocational skills can provide children and youths with a sense of predictability and security amidst the chaos of displacement, traumatic events, and loss" (p. 323). The effects of conflict, however, have been found to deter children away from participating in educational activities when they come available (Bragin & Opiro, 2012). This has been linked to the negative "effect [that] exposure to violence [has] on cognitive capacity" (Bragin & Opiro, 2012, p. 159). Kovinthan (2016) agrees that "the school experience can be a difficult transition for refugee children" (p. 142). Denov and Shevell (2019) point to the reality that although conflict has devastating effects, "war itself is not the only challenge and devastation. Displacement as a result of war, and its related consequences, are significant" (p. 2). In Betancourt et al.'s (2015) study on Somali refugee experiences, they reveal how "past trauma exposure" (p. 117) was a barrier that hindered parents' efforts to protect their children from coming in contact with violence after their resettlement. The UNHCR (2016) report on refugee education cites the UNESCO *Global Education Monitoring Report* (2016) in which a link is made between low access to education and a heightened "risk of violence and conflict" (p. 11). For refugee youth, encountering violence can have a direct impact on their access to and quality of education, even after final resettlement. Stewart (2011) demonstrates how avoiding contact with violence and gang activity might be overwhelming for refugee youth when "the gang activity looks like an easier way to achieve his or her means" (p .110). Paired with teachers' misunderstanding of refugee students' needs, these types of struggles can discourage students from relying on the education system as a source of support in rebuilding their lives.

In order to confront these challenges and to begin to understand the immediate needs of refugee students, a reform of the goals and intentions of refugee education is needed. Denov & Shevell (2019) concur, identifying the "need for culturally responsive practice with war-affected refugee children and families that accounts for the diversity and heterogeneity of their needs and experiences" (p. 3). However, Baum (2007) questions the effectiveness of mere "cultural sensitivity" (p. 874) that social workers adopt when working with war-affected children. Baum situates this question in a context within which "clinician and client may not only be of different cultures, but also on opposite sides of an ongoing political conflict" (p. 874), namely, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. While the proposed study focuses on education in a Canadian context, one can see how the positionality of practitioners (in social work and education alike) working with war-affected children can affect the quality of services provided to them and how their subjective beliefs can impact the degree of care and empathy that is offered. In response to Baum's concerns, Denov and Shevell state, "it is imperative that social work practitioners and educators actively reflect on their own professional explanatory models and cultural idioms…and how this might differ from their clients or students" (pp. 7-8). In addition, situational and context-based differences (for example the students' perception of a classroom setting, resources, rules, common practices, and expectations) should be taken into consideration. Castle, Elder, Baxter, and Cornu (2005) recognize the difficulty in undertaking the task of rebuilding tangible and intangible remnants of conflict. They state, "rebuilding is typically undertaken in a piecemeal fashion, but educators should seize the opportunity of reconstruction to develop, revise and improve educational components in a holistic manner" (Castle et al., 2005). In the context of the Canadian classroom where war-affected refugee students are expected to integrate not only into their new sociocultural climate but also into a new educational

setting, educators can move from implementing a strictly cultural awareness into their practice to considering the need to reformat and redesign the ways in which they welcome refugee students into the classroom.

Refugees in Canada

Between January 2015 and August 2019 more than 139,000 refugees were resettled in Canada (Government of Canada, 2016/2019b). Within this population, 42% were children 17 years or younger (Government of Canada, 2016/2019b). Families settled across the nation, with the highest concentration settling in the province of Ontario (Government of Canada, 2016/2019b). After arriving and settling in Canada, families are expected to begin their integration process. Garcea (2016) sheds light on the efforts made by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC) to enhance successful refugee integration practices in Canada. He brings attention to a resource that was created by way of the FCM to help facilitate refugee settlement considering the large wave of Syrian refugees resettled after 2016 (Garcea, 2016). The contents of this resource included the following headings and goals: Creating a welcoming environment; Share information and coordinate services; Support the front lines; Find safe, affordable and appropriate housing; Provide cultural education; Enable access to community services; Create connections, support integration; Advocate for more welcoming communities. (p. 161). This report indicates that refugee resettlement in Canada has received some extent of reform in the past few years, paying particular attention to the integration of refugees into society and the role of Canadians in that process. This is not to come as a surprise, as Fantino and Colak (2001) state, "Canada is one of the few countries in the world with an active resettlement and permanent immigration program (p. 588).

Various organizations undertake the task of familiarizing families with local resources and service providers to support newcomers' transition into Canadian society. The Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) is a government-sponsored program that provides immediate services for essential needs upon family's arrival (Government of Canada, 2019c). This program assists refugees settling all across the nation. Material needs and accommodations are provided during the first period after arrival, but the intangible source of comfort of a supportive community is not always available. Vukojevic (2018) points out that notwithstanding refugees' general eagerness to be successful in their new lives in Canada, "structural and social barriers" hinder integration into Canadian society. Oudshoorn, Benbow and Meyer (2019), in their study exploring resettlement experiences of Syrian refugees in Canada, revealed that their participants experienced challenges in a range of areas including feelings of belonging and integration, finding safe and sufficient housing, and securing a steady income. These challenges can have a compounding effect on the situational circumstances refugee families find themselves in after arriving in a new country and starting their lives over. Lamba and Krahn (2003) found that many of their participants who have refugee backgrounds, had family members left behind in their country of origin or in refugee camps. Refugee families have expressed that although they lost social connections with family and friends due to their forced displacement, they found "it was worth it for their children to have a safe life in Canada" (Oudshoorn, Benbow & Meyer, p. 12). This illustrates the commitment to successful integration that newcomer families often have.

Refugee school experiences in Canada.

Coming to Canada brings a lot of relief to refugee families. Having the freedom to live and learn in Canada is a part of life that refugees have expressed gratitude for (Cohen, Denov, Fraser & Bilotta, 2017; Shakya et al., 2010; Oudshoorn, Benbow & Meyer, 2019). Participants

from Cohen et al.'s (2017) study of war-affected students in Quebec revealed that "youth shared a general sense of relief about being in Canada and safe from armed conflict and felt grateful at being provided with the opportunity to enroll in stable and consistent schooling" (pp. 163-164). Similarly, Shakya et al.'s (2010) study of refugee youth in Toronto revealed that participants "passionately emphasized how their educational aspirations have strengthened considerably after coming to Canada" (p. 68). In contrast to the motivation illustrated in these student populations, Walsh et al. (2011) shed light on the dissatisfaction of refugee students reported by their parents. They attribute the feelings of dissatisfaction to existing language barriers, their limited sense of belonging and their young age, which was considered a factor contributing to their lack of care towards education (Walsh, Este, Krieg & Giurgiu, 2011).

Refugee students' experiences have been noted by a number of studies (Cohen, Denov Fraser & Bilotta, 2017; Fantino & Colak, 2001; Kirova, 2019; MacNevin, 2012; Oudshoorn, Benbow & Meyer, 2019; Ratkovic, et al., 2017; Schroeter & James, 2019; Shakya et al., 2010; Walker & Zuberi, 2019; Walsh, Este, Krieg & Giurgiu, 2011). Ratkovic et al. (2017) state that the "new influx of refugee students disrupted teaching, learning and settlement, generating new educational debates and opportunities in Canada" (p. 18). Despite the newly identified need for extensive research to formulate understanding of these issues, there still exists a dearth of literature on school experiences of refugee students in Canada (Ratkovic et al., 2017). With the current state of refugee resettlement services, this comes as a surprising reality. The existing studies have revealed varying experiences from both students and educators that offer important insights into the current state of refugee education in Canada.

Some of the challenges facing refugee students mentioned in the current literature revolve around interactions with the teachers and the classroom environment. Upon initial enrollment,

students who have missed school due to prolonged displacement will find it difficult to engage in a mainstream Canadian classroom; they may simply not be familiar with what a traditional classroom looks like or the resources available within. Cohen et al. (2017) give a general image of the origins of these challenges, stating they were "due to different learning styles, new systems of rules, and the reality that many children had little or no knowledge of French" (p. 164) in Quebec schools. Questions arise about what is being done to prepare newcomer students for learning in these types of environments. MacNevin (2012) interviewed teachers on Prince Edward Island who worked with students with refugee backgrounds and found it important to have access to information about the physical settings within which these students have previously learned. In addition, they expressed the importance of knowing more about these students' academic background, information that is rarely available upon refugee students' enrollment. On the other end of this teacher-student relationship, students expressed both their contentment and frustration with their teachers' practices. In Schroeter and James' (2015) study of French-speaking African Canadian refugee students' experiences, students felt that their relationships with teachers were good but that teachers failed to be patient with them and there were difficulties understanding course material. Similarly, Cohen et al. (2017) reveal that war-affected students attending Quebec schools felt "that while teachers were well-intentioned, they were also often ill-informed and unaware of the impact and realities of war" (p. 164). These misunderstandings are manifested in student-frustration with the school programming. The context in which the Schroeter and James' study existed was within a professional development program (PFP) designed "in part to meet the needs of students with refugee backgrounds who have not been academically successful as a result of the year(s) of schooling missed during refugee processes" (Schroeter & James, p. 24). Students enrolled in this program expressed their

frustration and beliefs that the program was a "waste of time" (p. 31) and it limited their development of skills needed to fulfill their goals (Schroeter & James). This illustrates the predicament of "special refugee programming" (Ficarra, 2017, p. 78), which generates exclusionary practices that although may not be intentional on the part of the educators, have real-life implications for students. These implications manifest as feelings of exclusion and resentment towards the school-learning environment. It also manifests in the feelings of incapacity over one's own educational goals.

The studies described above point to a potential gap in the relationship between teachers and refugee students. On the one hand, teachers' intentions to "integrate students with disrupted schooling backgrounds" (p. 33) are justified by the "immediate needs" (p. 33) of their refugee students. On the other hand, Schroeter and James (2015) attribute this compromise to a neoliberal logic that asserts it "is not responsible for the well-being of citizens, but the maintenance of free markets" (p. 33). This neoliberal thinking is dangerous in the school setting and especially with refugee students, who "face barriers that most Canadians do not" (Vukojevic, 2018). Here, students face the risk of falling through the cracks and heedlessly being passed through the education system.

Another dimension of refugee students' experiences in Canadian schools is the general social perception of refugee students. Lamba and Krahn (2003) bring attention to the "socially constructed expectations of refugee passivity and dependence" (p. 336), which in turn affect the ability of refugee students to "take control of their lives" (p. 336). A major finding in their study was the inappropriate understanding and portrayal of refugees as "passive" (Lamba & Krahn, p. 356). These social constructions are extended into the school setting through the interconnectedness of social structures that maintain these views. Furthermore, when they are

experienced in the school setting, these forms of discrimination are often dismissed as a result of

the power that educators have over their students. Shakya et al. (2010) found that in Toronto

secondary schools, refugee youth's "responses to experiences of discrimination involved either

'suffering quietly', passing, or even denying, one's identity" (p. 73). Not only does there exist a

struggle of power between the students and their educators, but feelings of helplessness to

confront and overcome these occurrences. One participant from Shakya et al's study reported

their experience with discrimination from an educator who undermined the student's academic

potential due to her status, not only as a refugee but also as a racialized female. Even more

concerning is this presence of the "covert and overt forms of racism" (p. 164) that have also been

reported in Cohen et al.'s 2017 study in which youth participants reported their perception of the

"narrow and confining label of 'immigrant' (p 164) that thwarted their ability to make

meaningful relationships (Cohen, Denov, Fraser & Bilotta, 2017). Schroeter and James (2015)

state that in addition to being marginalized due to their refugee status, students often experience

complications with social integration when their "ethnicity, language, culture, and race differ

from those of majority group students" (p. 21). Incidents of in-school discrimination were also

accounted for in Rossiter, Hatami, Ripley and Rossiter's (2015) study involving refugee

experiences in Canada. In addition, discrimination was also attributed to "inter-tribal conflicts

among youth" (Rossiter, Hatami, Ripley & Rossiter, p. 760). Students who can identify with

their school environment, more specifically, their peers, are more likely to have a positive

experience. Ayoub (2014) states that "friends from the same cultural background help them to

maintain their own cultural values and traditions" (p. 34). His study about the challenges

experienced by Somali refugee students revealed that many elementary students found it

undesirable to attend school because they could not connect with their peers on a linguistic and

cultural level (Ayoub, 2014). Similarly, Roxas (2011) found that teachers who used culturally

responsive teaching in the classroom enabled students to "connect with one another through their

shared experiences as refugee youth" (p. 7). Demonstrating the need for multicultural education

in developing an inclusive school environment, inter-cultural conflicts point to the scarcity of

inclusive pedagogies in some of these students' educational backgrounds. This serves as an

indicator of the state in which some students with refugee backgrounds enter the Canadian

classroom.

> ***Syrian refugee school experiences in Canada.***

Many Canadian communities and schools have been affected by the large influx of

Syrian refugees over the past decade (Kirova, 2019). Syrian refugees also experience a great deal

of challenges upon joining these spaces. Fifty percent of the resettled Syrian refugee population

in Canada were under the age of 18 upon their arrival in the country (Immigration, Refugees and

Citizenship Canada, 2019), indicating that these individuals were of school age upon arrival.

Furthermore, 75% of resettled Syrians reported having "no education or less than secondary"

(Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2019, p. 4) level schooling. This presents a

major challenge for facilitators of programs that are put in place to mitigate the effects of the

limited schooling experienced by this population. Syrian refugee students enter Canadian schools

with many of their peers and teachers holding preconceived ideas about them that have been

illustrated by the media (Walker & Zuberi, 2019). Walker and Zuberi report on an analysis

which found that various media platforms portrayed Syrians as vulnerable through the process

"othering" (p. 402). Furthermore, the analysis indicated that "individual Canadians, politicians,

and other non-Syrians spoke on behalf of refugees" (p. 402) limiting the refugee population's

sense of agency upon arrival to Canada. These processes have many implications on the

experiences of Syrian refugees in a Canadian context. In fact, Clark's (2017) study demonstrates

that such processes and assumptions act as barriers for their successful integration of Syrian

refugee students into Canadian schools. Furthermore, "anti-refugee discourses, racism, and

discrimination" (Walker & Zuberi, p. 405) have been found to have an impact on the academic

achievement of Syrian refugees in Canadian schools, and also "exacerbate the negative

consequences of trauma and stresses of resettlement" (p. 405).

In a number of empirical studies exploring the school experiences of Syrian refugees in

Canada, students and families have reported positive perceptions of the school system, despite

the challenges they face (Ayoub, 2020; Nofal, 2017; Oudshoorn, Benbow & Meyer, 2020).

Participants in Nofal's (2017) study reported that having peer-support groups helped them

overcome their language barriers, which was seen as one of the largest barriers upon joining a

school community. This finding is not uncommon among the general refugee student population

in Canada, having been revealed in Ayoub's (2014) study of Somali refugees as well. Similarly,

Ayoub (2020) reports that Syrian refugee students found comfort in their teachers' support,

especially in mainstream classrooms. Furthermore, students reported to have more social success

because of their improved English language proficiency (Ayoub, 2020) signifying the

importance of feelings of belonging in relation to student wellbeing. Although the welcoming of

students into the school environment was often reported to be a positive experience, parents

report that their children's limited English proficiency acted as a major barrier to their integration

into school. The language barrier that many refugees face upon final resettlement brings about

many challenges but can also act as a motivating factor. Keshavaszi's (2018) study demonstrates

how students viewed their language barrier as a reason to attend school. These findings coincide

with other reports of refugee students who experience feelings of motivation to access education

after arriving in Canada (Cohen et al., 2017; Shakya et al., 2010). An interesting finding in Nofal's study was the account of one student who expressed the importance of having access, not only Arabic speaking peers and community members but also, to people who have lived in the Middle East who offered a realistic comparison of their homeland and Canada. This indicates the importance of having a sense of community to which one can relate, even outside of the school environment.

Although the existing body of literature on the school experiences of Syrian refugee students in Canada is sparce, a number of parallels can be drawn between the existing findings and those of refugee school experience elsewhere in the world. Nonetheless, the variance among the findings demonstrates the possibility that unknown factors might influence the unique characteristics of each Syrian refugee's experience.

Canadian educational policy and special refugee programming.

As mentioned before, the transition to a Canadian school setting is challenging for newcomers. This is true for several reasons including language and cultural barriers, and in some cases, trauma-related barriers. Newcomers with refugee status, particularly war-affected individuals, might find it difficult to engage in a Canadian school setting, one that is structured in a way that is vastly different from their previous school experience; those with limited prior education might be at a total disadvantage because they will not have a concrete basis on which to pick up and continue their schooling. Educational policy relating to refugee education is a starting point to improving the experience of refugee students in Canadian schools. In their policy review of Canadian educational policy Ratkovic et al. (2017) revealed a limited range of existing policy documents that address refugee education across Canada; Ontario and Newfoundland were found to have the most significant number of relevant resources. This lack

of "policy guidance" (Ratkovic et al, p. 3) poses a dilemma for Canadian teachers who are stunted by the sudden influx of refugee students. As it was revealed in the literature, educators on a global level feel some need of support in preparing to work with students from refugee backgrounds.

In Ontario a document called *Capacity Building k-12* (2016) offers educators a framework for working with students from refugee backgrounds. The document recommends taking a "whole-school approach" (Capacity Building k-12, 2016, p. 1) to helping integrate students from refugee backgrounds with a focus on applying culturally responsive practice. The document's mention that educators should be aware of the possibilities of limited school experience is aligned with what existing research proposes. In fact, another document from the Ontario Ministry of Education (n.d.) focuses specifically on English language learners (ELLs) with limited prior schooling. This document presents several student testimonials and makes mention of refugee students and the unique challenges they might face when they begin school in Ontario. The document also offers suggestions for teacher-practice, including holding high expectations for student success.

A document out of the province of Manitoba, *Life After War: Education as a Healing Process for Refugee and War-Affected Children,* offers an impressive array of information for educators working with children and families from refugee backgrounds, with the goal of helping to "strengthen the capacity of school communities…to provide an appropriate and supportive school environment for refugee and war-affected learners and their families" (Manitoba Education, 2012, p. 3). Not only does it provide a thorough account of what individuals and families may have experienced before coming to Canada, it also gives educators suggestions for "effective and appropriate programming" (p. 37) which are derived directly from research

findings. In addition, the language used in this document strays away from the "deficit model of thinking" (Rodriguez, 2015, p. 119) that Rodriguez warns could have detrimental effects on student success. For instance, the resilience that students from refugee or war-affected backgrounds possess is mentioned repeatedly throughout the document; it is portrayed as a source of strength that teachers should recognize and reinforce. Manitoba's ministry of education offers a unique resource that was developed through collaboration with a number of stakeholders in the field of education, including educators of students from refugee backgrounds. Through storytelling, the resource intends to provide "insights about resiliency and what works and what doesn't in terms of educational supports and programming from these learners" (Manitoba Education, 2015, p. 6). By using the voices of real students who speak to their own experiences, this resource acts as one of the most authentic ways to demonstrate the struggles refugee students might be facing.

As stated before, Canadian education policy documents addressing the educational experiences of students from refugee backgrounds are limited. Within this literature review a brief search of such policies and documents was conducted and the results did not yield significant results. While policy documents are offered by ministries of education, the way they are put into practice is left to the school districts to decide. Stewart (2011) notes that in one Canadian school district, "schools were locally responsible for developing policy" (p. 89) and that principals have control over whether to allocate resources to developing such policies. This depends solely on the priorities that principals have for their school community. For example, a program launched by a principal at a Windsor, Ontario secondary school has been developed with the intention to "build bridges and create trust with newcomer families – including many who came to Canada as refugees" (Georgieva, 2018, para 2). The key actor in this program is a

"school-community ambassador" who is responsible for providing "support to newcomer

students…and to their families as they make the transition to Canadian school" (Georgieva, para.

1). The needs of students in this school community led to the formation of this program, with the

principal recognizing the need for a more parental involvement for students to succeed

(Georgieva, 2018).

In terms of in-school programs designed to address the immediate needs of refugee

students, the lack of policy guidance can leave schools relying on traditional English as a second

language (ESL) or English literacy development (ELD) programs as the only alternative

solution. According to the *Ontario Curriculum Grades 9 to 12* (Ontario Ministry of Education,

2007) the ESL and ELD programs are designed to "ensure that English language learners have

the maximum opportunity to become proficient in English and achieve the high levels of literacy

that are expected from all Ontario students" (p. 3). Yu (2012) recognizes that "there is no

specific program for refugee students" and "the ELD program may fit them better" (p. 4) due to

the limited amount of prior schooling these students had received. While these programs are an

excellent language-based support system for ELLs, there remains a gap in effective

programming that identifies and addresses the specific socioemotional needs of students from

refugee or war-affected backgrounds. Clark (2017) insists that language supports should act not

only as a strategy to attain "ministry-mandated goal(s)" (p. 11) but also "in achieving successful

social inclusion into Canada's education system" (p. 11). Montero et al.'s (2012) study that

explores refugee students' insights into their school culture and social structure revealed that

participants felt at a social disadvantage. One participant states, "I would like to get involved at

school but I am not comfortable because I cannot express myself well due to limited English

skills" (p. 13). Montero et al.'s work reveals that "students' sense of school belonging influences

academic motivation, engagement, and participation" (p. 17). Clark found that the

implementation of "ELL pedagogy" (p. 32) was an important factor in successfully integrating

Syrian refugee students at the elementary school level. However, she also states "given the

unique circumstances of Syrian refugee student experiences, it is important to remember that

strategies used to support ELLs in the past may not translate into current practice" (p. 11). ESL

programs have acted as the default solution for schools with refugee-student populations in the

past. These classrooms are often a blend of students from both refugee and immigrant

backgrounds and other English language learners, blurring the distinction between the various

groups of students. Guo, Maitra, and Guo (2019) cite Keddie (2012) who emphasizes "refugee

children's education cannot be merely conflated with the needs of migrants, 'new arrivals' or

'ESL learners'" (p. 100). Moving forward and developing new programs that will address the

unique needs of these students is the next step for Canadian schools – with the growing interest

and focus on refugee education, this is certainly possible. There exists enough research for such

programs to exist – we know enough about this vulnerable population to try to formulate a

solution in the same way that ESL and ELD programs were developed for the unique needs of

English language learners.

　　　　Current teaching practices in Canada involve educators fortifying ESL and ELD

programs with policy documents and references provided by ministries of education. While this

is a solution that works to move students along through the education system, it is troubling to

think about the quality of their experiences in programs that are not designed to address their

unique needs. MacNevin (2012) concurs, adding that "teaching these students requires a whole

new set of skills and tools" (p. 52) and that "policies should be developed at the Department and

Board level that provide support for the instruction and support of EAL students, specifically those coming from refugee backgrounds" (p. 59).

Refugee dropout rates in Canada.

The challenges faced by students from refugee backgrounds vary based on individual circumstances - it is important to recognize the individuality of those students. Still, research shows that there are some factors that affect the general population of refugee students in the same way. A longitudinal study by Wilkinson et al. (2012) found that immigrant entrance class had an impact on high school trajectories – more specifically, "those who enter as refugees have the lowest grade placement" (p. 39) upon entering high school. There were also some indications from this study that show the country of origin influences early school-leaving amongst refugee students in Canada (Wilkinson et al., 2012). Similar findings were revealed in a study by Gunderson (2007) however these conclusions were limited to a single school district, leaving a possibility that students simply changed their school district. Furthermore, according to Wilkinson et al's study, age upon arrival in Canada had an impact on the likelihood that individuals leave high school without a diploma. Generally, this study found that the likelihood that refugees will leave high school prior to receiving a diploma is five times higher than it is for other newcomers (Wilkinson et al., 2012). Stewart (2011) presents a case of Vietnamese refugee students in Winnipeg, Canada who were reportedly involved in criminal activity and dropped out of school. Their leaving school was attributed to the fact that they had "very limited school experiences and they were dropped into high schools" (Stewart, 2011, p. 55). Furthermore, Walker and Zuberi (2019) cite Baffoe (2006) who's study attributes less motivation and higher dropout rates of refugee students to "acculturation difficulties" (p. 34). Acculturation difficulties might include a variety of challenges with social integration as well as academic achievement.

These possibilities are highlighted by Graham, Minhas and Paxton (2016) in their systematic review of studies investigating refugee experiences in Canada. Their review revealed that peer-based abuse was not uncommon among children from refugee backgrounds. These studies point to the issues associated with students with limited schooling entering a Canadian school system with the expectation of their seamless integration. These students have been found to withdraw from school, get involved in violent and criminal activity, and even drop out of school (Stewart, 2011). These findings bring to mind questionable school practices, mainly, is enough being done to keep students engaged and enrolled in school? How prepared are schools and teachers to welcome refugee students and SLIFE and to encourage a commitment to completing their education?

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

"I think metaphorically of qualitative research as an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material. The fabric is not explained easily or simply. Like the loom on which fabric is woven, general assumptions and interpretive frameworks hold qualitative research together" (Creswell, 2013, p. 42).

Creswell (2013) describes the nature of qualitative research beautifully, painting a picture of the complexity that embodies this type of research. The threading of ideas, experiences, assumptions, interpretations, and analyses produces a unique perspective of a phenomenon and creates space for discussion and action to take place. Choosing a qualitative approach for this study stems from the intention to "allow [information] to emerge from participants in the project" (Creswell, 2003, p.17). The qualitative study explores the experiences of a Syrian refugee student who attends public secondary schools in Windsor, Ontario. Using a narrative inquiry approach, the study examines the extent to which this student's school experiences reflect a multicultural and inclusive learning environment and will refer to Banks' (1993) five dimensions of multicultural education. Furthermore, the research refers to the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy as a basis for examining the student-perceived teaching practices of educators who teach Syrian refugee students in Windsor, Ontario.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is typically defined, explained, and understood in relation to quantitative research. The general distinction between the two depicts quantitative research as a structured system involving unchangeable processes, and qualitative research as an organic and interpretive process. Maxwell (2005) states that designing a qualitative study involves a constant

"back and forth" (p. 3) progression between all the singular components of the study. He

proceeds by acknowledging that qualitative research "does not begin from a predetermined

starting point or proceed through a fixed sequence of steps but, involves interconnection and

interaction among the different design components" (p. 3). In addition, the quality of

interconnectivity is extended to the relationship between the qualitative researcher and his or her

participants. Placing the researcher at the center of the qualitative study, Scott and Garner (2013)

assert that in order "to understand the meaning of others' experiences, we need to first

understand how our own views, interests, and prejudgments were formed and to recognize the

influence of our own background and experiences" (p. 12). This reflective, or reflexive, process

will inform the procedural decisions during data collection and analysis stages. For example,

designing research questions and conducting data analysis are guided by the reflections and

thought processes of the researcher, as well as the context in which the participants engage.

 Qualitative research is concerned "with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or

'undergone'" (Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 7), although, as Scott and Garner state, it does not

involve "merely recording [participants'] opinions and behavior" (p. 11). Rather, participants'

experiences and perspectives are examined in order to better understand a specific phenomenon

(Bouma, Ling, & Wilkinson, 2016). Thus, this form of research relies heavily on the subject

matter or the participants, and the researcher's job is to "capture perspectives accurately"

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 7). This highlights the importance of perceptions and interpretations

of the phenomenon under examination. The aim of a qualitative researcher then becomes the

"understanding of experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel or live it" (Sherman &

Webb, 1988, p. 7). This task involves rigorous work; Bogdan and Biklen (1998) offer five

features of qualitative research that characterize its rigorous nature. Qualitative research is

naturalistic, descriptive, procedural, inductive, and meaningful (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The themes, categories, and patterns emerge from the data itself, as opposed to having predetermined themes guide the research process. Furthermore, it generally seeks to engage the informants involved in analytic processes (Bogdan & Biklen), to disengage hegemonic forces, and to promote "social change" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 38).

Reflexivity.

Qualitative research is a rigorous and cyclical process that involves continuous reflection; it also engages the researcher in a reflexive process. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) point out the responsibility of the researcher to evaluate their "self-awareness and self-exposure" (p. 964) and also to "hold himself or herself accountable to the standards of knowing and telling of the people he or she has studied" (p. 964). Furthermore, reflexivity involves "transparency and clarity [as a] minimum requirement for quality in published qualitative studies" (Dodgson, 2019, p. 220). This can be achieved by regularly reminding oneself of the multiple personal and social positions that influence how knowledge is consumed and constructed. The influence that positionality can have on knowledge construction in a research study is essentially what reflexivity aims to control. Berger (2015) identifies three ways that positionality can have such an impact: It affects how the researcher gains "access to the 'field'" (p. 220) and to the perception of the researcher as "sympathetic" (p. 220) to the participants' situation; it can shape the relationship between the researcher and participants and may have implications on participants' willingness to share information; it affects the researcher's perceptions of the information being provided to them through the research process. This in turn has implications on how the researcher interprets this information and on the final conclusions that are drawn (Berger, 2015).

Research Design: Narrative Inquiry

The process of narrative inquiry is a meticulous one. It gives importance to the point of view of the researcher and their intent in pursuing the study at hand (Chase, 2005). According to Murray (2009) narrative inquiry helps the writer to document change and the impact of change on our lives. Similarly, Richardson (1990) describes the narrative as a method that "allows us to contemplate the effects of our actions and to alter the direction of our lives" (p. 117). Furthermore, she describes a specific kind of narrative "which gives voice to those who are silenced or marginalized in the cultural narrative" (p. 128). What she calls a "collective narrative" (Richardson, p. 129) with its "transformative possibilities" (p. 129) creates a bond between individuals, the narrators, who share experiential characteristics. Here, Richardson describes how a collective narrative develops the prospect for social action and change. Without the voice of participants, however, this narrative is not possible. Creswell (2003) describes the emancipatory quality of this type of research by claiming "the 'voice' for the participants becomes a united voice for reform and change. This advocacy may mean providing a voice for these participants, raising their consciousness, or advancing an agenda for change to improve the lives of the participants" (p. 10).

Narrative inquiry transforms the "research relationship" or the "interviewer-interviewee relationship into one of narrator and listener" (Chase, 2005, p. 7). This involves great understanding and orienting of the narrator's story in relation to the context of the study and research questions. Similarly, Willis (2007) describes the subjective nature of storytelling as "an effort to represent in detail the perspectives of participants in the process or setting being studied" (p. 295).

This study aims to create a narrative composed of the experiences of one Syrian refugee student in their school context. Through the writing process, their individual experience will be weaved together with the researcher's understanding, albeit a limited understanding, of that context to create a testimony that will shed light on the nature of the unique experience in question. By giving this student a voice to identify their perception of the context in which they learn, they will become the narrator of their own story. Through narrative inquiry, the study adheres to what Richardson (1990) states is the "ability to empathize with the life stories of others" (p. 127). This involves allowing the standpoint of the participant to be narrated and taking into consideration one's own socially and personally constructed standpoints, that is, the standpoint of the researcher.

Phenomenology

The experiences that prompted this research are embedded with significance and deserve deep and intentional analysis. Interacting with Syrian refugee students provoked a continuous thought process through which the minute details of our correspondence were analyzed. A phenomenological framework plays an important role in identifying the value of and meaning behind these interactions. Furthermore, the deeply rooted basis upon which these interactions came to be is explored through a lens of phenomenology. With its origins rooted in the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl (1925), phenomenology is described as existing "with the unique goal of describing the 'essences' of the phenomenon that contribute to an understanding of meaning" (Randles, 2012, p. 11). While it is a difficult task to undertake, when executed successfully the phenomenological descriptions can provide a fascinating subjective perspective of a seemingly mundane event. Ladkin (2005) describes this framework as "an attempt to describe 'things' as they reveal themselves to us through our consciousness" (Ladkin,

p. 111). Things, as defined by Ladkin, can be meant to encompass more than the tangible items that surround us; they can also be ephemeral items such as "concepts, dreams, emotions, or even thoughts themselves" (p.111). Furthermore, she testifies for researchers who "argue that this world of relational and subjective interactions [constitute] an important and valid ground for examination" (p. 113). In fact, Randles argues that, "phenomenology can illuminate one's own thought process and affect how one approaches the teaching and learning that surrounds a phenomenon" (p. 18). The thought processes that Randles mentions here are aligned with my own thoughts during and after each interaction with the individuals who inspired this study.

In 'doing' phenomenology there has to be an "effort to reduce the reliance on pure data in research and to increase the use of reason" (Willis, 2007, p. 205). This does not suggest that a study be based solely on thoughts and ideas, but rather that existing data be examined so closely that it reveals more than an obvious patterns or common practice. It involves deep reflection and consideration of the perspectives of all stakeholders, as well as the contexts and situational influences that surround the research. Consequently, Willis (2007) identifies the dependency of phenomenological studies on "rich reports" because, as mentioned before, "context is needed for understanding" (p. 108).

Case Study

A case study was employed for the purposes of this study. Swanborn (2010) defines a case study in very broad terms, stating that it is "the study of a social phenomenon" which is conducted "by collecting information afterwards with respect to the development of the phenomenon during a certain period" (p. 13). Adding clarity to its definition, Gerring (2006) describes this approach as "the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is … to shed light on a larger class of cases" (p. 20). Typically, the purpose of employing a case

study does not involve generalizing its findings to a larger population. Rather it seeks to shed

light on a large issue by focusing intently on an individual case residing within a similar context.

Creswell et al. (2007) state that generally, "qualitative researchers are reluctant to generalize

from on case to another because the contexts of cases differ" (p. 247). This indicates that even

cases that *appear* to be situated in a similar context have microscopic differences that can

ultimately result in significantly unique themes. In the context of this study, namely a school

context, it is widely appreciated that learners' diversity is an asset in the classroom. Therefore, it

is to be expected that the single case being investigated produce unique findings. The literature

on using a case study approach does not fail to recognize the breadth of this type of study,

highlighting the fact that a case study has many different characteristics which are only

employed if they fit the specifications of the study in question. For instance, a case study can be

used as a tool, a means of finding out "what is 'going on' inside the entity" (Bouma, Ling &

Wilkinson, p.118) being examined, and to formulate a hypothesis for a future study (Bouma,

Ling & Wilkinson). For the purposes of this study, an exploration of one participant was

conducted to investigate the unique characteristics of his lived experience, and to determine

whether or not his experiences coincide with the existing literature.

This blended qualitative method approach employs three procedures that are aligned with

one another and which also complement each other. The use of a case study facilitated an

extensive examination of one participant's experiences, which were explored through a

phenomenological lens to reveal the deep meaning of the participant's thoughts, actions,

concepts, dreams, emotions, and feelings. Through a narrative inquiry approach, the examination

was taken further and presented in a format that maintained the richness imbedded within the

findings and which also gave precedence to the participant's voice. The combination of these

three approaches created an arena in which the qualitative nature of this study unfolded without limiting the interpretation of events. Furthermore, within this arena the emancipatory qualities of narrative inquiry were enabled by the understanding gained through a phenomenological perspective. The interaction of these approaches is demonstrated in *Figure 1*. The center field is representative of the case study which facilitates a space in which a narrative inquiry and phenomenological approach unfold and interact. The arrows demonstrate the accessibility of the procedures to one another.

Figure 1

Blended Qualitative Method Approach

Participant Characteristics

Participation was open to students who are currently enrolled, students who have graduated, and students who have dropped out of a secondary school from either of the two main school boards in the region: Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB) or Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board (WECDSB). Participants were required to speak either Arabic or English, or a combination of both. Arabic is the official language in the Republic of

Syria (Chepkemoi, 2017) so it is likely that most potential participants speak the language.

Participants were required to adhere to specific criteria. The criteria maintain that:

1. participant must be of Syrian origin with refugee status,

2. participant must speak either Arabic or English, or a combination of both,

3. participant must have lived in Canada for at least one year, and

4. participant must have been enrolled in a secondary school in Windsor/Essex County for at least one year.

The time requirements placed on the last two criteria are to ensure that the participant have enough exposure to the school system and thus will be able to contribute substantially to the study.

Participant Recruitment

After gaining approval from the Research Ethics Board (REB), a recruitment poster (*Appendix G*) was posted at various locations throughout the city of Windsor. One individual willingly volunteered to participate in the study. This recruitment method was employed to ensure that the individual is knowingly and voluntarily willing to participate in the research study, with no chance of coercion from the researcher. Feldman, Bell and Berger (2003) point out that often, the unorganized status of a group of informants creates a barrier to their access. They state, "the task of finding unaffiliated informants frequently requires assessing continuously the range of people encountered in the field and taking advantage of any opportunity that presents itself" (Feldman, Bell & Berger, p. 55). While the Syrian community is in some respects an 'organized' group who are affiliated by common cultural values, there is no site from which access to potential participants can be gained for the purposes of this study.

Consequently, employing a recruitment poster was the most impartial method of recruiting a participant. Upon initial contact, the participant was provided with a letter of information (*Appendix B*) describing the intentions and details of the study. They were also given a consent form (*Appendix B*) to fill out independently or with their parents/guardians' permission. At the point of second contact with the participant, verbal consent was obtained before scheduling a date and time for an un-structured telephone interview.

Data Collection Procedures

The research employed one qualitative data collection procedure: an unstructured interview. Unstructured interviews "allow the participant(s) to determine what information is relevant to their [personal] story or version of events" (Bouma, Ling & Wilkinson, 2016, p. 54). Using interviews facilitates the ability for researchers to "reach areas of reality that would otherwise remain inaccessible such as peoples' subjective experiences and attitudes" (Peräkylä, 2005, p. 869). Bouma, Ling and Wilkinson state "the idea is to give the participant a 'voice' to describe their experiences without the researcher predetermining their descriptions of events" (p. 54). This technique is used to prevent researcher-biases from influencing participants' responses. The interview included open-ended questions, allowing the participant to express their feelings and experiences freely. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) assert "questions developed to guide a qualitative study need to be more open-ended and concerned with the process and meaning rather than cause and effect" (p. 160). The participant was informed that the interviewer is fluent in both languages. The interview was facilitated by the researcher in both Arabic and English, using both languages interchangeably; the participant was given the freedom to choose this option, and determined they are comfortable using both languages. The interviews were transcribed during the interview, that is, the researcher recorded responses as they were given by the interviewee.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is said to be one of the most daunting and "mysterious" (Maxwell, 2005, p. 95) tasks in qualitative research. During this step of the research process all of the accumulated material are systematically viewed and organized into manageable categories or themes (Creswell, 2013; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Chang, 2016; Maxwell, 2005). Bouma, Ling and Wilkinson (2016) assert that data analysis requires the researcher to become "sensitized" (p. 246) to the situations being researched. This sensitivity is achieved through deep, ongoing immersion in the data, which is described as a "back-and-forth" process "between immersion and extraction and often leads to a kind of 'split identity' or 'dual consciousness' in the researcher" (Scott & Garner, 2013, p. 12). What emerges from this process manifests itself in the form of deep understanding of the participants' experiences, allowing the researcher to report the most authentic version of the narrations as possible.

Rigorous immersion into the data is required in order to achieve this understanding and this is accomplished not only by reading or listening, but also by engaging in memo writing during the analysis process. Maxwell states "memos not only capture your analytic thinking about your data, but also *facilitate* such thinking, stimulating analytic insights" (p. 96). Bogdan and Biklen concur, adding that regular memo writing "can a time to reflect on issues raised in the setting and how they relate to larger theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues" (p. 161). Furthermore, Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) equate inquiry with "writing because, for [them], writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery" (p. 967). As an ongoing and cyclical process, data analysis involves "really living with the data" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p.124). To that end, data analysis does not begin when

data collection ends. Instead, the analysis process is constantly in effect, even throughout the interviewing process.

For the purposes of this study, memo writing was used as an ongoing strategy to engage in the data. Beginning in the interview setting, any internal thoughts, feelings, or inquiries experienced during the conversation with the participant were recorded. This process continued throughout the formal data analysis process where memos informed the process of constructing the final narrative.

Data analysis was conducted through the process of "restorying" (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002, p. 332), which is based on Clandinin and Connely's (2000) publication *Narrative Inquiry*. Restorying is an intensive process in which stories are gathered through interviews, the use of artifacts, or other qualitative data collection methods. Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002) describe two approaches used to engage the restorying process: the "problem-solution approach" (p. 333) and the "three-dimensional space approach" (p. 339). In the former approach, participants' stories are analyzed for traditional elements of a story and then re-written by the researcher in a chronological sequence (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). The latter approach includes analysis of three main elements of experience: "interaction, continuity, and situation" (p. 339). The goal is to produce a narrative by piecing together the fragmented elements participants' told experiences. For the purposes of this study, the three-dimensional space approach to restorying was employed to create a narrative that will shed light on the experiences of one Syrian refugee student. The analysis process utilized an adapted form (Table 1) of Ollerenshaw and Creswell's adaptation of Clandinin and Connely's structure for implementing the three-dimensional space approach to conduct a data analysis. The adapted form of this framework includes elements derived from Banks' (1993) five dimensions of

multicultural education. The use of this framework was guided by questions that address each of

the five dimensions while identifying the three elements of experience as outlined by

Ollerenshaw and Creswell. After the interview was transcribed, the text was read several times.

The elements (interaction, continuity, and situation/place) were identified based on the

descriptors in Table 1 as well as the questions based on Banks' framework. The elements

identified in the transcribed texts were color-coded and organized into the respective units

outlined in *Table 1*. It is important to note that coding and theme development was not limited by

the questions added to the existing framework.

Table 1

Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

Interaction		Continuity			Situation/Place	
Personal	*Social*	*Past*	*Present*	*Future*		
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions, and points of view	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines	Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view	- Restorying
What do existing constructions of knowledge look like? What kind of awareness is there of prejudice reduction in the self?	How does the learning environment influence construction of knowledge? What kind of awareness is there of prejudice reduction in others?	How did past educational experiences reflect a multicultural pedagogy? (content integration, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy)	How does the current education experience reflect a multicultural pedagogy? (content integration, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy)	How are current practices working toward an empowering school culture/social structure?	What does the learning environment look like? How are students represented in it?	- Banks' (1993) Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Source: Adapted from Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002)

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

When I began my interview with Karam, I was looking at a page full of questions organized in a manner that I believed would yield the most substantial responses. I told him that I would ask him a series of questions about his experiences and urged him to give his most honest and detailed answers. Through the telephone, I could imagine him smiling as he said, "I will tell you my entire story" (Personal Communication). Karam was already prepared, naturally, to share his story. He felt it important for others to hear and recognized the value in sharing his unique disposition towards accessing education as an immigrant and refugee student. By nature, we are story tellers, bound by the need to profess our realities to keep them alive, and by the hopes that future generations will value and learn from our experiences. Clandinin (2006) states that "lived and told stories and talk about those stories are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities" (p. 44). By engaging in an unstructured interview with Karam, I was able to engage with his narrative and take part in negotiating the meaning behind it.

In keeping with the narrative inquiry approach, and more specifically the three-dimensional space framework, these prescribed dimensions helped organize the data:

- interactions (personal; social),
- time (past, present, future),
- place

From these categories several themes emerged which will be used to build the narrative of Karam's experience as a Syrian refugee living and learning in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. The identified themes are: maturity and resilience; community: attachment to the familiar; life as

teacher; teacher as champion; passion for education. These themes appear in a recurrent fashion rather than a linear one, appearing repeatedly throughout Karam's narrative. The narrative will be told by looking backwards into his past, moving onwards into the present, and followed by musings about his future. Intertwined within this timeline will be the personal and social interactions that happened along the way in various settings.

Looking Backwards: Karam's Childhood

> I was born in Halab in January 2005, although my real birthday is in September 2004. A lot of us have fake birthdays, usually in January. In Syria, babies are not documented right after birth. They wait months before this is done, and they usually don't record the birth date, but the date of that day instead. For the first three years of my life, I lived with my grandparents. My father traveled for work around the Middle East, so I wouldn't see him more than once every month. When I was about three years old, my grandfather moved us to Al Sham. In 2010, we moved to Jordan, where my father had work, and we lived there as a family for about 6 years. We didn't plan on staying there for that long, but the war started in Syria and we couldn't go back.

Relocating from one place to another can certainly have an impact on a young individual's character. The frequency of these events in the first few years of his life coupled with the absence of his father rendered Karam more independent and responsible than expected of most young people his age. In addition, Karam's inaccurate age, although it may seem irrelevant and minuscule, led him on a path that changed the course of his life. These early experiences helped form the resilience that is evident throughout the life experiences that he shared. Some of those experiences took place in a school context.

Passion for education.

What was initially supposed to be a temporary living situation in Jordan gave way to Karam's first school experiences. The first few years of his schooling consisted of a myriad of varying experiences that shaped his perception of school. Karam's inaccurate documented age rendered him too young to begin school at the appropriate time, forcing him to push his educational journey back one year. By the time he began attending school he knew he loved it and his teachers recognized his willingness to learn. For the first few years, Karam began discovering himself within the walls of his classrooms. The glory of these days was ameliorated by the presence of his teacher:

> I still remember the name of my first school, Bara'im al Adnan. I was so excited
>
> to start school, and I loved my teacher. She was very helpful, and she was my
>
> neighbour, so she knew me well, and she was familiar with my language
>
> difficulties. I missed a lot of school because I started late, so she helped me catch
>
> up outside of school hours. My first year of school was very good. I was really
>
> happy to be in school, but we began to have some financial issues, and the
>
> political situation wasn't good, so I had to leave school for some time.

His excitement about starting school for the first time lingered in his voice as he recalled attending Bara'im al Adnan school, acting as a prelude to my discovery of how much Karam values education. Soon that excitement became sadness as he recalled how their circumstances were compounded by the unrelenting political circumstances back home in Syria. Karam recalls taking on a job to help with the family's finances:

> I was about ten years old when I started working at the grocery store. I would
> open shop at 7:00 AM and sell fruits and vegetables all day. I worked there for
> about a year and a half before we moved to a new house and I was relieved that I
> could focus on school again.

Working at such a young age seemed to be Karam's duty to his family. He didn't speak of this as a disadvantageous or abusive act against him but, instead as an honourable act that he undertook to support his family. As the oldest son to his parents, this came naturally. Eventually, Karam's return to school was met with tremendous support from his teachers, particularly Miss. Shorook, who identified Karam as an exceptional student and invested time outside of school hours to help him. He remembers her particularly as a kind individual who helped him in many areas besides his studies. She was yet another teacher who Karam gives much credit to in his earliest days attending school. Soon after, however, his experience changed dramatically.

Life as teacher.

> She made things very easy – she was helpful, and I loved school because of her. I
> really loved school at this time. In year five I moved to a public school; it was an
> all-boys public school. These teachers were very difficult – unimaginable. I didn't
> think school could be like this, but it was, and I had to deal with it. By law, there
> was no hitting allowed, but that didn't mean anything to some of them. One time,
> a teacher asked me for my ID card, but I had forgotten it at home. He asked me to
> stand up, I opened my hands, and he hit me on my palms with a stick. I went
> home that day and told my father. Father held a respectable position at this time,
> and he talked to someone from the school board about it. This teacher was spoken
> to by administration, but they didn't do anything about it.

Karam spoke about this experience with a degree of normalcy, as though it was an expected rite of passage, an experience that made him into the person he is now, and that will continue to influence who he will become in the future. The next incident Karam shared was one of the most significant, in that it was a pivotal moment in my discovery of Karam's strong character. During our interview, he paused briefly before he spoke; initially I interpreted this silence as a painful moment of remembrance, as if he were re-living a challenging time:

> During exam time, one of our teachers assigned homework: we had to copy a certain passage about a hundred times in order to memorize it. I'll be honest, I didn't do it. It was unnecessary. I was a good student, I knew that, the teacher knew that, and more importantly, I knew how to study effectively. This was not going to help me pass my exams. So, when the teacher learned that I hadn't completed this task, I got hit 30 times on each hand in front of the entire class. I didn't want the teacher to feel the satisfaction of hurting me, I didn't want him to feel like he broke me. So, I looked him in the eyes the entire time, as if to tell him, "Yeah, so what, you're going to hit me? Hit me, I can take it" At the end of the day, I know that I was not the one who was wrong.

For the second time during our interview, I could almost *hear* Karam smiling through the phone as he described this interaction. What I realized afterwards is that he was extremely proud of his defiance and strength in this moment. He expressed how he learned a lot from this experience, and it has since shaped many of his interactions with teachers and other authority figures. Karam reassured me of this by stating,

> I am not a disrespectful person. I respect my elders, but I also demand respect
>
> back. This difficult environment is what forced us to learn. We actually did
>
> benefit from their harshness, believe it or not, but it also made some people hate
>
> school. Sometimes I felt like I disliked school to a certain extent, but I still loved
>
> to learn.

The maturity and insight he demonstrated here is far more than a typical child is usually expected

to have. In addition, Karam exhibits a degree of resilience in that he maintained his drive to

access an education despite the difficult circumstances in the classroom. His resilience is a result

of the ability to adapt to the given circumstances and his determination to succeed. I followed up

about Karam's response about the ill-treatment from teachers and wondered whether he believed

he was treated differently due to his refugee status. Karam explain:

> I don't know the other Jordanian students were treated in the same manner,
>
> mainly because they had a different schedule than we did. The Jordanian students
>
> attended school during the normal morning schedule, and we attended in the
>
> afternoon. There are a lot of Syrians living there, so they didn't have space to
>
> teach us all together. But I think they treated us all the same; I don't think they
>
> disciplined us because we are Syrian.

Despite the ill-treatment at the hands of one teacher, Karam draws a clear separation between

that negative treatment and his overall experience as a refugee in the Jordanian school system.

That is, his perception of school remains positive and he recognizes the abuse he faced as

inhumane and completely irrelevant to his perception of what education should be.

Community: Attachment to the familiar.

> Someone called us and said we could come to Canada. My family did not even
>
> apply, but we agreed to do the interviews, some health tests, and about one year
>
> later we got a call. They told us about the travel date. At first, my father didn't
>
> hesitate one bit to go. But on the day before we were supposed to travel, he
>
> cancelled the tickets. We didn't have family in Canada, and the idea of traveling
>
> to this foreign place was not a comfortable one. Our entire life was [in Jordan],
>
> and besides, we hoped to return to Syria as soon as the war was over.

The feeling of hesitation was not only due to the thought of traveling to Canada, a foreign place.
It also came from the attachment the family had to their homeland. This double-sided anxiety
intensified when the time to travel arrived. That is, Karam's father made the decision to cancel
their airline tickets only when an idea became reality, and they were suddenly about to travel.
Anticipating an unfamiliar place and life while also letting go of everything they had become so
comfortable with caused a lot of confusion and conflict in the family's decision-making process.

It is noteworthy to mention the influence that his father's decision had on Karam's life.
Like so many young refugees, and children all over the world, his fate is in the hands of his
elders. However, when he recalls these events, he speaks as though it were a collective decision,
using first-person pronouns to describe the unity in the family: "we" and "our" rather than "I"
and "my". This theme is imbedded deeply into his narrative, revealing the sense of obligation
Karam has to his family, and, as his narrative will reveal later, to his *people*. This obligation did
not, however, prevent him from sharing his own personal expectations and fears. Karam
described his thoughts about Canada before traveling:

My expectations about Canada were based on fictional places I used to watch

when I was a small boy, the American films and cartoons that were translated into

Arabic. I imagined the place to be more free, people talking about big ideas, a big

social life, things like that. I learned about the different religions in Canada; there

are so many more than in Jordan and Syria. I saw a lot of images of the nature in

Canada, and of the technology, too. But I didn't have much ambition to come to

Canada; all my friends were in Jordan. I also thought I would have a lot of

difficulty there because of the language. But at the same time, I was excited about

the prospect of a future. Plus, everyone was travelling there, so why not? My aunt

and her family travelled to Canada during the year [before we travelled], and she

told us, "if you have common sense, you'll make it just fine over here". I began

getting very excited about coming to Canada and learning. Education was a big

deal for me. My aunt told me that school here was very good.

Education was a driving factor for Karam's excitement about coming to Canada. In addition,

Karam's presumptions about Canada painted an image of a multicultural place where he would

be free to think, believe, and act as he wishes. The prospects of a liberating space to live

motivated him even more. Although the decision to travel was not entirely his, his enthusiasm

about the country seemed to have increased despite his fears about the language barrier he might

encounter. Soon, Karam's father arranged a new travel date. Karam recalled this turning point,

"On December 12, 2016 we left Jordan and arrived in Canada for the first time on December 13,

2016, at 4:00 o'clock in the morning".

Maturity and resilience.

Karam spoke about a major difficulty facing his family upon arrival to Canada:

> We had a lot of trouble communicating with the landlord when we first moved in. This caused so many issues with him. It was hard to understand what he wanted from us, so we began looking for a new house almost 15 days after we moved in. Imagine, we had two houses and two schools within the first weeks in Canada. At the [second] house, the owner was Lebanese and it was so much easier for us to communicate, so we stayed there for almost two years. At [my second school], I really liked my ESL teacher; she helped me and made me feel confident in English, and soon I became the family ambassador because I learned to speak English. My family depended on me for everything because I could speak English. They still do.

The family's first experiences in Canada were ones of frustration and uncertainty. The crippling realities of a language barrier reveal how simply communicating about their living arrangements became problematic. Karam assumed responsibility for supporting his family through their transition into Canadian society, revealing, once again, his sense of responsibility as their son. Not only was he learning English for his own gain, but as a necessity for the wellbeing of his family as well. He continued by describing the challenge of being immersed in a highly Arab-populated area and school while feeling pressure to quickly improve his English language proficiency:

> In the community where we lived, and in the school too, it was chaotic and there are so many Arabs, so it was hard for me to continue improving my English. After

some time, my father decided we should move to another house, to a calmer area.

At [the new school], we were the only Arabs, and my English was the strongest of

my siblings. The teachers put me in a mainstream classroom to help me progress

more quickly. It was really hard for me at this school, because there were no

Arabs there for a long time. So, I became good friends with an Indian boy, who

only spoke English, not Indian.

In this short period of time and with the frequency with which the family moved from one

community to another, Karam seemed to have made a revelation about his attachment to and

need for familiarity in the language and people that surrounded him. Moving from a "chaotic"

community only to feel isolated and underrepresented in another one has a tinge of irony to it.

This is perhaps the only time Karam explicitly mentioned experiencing feelings of not belonging.

Under these circumstances, he was naturally drawn to becoming friends with someone who he

perceived as another minority like him. At this point in his narrative, Karam began to reveal

times when he was perhaps negotiating his own identity, questioning whether he needed to be

around other Arabic speakers, or whether he could navigate his new life without them.

Community: Attachment to the familiar.

For Karam, beginning high school brought with it the usual challenges any typical high

school student would face. For a young man with the responsibility of helping the family

navigate through their new home in the English language, it also brought some relief:

I blended in right away, because the school had a lot of Arabs. I found many

students who were very social, so I tried to be social too. I was comfortable

because my older sister was there, but I loved the fact that my younger siblings

weren't. I didn't have to worry about them so much.

Karam found his high school to be a sanctuary; he described his first semester as a very energetic

one during which he formed very close bonds with his classmates. In keeping with his "we, not

me" mentality, he recalls:

I loved waking up to go to school in the morning. I liked all the classes I was

taking. I would go to school very early; I'd be there at 7:00 AM most days. I

hated being late and I looked forward to seeing my friends. I didn't like to start

class before seeing my friends. We would have breakfast together before class, at

school. I didn't like eating alone at home, so it was a daily thing to have breakfast.

If we didn't do this, I wouldn't be okay in class. In class I sat next to my friends

and we worked together and succeeded because we worked together. If one of us

didn't do well, we all didn't do well. We are all friends, Canadians and Arabs.

Once I had a problem with one of my friends and about nineteen of our

classmates came to help us solve our problem.

Karam's extreme satisfaction at the events that took place during his first high school semester is

inspiring. I had the sense that he was speaking of some of the most outstanding days of his life.

The bonds he created over breakfast each morning fueled the energy he needed to continue

progressing academically and socially. Although these gatherings were short-lived (the COVID-

19 pandemic caused school closures during his second semester) Karam spoke of these

experiences with a fondness that seemed to satisfy a deep need for connection to something

familiar. It is as if he was reunited with old friends from his homeland. Karam's experience with

school has always included his awareness of the community around him. An earlier example of this is through his interaction with teachers during his earliest school days in Jordan. He described:

> It was normal to see my teachers in the street. They saw me on my way to school in the mornings and after school, too. We knew each other well because we were neighbours.

For many people of Middle Eastern descent, neighbours and community members usually take part actively in each other's lives; there exists an "everyone knows everyone" type of environment that is common throughout the Middle East. Karam's perception of the normalcy of this type of interaction indicates that he felt like he belonged to a community, or at least that he wanted to feel connected to a community. His sense of belonging could be a sign that he was not viewed as "different" by the locals, but instead was welcomed and treated with the dignity that one would expect, despite his migrant status. This in turn would explain his satisfaction with the bonds he created with his high school peers. Karam displayed a sense of belonging to a community on another occasion. He recalled:

> I didn't experience the war in Syria, but I have a lot of friends at school who did. If they hear about death or violence, they are very affected, they get very upset. I try to be there for them and make it easier for them because I understand where they come from.

We can never know the true extent of his understanding of his peers' experiences with conflict. However, Karam's ability to empathize with his peers, and his attestation of understanding "where they come from" provides some understanding of his attitude towards the environment

he is in. Furthermore, this demonstrates a sense of unity with and obligation to his people.

Throughout elementary school, Karam conflicted with two realities: one where Arabs existed in

his school and community and another in which they did not. He felt relief when he was reunited

with a sense of normalcy in high school.

Teacher as champion.

While he was relieved to find and maintain a sense of community, he wanted to do it on

his own terms. With his well-established goal of taking control of his education in mind, Karam

spoke to me about the challenges he had maintaining a connection to his first language while also

creating boundaries for himself in the school context:

> There's one teacher that I heard about before taking his class. Everyone said he's
>
> such a great teacher, but I found the opposite. When he was teaching us, he spoke
>
> half in Arabic and half in English; it confused me, I'm still confused from his
>
> class.

I was surprised to hear that Karam found the teacher's use of the Arabic language to be an

annoyance. In my experience, students appreciate the teacher's use of their first language in the

classroom, and it usually acts as a connecting force between them. However, Karam's frustration

with the interchangeable use of Arabic and English in the teacher's instruction demonstrates his

discipline and a desire to excel. Furthermore, it reveals Karam's need to connect with his

teachers on more than a familiar cultural or linguistic level. His appreciation for his teachers is

not based on their cultural or linguistic background, but instead on the way they enable him to

harness his skills. He described his feelings towards another teacher with which he was more

pleased:

>I heard from other students that he was hard. They scared me a little bit. When I
>
>was in his class, he was very strict, but he was fair. I did really well in his class
>
>and I still love him, he is one of my favourite teachers.

In Karam's experience, he gained either comfort or a valuable lesson from his teachers every step of the way. In every segment of his life that he spoke about, there was a teacher who helped him, directly or indirectly, to achieve his potential. He reported his appreciation for these individuals very often. In the case of his grade eight teacher, he recalled:

>I was lucky to have this teacher, the best teacher in the school. She recognized my
>
>skills in math, science, and art – she used to give me high school level lessons to
>
>challenge me and to prepare me for high school. She even offered her free time to
>
>help me. When I started high school, I noticed that the lessons I was doing were
>
>some of the same ones she gave me in grade eight. She still talks to me when I go
>
>to pick up my younger siblings and she asks me about high school. She asks me
>
>about my personal life as well.

His grade eight teacher clearly dedicated a lot of attention towards Karam and his future. She left a positive impression on him even after having graduated and moved on to secondary school, perhaps setting high expectations for his future school experience. While Karam recognizes the impact that his teacher had on his academic success in grade eight as well as early on in high school, she existed as much more than that. Karam's teacher was his champion, that is, she supported him and upheld her responsibility as an educator to go beyond her duties of providing academic guidance. She recognized Karam as human, as someone with whom she can connect. The effect that their relationship had on him might has even contributed to his ability to

transition so smoothly from elementary school to high school. In our discussion about the nature of his high school experience, he revealed more positive experiences:

> I feel no difference between myself and the Canadian students in my classes. The teachers treat us the same. They treat us all very well, and they help us a lot. They don't make us feel like there's a difference between us and other students. This really helps me, it's a really good thing. They don't act as if some students are Arab, some students are Western. They treat us as the same. But of course, this is my experience. It depends on the teacher. In my experience, I've had good teachers, but I know other people who have not been so lucky. Like, some of my friends had a teacher who is not helpful, and the students don't like her.

Teachers have a very important job: to make students feel welcome in the school environment. Karam reports that this is true of his experience during his first year in high school. His teachers' fairness not only made him feel like he belongs, but also influenced the perception he has of himself in relation to his Canadian peers. He is also aware of the active role of the teacher. When asked how schools and teachers can better serve students affected by conflict, Karam responded:

> Teachers can smile. In my opinion no matter how hard something feels, a smile can make it all better. Teachers should also show students that life is good here. They should show us how our life can be better, because a lot students are afraid when they first arrive.

The simple request, to smile, demonstrates the existential qualities that Karam and students in general rely on in a relationship with teachers. Furthermore, it is a primal necessity that Karam feels can transform his and his peers' school experience. It is a reminder that, while so much

effort is put into developing programs and resources to teach curriculum content, there will

always be humans on the receiving end, and humans need to connect with others in order to

develop. These are reminders that the sociocultural, socioemotional, and psychosocial

characteristics of students dictate their needs in a way that is much more dire than the academics.

Here and now: Karam's present

Karam has acknowledged some of the challenges of being a young newcomer navigating

through life with new-found challenges, and he attributes his ability to overcome some of these

challenges to his past:

> My strong personality helped me a lot. I know right from wrong. This personality
>
> came from a lot of hard life-experiences. It's important to me to limit your
>
> expectations. You will not be disappointed this way. I am used to moving around
>
> a lot and being challenged, so I can easily adapt to new situations. You know,
>
> people should see the good in the world. Our reality is as such: If I take a white
>
> paper and make a black mark on it then showed it to someone, they will usually
>
> focus on the black dot. They don't usually see the pure white surrounding the
>
> darkness. People should try and see the good part of their difficult situations.
>
> That's what I think.

Once again, I found myself in awe of the level of maturity Karam possessed, and it reminded me

of the poetic words of Ghassan Kanafani, "I used to feel that I was teaching children who were

old for their years. The spark in each of them seemed to have been ignited by the harsh friction

of contact with a rough edged life" (Kanafani, 1966/2004 p. 80). Much like the impression that

Kanafani leaves on his readers about the mystery behind the lives of refugee students, Karam's

words forced me to ponder what the true nature of his experience was before coming to Canada, and his ability to navigate his new life.

Not unlike so many young students across Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a rift in Karam's steady educational venture. The most immediate changes were noticed in his social circle; Karam found himself distanced from his friends, unable to engage in what had become a daily ritual meeting for breakfast each morning. In addition, it stunted his academic performance and caused a decrease in his enthusiasm about going to school. Karam explained:

> Corona came and I was separated from my friends, but we tried to maintain our daily meetings. We would go to the public library and study, me and my friends. But soon everyone became afraid; we forgot a lot of things we were taught. Teachers started teaching us about Corona, and they keep talking about it. It scared us and eventually we even became tired of this subject. I noticed that my marks were decreasing because I wasn't learning as well. I couldn't reach the teachers online, I felt like they weren't there anymore. I stopped caring as much, and I miss my teachers. You know, if books were enough, they wouldn't have made teachers.

The switch to online learning presented an unforeseen challenge for Karam, making it less desirable to attend school and to learn. The main deficit he spoke about was in the social aspect of his school experience, the partial loss of a sense of community he had developed and found comfort in up until then. It became clear to me at this point that maintaining a sense of community was a major theme in Karam's narrative, a crucial part of his experience that helped him navigate his school experience, in addition to his experience as a young refugee navigating

his new life in Canada. The limited access to this community solidifies its importance. In addition, the teacher as a champion is a constant theme throughout Karam's narrative. Karam identified the importance of his teachers' presence and their impact on his school experience so far. His despair at the inability to *reach* his teachers through the online platform makes it clear how much he depended on their guidance and appreciated their presence, and perhaps emphasizes the value of having in-person contact at school.

Looking Forward: Karam's Future

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has kept many people in the dark about their future. Unsure about what to expect in the next short while, Karam expressed some of his thoughts about his future.

      Passion for education.

              Throughout one's studies, thoughts can take you to faraway places, only to bring you back to reality again. I often find myself deep in thought about life and about my schoolwork. I think about how to finish the school year, strategies to help me pass my subjects. I wonder about if the following [school] year will be more difficult or easier than the current one. I always have these kinds of thoughts. Also, I even think about what will happen after I graduate high school. Even when I am doing homework, I think about whether I feel like completing those simple tasks or not, and that I am required to do this homework because it is what is socially acceptable and required of me. It's typical for people to have these thoughts, to think of everything happening around them, and why it is happening.

Karam's narrative began with him sharing his passion for education. The statement above demonstrates the constant dialogue he engages in with himself about his future. Despite the unforeseeable future with the COVID-19 pandemic lingering, Karam maintains a hopeful outlook for things to come. In addition, his thought process brings to light the level of consciousness he has about the decisions he makes. Thinking about Karam's past narrative, it is evident how his eventful life has shaped him into a planner, an independent young man who consciously thinks about the impact of his current actions on his future. In discussion about his future, Karam spoke about his immediate plans to continue pursuing his education:

> I want to leave this high school. People say that it is hard to go to university if you graduate from this high school, so I want to go to another school. Many of my friends left to attend other schools.

Karam's awareness and concern about the reputation of his school, and in turn his educational prospects based on his own reputation after having attended the school in question, reveals his level of integration into his environment. He has been able to overcome some of the initial challenges, namely his language barrier, and appears to be making large strides in his integration process. He is concerned with the quality of his education. In fact, he shared some plans for the near future when he reached out to inquire from me about a fast-track program:

> I'm interested in taking summer school and night school because I want to graduate earlier. I want to take summer school next year and night school as soon as I can. If it works out, I would like to start now because I will be able to graduate on time.

When asked to elaborate about his decision to fast track his high school programming, Karam responded:

> It bothers me that I missed one year of school. I should be with the rest of the students who are my age. It is in my nature to be punctual and to finish things on time, so it bothers me to know that I am one year behind due to my experience in Jordan. I would like to make up for that by graduating high school early.

Taking control of his education and his future is one way for Karam to cope with the circumstances that have impacted his life so far. These are changes that he had little control over: his father's employment caused their move to Jordan; his father made the decision to accept the offer of migration to Canada; the conflict in Syria prevented him from returning home. Karam's education, however, is in his control and he is actively making decisions to suit his own desires and goals for the future. The agency that Karam has in his decision making demonstrates that he foresees himself continuing his life here in Canada for the long term. By actively pursuing his education and making important decisions for himself, Karam maintains power over his future.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

"It's a long story, but I won't tell you everything. Some details won't be of great interest to you,

while others…" (Salih, T., 1967/2009, p.18).

The details that Karam decided to share with me, at first, appeared to be very objective.

They were fragments of data awaiting analysis. I knew, upon beginning this project, that a

narrative inquiry was going to involve rigorous work and that interesting themes would emerge

from the data. However, I would often forget what the authors of the countless research articles

told me about narrative inquiry: it's about finding meaning in the experiences of people, as well

as the places and objects surrounding these people. So, as I read and re-read Karam's narrative, I

began to recognize just how meaningful his choices were. By "his choices", I mean the details *he*

chose to share; he perceived these details to be significant to his narrative as a young refugee

student.

Passion for Education

Karam spoke about education as a constant in his life. He seems to have always had a

passion for education and feels that it is an agent of positive reform in his life. His feelings of

hope regarding education coincide with the literature that reveals how education is viewed as a

"priority for rebuilding [refugee children's] lives" (Brahin & Opiro, 2012, p. 159). Furthermore,

education has been found to help restore "opportunities to study or develop vocational skills

[and] can provide children and youths with a sense of predictability and security amidst the

chaos of displacement, traumatic events, and loss" (Bentacourt & Khan, 2008, p. 323). However,

while education is found to act as a remedial component of refugee students' lives, we should be

careful not to engage in using a deficit way of thinking and writing in the literature about the

educational experiences of refugee students. Rather than concluding that education is a means to an end for refugee children and youth, their pre-existing passion for education should be investigated further.

Although Karam did not directly experience trauma or conflict, the displacement and his inability to return to Syria had similar consequences on his education. It has been noted that "displacement as a result of war … [is] significant" (Denov & Shevell, 2019, p.2). After arriving in Canada Karam found a sense of normalcy and prospects of a future and was met with tremendous support from his teachers along the way. So far, his secondary school experience has enabled him to develop of broad sense of community and feelings of belonging, which play an integral part in his growing attachment to school. Karam paid a lot of credit to his teachers for supporting him through his integration into school, bringing to light the importance of a positive support system for refugee students, particularly in a school setting. Studies have demonstrated how students who are viewed through a "deficit lens" (Ficarra, 2017, p. 76) experience feelings of exclusion and loss of motivation to pursue their education (Ficarra, 2017; Schroeter & James, 2015). Furthermore, Maier's (2014) use of this term is deeply rooted in the education of students with disabilities, and it was found that "the educational decisions and plans developed by teams were very different depending on which lens was used to view a child" (p. 2). Maier uses this term in contrast with "capacity-lens" which is the alternative, and more pragmatic, approach to working with vulnerable students. It is not simply enough to provide students with access to education, but rather it is imperative to create safe, caring, equitable spaces for them to begin to move forward from a life of unpredictability. Knowing this, schools should emphasize the active role of teachers to motivate refugee students and facilitate their understanding of how valuable the opportunity to pursue an education is. Furthermore, it is important for teachers to understand

how refugee students' past experiences with education might impact their current outlook and attitudes.

Teacher as Champion

It goes without mentioning that there are key actors within the walls of the spaces that many refugee students dream of returning to. Without them, schools are merely buildings and an education is not easily attainable. During our conversation, Karam spoke a lot about his teachers, and he showed a high level of respect to them for the effort and care they showed him. Karam stated that "if books were enough, they wouldn't have made teachers" (personal communication). He demonstrates the type of respect for educators that, quite frankly, many of us wish the general public recognized. This is a belief that is deeply rooted in Middle Eastern culture and Islamic thought. It is demonstrated by a well-known proverb that roughly translates to, "whoever teachers me one letter, I am indebted to them forever" (Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib). Being raised in a climate infused with this belief surely impacted Karam's mindset about education. In fact, in his homeland, Syria, education is highly revered, and the country was well known for its high academic standards (Al Hessan, 2016; Teschendorff, 2015; UNHCR, 2013). It is no wonder why Karam holds such beliefs about teachers. They are the essence of education, and I believe this case study demonstrated the impact they have through Karam's narrative.

A major factor contributing to the success that Karam has seen so far in his secondary school experience is the support he has received from his teachers. Karam explicitly reported the impact that his teachers had on him and his Canadian school experience, stating that "teachers helped the most" (personal communication) in his pursuit of overcoming the initial challenges he faced after arriving in Canada. His statement brings into focus the importance of building relationships between teachers and students to promote student success and to help foster a

welcoming school environment. The success I mention here is not exclusively academic, but includes personal, emotional, social success as well. Rita Pierson eloquently speaks to this type of student achievement and draws an important connection between learning and building relationships. In her renowned TED talk presentation, she states, "no significant learning can occur without a significant relationship" (Pierson, 2013). In addition, Pierson states that, "Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be" (Pierson, 2013). While we cannot attribute Karam's success solely to his teachers' contributions, it serves as evidence for the impact a teacher has on their students' feelings of belonging in school. In the context of teaching students from refugee backgrounds, these actions can grant students agency in their own learning as well as benefit refugee student communities outside of school (Montero et al., 2012). A teacher's critical role is justified by various studies, in which they highlight the importance of feelings of trust, which play a major role in developing a bond between the teacher and his or her student (Cummins & Early, 2015; DeCapua, 2016; Hoy & Moran, 1998; Lee, 2007; McHugh et al., 2013; Montero et al., 2012).

What I did not find in Karam's narrative is the mention of deliberate culturally responsive practices of his teachers by way of content integration. Although I inquired about this in the form of follow-up questions, Karam did not identify academic content that reflected his personal and cultural background. Perhaps he did not find it relevant to mention, or perhaps it was in fact non-existent; this *unknown* serves as one major limitation of the study. However, what stood out in his narrative is the connection he had to several of his teachers, despite the absence of these practices. Karam seemed to value the academic support and guidance his teachers offered and did not expect them to mirror his cultural identity. This draws attention to the diversity in refugee

students' experiences and expectations while navigating their Canadian school life. No two students from refugee backgrounds are the same, just as no two students in any classroom are the same.

Maturity and Resilience

In their discussion about the labels and identities of refugees, Vigil and Abidi (2018) take an autoethnographic approach to explore their personal experiences as forced migrants. They state:

> "Being a refugee means being in a contradiction: it means being vulnerable and having to show this vulnerability in order to receive protection, while, on the other hand, having to show resilience. Despite this contradiction, as refugees and asylum seekers we carry our self respect and the multiple causes that brought us to where we are today. Hence, we seek a platform to show our worth as human beings" (p. 56).

The term "refugee" is mainly used by individuals who are not themselves refugees; rather we label people who have fled conflict or persecution. Those labels come with a weighty consequence, which ironically, we do not experience, but rather we force upon the carrier of the label, often failing to recognize its impact on their dignity as human beings. What we do not often recognize is the immense strength and resiliency that "refugees" possess. An extraordinary finding in the literature and in the empirical data produced from this study is the resilience refugee students present, and their desire to access education as a form of resiliency (Betancourt & Khan, 2008; Manitoba Education, 2012; Pieloch, McCullough & Marks, 2016). Karam's narrative indicated this to be true. Although he did not report to have personally experienced

conflict in Syria, his experience, like many refugees, includes the fear of returning home, forced migration to an unknown land, interrupted schooling, and other personal and social setbacks. Despite these experiences, Karam exhibits what Betancourt and Khan (2009) define as a "dynamic process, rather than … a personal trait" (p. 2), that is, he could withstand and overcome significant challenges that threatened his stability (Pieloch, McCullough & Marks, 2016) and continues to foresee and strive towards a successful future.

When asked to what he attributes his resilience, Karam gives credit to his life's experiences and to his teachers' support. It is important to note that Karam's strong personality is not dependent on his experience with forced displacement. Nor does his personality exist without these experiences. His personal identity is shaped by events that he had no control over, choices that he consciously makes, and desires that he has about his life. Some of these events taught him lessons and made him stronger, while others may have effects that remain hidden by the ambiguity of this study.

While he did not report that he perceived the ill-treatment he experienced in Jordanian schools was directed at him for reasons related to his refugee status, Karam's early school experience is not uncommon among school-aged children in their countries of first asylum (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Milton et al. 2017; Pinson & Arnot, 2010). The circumstances refugees have reported or have been found facing while living in the countries of first asylum include a lack of freedom of movement to-and-from refugee camps, limited access to educational facilities, and ill-treatment by respective nationals. Furthermore, reports of exclusionary practices upon arrival in Canada have been made (Ficarra, 2017). In these cases, it is suggested that students were perceived through a "deficit lens" (Ficarra, p. 76) by Canadian teachers. Refugee students who have experienced difficult living conditions and unequal human rights can manifest feelings

of irritability and defiance towards teachers and authority figures well after they are removed from those situations. Children can certainly be impacted in ways that are not recognized or fully understood by them or their families, making it even more critical for teachers to pay close attention. Karam exuded resilience and an ability to look past the circumstances he has experienced; however, this might not be the case for all students. For this reason, it is important for teachers of refugee students, as well as SLIFE, to be cognizant of these past experiences and to work closely with families to mitigate the challenges faced by affected students.

Throughout his narrative, Karam praises the teachers, in both Jordan and Canada, who challenged him and helped him access an education. Pieloch, McCullough and Marks (2016) associate these types of opportunities, "attend[ing] school, feeling safe at school, and valuing education" (p. 334), with promoting resilience. Furthermore, they state, "one factor that has been consistently associated with promoting resilience in refugee youth is meeting their basic needs, including the need to learn the language of their host country and their need to attend school" (p. 334). This is aligned with some of the work of researchers on the unique needs of SLIFE and implications of teaching practices on their school experiences. They demonstrate that learning a language is not merely a matter speaking and understanding; it involves finding ways to empower the learner and enable them to communicate, to interact, to voice an opinion and to be an active participant in society. The need to learn a language coincides with Karam's narrative, in which he revealed his need and desire to access education. In fact, education was a motivating factor in the family's decision to migrate to Canada. There are many factors preventing refugee children from accessing education all over the world; however, in Canada, where a child's right to education is normally exercised, recognizing the factors influencing resilient behaviour in

refugee youth would further perpetuate its existence. When these processes are recognized and understood, teachers can harness their own practices to further promote resilient behaviour.

Life as Teacher

One of the first things Karam shared about himself was his age, and he did so insistent on the fact that he is 15 years old, not 14. It was important to him not to be mistaken as a year younger than his true age. Throughout the existing literature, there are several studies that shed light on the issue of inappropriate grade level placement of refugee students upon their return to a school system (Karam, Monaghan & Yoder, 2017; Wilkinson, 2002). Through discussion with Karam, and through engaging with the literature, it is evident that the matter of age and appropriate grade placement is important. While, in the case of Karam's experience, his inaccurate documentation was not caused during his migration process, it has implications on his current school experience. In fact, Karam feels the need to fast-track his schooling in order to graduate based on his real age. The implications this has on the mentality of students might be seen in class by schoolteachers. Students might feel out of place or that the material they are engaged with is not adequate or challenging enough for their level of understanding. Furthermore, teachers might witness students' reluctance to engage with other students because they are aware of the age difference between them. What starts as an issue with documentation can leave a student feeling disheartened and out of place, not to mention an altered sense of identity that is attached to the individual for the rest of their life. In fact, Karam's efforts to fast track his schooling indicate his discomfort with his current grade level placement. Fitzpatrick (2018) suggests that teachers can help determine the accurate grade placement of refugee students by speaking to the student's family instead of relying on documents. Furthermore, with

the help of Settlement Workers in the School (SWIS), they can determine the best grade level for students (Fitzpatrick, 2018).

Karam reported that he had very little expectations before coming to Canada. Given the frequency with which he and his family relocated, it is plausible to assume that he learned not to expect too much to prevent being disappointed. In fact, he shared the family's uncertainty about traveling abroad because of the perception of vast cultural and linguistic differences. Research shows that children from refugee backgrounds face diverse challenges while readjusting to their new countries (Cohen et al., 2017; Skidmore, 2016; Wilkinson, 2002). By adopting this coping method and limiting his expectations, Karam was able to deal with the challenges he faced upon final resettlement with a pragmatic approach.

The insight and wisdom that Karam displays throughout his narrative are synonymous with the portrayal of refugees given by Ghassan Kanafani (1966/2004). Karam seems older than his age, and the life-lessons that he shares are, at least in part, results of the struggles he has experienced. He often spoke in metaphorical terms, giving me the impression that I was speaking with someone much older than his 15 years of age. He chose to focus on the prospects of his future instead of dwelling on challenges he might have faced. In fact, Karam did not speak much about challenges that he and his family faced – upon first glance, this might indicate an absence of such challenges. However, after becoming more aware of who Karam is, it became clear that he consciously chose not to proclaim his life as one filled with hardship. When he did speak about a few testing incidents, it did not appear to be out of self-pity, but rather out of confidence that life had taught him a valuable lesson. More specifically, the abuse he faced in his Jordanian school shaped him into a more self-respecting person. Vigil and Abidi (2018) examine the use of the term refugee and its implications on those to which it has been applied throughout history.

They speak of self-respect and state, "...we seek it in our everyday lives, trying to find a balance between our private worth and the possibility of creating a new space to live in" (p. 56). Acknowledging the ill-treatment at the hands of his teacher and describing his reaction to it was a way for Karam to present himself as a strong individual, refuting the humiliation that he felt his teacher intended to inflict. The lesson that Karam learned from this experience is precisely the type of disposition that Vigil and Abidi attempt to portray about refugees: they are innovative, in that they create their own self-respect and impose it upon people they interact with because of the impression that others often have about them. They re-define "refugee" in their own terms.

Community: Attachment to the Familiar

Throughout our interview, Karam spoke as part of a collective, never as if he was alone in his experience. He navigated each scenario *with* his family and his peers or in relation to them. He is not alone in his experience but rather, he exists actively as part of a whole. This characteristic stems from the communal lifestyle that Karam engaged in before coming to Canada. In addition, existing in a new country as an individual carrying various socially and culturally constructed labels (minority, refugee, newcomer, Arab …) identifying with and belonging to a community gives Karam a sense of identity. Montero et al. (2012) shed light on this phenomenon, revealing the likelihood that refugee students depend on that sense of belonging in order to thrive at school.

Before migrating, Karam held a presumption about Canada as a multicultural place, which increased his enthusiasm about traveling. It also helped him embrace his new home upon arrival. Researchers have demonstrated the many faces of multicultural education, and in this context, Karam found himself in a prejudice-free learning environment (Banks, 1993; Banks, 2013; Dilg, 1999; Ghosh, 2002; Johnstone, 1981). In most of the schools he attended, Karam

found comfort in the student diversity, where he found a large population of Middle Eastern students with which he bonded. He also felt like he could truly be himself. In high school he found a community of people to really connect with, which gave him the clarity to be able to focus on academics. Karam's perception of the education system relies on his comfort level within that environment, and that comfort, I might add, stems from developing a sense of belonging and place in the school community. The ritual aspect of meeting with friends before school gave Karam solace as he began to navigate a new chapter of his life. This welcoming environment has been found to play a major role in students feeling welcome in their school environment (Ayoub, 2020; Drolet & Moorthi, 2018; Hatala et al., 2017; McHugh et al., 2013; Montero et al., 2012). As the literature suggests, Karam was able to satisfy his need for a sense of belonging and connection within the school environment, that is, he constructed his own sense of belonging by identifying peers with whom he can relate to. This plays a major role in his ability to overcome the challenges of being a young newcomer navigating a new life in Canada.

Refugee students' "perceived lack of support" (Karkouti, Toprak & Wosley, p. 29) can invoke feelings of hopelessness which can be restored by the mere thought of connecting with peers who have similar experiences (Karkouti, Toprak & Wosley, 2020). Although Karam reported that he did not directly experience the conflict in Syria, he did express empathy towards his peers who did, noting that when the topic arises, they become very upset. Much like with the practice of *zakhor* (Simon, 2000) through which feels a connection and obligation to those who experienced events which we did not personally encounter, Karam feels connected to individuals who come from the same land that he could not return to; he feels an obligation to those people, *his people*. Furthermore, Karam's willingness to share his story, his willingness to participate in

this very study, demonstrates his active engagement with *zakhor* as well: not only does he recognize the struggle of his people, but he is preserving it through this narrative.

Recognizing how refugee students connect to their peers who have similar experiences can help educators to mitigate the challenges that students face. Karam certainly found comfort in the similarities between him and his peers and built his school experience around his interactions with them. This is consistent with the literature that indicates that students from refugee backgrounds have more success integrating into the school environment when they can identify with others around them (Ayoub, 2014; Roxas, 2011). These findings can serve as a model for teachers of refugee students. Teachers can use this evidence to help students find supportive peer-groups during their initial stages of integration. Furthermore, this knowledge can demonstrate the need for and impact of a more diverse teacher population.

Students from refugee backgrounds have reported a need to improve their English language proficiency in order to fit in to their school environment (Ayoub, 2014). Similarly, Karam reported that he felt the need to improve his English after arriving in Canada, and that in doing so he felt more confident in school. This also played an important part in the family's integration process into the broader community. Often, young members of newcomer families inherit adult responsibilities due to their ability to adjust to a new society quicker than their parents can (Wilkinson, 2002). In Karam's case, he reported that he became the "family ambassador" due to his speedy acquisition of the English language. While the pressure of adult responsibilities can interrupt students' schooling even further, it is a way for the entire family to cope with newfound challenges of arriving in a new country. The needs of the family might be prioritized over the educational needs of one, especially the oldest male. In his case, Karam no

longer sacrificed his education for the sake of helping his family, but instead he used his English

proficiency to gain leverage in advancing his own school endeavors.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

This chapter will include a summary of the research findings, recommendations for improving teaching practices of educators who work with refugee students, recommendations for future research, and a final statement from the researcher.

Summary of the Research Findings

Karam's secondary school experience was influenced by his passion for education and the presence of his teachers and by his access to a community in which he established feelings of belonging and built meaningful relationships with his peers. There were some parallels between Karam's narrative and the existing literature that focus on the school experiences of children affected by conflict. Education is a means of reform for students from refugee backgrounds. It provides predictability and hope for a more stable and successful future. Teachers play an imperative role in supporting students to maintain this passion. Replacing the "deficit lens", through which refugee students are often perceived, with a "capacity-lens" (Maier, 2014) is one step in that direction. Maier identifies that the problem with a deficit-lens is that interventions and student programs are designed to remediate those deficits, indicating that these deficits define the students' capabilities. What Maier suggests is that strengths and abilities are recognized instead and are used as the base upon which students are taught (Maier, 2014). Recognizing that many students from refugee backgrounds want to learn and see their education as a means of maintaining control of their life can inform teacher-practices and help teachers begin to mitigate the post-migration challenges refugee students face.

Children from refugee backgrounds demonstrate a tremendous amount of strength and resilience. This quality is an invaluable source of motivation that should be recognized by educators to promote student agency. They demonstrate their resilience in diverse ways. For example, Karam's nonchalant demeanor when describing his responsibility as a ten-year old employee with the responsibility of opening shop and managing the store suggests a premature sense of responsibility. Even more, it sheds light on the normalcy with which this happens in the Middle East, where young children often step up to provide for their family in times of need. Often, their education suffers as a result. In Karam's case, he worked at a grocery store in order to support the family at the young age of 10 years old. Rather than seeing this as a roadblock, however, he spoke about it as a necessity, his responsibility as a young man; his age wasn't a factor. In fact, his lack of emphasis on this matter dictates the normalcy of it. Generally, children and youth who grow up in challenging circumstances exhibit the same characteristics which amaze many well-off or foreign observers. Karam recognized these qualities within himself and has used them to help him overcome the diverse challenges he has faced throughout his life.

Karam reported to have a positive perception of his high school experience so far. He was able to identify with his peers and developed a sense of belonging in the school community. In addition, his teachers created a welcoming environment in which he felt accepted and that he is a member of his peer-group. Multiculturalism, or multicultural education, played an important role in his experience, in that he was integrated into an environment where he felt like he could be himself without prejudice from other students or teachers. In addition, Karam recognized his positionality in the school context in relation to his peers. He identified the importance of the empowering school culture and its impact on his experience. It is important to note how this came to be: a multicultural-educational environment does not simply come into existence.

Rather, one must go through some level of self-actualization before finding the multicultural space within which they can exist, a space where they will adhere to the five dimensions of multicultural education. Karam was in search of his identity for the first few years in Canada, after which he felt a sense of relief when he found himself within the walls of his high school, participating in the construction of his own knowledge and of those around him.

The interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic limited his interactions with friends and teachers and Karam voiced his dissatisfaction with school during this time. These unexpected circumstances reveal a salient quality of his school that Karam had difficulty functioning without: the communal characteristic of school played an important role in his feelings of contentment. More importantly, the feelings of empathy and compassion that he received from his teachers was difficult to recognize through a virtual school environment. His dissatisfaction with these changes implies the strong need for a sustained connection to his teachers. These reactions validated his presence and made him feel like an active member of the school environment. Karam clearly stated that one thing he believes can help improve the experiences of refugee students is a teacher's smile. A smile is suggestive of a sincere human reaction and reassurance. Karam's statement highlights that these feelings of reassurance and compassion can be more important than any academic service that the teacher provides.

Recommendations for Improving Teacher Practices

One of the most rudimentary ways that teachers can better meet the needs of refugee students in their schools by learning more about them. This means making an active effort to identify the circumstances that refugee children and youth experience before and after coming to Canada. While some research findings can be generalized to the larger refugee population, not all cases are identical. In the same way that teachers are urged to get to know all their students in

order to teach directly to their individual needs, teaching refugee students is no different. Showing feelings of empathy and compassion towards students from refugee backgrounds has been shown to be one of their most important needs. However, the literature warns against the "dangers of compassion" (Rodriguez, 2015), by which refugee students are at risk of being viewed through a deficit lens. In contrast to this practice, teachers should identify student strengths and encourage their development by using those strengths as a starting point in their program planning. In addition, schools and teachers should identify equitable ways to bridge the gaps between students' home and school life in order to help them succeed academically and socially.

This study revealed that strong sense of community and feelings of belonging facilitated a more positive school experience. It is recommended that schools develop peer-support programs to help welcome new refugee students. For example, schools might introduce new students to other members of the student body who speak the same language or who have similar experiences. When students find themselves represented by others in the school, they can begin to feel like they belong, allowing them to harness their academic and social potential. Furthermore, adding educators from minority and refugee backgrounds to the school staff can be advantageous for welcoming students and their families to the school community. One high school in Windsor, Ontario employs a "school-community ambassador" (Georgieva, para. 1) who acts as a bridge between the school and the community. This ambassador's Arabic-language fluency facilitated dialogue between the school and the community, facilitating what SLIFE research has shown can help bridge the gap between students' home and school life (Montero at al., 2012). Being careful not to stifle students' sense of individuality, schools and teachers should also find ways to promote independence in students from refugee backgrounds by way of

equitable practices. It is also important to recognize the positive implications of fostering students' sense of belonging on teachers' understanding the unique needs of refugee students in order to further inform teacher practice.

The literature review revealed a small amount of accessible policy documents that provide information to educators about teaching refugee students and working with families from refugee backgrounds. Creating more ministry-approved documents that highlight current research findings and recommendations about working with refugee students can improve teacher efficacy, especially when teachers report limited knowledge and experience working with students from this vulnerable population. In addition, professional development workshops through which educators can engage in discussion about teaching refugee students should be developed. Such workshops should be developed in collaboration with educators who are knowledgeable about the best practices to apply when teaching students with limited or interrupted schooling and who have been impacted by conflict. Procedures and teaching strategies geared towards teaching students from refugee backgrounds and SLIFE should be developed to better meet the needs of these students. These should not be exclusive to ESL or ELD programs, but instead should be implemented across curriculum boundaries and should be facilitated by teachers in both English language learning programs and mainstream subject-specific programs. This would help forego the isolation of students into "special refugee programming" (Ficarra, 2017). Furthermore, these plans should encourage the use of students' first language in the language learning process, as well as integrate diverse sociocultural elements of refugee students' lives into the delivery of curriculum content.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a growing body of literature that focuses on the school experiences of children and youth from refugee backgrounds. While parts of the existing literature can be generalized to a larger population, this case study revealed that the student participant possesses very individualized needs based on his unique experiences. More research is needed in order to better understand the diverse needs of students from this vulnerable population. In addition to this, researchers of this subject matter, the school and/or educational experiences of refugee students, should refrain from speaking of education in a "means to and end" manner in the context of refugee students' school experiences. Rather, future research should investigate the pre-existing passion that individuals from refugee backgrounds possess instead of assigning education as means to fix them. Furthermore, this case study explored the school experiences of one student, Karam, who did not directly experience or witness conflict. More research is needed to better understand how students who are directly impacted by conflict navigate the school systems in Canada and particularly SLIFE who arrive in Canadian schools with major gaps in their education.

This study took place in a relatively diverse location in Canada in which there is a large refugee population. The existing body of literature would benefit greatly from comparative research that explores the Canadian school experiences of refugee students in more remote locations with smaller refugee communities. Furthermore, such studies should include an exploration of teacher preparedness to teach students from refugee backgrounds.

The results of this case study did not reveal a significant amount of data regarding the specific teacher practices employed while teaching refugee students. Furthermore, it did not satisfy the existing need to explore the culturally responsive practices of educators. Research

involving teachers and their students is needed to better understand how teacher-practices directly affect the school experiences of refugee students, as well as the significance of teacher-student relationships. In addition, much of the existing literature focuses on elementary students' school experiences; more focus on secondary school and post-secondary school experiences of students from refugee backgrounds is needed.

Final Statement

Karam's narrative revealed a deeply rooted passion for education which he was able to pursue by virtue of his resilience and maturity. It was inspiring to listen to and an honour to re-write for the purposes of this study. His passion for education, not only in an academic context but in life itself, is motivating. Although this case study has its obvious limitations, Karam's story is a testament to the experiences of young, vulnerable, passionate individuals who have had their right to an education taken away from them due to conflict. Education is a tool by which young people can overcome even the most difficult circumstances. It seems like a cliché, but education is the future, and it is, in his own words, Karam's future.

Education exists as more than a school building; it is more than sitting in a classroom and receiving a final grade at the end of a term. This is, perhaps, why I became so passionate about this research topic: I recognized the need that my students had for something more than academic programming. They needed to form a connection. In the case of some of my students, I satisfied that need merely by existing as a Muslim-hijabi-Arabic-speaking educator in their schools who not only listened, but also *heard* their voices and valued their presence.

Narratives like Karam's demonstrate that education is one of the most powerful tools for reform and restoration of hope for a positive future. What the literature shows is many young

people who escaped conflict, bloodshed, destruction, terror, persecution and, despite those

horrendous circumstances, still had the will to move forward, through education. If we can

recognize the power of that reality, we can begin to empower so many students to build a future

that they deserve.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your name, age?
2. Can you please share a little bit about your background, for example, how many years have you been in Canada? Where are you originally from?
3. Tell me about your experience with education before coming to Canada.
4. What were your general expectations about Canada before you arrived?
5. What did you expect school to be like in Canada?
6. Tell me about the greatest challenges that you have encountered while resettling in Canada?
7. What helped you overcome those challenges?
8. Tell me about how the people at school made you feel when you first started attending your school.
9. Tell me about your school environment and how you feel being there everyday.
10. Tell me about the things or people in your school that make you feel welcome.
11. Tell me about your relationships with the people you interact with at school, including your peers, teachers, and administration.
12. Has your experience met the expectations you had? If so, how? If not, how?
13. In your opinion, how can schools better serve refugee students and/or war-affected students?

APPENDIX B

University of Windsor

LETTER OF INFORMATION/CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH STUDY

(Student and Parent)

Title of the Study: Exploring the school experiences of a Syrian refugee student in a Windsor, Ontario secondary school: A case study

STUDENT PARTICIPANT:

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Fatima Fakih, a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. As partial requirement for completing a master's degree in Educational Studies in the University of Windsor, Ms. Fakih is conducting an exploratory study to learn more about the school experiences of refugee students. If you have any questions or concerns about the study please contact Fatima Fakih at ▮▮▮▮▮ ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You may also contact the supervisor of this study, Dr. Clinton Beckford at the University of Windsor ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ / ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research will be to explore the school experiences of a Syrian refugee student who attends or has previously attended secondary school in Windsor, Ontario. By doing so, the research will provide a broader understanding of experiences and needs of refugee students in a school context.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one individual interview that will last between 1 to 2 hours. The interviewer will ask open-ended questions. You will be provided with a list of guiding questions prior to interview. You will have the freedom of choosing to elaborate on, skip or reject any questions and will be free to add any additional information that you think is relevant. The interview will be transcribed. Once the interview has been transcribed, you will receive a copy of the transcription of your interview to review for accuracy.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Although there are no significant physical or psychological/emotional risks to you, it is possible that you may feel uncomfortable discussing your personal experiences as a refugee. However,

you will only be asked to share stories you feel comfortable sharing. Please note that all information during the individual interview will be kept confidential. Should you feel any psychological or emotional discomfort during the interview you may stop participating.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

By sharing your lived experiences as a refugee student learning in Windsor, Ontario, this study will be useful to you and the school community. It may encourage stakeholders to develop programs that support the unique and diverse needs of refugee students.

Please note that the findings from this study may result in publication in academic journals or may be shared at conferences without identifying the participant. Data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and presentations. If you wish, you can review and verify the information included in the writing before it is published.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

In appreciation of your participation, a $10 gift card to Tim Horton will be given.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your identity as a participant in the study will be kept confidential at all times and in all ways possible and will not be revealed in the final report or anywhere else where this study may be shared, as a pseudonym will be used to refer to you. All data collected during this study, including notes and transcriptions recorded by the researcher during the interview, will be kept in a computer that is password protected and will be deleted once the study is complete.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can withdraw from the study verbally with no consequences, up until the data verification stage. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable answering and still remain in the study.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: ethics@uwindsor.ca.

You may also withdraw your consent verbally at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I understand the information provided for the study *Exploring the School Experiences of a Syrian Refugee Student in a Windsor, Ontario Secondary School: A Case Study* as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Name of Participant (Include Name of Parent if participant is under 18 years)

_____ Signature of

Participant (Signature of Parent if participant is under 18 years)

_____

Date

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____

Name of Researcher

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

APPENDIX C

Faculty of Education - University of Windsor كلية التربية جامعة وندسور
PARTICIPANTS NEEDED   مطلوب المشاركون

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a study exploring the school experiences of Syrian refugee youth. If you are a Syrian refugee youth who has been in Canada for at least one year and are currently studying or have recently studied in a Canadian high school for at least one year, you are eligible to participate.

نحن نبحث عن متطوعين للمشاركة في دراسة استكشاف التجارب المدرسية للشباب السوري اللاجئين. إذا كنت شابًا سوريًا لاجئًا مقيمًا في كندا لمدة عام واحد على الأقل وتدرس حاليًا أو درست مؤخرًا في مدرسة ثانوية كندية لمدة عام واحد على الأقل، فأنت مؤهل للمشاركة.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to take part in one unstructured telephone interview, lasting approximately one hour.

كمشارك في هذه الدراسة، سيُطلب منك المشاركة في مقابلة هاتفية واحدة غير منظمة، تستمر لمدة ساعة تقريبًا.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive *a $10 Tim Horton's gift card.*
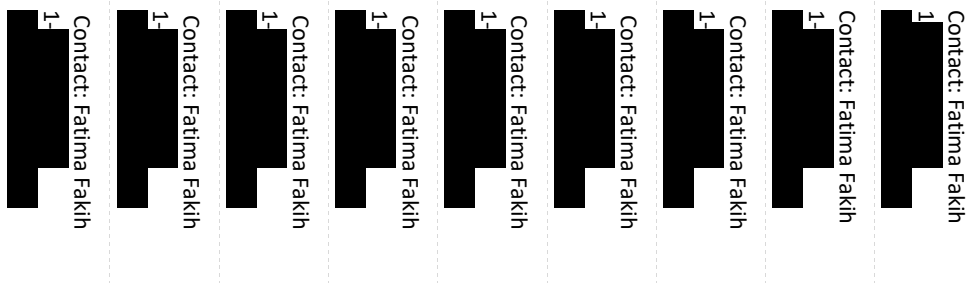
تقديرًا لوقتك، ستتلقى بطاقة هدايا بقيمة 10 دولارات من Tim Horton's.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, contact: *Fatima Fakih* at ▮▮▮▮▮▮   Email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

لمزيد من المعلومات حول هذه الدراسة ، أو للتطوع لهذه الدراسة الاتصال: فاطمة فقيه على الرقم ▮▮▮ ---- البريد الإلكتروني: fakihf@uwindsor.ca

This study is supervised by Dr. Clinton Beckford (▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮) and has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮ Contact: Fatima Fakih 1-▮

APPENDIX D

Parent Consent Form

Childs/Research Participant Name (printed):

Parent/Guardian Name (printed):

Title of the Project: *Exploring the school experiences of a Syrian refugee student in a Windsor, Ontario secondary school: A case study.*

I _____consent to the participation of

(name of parent/guardian)

my child _____ in the study.

I read and understand the potential risks involved in my child's participation in the study. I read and understand the potential benefits of this study. I understand the withdrawal procedures and limitations of withdrawal. I understand that my child's confidentiality will be maintained during individual interview. I understand that the interview will be conducted over the telephone and will last one to two hours in duration.

This research has been cleared by the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board.

_____   _____

(Signature of Parent or Guardian)   (Date)

APPENDIX E

University
of Windsor

Arabic Translation of Letter of Information/Consent Form

جامعة ويندسور

خطاب المعلومات / استمارة الموافقة للمشاركة في دراسة البحث

(الطالب)

عنوان الدراسة: استكشاف التجارب المدرسية للطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في ويندسور ، أونتاريو للمدارس الثانوية.

الطالب المشارك :

يطلب منك المشاركة في دراسة بحثية أجرتها فاطمة فقيه ، طالبة دراسات عليا من كلية التربية بجامعة ويندسور . كشرط جزئي لاستكمال درجة الماجستير في الدراسات التعليمية في جامعة ويندسور ، تقوم الآنسة فقيه بإجراء دراسة استكشافية لمعرفة المزيد عن التجارب المدرسية للطلاب اللاجئين. إذا كانت لديك أي أسئلة أو مخاوف بشأن الدراسة ، فيرجى الاتصال بفاطمة فقيه على الرقم : (████████) / أو الإيميل يمكنك أيضًا الاتصال بالمشرف على هذه الدراسة ، الدكتور كلينتون بيكفورد في جامعة ويندسور :

████████ ████████

الغرض من الدراسة

سيكون الغرض من هذا البحث هو استكشاف الخبرات المدرسية للطلاب السوريين اللاجئين الذين حضروا أو التحقوا سابقًا بالمدارس الثانوية في ويندسور ، أونتاريو. من خلال القيام بذلك ، سيوفر البحث فهماً أوسع لخبرات واحتياجات الطلاب اللاجئين في سياق تعليمي.

الإجراءات

إذا تطوعت للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة ، فسيُطلب منك القيام بما يلي:

1 سيُطلب منك المشاركة في مقابلة فردية واحدة تستغرق ما بين ساعة إلى ساعتين. سيقوم القائم بإجراء المقابلة بطرح أسئلة مفتوحة. سيتم تزويدك بقائمة من الأسئلة التوجيهية قبل المقابلة. ستتمتع بحرية اختيار أيّ أسئلة أو تخطيها أو رفضها وستكون لديك الحرية في إضافة أي معلومات إضافية تعتقد أنها ذات صلة. سوف تكون المقابلة صوتية و مسجلة. بمجرد تسجيل جميع المقابلات ، ستستلم نسخة من المقابلة لمراجعتها والتأكد من دقتها.

2 سيُطلب منك المشاركة في مجموعة تركيز تشارك خلالها في حوار مع المشاركين الآخرين. سيتم توجيه هذا الحوار من قِبل الباحثة فاطمة فقيه ، وسيتم تزويدك بقائمة من الأسئلة التوجيهية قبل المقابلة. ستتمتع بحرية اختيار أي أسئلة أو تخطيها أو رفضها وستكون لديك الحرية في إضافة أيّ معلومات إضافية تعتقد أنها ذات صلة. سيتم تصوير المقابلة بالفيديو وتسجيلها. وبمجرد تسجيل جميع المقابلات ، ستستلم نسخة من المقابلة لمراجعتها والتأكد من دقتها.. سيُسمح لك بتعديل مساهماتك الخاصة فقط أثناء المجموعة المركزة.

المخاطر المحتملة والمضايقات

على الرغم من عدم وجود مخاطر جسدية أو نفسية / عاطفية كبيرة بالنسبة لك ، فمن الممكن أن تشعر بعدم الارتياح عند مناقشة تجاربك الشخصية كلاجئ. ومع ذلك ، سيُطلب منك فقط مشاركة القصص التي تشعر بالراحة عند مشاركتها. من الممكن أن تشعر بعدم الارتياح عند التحدث بصراحة أمام المشاركين الآخرين. لن يتم الضغط عليك للخروج من منطقة راحتك. يرجى ملاحظة أن جميع المعلومات خلال المقابلة الفردية ، وجميع المعلومات التي تم جمعها خلال مجموعة التركيز ستبقى سرية. إذا شعرت بأيّ إزعاج نفسي أو عاطفي أثناء المقابلة أو مجموعة التركيز ، بإمكانك أن تتوقف عن المشاركة.

الفوائد المحتملة للمشاركين و / أو المجتمع

من خلال تبادل تجاربك الحية كطالب لاجئ يتعلم في ويندسور ، أونتاريو ، ستكون هذه الدراسة مفيدة لك وللمجتمع المدرسي. قد يشجع أصحاب المصلحة على تطوير برامج تدعم الاحتياجات الفريدة والمتنوعة للطلاب اللاجئين.

يرجى ملاحظة أن نتائج هذه الدراسة قد تؤدي إلى نشرها في المجلات الأكاديمية أو قد يتم مشاركتها في المؤتمرات دون تحديد المشاركين. يمكن استخدام البيانات في الدراسات اللاحقة ، في المنشورات والعروض التقديمية. إذا كنت ترغب في ذلك ، يمكنك المراجعة والتحقق من المعلومات المدرجة في الكتابة قبل نشرها.

مكافأة المشركين

تقديراً لمشاركتك ، سيتم تقديم بطاقة هدية بقيمة 5 دولارات لتيم هورتون. أثناء المقابلة وجلسات مجموعة التركيز ، وسيتم توفير المرطبات الخفيفة.

السرية

سيتم الحفاظ على سرية هويتك كمشارك في الدراسة في جميع الأوقات وبكل الطرق الممكنة ولن يتم الكشف عنها في التقرير النهائي أو في أي مكان آخر حيث يمكن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ، عبر استخدام الأسماء المستعارة للإشارة إليك. سيتم حفظ جميع البيانات التي تم جمعها خلال هذه الدراسة ، بما في ذلك التسجيلات الصوتية وتسجيلات الفيديو وأية مادة تقدمها للباحثة وأي ملاحظات سجلتها الباحثة خلال المقابلات ، في جهاز كمبيوتر محمي بكلمة مرور وسيتم حذفه بمجرد الانتهاء من إكتمال الدراسة.

المشاركة والانسحاب

أنت غير ملزم بالمشاركة في هذه الدراسة. مشاركتك تطوعية تماما. يمكنك الانسحاب من الدراسة شفهياً دون أيّ عواقب ، حتى مرحلة التحقق من البيانات. يمكنك أيضاً رفض الإجابة عن أيّ أسئلة لا تشعر بالراحة في الإجابة عليها وستبقى في الدراسة. سيحصل جميع المشاركين على تعويضات تقديراً لوقتهم.

حقوق المشاركين في البحث

إذا كانت لديك أسئلة بخصوص حقوقك كمشارك في الأبحاث ، فيرجى الاتصال بـ: منسق أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور ، وندسور ، أونتاريو N9B 3P4؛ هاتف: 253-3000 (519)، تحويلة. 3948؛ البريد الإلكتروني: ethics@uwindsor.ca

يمكنك أيضاً سحب موافقتك لفظياً في أي وقت وتوقف المشاركة دون عقوبة.

توقيع مشارك في البحث

أفهم المعلومات المقدمة للدراسة "استكشاف خبرات المدارس للطلاب السوريين اللاجئين في وندسور ، مدارس أونتاريو الثانوية كما هو موضح هنا. تم الرد على أسئلتي بما يرضيني ، وأنا أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة. تمّ إعطائي نسخة من هذه الأستمارة .

_____

إسم المشارك (ضع اسم الوالد إذا كان المشارك أقل من 18 عاما

_____

توقيع المشارك (توقيع الوالد إذا كان المشارك أقل من 18 سنة)_____

التاريخ : _____

توقيع الباحثة_____

هذه هي الشروط التي بموجبها سأجري البحوث.

اسم الباحثة_____

توقيع الباحثة_____

التاريخ : _____

APPENDIX F

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Arabic Translation of Interview Questions

أسئلة المقابلة للمشاركين

- ما هو اسمك ؟ كم هو عمرك ؟

- هل يمكنك أن تتحدث قليلاً عن خلفيتك ، على سبيل المثال ، كم سنة مضى على وجودك في كندا؟

- في الأصل أنت من أيّ بلد (مسقط رأسك)؟

- أخبرني عن تجربتك في التعليم قبل المجيء إلى كندا.

- ما هي توقعاتك العامة حول كندا قبل وصولك إليها؟

- ماذا توقعت أن تكون المدرسة في كندا؟

- أخبرني عن أكبر التحديات التي واجهتها أثناء إعادة التوطين في كندا؟

- ما الذي ساعدك على التغلب على هذه التحديات؟

- أخبرني كيف الناس جعلوك تشعر في المدرسة عندما بدأت في الذهاب إليها لأول مرة.؟

- أخبرني عن البيئة المدرسية الخاصة بك وكيف تشعر بوجودك فيها في كل يوم ؟.

- أخبرني عن الأشياء أو الأشخاص في مدرستك التي تجعلك تشعر بأنك مرحب بك ؟.

- أخبرني عن علاقاتك مع الأشخاص الذين تتفاعل معهم في المدرسة ، بما في ذلك زملائك والمعلمين والإدارة.؟

- هل استوفت تجربتك توقعاتك؟ إذا كان الأمر كذلك ، كيف؟ إذا لم يكن كذلك ، كيف؟

- في رأيك ، كيف يمكن للمدارس أن تخدم بشكل أفضل الطلاب اللاجئين و / أو الطلاب المتأثرين بالحرب؟

APPENDIX G

University of Windsor

Arabic Translation of Parent Consent Form

نموذج موافقة ولي الأمر
اسم الطفل / المشارك في البحث (مطبوع):
اسم ولي الأمر / الوصي (مطبوع):

عنوان المشروع: استكشاف التجارب المدرسية للطلاب اللاجئين السوريين في مدارس وندسور الثانوية بأونتاريو.
أنا _____ أوافق على مشاركة
(اسم الوالد / الوصي)
طفلي _____ في الدراسة.

قرأت وأفهم المخاطر المحتملة التي تنطوي عليها مشاركة طفلي في الدراسة. قرأت وفهمت الفوائد المحتملة لهذه الدراسة. أفهم إجراءات الانسحاب وقيود الانسحاب. أفهم أنه سيتم الحفاظ على سرية طفلي أثناء المقابلات الفردية والحفاظ عليها إلى أقصى حد ممكن خلال مجموعة التركيز ، إذا كان طفلي يرغب في المشاركة في جلسة المجموعة المركزة. أفهم أنه سيتم احترام السرية فيما يتعلق بالتسجيلات الصوتية فقط. أفهم أن هذه التسجيلات ستكون للاستخدام المهني فقط. أفهم أن المقابلات ومجموعات التركيز ستجرى في المدرسة الثانوية الكاثوليكية المركزية وستستغرق حوالي ساعة إلى ساعتين. أفهم أن طفلي سيبقى في المركز الكاثوليكي المركزي بعد المدرسة ، أو سيسافر إلى المركز الكاثوليكي المركزي بعد المدرسة للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة.

تمت الموافقة على هذا البحث من قبل مجلس أخلاقيات البحث بجامعة وندسور.
_____ _____
(توقيع ولي الأمر أو الوصي) (التاريخ)

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