

Factors Contributing to Successful High School Completion for Resettled
Refugee Students in Arizona: Student and Mentor Perspectives

by

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ABSTRACT

Given the surge of immigrant and resettled refugee student enrollment in public schools, a strong understanding of the transition process for these students and their families and facilitating the creation of effective schooling contexts are major educational priorities. It is critical to determine how to best support and assist resettled refugee students in academic and other endeavors. This study seeks to better understand the perspectives of resettled refugee students who are recent high school graduates and their mentors in order to contribute practical insights into resettled refugee education and to give voice to these students.

Informed by sociocultural theories as reflected in the works of Daniels, Cole and Wertsch, (2007) and others, twelve resettled refugees from Bhutan, Iraq and Burma (aka Myanmar) and ten mentors participated in individual interview sessions and focus group discussions. The study took place in Arizona. The participants' responses were audio-recorded, transcribed, interpreted, coded, and categorized into themes. Study findings suggested that: resettled refugee students struggled with adjusting to their new school system. They were marginalized and faced discrimination and suffered low teacher expectations. They were placed in English language classes that they felt were not beneficial to them; and almost all attended inner city urban schools in areas with a high poverty concentration characterized by gang and drug activities that further adversely affected their performances. Against the odds, with the help of

their mentors, striving for a better life, commitment to family, and resilience, the study participants were able to not only complete their high school education on time but earned impressive grade point averages of between 3.5 to 4.2 that helped five of them win scholarships to four-year colleges.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Tamima Ahmed Ali, and our three children: Abdulhakim, Asmahan, and Mohamed, for their endurance as I completed this dissertation.

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All Thanks is to Allah, the Originator of All knowledge. Oh Allah! Make useful for me what You taught me and teach me knowledge that will be useful to me.

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And to Allah, who made all things possible, I make this prayer:
Oh Allah! I ask of you a perfect faith, a sincere assurance, a reverent heart, a remembering tongue, and a good conduct of commendation;
I ask of you a true repentance before death, rest at death, and forgiveness and Mercy after death;
I ask of you clemency at reckoning, victory in paradise, and escape from fire;
By Your Mercy, Oh Mighty One, The Forgiver, The Lord;
Increase me in knowledge, Make my knowledge useful in service to humanity, and join me unto good.

Ameen.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Given the surge of immigrant and resettled refugee student enrollment in public schools, a strong understanding of the transition process for these students and their families and facilitating the creation of effective schooling contexts are major educational priorities. It is critical to determine how to best support and assist resettled refugee students in academic and other endeavors. This study seeks to better understand the perspectives of resettled refugee students who are recent high school graduates and their mentors in order to contribute practical insights into resettled refugee education and to give voice to these students.

Teachers are increasingly challenged to meet the diverse needs of students in their classrooms, which may include immigrants and resettled refugees (Monzó & Rueda, 2006). Although there are similarities between these two groups of students, i.e., they are new to the country, and they must go through a process of adjustment, immigrants and resettled refugees differ in important ways. While immigrant issues are not the focus of this study, the terms “refugee” and “immigrant” are used interchangeably by some researchers. The following are broad ways to differentiate the two categories: (a) Immigrants have time to take care of personal business before leaving their home country, whereas most resettled refugees most leave their home country before dealing with personal concerns (Haines, 1996); (b) immigrant children’s education

usually continues uninterrupted, but for refugees, education may be interrupted or postponed due to strife in their home country or time spent in a resettled refugee camp (Hamilton & Moore, 2004); (c) Immigrants do not usually experience loss and trauma, but for refugees, trauma can be profound and may include the loss of family members and personal property, which often have serious psychological impacts.

“Babies are born with reflexes to suckle but the mother/caregiver has to show the breast” is a traditional African saying. Using this analogy, resettled refugee children might be willing and ready to learn at school, but they typically need to be shown how to learn in a new language within a different curriculum and social context. They require a welcoming, secure, affirming, and caring environment. How we educate our children is a vital cultural aspect. Culture is a shared heritage rather a dynamic historical process (Green & Perlman, 1995). Berry (1999) maintains that all human behavior is cultural in some respect; virtually no psychological phenomenon can be independent of cultural context in which it developed, and is now displayed and Ogbu (1995a) also argues that culture is a people’s way of life.

An assumption of this study is that integrating resettled refugees and immigrants into societies is not only a moral obligation, it is also a tremendous potential benefit for host societies, as it brings new cultures, perspectives, skills and talented people into the citizenry of nations. Schools are the key institutions in “cultivating” these potentials. It is

important to examine how resettled refugee students adjust to high schools, not only from educational perspectives but also looking at the process of absorption of new cultural and behavioral practices and determining how these influences affect resettled refugee students' school success.

This ability to look at the world through many lenses and from multiple perspectives, including those of students whose experiences are quite different from those of most researchers, teachers, and the majority of the student population, is essential in developing pedagogies that can reach diverse learners (Lee, 2007). Whether this is discussed in the corridors of most public high schools is anyone's guess. Do resettled refugee students' cultures and needs come to the attention of school administrators, or are they mere statistics? How are resettled refugee students active agents in their own achievement as they perform new roles and meet requirements for "success" in a new context?

Newly arrived refugees and their children often fall through the socioeconomic cracks of American society. They are often grouped together with people from the so-called native (involuntary) minority groups (e.g., African Americans) and some voluntary minority/immigrant groups (Ogbu, 1987), most of whom have been exposed to long-lasting social, economical, and educational problems and discriminative acts in the legal, educational, and socioeconomic system (Buras & Apple, 2006). They have no choice but to assimilate into the impoverished socio-

economical demographic in the sharply segregated United States. We have seen over and over the devastating effects of the combination of racial segregation, poverty, and blocked educational opportunities on the academic achievement, adult outcomes, and overall quality of life of minority children and their families (Feagin, 2001; Kozol, 2005).

Background

Every year since 1975, the United States has permanently resettled tens of thousands of refugees. Admissions dropped sharply after September 11, 2001, but they are now increasing, from just over 27,000 refugees admitted in the federal fiscal year 2002, to over 60,000 in 2008 (U.S. Committee on Immigrant and Refugees, 2008). Over 74,000 refugees were admitted in 2009 (Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program, 2010). According to the U.S. Resettled refugee Processing Center (U.S. Department of State, Population, Resettled refugee and Migration, 2009a), between 2004 and 2008, the United States admitted an average of 21,842 refugee children annually, with children constituting approximately 42.6% of total resettled refugee admissions. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that almost half of any refugee population is composed of children (UNHCR, 2009). Boyden, de Berry, Feeny, and Hart (2002) estimated that more than half of the world's 22.4 million displaced people are children or adolescents; this is equivalent to 1 in every 230 persons.

Children experience numerous traumatic situations when their lives are disrupted by the refugee experience. The effects of war on children are horrendous (Boothby, 1994; Kuterovac, Dyregrov, & Stovland, 1994; Machel, 1996; McBrien, 2005). Many school-age resettled refugee children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and need assistance (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993; Deykin, 1999; McBrien, 2005; Hamilton & Moore, 2004). Some suffer from family separation when they flee persecution alone or become separated from their families during flight (Boyden et al., 2002). In refugee camps, children are at high risk for rape, abduction, and trafficking. Some children are forced to become soldiers, and many girls become child brides against their will. Refugee children become heads of households when parents or adult caretakers are killed or die due to illness or malnutrition. These experiences eliminate social stability and access to education (Boyden et al., 2002). War-associated factors often disrupt schooling environments, and resettled refugee children have specific educational needs and barriers that they must overcome to be academically successful. For example, a study among African resettled refugee students in Manitoba found that the “academic, economic, and psychosocial challenges facing African resettled refugee students adversely affected their ability to integrate and cope well in school, thereby significantly reducing their socioeconomic opportunities” (Kanu, 2008). Many children had limited secondary education in refugee camps, which makes staying in school once they are resettled difficult.

A study by the Women's Refugee Commission (2009) interviewed resettled refugees living in Phoenix, Arizona, and found that the language barrier was the single greatest impediment to successful integration in the community and the ability to be successful in school. Additional barriers exist for resettled refugee populations that impede them from achieving their full potential in school, e.g., a lack of academic support at home, separation from their family, fear of authority figures, and inappropriate grade placement (Hamilton & Moore, 2004). Because they also face economic challenges, it is not uncommon to find resettled refugee youth holding full-time jobs. The numerous barriers at schools require the need for provisional educational support targeted to resettled refugee populations.

Educators in an array of settings are facing challenges associated with effectively providing culturally and linguistically appropriate education to recent resettled refugees and immigrants (Miller, 2009; Hornberger & Vinity, 2009). Some educators may be knowledgeable about the cultures and languages of the immigrant and resettled refugee children and families they are serving, while others may not. Some educators may, regrettably, hold negative preconceptions about children from specific ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic groups and consequently have low expectations for these children (Hamilton & Moore, 2004). The result is further marginalization. While other educators may truly believe that every resettled refugee/immigrant child is fully competent, they may lack

the knowledge and strategies needed to help these children reach their full potential (ibid p. 46).

Problem Statement

An influx of immigrants and refugees over the past two decades has changed the face of U.S. classrooms. Arizona has been a popular destination for both types of groups. It is a generally held belief that resettled refugee students who enter school in elementary and middle school have a better chance for successful adjustment and high school completion, as opposed to resettled refugee students who enter the American educational system at high school grade levels (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien, 2005). This could be attributed to the duration of time in U.S. schools and in the larger society. In the case of resettled refugees arriving in Arizona, schools have seen increased enrollment, from 750 resettled refugee children in high schools in the 2007/2008 academic year to 1,168 in 2009/2010 (ADE, 2010). Unfortunately, this increased number is not matched by graduation rates; an insignificant number of resettled refugee students go on to complete high school. The focus of this research is to assess how these few resettled refugee students successfully complete high school.

Resettled refugee families care greatly about education and have high aspirations for their children; they come to the United States in the hope that it will improve their children's lives. As resettled refugee children enter school, they are optimistic about their future and tend to

work hard (Olneck, 2004; Fuligni & Hardway, 2004; Shields, 2004). Yet, that is not what one might hear from many U.S. educators. Faculty and administrators raise concerns that these students don't pay attention in class or act out and that their families don't support the school. Oft-heard faculty remarks about these students tell the story: "They don't have the experiences necessary for school," "They lack basic social skills," and "their parents don't care" (Kugler, 2009).

Statistics from the Arizona Department of Education (2010) indicate that only 9% of resettled refugee students graduated in 2010, there was a 14% dropout rate, and 77% "transferred or continuing education status unknown." This last statistic is especially troubling and demands further inquiry.

Purpose and Objectives

The primary objectives of refugee resettlement in the United States are to achieve self-sufficiency through early employment and facilitate integration into the host community (Clipper, 2008). Because education is a key factor in helping resettled refugees become self-reliant (UNHCR, 2007), identifying and understanding the cultural and contextual mechanisms that help resettled refugees achieve their educational goals is essential.

In the United States, educational achievement is one of the most important preconditions of individual economic and social welfare. From a rather liberal viewpoint, schools are seen as institutions that help resettled

refugee youth become "educated people" and "productive citizens" that chase the "American Dream" (Bal, 2009). In this view, schools assist resettled refugee students in achieving economic self-sufficiency and they in turn support their families, which is the primary aim of the resettled refugee resettlement programs in the United States (ibid).

On the other hand, theorists using more critical standpoints warn us of the historical role of formal schooling in oppressing low-income, racial, cultural, and linguistic minority students (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Unfortunately, this is the case for resettled refugees because they often end up resettled in already impoverished neighborhoods alongside other minority groups. According to these scholars, schools, like political institutions, are in the business of reproducing the social inequalities and privileges of the dominant race, social and economic classes, and gender in a given society through various modes of domination (e.g., validating or valuing the symbolic/cultural capitals of the dominant groups over other social and economic groups) (Bourdieu, 1993; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Willis, 1977).

This study aimed to : (a) explore resettled refugee students' motivation for learning in Arizona high schools; (b) better understand how they navigate the system; and (c) identify sources of support, particularly mentors or others who have played strong roles in their achievements. Successful high school graduates were asked to share their experiences; how they were able to navigate the education system; how culture

influenced their schooling; and what factors, internal motivation, and/or individuals contributed to their success? Of particular interest was the roles of mentors, family, community, friends, and others who helped these students complete high school. While the word “successful” can be multifaceted, for the purpose of this study, it refers to obtaining a high school diploma.

Rationale

Arizona has experienced consistent growth in the overall number of resettled refugee since 2001. The Arizona Refugee Resettlement office (2010) reported that a total of 26,566 refugees were directly resettled in the state between 2001 and 2009, bringing the total number of resettled refugees in Arizona to just shy of 60,000 since the official enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980. This number does not include a good number of resettled refugees who came to Arizona from other states of initial resettlement. In addition, data from the Arizona Department of Education (Interview with the State Coordinator for Refugee Education, January 14, 2011) show that 19,632 resettled refugee students enrolled in K-12 Arizona schools between 2005 and 2010. During the same period, the United States resettled 351,530 resettled refugees, which includes 19,445 that were resettled directly in Arizona (Arizona Refugee Resettlement office, 2010).

A noteworthy shift in resettled refugee over the past decade has been the decrease in European countries as refugee source countries and

the rapid increase in African and Middle Eastern countries as major sources (MacKay & Tavares, 2005). MacKay and Tavares' study of Manitoba area, which reflects general trends in refugee resettlement, also noted that the current resettled refugee population composition in schools reflects the majority as coming from Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Somalia; these indicate that the highest numbers of resettled refugee students are coming from African countries, Iraq, and Afghanistan. They deserve research attention for three reasons: (a) their unique educational coming from war-affected and disrupted schooling backgrounds; (b) their unique difficulty with integration due to their phenotype, ethnicity, and linguistic and religious backgrounds; and (c) the higher school dropout rate observed among them that may account for increased anti-social behaviors, such as criminal gang activity, and drug use. It is important to note that the few available literature are heavy on African and Middle-eastern refugees and were used to shed light into the plight of refugees.

Historically, Eastern Europeans, fleeing persecution during the Cold War, represented resettled refugees to Canada and America (Kanu, 2009). They tended to be more culturally and ethnically similar to many in the host country and were generally well educated and possessed skills that their host country valued (ibid). Since the 1990s, however, most resettled refugees fleeing from violence in sub-Saharan Africa, Afghanistan, and other Middle-Eastern countries are unlikely to have high

levels of education or skills valued by Western host countries (McBrien, 2005; Hamilton & Moore, 2004). Furthermore, many recent resettled refugees to Western countries have two additional barriers to overcome: (a) Many are black Africans with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds that are significantly different from those of the majority in host countries (Caucasian, middle-class, and of European ancestry) and are significantly less proficient in the primary languages of their host countries (English or French in Canada) (Kanu, 2009); and (b) many resettled refugees from Africa and the Middle East are Muslims, a religious group that many in the West have come to fear and despise because they associate it with violence and terrorism (Asali, 2003). Anecdotal reports in Canada and studies in the United States (McBrien, 2005) have uncovered discrimination against new resettled refugees by members of the host culture because of the stigma of Islam, often made conspicuous by wearing the Muslim head scarf (hijab), fasting during the month of Ramadan, or finding secluded places for ritual prayers during the day.

Although all war-affected resettled refugees have suffered multiple traumatic experiences, African resettled refugees, comprising the largest group in Arizona, are more likely to have spent longer periods of time (sometimes over a decade) in resettled refugee camps where they received extremely poor support and lived in conditions that contributed to significant and often chronic ailments (Kanu, 2009). They are also more likely to have experienced extended periods of disrupted schooling. These

factors suggest that this group of students may experience greater difficulties adjusting to and integrating into a new society and may be slower in learning academic concepts, skills, and a new language (Prairie Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration [PCEII] and Population Research Laboratory, 2001; MacKay & Tavares, 2005; McBrien, 2005). In fact, research by Thomas and Collier (1997) suggests that students with low literacy, interrupted schooling, and traumatic experiences might be expected to take 10 years or more to catch up to average levels of cognitive and academic language. Nonetheless, due to Arizona schools' age-appropriate placement policy, teenage resettled refugee students are placed with their peers in high school grades and are expected to pass the same tests as native English speaking students without any accommodations for their disrupted schooling and/or language barrier.

These war-affected resettled refugee students typically lack appropriate and sufficient support programs targeted for them, which impedes their ability to adjust quickly and learn. This situation may account for the higher dropout rate reported among this population (African Communities of Manitoba, Inc. (ACOMI) Report, 2006; McBrien, 2005; Hamilton & Moore, 2004). This research examines the educational challenges and successes and existing support systems for resettled refugee students in Arizona high schools. Educational needs are defined broadly and include academic, social, psychological, linguistic, and

economic, a list that is appropriate for exploratory research of this nature and intended to identify the complex and interrelated conditions that support or undermine resettled refugee students' ability to succeed in completing high school and participate actively in Arizona's social, economic, cultural, and political life.

The findings from the study are useful for the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program, the various refugee-serving organizations, school districts, and resettled refugee communities themselves. The study also contributes to much-needed research in the area of resettled refugee education in United States. It is also important in its emphasis on successful students and listening closely to their narratives and perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by sociocultural theories reflected in the works of Daniels, Cole and Wertsch, (2007); Engestron, (1987, 2001), Holland et al. (1998) and Hanks (1991). According to these scholars, learning is a way of being in a social world – not solely an internal process of acquiring certain cognitive skills and knowledge of a specific domain. This framework assumes that individual development and learning are mediated by culture as individuals participate in socially produced, culturally mediated, and historically contingent human activities. As such, I examine how culture, in the context of resettled refugee children's

resilience and other sources of support, influences resettled refugee students' motivation for learning in Arizona high schools.

Sociocultural theories emphasize the key role of interaction in mediating learning. Sociocultural research has helped to modify the belief that all interactions lead to learning (Hogan & Tudge, 1999). A good example is peer tutoring, also referred to by some researchers as collaborative learning, which is defined as "the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active help and support among status equals or matched companions" (Topping, 2005, p. 631). Other scholars, like Monereo & Duran (2002), define peer tutoring as "a method of cooperative learning based on the creation of pairs of students with an asymmetrical relationship and sharing a single common goal, which is known and shared and must be achieved through a relationship framework planned by the teacher." With such pairing, scaffolding learning can take place among students of similar ages and skills (King, Staffieri, & Adalgais, 1998). There is more about the sociocultural theory in the literature review chapter of this dissertation. It is important to note that for any learning to take place, there ought to be motivation. In addition, specific to resettled refugees, is the role of culture in healing and resilience; this are discussed below.

Motivation

Resettled refugee students' willingness to learn has been identified as a particularly valuable to the school. In the intervention study

“Supporting Asylum Seekers and Refugee Students” funded by the United Kingdom’s CfBT, an education trust, and conducted by Kendall, Gulliver, and Martin (2006) focused on the support offered to asylum seekers and resettled refugee children and their families and how it may lead to improvements in meeting the educational, social, and cultural needs of asylum seekers and resettled refugee pupils. It was noted that schools can play a key role in integrating children and their families into local communities and have been described as the “ideal starting point to enable these children to rebuild their lives” (Dennis, 2002).

Kendall, Gulliver, and Martin’s (2006) study also indicated that teachers spoke positively of the motivation and enthusiasm expressed by asylum seekers and resettled refugee pupils; it acknowledged the dedication and determination of pupils to achieve but also mentioned the challenges in keeping asylum seekers and resettled refugee pupils positive and motivated during periods of uncertainty. This is particularly an issue for students approaching the age of 18, at which point students’ priorities often move from education to employment so that they can support themselves and their families. Notwithstanding the many problems resettled refugee children face, schools in the study highlighted resettled refugee students’ enthusiasm and motivation to learn and the positive impact they have on the school community, as well as the positive ambitions that resettled refugee parents have for their children.

Motivation for learning can be enhanced by psychological well-being and proper adjustment. While it is not the focus of this paper, Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (2003) term such proper adjustment “acculturation.” According to them, acculturation is a change in an individual or a culturally similar group that results from contact with a different culture. They also make a distinction between psychological and sociological acculturation; at the psychological level, changes can occur in one’s sense of identity, values, and beliefs and that individual may experience acculturation stress, such as anxiety and depression, as they try to adapt to a new culture. Immigration sociology recognizes that outcomes for immigrant minorities, including resettled refugees, are significantly influenced by what Portes and Rumbaut (1990) call a group’s mode of incorporation – the context that immigrants and resettled refugees face plays a decisive role in their process of adaptation, regardless of the human capital the immigrants may possess.

Immigrants and resettled refugees who receive resettlement assistance and are not subject to widespread discrimination are expected to experience smoother social and psychological integration and faster economic progress. The contribution of successful schooling to gainful employment in this economic progress cannot be underestimated. Acculturation has been seen as a factor in contributing to successful academic achievement (Monzó and Rueda, 2003).

Portes and Zhou's (1993) segmented assimilation theory posits three patterns of immigrant adaptation into a new society: (a) the straight line theory of upward mobility in which newcomers assimilate into the Caucasian, middle-class majority; (b) upward mobility and ethnic solidarity found in successful ethnic enclaves that have established themselves through government and social policies; and (c) a third unsuccessful pattern consisting of a downward spiral resulting in assimilation into poverty, often in an inner city underclass. Portes and Zhou (1993) noted that resettled refugees that arrived since the 1980s are less likely to blend than their predecessors because of their racial and ethnic origins. Without significant social and economic support, recent resettled refugee children and youth are especially vulnerable to this unsuccessful pattern of acculturation and attending ill-equipped, impoverished schools destines them for major challenges and possible failure.

Resilience

Resilience can be seen as the courage and persistence of individuals. Grotberg (2003a) defined resilience as "the human capacity to face, overcome, be made stronger, and even transformed by experiences of adversity." In the case of resettled refugees, Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee (2007) describe it as "having high expectations for the future," which helps in appropriately coming to terms with situations. It is generally established that resilience involves two conditions: (a) the

presence of some form of negative life condition, risk, and/or adversity; and (b) the demonstration of positive adaptation despite adversity (Gewirtz, Forgatch, & Wieling, 2008; Rutter, 2006). Studies of resilience are generally divided into two categories: (a) overcoming the odds by maintaining normal development despite risk and adversity or (b) recovery from trauma by adjusting successfully to negative life events (Fraser et al., 1999; Staudinger et al., 1993). The experiences of resettled refugees generally fall under the latter.

Although many symptoms of distress have universal characteristics, the ways in which people express, embody, and give meaning to their distress are largely dependent on social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Likewise, the manners in which different cultures deal with manifestations of emotional distress are based on different cultures and belief systems. In short, researchers can no longer neglect to consider culture as a significant variable in the study of resilience. Clauss-Ehlers (2008) defined cultural resilience as "the way that the individual's cultural background, supports, values, and environmental experiences help facilitate the process of overcoming adversity."

Regarding schooling, the literature about resilience indicates that mentors, whether located in schools (teachers, coaches, and counselors) or outside of schools (community leaders), provide critical support for at-risk students. When children have a strong and enduring relationship with at least one caring adult, they are much more likely to overcome personal

adversity (Luthar, Sawyer, & Brown, 2006; Selig et al., 2006). Martin & Marsh (2006) referred to "the heightened likelihood of success in school and other life accomplishments despite environmental adversities brought about by early traits, conditions, and experiences" as educational resilience.

In her dissertation work with Sudanese resettled refugees in Virginia, entitled *An Exploration of Resilience Mechanism Relating to the Educational Persistence of Sudanese Refugees*, Spaulding (2009) referenced Cabrera and Padilla's (2004) qualitative study that examined the role of culture in the educational resilience of two college students from immigrant backgrounds who graduated from Stanford University. Spaulding mentioned that the study found that the students' cultural backgrounds played significant roles in the development of their senses of self and provided a source of heightened self-worth. In addition, both students served as translators between their new culture and family members, a role that led each to learn to be more self-sufficient and responsible, thereby enhancing their sense of self-efficacy. Alluded to by the study and others, though uneducated themselves, resettled refugee parents placed high value on education and are often the driving force behind their children's educational attainment.

Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's earlier works for his research on children who escaped from their impoverished childhoods to develop accomplished and successful lives, Rutter (1999) came to the conclusion

that a key component of healthy development was the cultivation of psychosocial resilience, which is a combination of personal and social resources. Personal resources include dispositions such as maturity, self-reliance, self-understanding, and the belief that it is possible to deal with adversity and stressful situations and to shape one's own life. Social resources are a measure of integration and include positive, confident social relationships with family and friends and access to support networks. In another study, Kendall, Gulliver, and Martin (2006) noted that the role of resettled refugee resettlement caseworkers was central to supporting students' motivation and ambitions for the future. Through the pupil-caseworker relationship, young people are able to build trust and confidence and ultimately share their hopes and aspirations.

In general, children and youth with increased resilience tend to have the following attributes: higher task-related self-efficacy, greater autonomy, and optimism (Benard, 1993); interpersonal awareness and empathy, self-direction, and an internal locus of control (Masten, 2001); social competence and problem-solving skills, a sense of purpose and future, a sense of humor, and intellectual competence (Kumpfer, 1999); superior coping styles, a higher sense of self-worth and self-esteem (Qouta, Punamaki, & Sarraj, 2008); and willingness and capacity to plan (Benard, 1997; Fonagy et al., 1994; Masten, 2001).

The factors described in these frameworks ultimately affect resettled refugee youths' access to education and opportunities and were

drawn upon to inform this study's research questions, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Research Questions

The primary research question guiding the study was:

1. What are the factors considered by students and mentors to contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona?
 - a) How do graduates describe their sources of support and challenges?
 - b) How do mentors describe the roles they played in the students' success?

The target groups for this study are former resettled refugee students who successfully graduated in the last three years from high schools in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. Participants must have started school in the U.S. during junior high school or later. Both schools have relatively large numbers of resettled refugee high school students.

Twelve former students (six from each site) were selected and interviewed regarding their schooling experience. In addition, participants were asked to name one person who was significant in their schooling, and those individuals were also invited to participate. This person can be anyone, including a teacher at school, a school staff member, or a friend.

This chapter addressed the study background and stated the problem, purpose, rationale, and theoretical framework in which culture is

important to the learning process. Resettled refugee motivation and resilience and the research questions were also addressed. The next chapter delves deeper into the related literature.

Chapter 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section highlights the sociocultural theory as it relates to learning. The second focuses on the world of resettled refugees. The last section presents discourses in the area of resettled refugee children's schooling, highlighting the needs, describing the limited research in this area, and clarifying the need for continued scholarship.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theories of learning that have emerged over the past two decades (Engestrom, 1995, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1994; Wenger, 1998) characterize learning in ways that are relevant to social practice stances. These theories begin with the assumption that learning is situated in everyday social contexts and that learning involves changes in participation in activity settings or communities, rather than the individual acquisition of abstract concepts separate from interaction and experience (Rogoff et al., 1995). Taking learning as an inherently social phenomenon, sociocultural theories suggest that analyses of collective learning move from individual's heads (Simon, 1991) to units of participation, interaction, and activity (Engestrom, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff 1994). Sociocultural theories of learning imply "the simultaneous transformation of social practices and the individuals who participate in them, and thus the social and individual dimensions of learning are mutually constitutive" (Boreham & Morgan 2004, p. 308).

Sociocultural approaches have increasingly been used to understand student learning and development in a way that includes culture as a core concern (Cole, 1996b; Rogoff, 1990; Saxe, 1999; Wertsch, 1998). These frameworks assume that social and cultural processes are central to learning and argue for the importance of local activity settings in learning. From this perspective, understanding learning requires a focus on how individuals participate in particular activities and how they draw on artifacts, tools, and social factors to solve local problems.

Further, the Funds of Knowledge scholars (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) believe that learning about students and their communities is as important as learning about subject matter and content. These two sets of goals can work in concert with one another, as teacher-ethnographers gain a more profound understanding of how community cultural knowledge can be a valuable academic resource for teachers and students. The methods for doing this involve the ethnographic exploration of communities through household visits by teachers, as well as their reflexive practice based on community strengths and resources. (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005).

In line with sociocultural theorist assertions, a Funds of Knowledge anthropologist of education (Foley, 2007) affirms that recognizing students' multi-stranded relationships within their families and communities could deeply transform relationships between schools and

communities and that these transformations might begin with respectful dialogical interactions.

While there are many facets of sociocultural theories that have been considered useful in learning situations, such as scaffolding and cooperative learning, Scott and Palincsar (2003), looking through sociocultural lenses, suggest that the sociocultural theory's notion of zones of proximal development is particularly unique in contributing to the goals of educational assessment in that it can: (a) identify abilities that are in the process of developing, and (b) attempt to predict what the learner will do independently in the future. A line of inquiry consistent with these assessment goals is *dynamic assessment*, a term used to characterize a number of distinct approaches that feature guided learning for the purpose of determining a learner's potential for change (Scott & Palincsar, 2003).

A sociocultural framework has been used to investigate family dynamics, such as school-home relations, family interventions, and developmentally delayed children (Harkness & Keefer, 2000). Put into practice at a Hawaiian school, the theory led to the development of child-generated activities, which were more successful than traditional education approaches (Weisner, Gallimore, & Jordon, 1988).

In other areas related to learning from a sociocultural framework, research by Claude Steele and colleagues (1997) examined the intersection of macro level sociocultural patterns and individual academic functioning. Focusing on the cultural minority's perception of bias in achievement

situations, they argue that one inhibitor of school performance is stereotype threat; the perceived threat of racial stereotypes can depress academic performance through their anxiety-inducing effects on thought and problem solving. Studies of the racial or social class biases of teachers also share the view that ideas and values of the broader socially stratified society are played out in the microculture of the classroom. For example, Rist (1973) and Jordan-Irvine (1990) argue that the internalized biases of teachers and counselors (both minority and white) against poor and minority students are an important factor in shaping racial bias in schools.

Refugees and Globalization

The analysis offered here rests on the recognition that although the implications of accelerating globalization are profound everywhere, they are extremely uneven, affecting different localities, sectors, and regions in profoundly different ways. For example, anthropologist Kathleen Hall (1999) argues that globalization and the consequent decentring of the nation-state and decline in the geopolitical dominance of the West have created spaces for new forms of cultural identifications and politics to emerge. Whether this is true or not, one clear conclusion that can be drawn is that current trends do not paint a particularly positive picture for refugee protection in the years ahead (Loescher, Betts, & Milner, 2008).

Individual states, it appears, are either increasingly unwilling or unable to apply international refugee and associated human rights instruments to guarantee protection for those who are forcibly displaced,

whether within their countries or across international borders (Zolberg et al., 1989; Crépeau et al., 2006; Kacowicz & Lutomski, 2007; Sales, 2007; Loescher, Betts, & Milner, 2008). This unwillingness or incapacity to protect populations is very much connected with the erosion of state authority under the pressures of economic globalization. The erosion of an international commitment to refugees is accelerated by the downward standard-setting led by migrant- and refugee-receiving northern countries (Sales, 2007). With globalization processes continuing to exacerbate global inequity of all kinds, what moral authority northern states had to press southern governments to respect and apply refugee human rights instruments is all but disappearing (Collins, 1999). There is certainly no kind of emerging structure of 'global governance' of international refugee migration.

Like other forms of transnational migration, refugee migration and the international refugee 'regime' are likely to be profoundly affected by the growing diversity of political and economic circumstances that force people to move and by the great complexity of policy process interactions in different contexts of forced migration (Boswell, 2005). The diversity of challenges in this area is already plain to see. In Western Europe, for instance, refugee protection has become all but subsumed within the immigration control 'regime' (Sales, 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa and the Balkans, refugee protection is largely defined by changing systems of international humanitarian response, including the United Nations (UN)

and regional peacekeeping and conflict resolution initiatives and, in many parts of Africa, by wider and increasingly severe environmental and socioeconomic challenges that affect both displaced and 'host' populations (Hollenbach, 2008). In the Middle East, southeast Asia, and Central America, issues of refugee protection are more directly affected by political and diplomatic processes that shape often highly conflictive political and economic relations between states, and by labor market conditions that affect refugees' (and other migrants') livelihoods and security (Sales, 2007).

According to Hollenbach (2008), the future of refugee protection in much of Africa will be crucially dependent on the fortunes of the international humanitarian system, which, like the refugee regime, is in crisis and facing faltering commitment from key donor governments. Reflecting the increased regionalization of challenges in this area, the regional and sub-regional actors that UNHCR and other international organizations will have to engage with will continue to take on more importance relative to other international/global actors.

Among the most immediate dangers for the international refugee regime is further regionalization of refugee protection financing and associated humanitarian assistance because this could result in less funding for refugee protection and assistance in those regions where the need is greatest and resources are most stretched (UNHCR, 2009). However, the challenges faced in terms of the content and balance of the

activities and instruments that define the international refugee regime are also considerable.

The growing pressure for diversifying the means of securing refugee protection in different parts of the world underscores the importance of maintaining a clear, shared view of core objectives and core principles within the international refugee regime (Steiner, Gibney, & Loescher, 2003). This will depend on the development of agreed-upon and explicit criteria for defining and fine-tuning protection priorities and needs within and across different national and regional situations of forced migration (ibid). Reflecting, in part, a progressive shift in power and authority away from states, refugee protection is likely to involve an increasing number of actors, including not only governments and inter-governmental organizations, but also voluntary and civil society institutions of various kinds, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media organizations playing a variety of roles at different levels from local to international. The future of international refugee protection may rest largely on the roles that these actors play in shaping the causes of and responses to forced migration in different contexts (Stedman & Tanner, 2003).

World Refugee Situation

According to the 2009 World Refugee Survey by the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrant (USCRI), the world refugee population is estimated at over 13 million, with more than two-thirds in

Africa and Asia combined (USCRI, 2009). It is generally estimated that 80% of any refugee population is composed of women and children, with children (under the age of 18) making up to 50% of the total. It is also estimated that most refugees stay in refugee camps for a decade on average, with less than 1% resettled each year (Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program [RRP], 2008). While it remains difficult to establish and interpret the reasons that people are forced to flee, it is clear that the issue is a chronic one (Nicklaus, 2002). Increasingly, families try to escape sociopolitical injustices and personal tragedies by moving away from their countries of birth so as “to have a better chance.” Yet while trying to eliminate an important risk factor in their lives, they often expose themselves and their children to new and frequently unforeseen hardships.

Patterns of contemporary voluntary and forced migration mirror those of the past in many respects (Crépeau et al., 2006). Aristide Zolberg (1997) points to a concatenation of worldwide changes in the final decades of the last century associated with the globalization of capitalism that induced a sudden and massive increase in the number of people on the move worldwide and in the distances they covered. Already in the throes of growing domestic and international tensions, the receivers also saw themselves beset by an “immigration crisis” (Zolberg, 1997). Widely perceived as an unprecedented crisis, the number of refugees originating in the developing world since the 1970s has generated urgent concern

throughout the West (Sales, 2007). Such concern is an ambiguous mixture of compassion for the plight of the unfortunates who have been cast adrift and of fear that they will come pouring in (Hear & McDowell, 2006). Refugees are a category of persons with certain human rights that are under threat. It has been said that “today’s human rights abuses are tomorrow’s refugee problems,” (Loescher, 1999) and it could be argued that in most situations of mass displacement the violation of human rights is involved. When these occur, refugees are forced to seek protection. How those protections are accorded vary depending on many factors, but the first place of safety for refugees are camps.

Refugee camps

To provide proper context, it is important to paint a clear picture for readers who have never visited a refugee camp. While writing a class paper in 2004 regarding the life and times of refugee children and through my advocacy work for refugees, I summarized the condition in refugee camps as full of difficulties. In most cases, refugee camps are situated in remote places that are environmentally harsh (arid or/and semi-arid), inhabitable lands. Often times, these refugees live on handouts and limited food rations and lack drinking water and other basic necessities. Severe malnutrition; high infant mortality rates; maternal-child illnesses; death resulting from minor treatable ailments; conflict with the local population; and under-staffed, ill-equipped, non-functional health facilities are the very minimal description of life in refugee camps (Yarrow, 2004).

Landless, jobless, homeless, marginalized, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property resources and community disarticulation are all terms that are applicable to refugees (Cernea, 2000). The UNHCR maintains that refugees may spend up a decade in refugee camps waiting in limbo. An extreme example is the group of Burundian refugees who fled to Tanzania in 1972 and having been waiting in camps since then for a durable solution. On the opposite end of the spectrum are Iraqi refugees who fled Iraq due to their association with the Unified Forces and U.S government agents and were granted resettlement within months of escape to either Jordan or Syria. Whatever the case may be, refugees' experiences and the issues they face as they flee for their lives are diverse. Examples of other issues facing refugees include nations'/states' unwillingness to provide protection, mostly in Europe, due to issues associated with what constitutes persecution. Others include the militarization of the camps (USCRI, 2009), lack of financial resources, open hostility and attack by local populations (Crisp, 2003), and issues of Non-Admission due to international terrorism-related concerns (UNHCR, 2007; RCUSA, 2008; USCRI, 2008; Kelley, 2007; Boswell, 2005). Educational issues in refugee camps aren't any better. I will briefly describe education in the resettled refugee camps in the next section.

Education in refugee camps

At the Education for All (EFA) forum held in Dakar in 2000, 164 governments pledged to agree on policies and a wide-ranging strategy for addressing global challenges involving deficiencies in educational provision (UNESCO, 2000). These challenges included high levels of illiteracy and poor access to educational resources (Watters, 2008). Article 3 contains an explicit reference of the declaration to the education of refugee children, which refers to the removal of educational disparities for underserved groups, including “refugees: those displaced by war and people under occupation” (UNESCO, 2000). Despite this commitment to refugee children, evidence from emergency situations suggests that refugees may be frustrated in securing educational support. Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) argue that, “while for humanitarian organizations, education is the last priority in an emergency, for refugees it is among the first.”

Refugees do not have a common past or a future; there is only a ‘present’ as a refugee in a camp full of people with the same problem of homelessness (LeBlanc & Waters, 2005). One consequence of this is that, education programs in refugee camps around the world are often confronted with questions that can only be resolved in peaceful settings (ibid). What language should be used? Who is qualified to teach? What is a respectful relationship between teacher and student? Are rote-learning or group-centered activities best? These are big questions, often going to the

root of seemingly intractable political problems. Whose history, language, music, or literature is taught in primary school – Israeli or Palestinian; Catholic or Protestant; Hindu, Sikh, or Muslim; mujahedin or Royalist; Hutu or Tutsi – has much to do with expressions of power.

Faced with these difficult questions, humanitarian relief agencies often reduce refugee schooling to a logistic problem. Basic schooling has emerged as a humanitarian ‘right’ just like water, sanitation, food, security, and shelter. Yet, education programs for refugee children have longer-term political significance, as well as immediate humanitarian consequences. Education pushes humanitarian action beyond a medicalized endeavor to ‘save lives,’ to a project that also shapes futures. The result is that education packages for refugee camps, like food reserves, are ‘borrowed’ from a stockpile in the host country or elsewhere, and little attention is paid to broader questions about the kind of future children will have (LeBlanc & Waters, 2005). In refugee camps, the core function of schools – the creation of citizens and/or preparing students for the labor force – is often ignored. It is with such experiences that refugees are resettled and held against the same measures and expectation in competing with host countries’ children.

Resettlement and Post-resettlement Issues

Resettlement experiences are mostly the same for all resettled refugees – a mixture of excitement compounded with challenges of adjusting to a new culture in a fast moving and developed world. Refugees

are divided into rural and urban (Hirschon, 1989) based on the places they were living in their country of origin. Urban refugees might be aware of modern day life skills, but to a rural refugee, something as simple as flushing a toilet might seem mysterious. To help in acculturation, resettled refugees are more often settled in and around people from their culture. They are encouraged to retain and build upon their ethnic identity and community membership as a means of coping with life in their new country (Fong, 2004; Martin 2005; Rutter, 2006; Watters, 2008). As much as the host refugee-receiving countries try to adopt flexibility for resettled refugees to develop a new identity based on heritage retention and integration with the larger society, sometimes even legislation cannot guarantee the experience of openness and the envisioned flexibility, especially during bad economic or political times.

However, initial resettlement experiences vary considerably and are also affected by environmental factors and the availability of resources that resettled refugees can summon to combat barriers to accessing the new culture (McBrien, 2005). In addition, political and social processes affect people's attitudes towards newcomers. In this section, as mentioned earlier, I will start with issues categorized into thematic areas that are common amongst all the resettling countries and later narrow it to issues in Arizona within the context of the United States refugee resettlement efforts.

Welcoming refugees

How refugees are welcomed by the host community has raised some concerns. Resettled refugees are in an imagined no man's land, alienated from both home and host communities. Rather than forging a new liberated identity, resettled refugees live indefinitely in an imagined community of hope and memory. Resettled refugees know, perhaps better than any of us, that "who we once were we always continue to be and who we were once we will never quite be again" (Kibraeb, 1999). If refugees suffer persecution and are forced to flee their state, they have lost their ties with a political community and now "just exist because of birth" (Goodwin, 1988); no longer allowed to partake in the human artifice, the refugee will begin to belong to the human race "just as [an] animal belongs to a specific animal species" (Arendt, 1951). In other words, relying on one's human rights, as opposed to the positive rights that come with membership in a state, is not sufficient to ensure a place within society, within the human artifice.

Ogbu (1982) argued that refugees fall in the category of semi-voluntary immigrants and that adaption to a new culture is seen as a desirable avenue to success, whereas people with an oppositional cultural frame of reference, such as colonized or enslaved people, view conformity as "a symbol of disaffiliation" with their own culture. Also Kaprielian-Churchill (1996) maintains that refugees are involuntary immigrants who do not have the option of returning home. The circumstances of

involuntary immigration predispose [resettled] refugees toward the development of an oppositional cultural frame of reference (Ogbu, 1995a, 1995b) and negative acculturation attitude (Berry, 1987, 1995), both of which are predictive of negative outcomes. Though each resettling country has some form of initial time-limited assistance, these ‘welcome packages’ vary considerably among different resettling countries. For example, according to Maria Reyes’ (2008) comparative analysis of refugee settlement programs, a project of Canadian Heritage, Multiculturalism and Aboriginal Programs with the collaboration of Carleton University, Australia has an Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP), which is one of the long-term settlement services available for resettled refugees. Its goal is to develop Basic English skills, provide orientation about the country, and offer information about existing services. Resettled refugees also learn about their rights and responsibilities that come with being in Australia. The program’s length is 510 hours on average. If the resettled refugee is under 25 and has low levels of education, he/she is eligible for 910 hours. For those older than 25 but also with low levels of education, the training is extended to 610 hours. Full-time, part-time, and self-paced individual learning centers and distance courses are offered.

According to the Australian government (2007), AMEP is directed toward those who lack “functional English.” Diversity in delivery methods facilitates users’ access to the program. The completion of the program is evidence to the government that the person understands the “Australian

way of life” (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). Thus, if completed, the student does not have to take a citizenship exam. In comparison, the free U.S. English language training offered to resettled refugees is aimed at helping the resettled refugee get their first job. There aren’t standardized curriculums or enough financial and human resources dedicated to this important program. Though opportunities for upgrade and citizenship classes exist, resettled refugees are not required to attend these classes, and even if they attend, they are still expected to pass the citizenship test for naturalization.

U.S. Refugee Resettlement is a public-private partnership in which voluntary refugee resettlement agencies play a key role. These resettlement agencies who have contract with the United States Department of States, Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration, have local affiliates all over the U.S. who work with communities. As such, they have created partnerships with property companies in an effort to provide resettled refugees with safe, affordable housing. In most cases, resettled refugees end up living in inner city neighborhoods with depleted resources and high poverty rates. The children are enrolled in inner city schools and often end up in a negative, subtractive assimilation pattern, rejecting their family and cultural ties in hopes of being accepted by their American peers (McBrien, 2005). At the same time, the families are caught in poverty-like situations that take a long time to recover from (if at all), forcing them to

depend on welfare, as is in the camps where they depended on humanitarian agency handouts.

The stress that resettled refugee adults feel as a result of the traumas they have experienced often limits their effectiveness in traditional parental roles (Kugler, 2009). Parents have a hard time establishing a sense of ‘normalcy’ and setting up appropriate expectations and rules for their children because of the unfamiliarity with the new culture where all aspects of life are strange and confusing (ibid). In addition to feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, parents struggle to survive economically. Resettled refugee parents are often unable to help their children with various aspects of school and school transitions. As resettled refugee adults focus on employment, learning English, and taking care of the family’s basic needs, the lives of the children can go unattended.

Refugee rights

Opponents of the recent developments in increased advocacy for victims of failed states insist that rights granted by membership in a particular state continue to be the only ones of any worth. As Walzer (1983) pointed out, “it is not the case that one can simply proclaim a list of rights and then look around for armed men to enforce it, rights are only enforceable within political communities where they have been collectively recognized via a political process” (p.72). Any such political process requires a political arena, and “the globe is not, or not yet, such an arena.” While we continue to exist within “a community of nations, not of

humanity,” (ibid) we will continue to be granted a modicum of largely negative rights, which are designed more to protect the integrity of nations than uphold any universal human rights which may or may not exist (ibid). Walzer continues;

“Against foreigners, individuals have a right to a state of their own. Against state officials, they have rights to political and civil liberty. Without the first of these rights, the second is meaningless: as individuals need a home, so rights require a location”.

In other words, without membership in a political community, our so-called human rights are worthless.

Language acquisition

Language plays an important role in the task that adult and child refugees face in resettling in another land (Burnett, 1998; Watts et al., 2001). The newcomer’s task of adapting to life in a new country is often complicated by the need to acquire a new language. Obviously, language is not the only concern for resettled refugees in a new environment; however, one measure of resettled refugees’ overall success in adapting to their new environment is the extent to which they are successful in learning the language of their host country (Schumann, 1986).

Allen (2002) and Cheng (1998) wrote about a language problem that people specializing in immigrant and refugee work quickly recognize but that many classroom teachers overlook. It is that children may be competent at spoken, colloquial English but considerably behind in academic English. As a result, some of these children are placed in special education classes, and others are put on low academic tracks despite high

capabilities (Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990; Suarez-Orozco, 1989; Trueba,). This is evidenced in Portes and Rumbaut's (2001) study of psychosocial adjustment and identity, in which they found that children's language retention and acquisition related not only to academic achievement but also their success with acculturation and sense of continuity with their parents and others from their native country. In addition to linguistic proficiency, resettled refugee children have the task of acculturation and second language learning. Acculturation does not necessarily imply that second language learners must adopt the target group's lifestyle and values; however, learners must be socially and psychologically open to the target language group (Schumann, 1986).

Hornberger (2004) and McBrien (2005) explained that bilingual children had the highest scores, lowest levels of depression, highest self-esteem, and highest education and career goals. The researchers criticized the tendency of U.S. school policies toward English language learning that involves the pull-out of students from their classes, as this increases cultural dissonance and can cause children not only to lose their native language but also to fall short of acquiring full English proficiency (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Watters, 2008).

Schools and resettled refugee children's academic performance

“School” and “education” are familiar concepts – so much so that one might assume that all people share the same understanding of what is

meant by these terms (Chung-Muy & Congress, 2009). However, the reality is different. What children learn and how schools operate are matters that vary enormously from place to place and culture to culture. In some countries, schools are secular; in others, they are closely managed by religious authorities. Access to school is universal in some places but in others it is limited to children from well-to-do families or children of a favored ethnic background (ibid, p. 210).

Schools are not only places where the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are taught, they are also highly emotive symbols of a community's hope for the future (Waters, 2008). They are social hubs in which children meet and play, and parents share experiences (ibid, p.96). Schools may also hold a key to the enhancement of families' future through equipping children with skills that have the potential to open a degree of economic well-being hitherto unknown. Education is routinely referred to in terms of its potential for investment in the future well-being and prosperity of the community. In addition, education is generally seen, as by Durkheim, as crucially important in securing social coherence and integration. According to Durkheim (1961),

“Society can survive only if there exist among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuate and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands.”

This is achieved through the transmission of society's norms and values necessary for social solidarity and the obeying of social rules. For

refugee children, this could be a problem due to the very absence of society culture in the camps.

For resettled refugee children who have never been in a formal classroom, enrollment in schools can be daunting. One of the major tasks facing the resettled refugee child upon arriving in a new country is how to adapt to a new school environment. In coming to grips with this task, the child brings many potentially facilitating and interfering pre-migration characteristics and experiences, e.g., nature of flight and resettled refugee experience, level of literacy in first language, and parental support (Hamilton, 2005; McBrien 2005; Watters, 2008). One set of post-migration variables that critically influences the child's adaptation process resides within the school, i.e., characteristics of schools and teachers (Watters, 2008). It is important to emphasize that not only will the child be required to adapt, but schools, teachers, and existing students will also need to adapt.

Schools play a significant role in children's socialization process (Hamilton, 2005; McBrien 2005; Watters, 2008). For a resettled refugee child, this process is often violently disrupted in the home country and does not resume until the child or adolescent's education begins again with a new socialization process in a host country school. This process is often at odds with the child's home environment and previous school experience (Hamilton, 2005), e.g., differences in discipline, school culture, and learning processes. This places additional pressure on a child who has

already experienced multiple changes, trauma, and loss. In a study of Somali students in Christchurch secondary schools in Auckland, Humpage (1998) found that students had to compromise their own cultural norms to succeed; they struggled with how learning was expected to occur and were marginalized not only by experiences of racism but also because of their low socioeconomic status as resettled refugees. The same can be said for most resettled refugee children in the United States. In his work on multicultural issues within educational institutions, Cushner (1998a) noted that a tremendous gap often exists between the culture of the home and the culture of the school, and at times this gap is too great for many students to bridge. These children are often left to struggle with the dichotomy between the two environments. However, Cushner states that an effective school recognizes this dilemma and aids the child and family in understanding that with effort, both realities can be accommodated (Cushner, 1998a).

When we focus on the experience of resettled refugee children it has been noted that they generally adjust to the new settings in which they are placed (Ahearn & Athey, 1991). Nevertheless, research on resettled refugee children and adolescents (Kinzie, Sack, Angell, Manson, & Rath, 1986; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Corin, 1998) has also revealed that a significant number of resettled refugee children who have experienced loss and trauma exhibit emotional problems upon resettlement. These differences reflect that resettled refugees are not a uniform group and that each

individual will respond to resettlement differently depending on variables that include cultural, social, economic, and developmental differences, alongside differences the degree of loss and trauma experienced.

Many resettled refugees come from pre-literate and pre-technological cultures; their previous life was very different from the lifestyles found in middle-income, industrialized cultures. Some of the children were born in refugee camps; they have never known life outside of these camps. They may have had no formal education, language training, or experience with Western societies. These children are tremendously dependent on the school system for academic guidance because the parents of these children have had little or no exposure to formal education and may be not literate in any language (McBrien, 2005; Watters, 2008).

Newly arrived resettled refugee children in United States may fall through the "socioeconomic cracks" of U.S. society. They take their places next to people from the so-called native (involuntary) minority groups (e.g., African Americans) and some voluntary minority/immigrant groups (Ogbu, 1987), most of whom have been exposed to long-lasting social, economic, and educational problems, as well as discrimination in the legal, educational, and socioeconomic system (Buras & Apple, 2006). Newly arrived resettled refugee students have no choice but to assimilate into an impoverished socioeconomic group. We have repeatedly observed the devastating effects of racial segregation, poverty, and blocked educational

opportunities on the academic achievement, adult outcomes, and overall quality of life of minority children and their families (Feagin, 2001; Kozol, 2005).

Compounded with the already difficult task of coping with post-traumatic stress as a result of repeatedly fleeing across international borders and the challenges associated with adjusting to a new culture in U.S. urban centers, graduating from a high school can be a daunting task for many resettled refugee children. One important hindrance to successfully completing secondary education is the policy of age-appropriate placement of children in schools, which continues to have adverse effects on resettled refugee children's academic achievement and completion. A recent February 2010 report from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), which administers the Refugee School Impact Grant funded through the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, stated that the major challenge is meeting the academic needs of teenage resettled refugee students in high schools who have experienced significant gaps in education, especially in core skills such as language arts, math, and science (ADE 2010). Often, such a student also lacks basic literacy in his/her native language, and he/she is unable to access a translation dictionary. In addition, the report also stated challenges in female students' participation in programs.

Behavior, motivation, and cultural issues

Behavior of resettled refugee students who may come from countries currently engaged in conflict or post-conflict reconstruction may pose a challenge. Principals and school administrators acknowledge that anger management issues sometimes arise among students who have had a difficult past in their home country (Machel, 2001). However, it was also expressed that problems can manifest themselves in reverse, where the children may be very withdrawn and depressed, don't interact with children of their own age, and won't get involved in social activities like play during recess time (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999; Elias & Tobias, 1996; Kinzie, Sack, Angell, Manson, & Rath, 1986; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Corin, 1998; Watters, 2008).

Resettled refugees have been known to exhibit a high degree of resilience (Chang-Muy & Congress, 2009; Watters, 2008), which is defined in psychological literature as “a dynamic developmental process reflecting evidence of positive adaptation despite significant life adversity” (Cicchetti, 2003 p. XX). Masten and Powell (2003) have described resilience as an inference about a person's life that requires two fundamental judgments; that the person is ‘doing okay’ and that there is now or has been significant risk or adversity to overcome. Studies about resettled refugee children often describe the presence of multiple risks (Chang-Muy & Congress, 2009; Hamilton, 2005; McBrien, 2005; Watters, 2008). According to a 2006 review of intervention for resettled refugee

children in New Zealand schools published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education, the risk factors of being a resettled refugee are enumerated as: experience of war; famine; persecution; violence; flight; loss of home, way of life, family, and friends; and involuntary migration. Though all of these factors have the potential of affecting resettled refugee children's behavior and adjustment in schools, the determination and high aspiration associated with schooling often makes resettled refugee children and families work even harder.

Coming to the United States (or any other refugee resettlement country) in search of a better life for their children, resettled refugee families care greatly about education and have high aspirations for their children. As resettled refugee children enter school, they are optimistic about their future and tend to work hard (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004; Olneck, 2004; Shields & Behrman, 2004). Yet that is not what you may hear from many American educators. Faculty and administrators raise concerns that these students don't pay attention in class or act out and that their families don't support the school (Kugler, 2009). Oft-heard faculty remarks about these students tell the story: "They don't have the experiences necessary for school," "they lack basic social skills," and/or "their parents don't care" (ibid).

Clearly there is a disconnect. One factor that educators are likely to overlook is that many resettled refugee students and their families face unique emotional and behavioral health issues, and these issues can be

barriers to school success (Hamilton, 2005; Kugler, 2009, McBrien, 2005). Teachers and administrators, held accountable for student achievement, focus on teaching strategies and educational performance; and they may miss cues pointing to emotional or behavioral issues that impact student achievement. Recognizing the mental health needs of resettled refugee students, and engaging the entire family in addressing them, can build a crucial home-school partnership that may open doors to student success (Kugler, 2009).

When an individual is traumatically uprooted from their social, environmental, spiritual, and economic structures, it can produce intense and profound grief (Frater-Mathieson, 2004). However, the resettled refugee experience typically does not fit into classic grief or trauma theories; it instead needs to incorporate a specific form of cultural construction and therapeutic help within the framework of individuals' experiences of monumental social loss (ibid).

Resettled refugee students experiencing distress associated with their life experiences usually have limited access to mental health care in the U.S., and they face cultural barriers as well as language (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004; Rousseau, Drapeau, & Corin, 1996), such as uneasiness about revealing personal information to non-family members (Birman, Beehler, Harris, et al., 2008; Hernandez, 2004; Kouyoumdjia, Zamboanga, & Hansen, 2003). While some students become major disruptive forces in the classroom, others fade into the background,

perhaps viewed as disinterested or unwilling to learn (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000). They may display symptoms of PTSD (Ellis, Macdonald, Lincoln, et al., 2008; Lustig, Kia-Keating, & Knight, 2005), depression (Kliewer, Lepore, Oskin, et al., 1998) and behavioral problems (Birman, Ho, Pulley, et al., 2005). These symptoms have been linked to lower academic achievement, as well as dropping out of school before graduation. Recognizing the unmet mental health needs of immigrant and resettled refugee children and youth and the vital role of families in securing help, in 2007 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) created the Caring Across Communities (CAC) Initiative (Kugler, 2009). The \$4.5 million grant was aimed at reducing emotional and behavioral health problems among students in low-income immigrant and resettled refugee families. The grants support a range of innovative partnerships among schools, mental health service providers, and immigrant or resettled refugee community organizations (ibid).

Culture is a core factor in individual well-being. Resettled refugees' cultural roles and expectations about their children might contrast sharply with those of the host countries. For example, many families may not allow their daughters to participate in after-school enrichment programs aimed at assisting students with remedial classes because of cultural norms, expectation of help with family chores or both (Watters, 2008). School staff may have to make a home visit to encourage parental support, especially of their female children. Many times, personal contact helps the

parent understand the program, and they may allow their daughters to participate (ibid). Nonetheless, challenges exist in effectively providing culturally and linguistically appropriate education to recently resettled refugees. Although some educators may know a lot about the culture and language of the immigrant children and families they are serving, others may not. Regrettably, some educators may hold negative preconceptions about children from specific ethnic, cultural, and/or linguistic groups and consequently have low expectations for these children (Hamilton, 2005; McBrien, 2005; Watters, 2008). The result is further marginalization.

School environment: Norms, rules and expectations

To serve the needs of resettled refugee students in the United States, policies need to exist to establish guidelines for educational entitlement and services. A careful review of the available information regarding these rights and services suggests that resettled refugees are frequently categorized with other immigrant children, regardless of their background or reasons for immigration (Stewart, 1993). This policy gap in distinguishing resettled refugee youth from other immigrant children begs the question: are these students' needs served within U.S. public schools?

Jill Rutter (1994) conducted extensive research on resettled refugee children residing in Britain. The issues faced by resettled refugee youth are diverse, but she cites the following list of common problems experienced by students, based on information from the Refugee Council: obstacles in finding a school to attend, schools' failure to accept documentation, issues

adjusting to a new school, educational problems caused by the home environment, withdrawn and aggressive behavior, inability to concentrate, racist bullying by other students, feeling that teachers have preconceived notions regarding the students, and lack of language support (Rutter, 1994). Though general, this list provides insight into the broad categories of difficulties that resettled refugee youth may face. In his research on immigration and education, Stewart (1993) argued that resettled refugee youth commonly begin their education in the United States at a disadvantage to a typical immigrant. Most of them do not have prior ties to this country and are less likely to have transferable skills. Furthermore, resettled refugees are not as apt to have a well-established community of compatriots in the United States, and they are unable to maintain economic or social ties with their home country. (Stewart, 1993, p. 51)

Because resettled refugee children may not have had any former schooling, it is very difficult for them to understand what is expected. School is an extremely important setting for resettled refugee children because it is at school that they encounter American culture and are socialized into its norms (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999; McBrien, 2005; Stewart, 1993). However, most of the rules and norms in U.S. schools and classrooms are implicit; they are not explicitly explained, but rather they are absorbed by children during their school experience and from their surroundings. For resettled refugee students, even the most simple and basic of the rules may need to be made explicit because of their lack of

experience with the U.S. schooling (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999; Elias & Tobias, 1996)

While in other countries, schools may rely on close monitoring, strict punishment, and discipline to manage student academic work and behavior, U.S. schools expect children to take responsibility for their own work and behavior. Resettled refugee parents may assume that schools and teachers are closely monitoring their child's behavior and performance at school, while this "rule" or "norm" of being responsible for one's own work without constant monitoring is particularly subtle, yet extremely important (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999; Elias & Tobias, 1996). For these reasons, it is very important for schools and teachers to be extremely explicit about rules and provide resettled refugee children with extensive orientation to the classroom. Orally explaining the rules to students and posting rules around the classroom can be helpful in that it provides limited English speakers opportunities to hear them, as well as see them in writing. Posters and posted slogans that clarify classroom rules will serve as ongoing reminders. Modeling a behavior by having the student watch someone else be rewarded for that behavior is another technique that works particularly well when English language skills are poor (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999).

In coping with the transition to schools and a new country, resettled refugee students are unlikely to have access to the support and company of peers who went through similar experiences. This is made even more

difficult because being “different” is not easy in U.S. schools, especially for middle- and high-school-age children (Adkins, Birman, & Sample, 1999; Elias & Tobias, 1996). Teachers may need to give resettled refugee students more attention and form a mentoring relationship with them (Snow et al., 1996).

Transitioning to a novel environment has been proven to be very stressful for children. Resettled refugee students may not express their stress through words or may not appear sad (Birman, 2002). However, changes in their behavior may be signals that the student is very upset and having difficulty adjusting (p. 49). It is extremely important not to ignore inappropriate behaviors and to help students cope with new problems. Assistance may be in the form of school-wide or classroom-specific interventions that improve social and learning environments for all students and/or individualized interventions that provide academic support or other needed services to individual students (Birman, 2002).

Unless schools are a safe environment in which one can flourish without being victimized, taunted, bullied, or at worse, physically harmed, resettled refugee children will be seriously hampered in their attempts to learn and develop. As is evident from recent incidents in schools, particularly in the United States, schools are becoming increasingly unsafe (Nolin, 1996). Elsewhere, , in New Zealand for example, there appears to be an increase in the incidence of violence in schools, as well as an overall high level of bullying (Sell, 1999). Bullying is now recognized as a serious

problem in many educational systems throughout the world. Estimates indicate that 30% or more of students have either been the victim of a bully or have been a bully at some point in his or her schooling (Snow et al., 1996). According to Olweus (1998), who has done research on bullying in Scandinavia, the United States, and other selected European countries, most bullying occurs at school, rather than on the way to or from school. Teachers usually do little to stop it, and most parents are unaware that bullying is occurring.

One of the critical determinants of whether an individual student will be the target of bullying or inappropriate treatment is the degree to which they conform to the prevailing norms or values of the majority culture (Olweus, 1998;Watters, 2008). In the case of integrating resettled refugee students into schools, there is a high potential for resettled refugees to be the target of bullying and racism. Schools need to adopt strict policies and procedures in order to ensure that resettled refugees are not subject to bullying and racism (Olweus, 1998).

Role change

Regardless of age, resettled refugee children tend to adapt more quickly to the host society than their parents (Nguyen and Williams, 1989). This frequently leads to the “parentification” of the child, whereby the parents give the child the onerous responsibilities of helping them in their daily interactions with the host society (Grizenko, Sayegh, & Migneault, 1992). Children must contend not only with their own changing

roles but also those of their parents. While it might seem fun for the children, it can also be a point of contention in families because the child is under pressure to assume roles for which he/she might not be ready (Fong, 2004; Watters, 2008) or that feel inappropriate. For example, many researchers have documented that many immigrant and resettled refugee parents have their children interpret at doctor's visits (Chang-Muy & Congress, 2009; Fong, 2004; Hamilton, 2005). This is unethical and illegal.

In their quest to be well adjusted and accepted by their peers, resettled refugee children often experience two core displacements (Watters, 2008). In the first, they leave their homes and countries of origin, and during the second they gradually disengage from familiar family and cultural groupings to assume new identities and conform to the structures and categories of the host society (ibid). Faster adjustment depends on the resources available to the resettled refugee individual and their family. If the host community is aware of the resettled refugees' needs and accepts them, then the adjustment is smooth. But where there are difficulties in accepting the resettled refugees in resource-limited communities, effective resettlement should be approached with caution.

In sum, it has not been possible to comprehensively cover all issues relating to resettled refugees and education throughout the world, as such a task would require extensive and possibly longitudinal research and is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I have tried to emphasize

the enormous diversity of challenges that the changing context of refugee migration presents in different parts of the world, and, thus, indirectly, the diversity of challenges that these developments imply for the international refugee regime in their effort to provide protection, repatriation and/or durable solutions.

To recap, less than one percent of the more than 13 million estimated worldwide refugees are resettled in a third country (UNHCR, 2007). While this statistic is bleak, resettlement prospects appear to be dwindling further due to worldwide escalating and sporadic civil unrest, issues relating to international terrorism and countries' willingness to provide protection, a lack of resources that generates conflict between locals and resettled refugees, long stays in camps and subsequent militarization of camps, and frequent attacks from cross-border militia groups. Added to these challenges are those of learning new languages, access issues, intergenerational and cultural clashes leading to role-reversals, the lack of willingness by nation states embracing the concept burden-sharing associated with providing durable solution for refugees continue to dominate the international debates. While the road to resettlement might be paved with opportunities for refugees, educational, cultural, psychosocial, and economic adaptation directly impact successful resettlement outcomes for resettled refugees in the United States and elsewhere (Ager, 1996; Lee, 2001; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Summerfield, 2000). For newly arrived resettled refugee

children yearning for the “American Dream,” educators need to move beyond overly simplified systemic and theoretical categories and holistically address their needs and strengths. It is evident that the educational needs are not adequately addressed in the United States. What is still lacking in the literature is how resettled refugee children analogically and jointly, as active agents, navigate and orchestrate the cultural, historical, social, and systemic factors in/through their day-to-day participation in U.S. schools.

Refugees are a litmus test for the notion of human rights. Their escalating number is an indication of state/nation’s failure to uphold the most basic human right – the right to life. Eglantyne Jebb, the Founder of Save the Children, said in 1928 “mankind as a whole is responsible for the world as a whole.” Although mankind may never be a “whole,” we can continue to hope and take heed of a quote from Jose Saramago,

The time has come to decide what we want to do. I am convinced the entire population is blind, at least that is my impression from observing the behavior of people I have seen so far ... I cannot say where there will be a future, what matters for the moment is to see how we can live in the present. Without a future the present serves no purpose, it’s as if it did not exist. Perhaps humanity will manage to live without eyes, but then it will cease to be humanity (José Saramago, *Blindness*, pp. 228-229 in Polakov, 2000).

In summary, the body of research on refugee resettlement and effective acculturation points to innovative ways of engaging resettled refugee students and their families in school. A sporadic patchwork of resources and supports are not enough in setting the stage for refugee resettlement. Rather, a system of service delivery is needed for the U.S. to

help rebuild resettled refugee families' lives, many of whom are reliant on the successful education and adjustment of their children. A small number of schools have generic resettled refugee support programs that are uninformed by input from the resettled refugees themselves or research on the effectiveness of these programs for particular groups of resettled refugee students (Kanu, 2009). It is in this context that my three research questions are worthy of undertaking: (a) What are the factors considered by students and mentors as contributing to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona?; (b) How do graduates describe their sources of support and challenges?; and (c) How do mentors describe the roles they played in the student's success?

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative exploratory study using the phenomenology tradition that aimed to increase understanding of factors considered by resettled refugee students and mentors as contributing to the successful completion of high school. The study was conducted between June and December 2011. In addition to identifying sources of support that may exist for these recent graduates, the study also looked at coping strategies of resettled refugee students as they attend Arizona high schools. Participants in the study were from the three largest arriving refugee communities in Arizona, namely Iraqi, Bhutanese, and Burmese, who recently (since 2007) graduated from Arizona urban high schools.

The primary research questions guiding the study were:

1. What are the factors considered by students and mentors to contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona?
 - a) How do graduates describe their sources of support and challenges?
 - b) How do mentors describe the roles they played in the student's success?

The main purpose of qualitative research methodology is to understand people's actions and their meaning in a given context (Morrow & Smith, 2000). For this purpose, I conducted a phenomenological

interview-based study, in which participants talked about their experiences comprehensively (Holstein, 1997). According to Holstein (1997), these descriptions provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis to portray the essences of the experience. The researcher then describes the structure of the experience based on reflection and interpretation of the research participant's story or answers to the questions asked (Moustakas, 1994). The aim is to determine what particular experiences mean for the people who went through them. Alfred Schutz (1967, 1970), who introduced phenomenology, argued that reality is "socially constructed rather than being out there for us to observe." People describe their world not "as it is" but "as they make sense of it" (Babbie, 2011). From there, general meanings are derived, and findings are linked to larger theories as appropriate. Phenomenologists see the need to make sense out of informants' perception of the world and use interviews to do so (Moustakas, 1994).

In this study, primary data were drawn from individual interviews, focus groups, documents, and field notes. Secondary descriptive statistical data on resettled refugee children's high school enrollment and graduation rates and resettled refugee arrival numbers were also used in building the framework and drawing conclusions. Together, this information helped provide insight into a social, cultural, and historical phenomenon of resettled refugee students' perceived motivation to learn and how they

were able to succeed amidst many challenges they encountered as urban high school students.

Examining the learning process and enacting new cultural models from a sociocultural perspective allows us to understand how existing values, beliefs, economic constraints, and other sociocultural and political factors affect students' identities and performance, how these may shift from context to context, and how they are socially negotiated. Using sociocultural theory, Monzó and Rueda (2003) conducted an ethnographic study of eight Latino immigrants to capture the complexity of acculturation. They determined that people are active agents of their own learning and draw on various resources as necessary in any given context. Sociocultural theory involves taking field-specific inquiries and extending them to account for the impact of social interaction and cultural and political phenomena involving people (Schoen, 2011). Sociocultural theory was chosen for this study because sociocultural research requires both content-specific knowledge and awareness of research traditions and processes; in addition, it necessitates the added dimension of thinking about the phenomenon in a way that takes into account both the big picture and the embedded context in which it occurs (ibid). In other words, socioculturalists are able to examine the interplay of individual, social, and /or cultural factors and explain how these variables collectively impact human motivations and efforts. From a socioculturalist standpoint,

elements in the social environment (e.g., the classroom, school and family and community) directly or indirectly impact educational outcomes.

It is in this regard that a qualitative research approach was chosen to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997) using a holistic perspective that preserves the complexities of human behavior (Creswell, 1998). This exploratory qualitative research attempts to understand and explain participant meaning (Morrow & Smith, 2000) as they relate to life experiences in United States high schools and the associated challenges and triumphs.

Setting

This study was conducted in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona. These two sites were chosen because the majority of newly arriving refugees in Arizona are resettled in these two cities. Traditionally, the U.S. Refugee Resettlement program encourages refugee-assisting agencies to resettle refugees in cities and towns with good public transportation and housing and employment opportunities. Before the economic downturn, both sites had relatively stable employment for resettled refugees, who normally start at entry-level positions.

Because newly arriving refugees are resettled anywhere in the communities where the resettling agency can find decent, affordable housing, it was not easy to target specific schools for enrolling study participants. The diversity of student enrollment in the five schools that the participants attended were, on average, 55.4% Hispanic (45-77%),

21.5% Anglo (8-33%), 13.6 percent African American (9-14%), and approximately 10% Native American and Asian (combined). Three of the schools were in the Phoenix metropolitan area, and the other two were in Tucson. While some schools were rated as “excelling schools” according to the Arizona Department of Education’s school performance ratings, others did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) indicators for several consecutive years. All of the schools are considered as urban or inner city schools, which many Americans believe fail to educate the students they serve. This perception is fed by considerable research and numerous observations that urban school students achieve less, attain a lower level of education, and encounter less success in the labor market later in life. If the urban schools are in areas with a high poverty concentration, students’ performances can be further adversely affected.

Participants

Using resettled refugee arrival data obtained from the Arizona State Refugee Coordinators’ office, participants were chosen from the three largest, most recently arrived refugee groups resettling in Arizona. These are Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi. I chose to study these groups because except for the Iraqis, these groups did not have previously resettled refugee populations that could serve as a resource to help with their adjustment to the United States. Iraqis have groups that arrived in the early and middle 1990s during the Gulf wars.

Purposive and convenience sampling were used in the study. Purposive sampling was only employed for recruiting resettled refugees from the three countries of origin, and convenience sampling was used in narrowing down participants based on gender balance and availability for participation. The study included 22 participants: 12 resettled refugee students (6 male and 6 female) and 10 mentors. Student participants were chosen based on their willingness to participate in both an individual interview and focus group discussions. Where I was not able to get two participants from a resettled refugee community, snowballing and word-of-mouth was used to recruit a second participant. This meant that individual interviews and recruitment occurred simultaneously until the desired number was reached.

Student study participants were newly arrived resettled refugees from Bhutan, Burma, and Iraq. As mentioned above, these three countries have supplied the largest number of newly arriving refugees resettling in Arizona since 2007. Between federal fiscal year 2007 and the end of 2010, 4,160 Iraqi, 3,074 Burmese, and 1,759 Bhutanese resettled refugees were resettled in Arizona. Together, these numbers represent over 62% of the total number resettled during this period (8,993 out of 14,500) (Arizona Refugee Resettlement Program, June, 2011). It is worth noting that these values do not include a significant number of secondary migrants moving from other states to Arizona.

Before any interview was conducted, a detailed explanation of the research procedures and possible contributions of this study were provided, and it was emphasized that study was completely voluntary and anonymous. Participants were asked to sign the consent forms at every individual and group session (Appendices C,D, E and F).

Recruitment Process

Recruitment began upon study approval by the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at Arizona State University in June 2011. Recruitment fliers (see Appendix B) were distributed at resettled refugee events, refugee resettlement agencies, and ethnic community-based refugee organizations (ECBO, also known as Mutual Assistance Association's (MAA) offices). Face-to-face recruiting was also done at community events.

Due to my prior experience working at the State Refugee Coordinator's office, it was easy to gain the trust of community leaders to help in recruitment. However, there were many referrals that did not meet the study criteria. I specifically looked for resettled refugees from Bhutan, Burma, or Iraq who started U.S. schooling at grade 10 or above who completed high school after 2007. However, many of the referrals had been in the U.S. longer, started their studies at college levels, or were still in high school. The overwhelming number of responses (whether eligible to participate in the study or not) signified the need for the study.

Information about the study was shared at the informal group meeting of refugee-serving organizations in Tucson called Refugee Integration and Service Provider Network (RISP-Net). This meeting is held every month and is open to resettled refugees and members of the general public. The group has been consistently meeting for over five years and has made important strides in raising awareness about resettled refugees and their unique potentials and needs. Various meetings held in Phoenix also provided avenues for participant recruitment.

Information was also shared at quarterly meetings held by the State Refugee Coordinators' office in accordance with 45 Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR § 400.5 (h)). The statute requires that states resettling refugees convene quarterly meetings that provide an opportunity for representatives of local refugee resettlement agencies, local community service agencies, and other refugee-serving agencies to meet with representatives of state and local governments to plan and coordinate appropriate refugee placement in advance of their arrival. At these quarterly meetings, Arizona refugee-serving organizations and representatives from state agencies come together to discuss trends in resettled refugee arrivals, current issues facing resettled refugees, and brainstorm refugee arrival projections. Over the years, this forum has evolved to a mini-conference where the meeting runs for a full day with morning and afternoon break-out sessions to discuss pertinent issues and a mid-day general session where all participants come together and hear

from the State Refugee Coordinators' office and other announcements regarding new programs, grants, or issues of common interest. There is also a question and answer session, and participants have an opportunity to announce upcoming events.

Oktoberfest is also becoming an important festive session for refugee-serving organizations in Arizona. In the past few years, there have been series of activities planned for a week in the month of October in both Phoenix and Tucson aimed at raising awareness about resettled refugees, sharing cultures, and celebrating the diversity of refugees resettling in Arizona. Information about the study was also passed out at this event, and face-to-face recruitment was conducted.

Data Collection Procedures

Each student who called to show an interest in participating in the research was added to a list until it had 12 participants, as gender-balanced as possible. The list had each participant's contact information, including phone number and e-mail address that were only used to follow-up discussions or to clarify specific points. During the first phone call or e-mail contact, I answered any questions that participants had about the study and interview protocol. Face-to-face recruitment provided opportunities to discuss the research, and willing participants enrolled on-site. Others were handed the recruitment flier and advised to contact me if they wanted to participate in the study. After this initial contact, if the participant showed continued interest in the study, I arranged a time and

convenient location for an interview. Just before they were given the consent form to sign, the participants were again asked about their interest in the study, and we went over the research purpose, protocols, and confidentiality and answered any questions they might have. Participants were also reminded that interviews would be recorded. After that, each participant was asked to sign the informed consent form. No interviews occurred without signed consent.

Each student participant was asked to identify two significant persons in the order of priority who were instrumental in helping him or her complete their high school education. Each person identified as highest priority was invited to participate in the study. In the case where the first person was not available, the invitation was extended to the second person nominated by the participant. The student participants were encouraged to contact their mentor to let him/her know that I would be contacting them. Once I received confirmation that contact had been made, I called the mentor to discuss the study. After this initial contact, if the participant showed continued interest in the study, a time and convenient location for an interview was arranged. Again, just before the mentor was presented with the consent form, they were asked about their continued interest in the study and we went over the research purpose, protocols, and confidentiality, and I answered any questions they had. Each mentor was also reminded that interviews were recorded. After that,

each mentor was asked to sign the informed consent form. No interviews occurred without the signed consent.

Following Erickson's (1986) suggestion on data collection, I also aimed to collect data regarding events occurring at any system level (e.g., the classroom, the school) in the context of events occurring at other system levels (e.g., home, community). (Erickson, 1986, p. 143).

Participant interviews

There is no such thing as a worthless conversation, provided you know what to listen for. And questions are the breath of life for a conversation.

James Nathan Miller (1965, p.257)

Interviews allow the assessment of people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality (Punch, 2004). It is one of the most powerful ways of understanding others. As Jones put it:

In order to understand other person's constructions of reality, we would do well to ask them ...and to ask them in a way that they can tell us their terms (rather than those imposed rigidly and *a priori* by ourselves) and in a depth which addresses the rich context that is the substance of their meaning (1985, pp.168-169)

I used semi-structured interviews with a fixed set of demographic items. This way, the interviews were flexible and allowed for new questions to be brought up in response to what the interviewee said. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer generally has a framework of themes to be explored (Punch, 2004). In this case, these themes were: (a) the students' pre-migration war experiences, trans-migration resettled refugee camp experiences, and any impact these experiences had on their learning and psychosocial adjustment; (b) post migration experiences in

America; (c) barriers to social integration and academic success in America and how these were overcome; and (d) interventions needed to help them integrate and succeed in school (see Appendix D). This approach was used because it allowed greater flexibility with what Douglas (1985) called “creative interviewing,” which provides opportunities for successful in-depth interviews. Also, Swadener, Kabiru, and Njenga (2000) mentioned Glesne and Peshkin (1992) as advocating the use of semi-structured interview procedures, stating that, “Qualitative inquiry is evolutionary, with a problem statement, a design, interview questions and interpretations developing and changing along the way” (p.257). Therefore, this research employed semi-structured interviewing techniques (see interview protocol in Appendix C).

Individual interviews allowed for re-visiting and gave participants the opportunity to say things that they might not have felt comfortable talking about during the focus group discussion. Each individual student interview took between 60 and 90 minutes with an average interview lasting approximately 70 minutes. This time does not include initial contact or follow-up time for clarifications. Mentor interviews ran for 90 minutes. All the interviews were conducted at a time and place that were convenient for the participants. Four of the student interviews were conducted at the parent’s home, and the others took place at libraries and community centers.

Student interviews focused on culture; schooling experience; and challenges, successes, support, and motivation that helped them complete their high school education. The time I had spent in the setting and my prior work and research projects with resettled refugee youth and urban schools helped me to develop better *experiential data* (Strauss, 1987) based on my prior knowledge and experiences regarding the phenomena studied and the participants' communities. Knowing something about the participants' ethnic group and trusted community leaders helped set the stage for trust and willingness to discuss their resettlement experience.

Mentor interviews (see Appendix F) focused on how mentors came to know the participants, what they saw in the students that led them to become involved in their education, their opinion about schools, recommendations for how resettled refugee students can successfully complete high school, and any other suggestions about resettled refugee education in general.

Three focus group discussions with student participants at both locations (one in Phoenix and two in Tucson) helped encourage participants to speak as a group and build on each other's points and encouraging dialogues. Writing about focus groups, Morgan (1988) pointed out that "the hallmark of focus group is the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group." When warranted, opportunistic interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) were also

conducted during the discussion to shed light on emerging points of importance to the study. The group situation stimulates people to explicitly state their views, perceptions, motives, and reasons (Punch, 2004).

Logistics

During the first few weeks, I made several trips to meet with six student participants and four mentors in Tucson. In total, I made eight trips; six for individual interviews (students and mentors) and two for focus group discussions. The first focus group discussion in Tucson did not go as well as I had initially planned. Participants talked primarily about themselves and what they were currently doing. As I tried to keep the discussion on track, we ended up repeatedly discussing Iraq, Burma, and Bhutan. In addition, lots of discussion regarding college applications and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) took place as participants exchanged contact information and made friends. I was able to reconvene the group again in December 2011 and discuss three main topics that came out of the discussion. Due to participants' work and school schedules, most interviews, both in Phoenix and Tucson, were done in the evenings and on weekends.

As I collected the data, I transcribed and analyzed the field notes and interviews as soon as possible following the interviews. Although all the interviews were recorded, I also took field notes on nonverbal gestures and behaviors. All recordings were then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

No translation was required and all interviews were conducted in English. Students were asked about life in the refugee camps and their schooling experiences. The majority of the time was spent on their resettlement experience and time in high school in the U.S. I used a variety of semi-structured and open-ended questions such as “Tell me your general knowledge about resettled refugees and how you got involved” (for mentors) and “What are some of the barriers that resettled refugee children experience at high school?” (For student participants), with the intention of encouraging students to talk about significant elements (e.g., time, people, events, and activities) of American high school. Such open-ended questions allowed me to probe deeper into the initial responses of the respondents to gain more detailed answers to the questions (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997). Structured, close-ended questions such as “Did you work in the refugee camp?” were also used.

Document collection/secondary data

Document analysis is used in various ways in qualitative social research. In this study, documentary data were collected in conjunction with interviews. This way, the documentary data helped in triangulation, as different set of method and data types were used (Denzin, 1989). Documentary products are especially important in providing “a rich vein for analysis” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). As such, the Arizona Department of Education’s (ADE) Student Accountability Information System (SAIS) data on resettled refugee students’ enrollment and

graduation rates in the state were used. In addition, data from the Arizona Department of Economic Security Refugee Resettlement Program (RRP), which keeps all data on refugee arrival in the state and other pertinent information like countries/regions of origin and resettlement site (usually either in Phoenix or Tucson metropolitan areas), were used in helping draw conclusions. This was only done to triangulate findings from interviews and focus group data and provide a framework/context for discussion. Data from the RRP was readily available and, unlike the ADE, staff members were very cooperative.

I placed an official request for data regarding resettled refugee students' graduation rates to the ADE. The initial request was submitted on December 22, 2010 (prior to the beginning of this research). The ADE tracks resettled refugee students using an identification number through the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS). The hope was that because they track students' progress, I would be able to get: (a) number of resettled refugee children that graduated between academic year 2006/2007 and academic year 2009/2010, (b) the number that graduated with the same cohort as they started, (c) the number that dropped out (and reason, if known), and (d) number that took an alternative path (e.g., the general education development (GED) exam). I received aggregate data (number of resettled refugee students that graduated) from the State Refugee Education Coordinator who works at ADE but was advised to put in another formal request for information to the ADE data warehouse for

the other data. This request was submitted on June 21, 2011. After 63 e-mail follow-ups and 21 telephone calls, some of which weren't pleasant, I was sent a haphazardly assembled file that showed groups that I thought were not resettled refugees. The classification included African American, Whites, American Indians, and Mexicans. When I requested for an explanation regarding this classification, I was initially met with resistance. After a change in staff, I was told that, "these are pre-determined categorizations set by the US Census."(Telephone conversation with ADE, October 12, 2011).

Because the detailed data from ADE were not what I requested, the aggregate data I received from the State Refugee Education Coordinator is what I used to contextualize the qualitative findings.

Data analysis

Due to the emergent nature of the data from qualitative studies, an interview-based approach derived from the phenomenological design was used. Phenomenological inquiry proposes that individuals approach the world with a stock of knowledge made up of common sense constructs and categories that are essentially social in action (Schutz, 1967). These stocks of knowledge produce familiarity. For example, language is the central medium for transmitting meaning and, as such, provides a methodological orientation for a phenomenology of social life that is concerned with the relationship between language use and the objects of experience

(Goulding, 2004). The goal of phenomenology is to enlarge and deepen understanding of the range of immediate experiences (Spiegelberg, 1982).

As a means of interpretation, in his analysis of consumer experiences, Thompson (1997) advocated part to whole analysis of participant accounts by proceeding through an interactive process. This involves reading texts (interview transcripts) in full, in order to first gain a sense of the whole picture. After several readings of the text, the next stage is hermeneutic endeavor (Thompson et al., 1990) or intertextuality (Thompson, 1997), whereby patterns and differences are sought across transcripts. This strategy of interpretation must broaden the analysis to include a wider range of considerations that helps the researcher arrive at a holistic interpretation. There must also be recognition that the final explanation represents a fusion of horizons between the interpreter's frame of reference and the texts being interpreted (Thompson, 1997). This is largely concurrent with the process outlined by Colaizzi (1978), who suggested a series of seven steps:

1. The first task of the researcher is to read the participants narratives, to acquire a feeling for their ideas in order to understand them fully.
2. Extracting significant statements requires the researcher to identify key words and sentences relating to the phenomenon under study.

3. The researcher then attempts to formulate meanings for each of these significant statements.
4. This process is repeated across participants' stories, and recurrent meaningful themes are clustered. These may be validated by returning to the informants to verify interpretation.
5. At this point, the researcher should be able to integrate the resulting themes into a rich description of the studied phenomenon.
6. The next step is to reduce these themes to an essential structure that offers an explanation of the behavior.
7. Finally, the researcher may return to the participants to conduct further interviews or elicit their opinions on the analysis in order to cross check interpretation.

Because phenomenology demands that intense reflection is an integral part of the process, I hoped to discover the deeper meaning of the “lived” experience in the sociocultural worlds of these resettled refugee youth in their relationship with time, space, and community (Stern, 1994). I also conducted analyses by scrutinizing the interviews and word choices while looking for meaning “units” that describe the central aspects of their experiences. These were then synthesized to provide a general description of the “whole” (Goulding, 2004).

Secondary data used in this study were all from credible sources, such as state and/or federal agency reports. These data generally have a pre-established degree of validity and reliability, which need not be re-examined by the secondary researcher (Cresswell, 2005).

Throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data, I kept written memos to keep track of and link theoretical ideas that emerged (Strauss, 1987). Memos are notations of the researcher's reflexive thoughts throughout the research process that allow the researcher to "elaborate on ideas about the data and the coded categories...and explore hunches, ideas, and thoughts" (Cresswell, 2005, p. 411).

Ethical considerations

The cover letter shared with all participants stated that "participation in this study is voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time." Participants were assured of confidentiality. Although I needed their names so I could conduct follow-up conversations for clarifications, participants were reminded about confidentiality before all interviews were conducted. Pseudonyms are used in the results to protect confidentiality of data.

I anticipated that participating in this study might evoke painful memories. For example, reflecting on possible past traumatic resettled refugee experiences, viewpoints, or opinions could cause some discomfort. Though no incidences occurred, I was prepared to encourage participants to contact supervising faculty or myself if they experienced discomfort and

needed support during the interview or focus group discussion or any time throughout the study period. Our phone numbers were included in the cover letter, and participants would have been assisted in finding an appropriate professional in their area as needed. Although the risks for participants were minimal, measures were undertaken to protect the participants.

I acknowledge my cultural competence to work with resettled refugee participants in this research and approached participants with care and cultural sensitivity. In addition to my familiarity with research protocols, I have also worked with children and adult resettled refugees and trauma survivors from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, both in the United States and in Africa. I tried to critically and carefully represent the participants' voices and use data generation, writing methods, and theories to maximize their representation in the study (Emerson et al., 2001; Swadener & Mutua, 2004, 2008). Lastly, I made sure that the information generated in the proposed study would be beneficial and relevant to both resettled refugees and host communities in the United States. In the following chapters, I present findings that address the research questions via analytical comments, vignettes, quotes, supporting documents, and classroom interactions that represent general data trends in light of the relative literature.

Chapter 4

PARTICIPANT AND STATE BACKGROUND

“I know that I shall overcome these dark moments because ... Allah is there for me and I am determined. I also have the support of my parents, especially my dad.” (Interview with Amina, resettled refugee student from Iraq, June 26, 2011).

This study was guided by sociocultural theory and examined factors considered by resettled refugee students and mentors as contributing to successful resettled refugee high school graduation in Arizona. Sociocultural philosophy is concerned with how individuals, social, and contextual issues impact human activity, especially learning and behavior (Schoen, 2011). Socioculturalism acknowledges that humans are both social and reflexive and that the complexity in the social world alters human thoughts and behavior; to overlook these forces leads to an incomplete understanding at best (ibid). The chapter begins with a brief history behind the plight of the three resettled refugee groups in the study: Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqis. Highlights of Arizona high school graduation rates, for the purpose of comparison with non-refugee students closes the chapter.

The primary research question guiding the study is: What are the factors considered by students and mentors to contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona?

- a) How do graduates describe their sources of support and challenges?

b) How do mentors describe the roles they played in the student's success?

The target groups were resettled refugee students who successfully graduated in the last three years from Arizona high schools in Phoenix and Tucson. Participants must have started schooling in the U.S. from junior high school grades and above. These two cities are the main resettlement sites for resettled refugees in Arizona.

Student participants were individually interviewed and also participated in focus group discussions. Mentors had individual interviews pertaining to their experience working with the mentee. The youths' love for school was evident in both the students' and mentors' interviews. Like other immigrant youth coming to the United States, outside of the family, schools are the most important social development context that shapes the lives of resettled refugee youth. It is the first sustained, meaningful, and enduring site of participation in an institution of new society (Suárez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). For all children, including resettled refugees, schools fulfill the function of focusing other related systems (e.g., families, community services, etc.) on the task of facilitating children's development in order to prepare the child to support her/himself and to contribute to the wider society. It is in school that resettled refugee youth begin to acquire academic, linguistic, and cultural knowledge necessary for their success in the United States. Resettled refugee students, new to the U.S. system, rely heavily on school personnel – teachers, coaches,

counselors and others – to guide them in the steps necessary to successfully complete their schooling and go on to college. It is through their interaction with peers, teachers, and school staffs that newly arrived immigrant [and resettled refugee] youth experiment with new identities and learn to calibrate their ambitions (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). These relationships serve to shape their characters and open new opportunities. As we'll see in this chapter, it is in their broadly defined engagement with school that resettled refugee youth most profoundly transform themselves.

Mentoring and/or providing any kind of support for resettled refugees is important. However, for resettled refugee youth in schools, mentors are critical not only for the completion of their high school education but also contribute to generational change where most resettled refugee parents have less than a high school-level education in the English language. Some are illiterate in reading in their own language. There is a great deal of discussion regarding immigration in the U.S., fear, misperceptions, and lack of information have created a climate of uncertainty about offering support, services, or a helping hand to many groups of “new” Americans. By taking the time to gain awareness and reconfirming support to help young people – all young people – mentors take an important step toward making not only mentoring relationships and making programs and communities more responsive to a growing need that cannot and should not be overlooked, but also learn about resettled refugee cultures, struggles, and resilience that have far-reaching

transformative effects on anyone's view of life. Next, brief background information about the specific resettled refugee groups represented in the study is presented and using a pseudonym, I introduce each participant.

Participant Overview

All the participants started their United States schooling no earlier than 10th grade, and all graduated after 2007. Participants were between 18 and 22 years old, with an average age of 19.6 years. Eight of the participants have been in the United States for three years, a common indicator of distinguishing the newly arrived resettled refugees/immigrants in U.S. immigration studies (Fortes & Rumbaut, 2006), and four of them have been in the United States for four years. All of the resettled refugee student participants came to the United States with all of their family members and all of the 12 participants still live with their parents.

Eight out of the twelve student participants were either born in refugee camps or came as toddlers and lived in the camps on average for 16 years. These are the Bhutanese and Burmese participants. The Iraqi participants lived in Syria and Jordan for an average of four years. This is consistent with the commonly held belief that most resettled refugees live in the resettled refugee camps for at least a decade – on average, this group lived in the refugee camps for 12 years.

Other demographic information important to this study includes the parents' education level and their proficiency in their native and

English languages. The data, based on students' self-reporting, revealed that language proficiency in reading and writing in the native language (Karenian, Arabic, and Burmese) for the mothers of the participants was 67% (8 out of 12) for reading and 58% (7 out of 12) for writing. For the fathers, this was 83% (10 out of 12) for both reading and writing, indicating that males had better educational opportunities in all three communities. Proficiency in English language for the mothers were 33% (4 out of 12) in writing, 17% (2 out of 12) in reading, and 42% (5 out of 12) speaking limited basic English and only 17% (2 out of 12) reported to be proficient. For the fathers, the numbers were 42% (5 out of 12) reading, 33% (4 out of 12) writing, and 83% (10 out of 12) reported as speaking in English with four as proficient. Only two of the mothers are reported to have attained high school level education in their country of origin while in the fathers' category three were reported to have four-year college education, and two with high school level. Four of the mothers and fathers have had no formal education.

At the time of the interviews, only two mothers were reported to be working either full time or part time. Six of the mothers have held some type of job in the U.S., but on average, all have been unemployed for over 2.5 years of their stay in the U.S. Comparatively, for the fathers, 10 out of 12 were employed at the time of the interview with four of them working more than two jobs. The average unemployment period was 9 to 12 months. Each participant was asked to identify two significant persons in

the order of priority who were instrumental in helping them complete their high school education. Each person identified as highest priority was invited to participate in the study. In the case where the first person was not available, the invitation was extended to the second person nominated by the participant. These formed another set of 12 interviews. According to the names given, these mentors comprised of other resettled refugee students and community volunteers; only two students named someone who was assigned by the school as a mentor. These two students named the same person because they are from the same school district. The person also happened to be a resettled refugee who is now a naturalized U.S. citizen. Specific participants' details are covered below.

Background on Student Participants' and Countries of Origin

From each of the three resettled refugee groups, four (two male and two female) individuals participated in the study. A brief background about each participant and their resettled refugee group is presented below, starting with Bhutanese.

Although there are various sources of information about any refugee groups resettling in the U.S., refugee service providers rely heavily on information provided by the Cultural Orientation Resources Center (COR Center). Housed at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), the COR Center provides orientation resources for resettled refugee newcomers and service providers throughout the U.S. and overseas. Funded through the United States Department of State, Bureau of

Population, Resettled refugee and Migration, the COR Center combines CAL's linguistic expertise, the cross-cultural and technical knowledge of COR's many consultants, and the field experience of refugee service practitioners; hence, it provided the majority of background information used in the study.

Bhutanese Refugees

According to the COR Center Refugee Backgrounder Number 4, (2007), Bhutanese refugees are almost all ethnic Nepalis from southern Bhutan who have lived in camps in Eastern Nepal since they were expelled from their homes in Bhutan more than 16 years ago. Bhutan is a landlocked country about one-half the size of Indiana with an estimated population of 716,896 (CIA, The World Factbook, 2012). The United States considered resettling 60,000 of the 100,000 refugees, with the first group arriving at the end of 2007. According to the U.S. Department of States, Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration's refugee Processing Center, the U.S. had resettled 102,560 by the end of February 2012 (Refugee Processing Center, March 10, 2012).

The four study participants from Bhutan were two females, Lax and Jolly, and two male, Nara and Ma.

Lax

The 20-year old second child of three came to the U.S. in 2007 with both her parents and her two sisters. Lax was born in the refugee camp in Bhutan and spent 17 years there. Lax and her sisters attended schools in

the refugee camp, but neither parent attended any school. Both parents cannot read or write in their own language or in English.

Both Lax and her mentor, also from Bhutan, shared difficulties while enrolling in school upon arrival in the U.S. The first problem was that the refugee resettlement agency caseworker wanted the girls to work rather than attend school. Although her family, especially the father, wanted them to attend school, the strong-willed caseworker was determined to have them start working. This caused confusion and fear, as the family thought if they did not follow what the caseworker wanted them to do, they might be sent back to the refugee camp. Upon consultation with other Bhutanese families, they were able to get help. The second issue was when the first school declined to admit Lax because she was approaching 18. Although she was not yet 18 years of old, the school denied her admission, but they were able to enroll her in another school.

At the time of the interview, Lax's father had a full-time job, Lax and her older sister worked part time while attending college, and her mother had never worked in the U.S. Lax shared that both parents attend English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in their apartment complex.

Jolly

The last born of five children, Jolly came to the U.S. in 2007 when she was 15. Due to her siblings being grown-up, the family was divided into four separate cases. First, came her older sister and her family, followed by her father, mother, brother, and Jolly. Third came one of her

sisters and her family and then her older brother and his family. Born in the refugee camp to a business family, Jolly remembers helping in the family's food store. Her father has an elementary level education and can read and write in basic English, and the mother did not attend school.

Jolly's brother worked in the refugee camp as an interpreter, and her sister Ann was an administrative staff member with a non-profit in the refugee camp. Both of them were employed upon arriving in the U.S. At the time of the interview, Jolly's father had been out of work for about a year and half, and her mom never worked in the U.S. due to health conditions.

Nara

"I was born in refugee camp in the mountainous Nepal area close to the Himalayas" was how the 19-year-old Nara started to talk about his life. The second child in the family of two boys, Nara has been in the U.S. for four years with both his parents and his older brother, who now works for a non-profit. Nara lived for 15 years in the refugee camp and misses the many friends he had there. He shared that because he did not know life outside of the refugee camp, he thought that the whole world was as in the refugee camp, with lots of health and sanitation problems.

Nara attended school in the refugee camp, and he spoke about his Australian English language teacher. "I am always thankful to CARITAS Nepal [a non-profit agency] to have provided us with education in English, which makes us here now better than those who did not learn in English"

shared Nara, who continued to participate in various clubs at school and now has a dance troupe. He always wanted to visit Australia and thought when were accepted for resettlement, they were going to Australia. Nara's father can read and write in their native language and basic English, while his mother dropped out of school due to early marriage.

Ma

Ma, 21 years old at the time of the study, came to the U.S. as an attached minor with a family that "adopted" him in the resettled refugee camp. Ma is not sure about the whereabouts of his biological mother. His father was killed in the wars, and he had to escape to the refugee camp with his mother. When Ma was about seven years old, his mother left him with a neighbor in the refugee camp and went to visit her relatives who were working in Thailand but never returned.

The family neighbors that Ma was left with were an elderly couple with grown children. Ma was seen by the elderly couples' children as "the little brother." After a few years, the elderly couple died, and Ma was left under the care of a young man who was the couple's second child. The death of the "adopted" parent affected Ma a lot, and he started living in the streets for a period. After some time, he was able to go back to stay with "the elder brother" of the family that he came with to the U.S.

A Bhutanese mentor in the study, Dr. Akadir, (Interview on September 12, 2011) maintains that the great majority of Bhutanese resettled refugees are descendants of people who in the late 1800s began

immigrating to southern Bhutan regions in search of farm land after they were shunned by the Druk Buddhist majority. They became known as the “People of the South.”

Contact between the Druk in the north and the People of the South were limited, and over the years, the People of the South retained their highly distinctive Nepali language, culture, and religion (COR, 2007). Under Bhutan’s Nationality Law of 1958, the People of the South enjoyed Bhutanese citizenship and were allowed to hold government jobs (ibid). In the 1980s, however, Bhutan’s king and the ruling Druk majority became increasingly worried about the rapid population growth of the People of the South. Concerned that the demographic shift could threaten the majority position and traditional Buddhist culture of the Druk, Bhutanese authorities adopted a series of policies known as *Bhutanization*, aimed at unifying the country under the Druk culture, religion, and language. The policies imposed the Druk dress code and customs on the People of the South and prohibited the use of the Nepali language in schools. Nepali teachers were dismissed, and Nepali books were reportedly burned. The government also established new eligibility requirements for Bhutanese citizenship that disenfranchised many ethnic Nepalis, depriving them of their citizenship and civil rights.

According to the COR Center Backgrounder (2007), ethnic Nepalis were targeted by the Bhutanese authorities, who destroyed the Nepalis’ property and arrested and tortured activists. Individuals were forced to

sign so-called “voluntary migration certificates” before being expelled from the country. In December 1990, the authorities announced that the People of the South who could not prove they had been residents of Bhutan in 1958 had to leave. Tens of thousands fled to Nepal and the Indian state of West Bengal (Interview with Bhutanese elder, November 7, 2011; COR, 2007).

Education in refugee camp schools is conducted in Nepali and English and follows a modified version of the Bhutanese curriculum through Grade 10. Beyond Grade 10, students attend local Nepali schools outside of the camp, and some students have attended secondary schools in India.

Burmese refugees

Burma (also known for a time as Myanmar) is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. Within the eight main ethnic groups inhabiting the country, anthropologists have counted more than 130 distinctive subgroups (COR, 2007). According to the COR Culture Profile Number 21 of June 2007, Burma has an estimated population of 55 million, and its location makes it a strategic crossroads in Asia. Smith (1999), a leading Burma expert explains it this way “it has acted as a historic buffer between the neighboring powers of China, India, and Thailand.” This Southeast Asian country, slightly smaller than Texas, was a province of India until 1937, when it became a separate, self-governing

colony (CIA World Factbook, 2012). The four participants from Burma were two males, Pi and Sangay, and two females, Ero and Sno.

Pi

Pi was born in a refugee camp, and lived in two different camps for 16 years. The now 21-year-old young man has been in the U.S since 2007. His family had to escape from the first refugee camp after they were attacked and the camp was burned down by Burmese militia. Pi is the sixth child in a family of three boys and three girls.

Pi remembers his days at school in refugee camp where he admittedly called himself “not a good student for ditching school and not completing homework.” Pi shared that he liked going to movies, and for that reason he was the student with the most absences at school at one time. As a result, he was expelled from school for one year “to give me enough time to watch all the movies I wanted.” He also shared that his parents weren’t concerned with the children’s schooling and that only two of his siblings completed high school. None of his parents attended school except for some ESL classes that they are now attending. Pi shared that he wishes he had some guidance while in the refugee camp to take his schooling seriously but also appreciate learning the hard way after arriving in the U.S. in what he calls “compensate for the lost time.”

At the time of the interview, Pi was attending a community college, and together with one of his brothers are the only two persons working in

the family. His father is on Supplemental Security Income due to disability, and his mom stays home to take care of his father.

Sangay

A twin child, Sangay spoke about his family appreciation for the birth of a twin baby boy and girl after his mother lost three children at birth due to a medication condition while in the resettled refugee camp. Sangay was the oldest child and only son and started assuming responsibility for caring for his three sisters while still young.

Sangay has been in the U.S. for four years. Neither parent attended school, “but they worked hard to support us all,” shared the 19-year old college student. Sangay lived in the refugee camp for 14 years and completed elementary education at the camp. He shared how they had to memorize and take unannounced tests at school, which employed strict discipline. If students do not pass all the tests, they are not allowed to go to the next class, shared Sangay.

All three sisters are married, and he is the only child still living with his parents. His mom stays home, and Sangay feels she has an undiagnosed medical problem. Sangay’s dad works at a grocery store and attends ESL classes in their apartment complex.

Ero

Ero’s family was among the earliest Burmese families to be resettled in Arizona. The 20-year-old first-born child has a brother who is 12 years younger. Ero shared about how her mother struggled as a single parent

raising her in the refugee camp after the death of their entire family. According to what she learned from her mother, their entire village was set on fire at night, and the rebels shot anyone who tried to run away. She said it was a sheer luck that her mother was able to crawl with the then toddler Ero out of their burning house.

After arriving in the refugee camp, her mother was very traumatized by the loss of all her siblings and had a hard time connecting with anyone, shared an emotional Ero. The very shy girl attended schools in the refugee camp but was also the only source of support for her mother until she remarried after living in the camp for 11 years. Ero came to the U.S. together with her stepbrother. Her stepfather died in the refugee camp just before the family was accepted for resettlement. When they were first shown their apartment, Ero said she was surprised. She said having a refrigerator, stove, running water, sofas, and all the furnishings was an unexpected surprise. She said, “I felt that we are now rich with everything in the house.”

At the time of the interview, Ero was attending community college while working full time at a restaurant. Her mother is receiving behavioral health services and as Ero shared, “is getting better day-by-day.”

Sno

Sno came to the U.S with all her family members – three brothers, a sister, and both parents. She is the second child in the family. Her elder brother married in the refugee camp when he was only 18, and Sno wanted

to do the same, but she was in the U.S attending high school. Sno wanted to marry her friend from refugee camp school who happened to come to the U.S. on the same flight, but the families were resettled in different states.

After connecting with the friend, Sno wanted to join him and get married. She was advised by her school counselor to wait another year as she completed her school and then she can marry. Her parents also wanted her to get married, but after the intervention of the refugee resettlement caseworker and the school counselor, the plan was postponed. Sno completed high school and at the time of the interview had a 13-month-old baby.

Although married, at the time of the interview, Sno still lives with her parents and with the help of her mother who stays home, she attends nursing college, and her husband, who moved from another state, was an interpreter.

According to the COR Center Backgrounder, after a quarter century of economic hardship and repression under military rule, the Burmese people held massive demonstrations in 1987 and 1988 that were quickly and brutally quashed by the regime. The military government held elections in May 1990 but refused to recognize the results after a landslide victory by the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by the charismatic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. Democracy activists were targeted for repression, and thousands of students, intellectuals, and elected

politicians were forced to flee the country (Thant, 2006). Many headed for the rugged jungles on the Thai-Burmese border, where the educated urbanites experienced malaria, wild animals, hunger, and fevers and encountered for the first time the ethnic armies whose struggles against the military regime were of a much older vintage than their own (ibid).

Thailand, which is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, responded to the influx in different ways at different times (Smith, 1999). Ethnic minority refugees on the Thai-Burmese border were permitted to set up designated camps supported by private relief agencies. This afforded those who succeeded in doing so a small monthly stipend but limited protection. Most Burmese dissidents continued to live in virtually the same precarious situation as illegal migrants, unable to find adequate work or other life opportunities and vulnerable to police harassment or even deportation if they are arrested without documents (Tucker, 2001).

According to the Backgrounder, Thai policy toward the Burmese refugees and activists hardened over time, and in 2003 the Thai government announced that all urban refugees registered with UNHCR would have to move to designated border camps. Soon after the policy was announced, expanded resettlement opportunities were opened up for the urban refugees, and many began to be resettled to third countries, including the United States.

The government education system consists of four years of primary school, four years of middle school, and three years of high school. Arts and science subjects, as well as economics, accountancy, and social studies, are taught (personal interview, June 25, 2011). According to the COR Center Backgrounder, government expenditure on education is very low, and although figures are unreliable, an estimated 1-2% of gross domestic product is spent on education. Teaching salaries are correspondingly meager, and most teachers take second jobs. In rural areas, villagers often have to organize their own schools by collecting funds, building the schools, and finding the teachers, texts, and equipment.

Iraqi refugees

COR center's Enhanced Refugee Backgrounder Number 1 of October 2008 states that the UNHCR estimates that more than four million Iraqis have been displaced by the war in Iraq and its aftermath. Of these, about two million people have found asylum in neighboring countries, where many eke out a marginal living in poor, inner-city neighborhoods, often by working illegally for low wages as laborers, drivers, and restaurant workers. Most Iraqi refugees lived in Syria and Jordan, but some also sought asylum in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey.

Because most Iraqis are unable to return to Iraq safely or to settle permanently in the countries to which they have fled, Western nations, including the U.S, began to resettle those refugees who are considered by

the UNHCR to be at greatest risk. After the 1991 Gulf War, an estimated 12,000 Iraqis were admitted to the United States, and in 1996, about 6,500 Iraqis who had links to a U.S.-sponsored coup attempt against the regime in Iraq were granted asylum (COR Center, 2008). The four participants in the study were Amina, Mary, Ali, and Mohamed.

Amina

Amina misses her home and spoke about the ghetto-like conditions in which they were resettled upon arrival in the U.S. With only an older sister, Amina said she had her own room in Iraq, and their family was living decently running a family business. Amina and her family arrived in the U.S. in 2008 after living in Syria and Jordan as refugees.

Amina attended school in Iraq up to ninth grade and had international travels with her family as they visited Italy and other parts of Europe. Her father only spoke Arabic and limited Italian. However, he was a successful entrepreneur. Amina's mother was an Arabic language teacher. The family had to escape to Syria in 2004 after two bombs exploded a few feet away from their home. Life wasn't good in Syria, and Iraqis weren't welcomed, shared Amina. Iraqis were seen as "taking away jobs from Syrians because Iraqis were more educated than them." After two years, the family moved to Jordan where resettlement processing had started and Iraqis were more welcomed.

Though the U.S. initially “didn’t meet my expectation, we are now happy with own house that we bought last year,” Amina shared. Her father is working, and her mother stayed home but is learning to drive.

Mary

Coming from a religious minority in Iraq, Mary’s family arrived in Phoenix in 2007 on a hot summer day. Mary wondered if all of America was this hot and couldn’t believe America was “like this at all.” The 21-year-old with an athletic built came to America like most resettled refugees with high expectations, but Phoenix summer weather gave her the shock of her life.

Mary’s father worked as a community organizer in the church and was targeted many times by the oppressive regime. Her mother taught at a school as a Mathematics teacher and was loved by many. Mary and her twin brother enjoyed the best possible education in Iraq and their “family had a decent living” according to Mary. They were both in 10th grade when the war broke out. Her father did not want to take any chances, and in 2004, the family moved to Jordan from which they were resettled into the U.S. At the time of the interview, both Mary’s parents work, and Mary and her brother also each have part-time jobs as they attend college.

Ali

Among all the Iraqi students in the study, Ali was the youngest. Only 18 at the time of the interview, Ali started schooling in Iraq, attending a private school. Both of Ali’s parents are college educated, and

his father was fluent in English. The family arrived in 2007 and was resettled in Vermont, but they moved to Arizona in 2008 to escape the cold weather. The father had an engineering background and at the time of the interview was working in Michigan at an auto plant.

Ali spoke about how his elder brother had to be sent away for protection when the war broke out. Although, they lived only a block away from the school, he had to be driven to class after the start of the war because of the danger. In 2006, his family fled Iraq for Jordan, and a year later they got the opportunity to resettle in the U.S.

Mohamed

Mohamed was concerned about his name when his family decided to come to the U.S. Mohamed was scared that he'd be targeted because of his unmistakably Muslim name. The family arrived in Arizona towards the end of 2007 when he was only 15. Mohamed wanted to change his name but just couldn't do it because of culture and family pride and instead goes by shorter form of the name (for example, if the real name is Mohamed, it is common to see it as shortened to only "Mo").

Mo attended school up to grade nine in Iraq and continued as the family lived in Yemen and then Syria. Mo arrived with both of his parents, a brother, and a sister. The last child in the family, Mo was and continues to be seen as the baby of the family. Both his siblings and his father were working at the time of the interview while Mo's mother was home due to a

knee problem. Mo attends college and is interested in becoming a computer engineer.

The Backgrounder states that according to UNESCO, Iraq had one of the best educational systems in the Middle East before the 1991 Gulf War, with high levels of literacy for both men and women. Institutions of higher education were of an international standard, particularly in science and technology. It further maintains that the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, and economic sanctions took their toll on Iraq's educational system. Enrollment fell, and the school system began to collapse. Since the 2003 invasion, more than one-third of Baghdad's schools have been damaged by bombing. Many others have been burned and looted (personal interview with an Iraqi Mentor, June 26, 2011). The Backgrounder also states that a 2004 United Nation survey found that only 55 percent of young people between the ages of 6 and 24 were enrolled in school. The survey found a literacy rate of 74 percent for youth between the ages of 15 and 24, with a higher literacy rate for the 25 to 34 age group.

Before looking at factors considered by resettled refugee students and their mentors as contributing to their academic success to graduating from U.S. high school, for the purpose putting things into context, I briefly discuss the high school graduation rate in Arizona below.

Arizona High School Graduation

Because my research examines resettled refugee high school graduation in Arizona, I thought it a good idea to briefly paint the picture

surrounding graduation in the state. This will help to understand how resettled refugees are situated in overall high school graduation rates.

The method the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) uses to calculate graduation rates conforms to the 2008 non-regulatory guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Education and to the National Governors Association Compact on State High School Graduation Data (ADE, Research and Evaluation, 2011). According to the Arizona graduation manual published by ADE, when calculating the graduation rates for subgroups, membership in a subgroup depends on the student's information at her/his last enrollment of record. For example, if a student is an English language learner in ninth grade, exits the program as proficient, and graduates, that student will not be included in the graduation rate of the English Language Learner subgroup. If a student is an English language learner and drops out before graduating, that student will be included in the graduation rate of the English language learner subgroup.

The graduation rate of Arizona public high schools is a "cohort" measure of four-year graduation; that is, the share of students who comprise a ninth grade class, plus transfers in, minus transfers out, and deceased students, who graduate by the fourth year. For example, those entering ninth grade in the 2000-01 school year comprise the cohort measured by the 2004 data. The four-year graduation rate is calculated for each high school in the determination of their adequate yearly progress

(AYP), and the five-year rate is calculated and used in annual AZ LEARNS calculations. Table 1 below, shows the four-year graduation rate (2007-2009) for Arizona by subgroup.

Table 1 - Four Year Graduation Rate for Arizona by Subgroup 2007-2009

Subgroup	2007			2008			2009			2010		
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C
Resettled refugees*				750	38	5	1221	98	8	1168	105	9
Limited English	3,500	1,596	45.6	3,614	1,749	48.4	2,873	1,264	44.0			
Asian	1,918	1,640	85.5	2,025	1,770	87.4	2,167	1,909	88.1			
Black	3,819	2,761	72.3	4,282	3,113	72.7	4,386	3,184	72.6			
Hispanic	24,833	16,067	64.7	26,590	17,709	66.6	27,402	18,798	68.6			
Native American	5,164	2,840	55.0	4,811	2,877	59.8	4,919	3,094	62.9			
White	36,957	30,046	81.3	37,185	30,678	82.5	36,701	30,535	83.2			
Total	72,689	53,354	73.4	74,963	56,147	74.9	75,585	57,520	76.1			

Key: Subgroup A: Number Enrolled to Graduate; Subgroup B: Number Graduated; Subgroup C: % Graduated

Source: Arizona Department of Education

Resettled refugee students are included in the total graduation. Data on resettled refugees is as reported by the State Coordinator for Refugee Education’s office. No data was available on resettled refugees for 2007, and although ADE is yet to post the 2010 graduation data, I was able to obtain the data on resettled refugee students.

As depicted in the table, the graduation rate for limited English proficiency students, in which many resettled refugee students are categorized, is low (an average of 46% over the three years), and the numbers for graduating resettled refugees is much lower (less than 10% for the three years average). A major factor given by the office of the State

Coordinator for Refugee Education is that over 70% of resettled refugee students' status becomes unknown after a few weeks of enrollment in schools (Personal conversation, June 30, 2011). The population is highly mobile. According to the ADE's definition, *Status Unknown* students are students who have more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences and whose status is unknown to the school. ADE further explains that students who were enrolled at the end of the prior school year but fail to show up at any time during the next school year and whose status or location is unknown to the school fall under this category. Another factor that was given is that it is possible that the data isn't accurately captured and that resettled refugee students who transfer between schools aren't self-identifying. Whatever the reason, obtaining data from ADE was difficult. While the department uses an automated tracking and identification system called the Student Accountability Information System (commonly referred to as SAIS), the data I got from this system-generated source was not suitable for use in this study as it classified resettled refugee students into groups such as Whites, African-American, American Indians, and Mexicans.

The explanation I received from ADE (personal communication, October 12, 2011) was that "these are pre-determined categorization set by the United States Census and are self-identified by the students." Although I tried to stretch and assume that all resettled refugees from Africa might self-identify themselves as "African-American" and resettled refugees from

Iraq, Afghanistan and other Arab countries self-identifying as “whites,” the data provided does not match data on refugees resettled from these regions of the world. I also could not understand which group might identify themselves as American Indian or Mexicans. It is for this reason that I used data from the State Coordinator for Refugee Education’s office.

In this chapter, I have presented participant and their resettled refugee groups’ background. All Bhutanese and Burmese resettled refugee youths in the study have been in the refugee camps for more than a decade with some born and raised in the refugee camps. On the other hand, participants from Iraq spent less than four years in the countries of asylum. I also looked at Arizona high school graduation rate from 2007 academic year for the purpose of comparison between the rate of graduation for resettled refugees and non-refugee students. In the next chapter I present thematic finding about students and mentors perspectives.

Chapter 5

FINDINGS: STUDENT AND MENTOR PERSPECTIVES

I met with a Counselor who gave me a schedule of 7 classes. Walked with me to the first class and told me I need to go to other classes by myself. After the first lesson, the bell rang and I thought it was time to go home and headed for home. A security guard stopped me and asked me where I was going and I told him I am going home. He took me to the Dean's office and they told me many things but I just couldn't understand why they are stopping me from going home. My Counselor was called to the office to help explain to me what was going on. After the discussion, I was assigned a Latino student as a mentor and he kept with me for the first two weeks (Pi, resettled refugee student from Burma).

Pi's experience was a common one throughout the study. While resettled refugees are thrilled about the opportunity to resettle in a third country for a durable solution to their situation, they are met with overwhelming challenges. In broad terms, schools are considered as a home away from home where children get to learn, make new friends, and intermingle with their "community" members. When the "community" becomes an unfamiliar place, new ways have to be articulated so as to overcome the challenges. In the words of a Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung (1875-1961) "no problem ever gets solved; what happens is we begin to look at the problem in a different light and it changes and we change."

One of the major tasks facing the resettled refugee child when arriving in a new country is to adapt to a new school environment – or to re-enter school if their education has been interrupted. In coming to grips with this task, the child brings many potentially facilitating and interfering pre- and trans-migration characteristics and experiences, e.g., nature of

flight and refugee experience, level of literacy in first language, and parental support (McBrien, 2005). One set of post-migration variables that will critically influence the child's adaptation process resides within the school, i.e., characteristics of school, other students, and teachers. Success for all (resettled refugee students, other students, and the school) will require not only the need for the resettled refugee child to adapt but schools, teachers, and existing students will also need to adapt.

While experiences of resettled refugee students in U.S. schools depend on many factors, including the age of the child, location, diversity in the school, parental education, and income, among others, the following findings based on the analysis of my data focus on factors considered by resettled refugee high school students and their mentors to have helped them graduate from high schools in Arizona. The data was collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions with study participants and their mentors. From the data analysis, I came up with broad themes that are discussed below.

School context and attitudes

It was anticipated that school context variables would highly influence both forms of academic performance: grades and standardized achievement test measures. Facilitating resettled refugee students' adaptation to a new and foreign school system is a complicated process that requires many interventions at different levels. How a school is organized, its relationship with parents and community, and how teachers

interact with students are all factors that will dramatically influence the success of students in general and resettled refugee students in particular (Hamilton, 2004).

When resettled refugees arrive in the United States, a refugee resettlement agency contracted with the Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugee and Migration is tasked with helping the family with initial resettlement issues, such as getting their apartment ready and furnished, help with getting social security numbers and other state identification documents, help with job search and job placement, initial health screening, and enrolling children in school. Except for the mention of the required school attendance during overseas' orientation and community orientation upon arrival in the host country, there is usually very little orientation about the school system. Typically, the process of orientation to U.S. schools starts and stops at the caseworker driving the children to school and starting the process of registration. A counselor or teacher works with the student to develop a timetable, and the student is ready for class, as shared by most study participants.

Entry to U.S. schools

Nine of the participants talked about their abrupt entry into school and the confusion this created. There isn't time to introduce the student to the school, its facilities, and be told about rules and regulations. As captured in Pi's quote above, for most students with interrupted schooling, it takes time to learn the routines. Although Pi was physically at school and

may have been told about the schedule (because he said he was given the schedule with seven classes), he was either not yet ready for the routine, did not understand the schedule, or both. Many of the school rules are implied and therefore take time for new students, especially those new to the country, to learn. In addition, most parents are not present during school registration. Only five students reported that one of their parents was with them on the first day of school registration. Also, even if they are present, many do not understand most of the conversation, and no one takes the time to explain the parents' role in the child's education in the U.S. These are all discrepancies that can greatly affect resettled refugee student performance leading "to kids either failing or dropping out" (Rasa, Mentor interview, August 6, 2011; Stewart, 2011).

Throughout my interviews, participants expressed a desire to have had an opportunity for orientation to the U.S. school system, roles, responsibilities, and expectations. The dozen students in the study graduated from five different schools in Phoenix metropolitan and Tucson areas. Out of the five schools, only two had a "Welcome Center" where new students receive orientation. Both the schools happen to be in the same school district that hired culturally competent staff members to work with new students and their families. Here is how Rasa, a mentor who also worked for a school district put it:

We had a system of registration where we had someone focused primarily on new arrivals. We also had a system, where any family enrolling their kids in school had to attend an orientation to explain

to them the methods used in school to help students and families. Within 2-3 weeks, we are required to follow-up with them.

Rasa, also a resettled refugee, worked at school and it was part of her job duty to ensuring smooth transition to U.S. schools. To the resettled refugee students and their families, such staffs, in the word of one study participant are “God-sent.” This is because, as we’ll see later in the chapter, the families looked up to the school staff as having answers and solutions to families’ problems that make it difficult for the staff to focus on academic issues. The home environment and activities have the obvious potential to affect students’ performance at school. While school staff such as Rasa tend to look at the educational issues, it is difficult to address academic issues in isolation. Again, here is how Rasa puts it:

More than half the time, I spend time on non-academic issues. If the family is struggling to pay for their utility bills, there is just no way can the child succeed at school. I will do home visits to talk about grades but I will face situations where the parent wants to talk about the electricity that’s going to be disconnected, need to know how to apply for cash assistance and other community resources. Once these issues are handled, it takes away the stress off the student and sets a better environment to discuss education and grades.

Inclusiveness

While individual teachers can do specific things in the classrooms, the entire school context is crucial in their policies surrounding inclusiveness and their commitment to welcoming not only the students but the families as well. Participants in the study wished schools’ openness and support not only for the resettled refugee student but their family too,

as depicted in this interview when I asked the question, “What did teachers, staff and other students think about you?”

The people at school were very nice and friendly, not like in Nepal. In Nepal people did not use to talk with us because they say we do not have citizenship. I felt really glad to be here. My family was thrilled (Lax, from Bhutan).

In another interview, the same question was answered as:

[They] looked at me like a stranger. I did not know anyone so, I just kept quiet. I felt out of place but knew I had to deal with it. Teachers didn't even care that I was in class. At first I felt should I be treated as same as American students? But again, I realized I just had to deal with it. (Pi, from Burma).

A welcoming school makes a great difference on students' perspective and their educational life. Students subjected to generational discrimination, as in the case of Bhutanese and Burmese resettled refugees, are sensitive to any slight form of bias and are likely to appreciate any gesture of acceptance and kindness. The lengthy stay in refugee camps, characterized by uncertainty, displacement, numerous difficulties, unknowns, and broken promises of relocation (Stewart, 2011) instills a sense of hopelessness and difficulty in trusting anyone. On the other hand, Iraqi resettled refugee students who did not experience long stay in refugee camps and have enjoyed relatively good education and higher standards of living for most of their lives, struggle with adjusting to “living in ghetto-like conditions” (Amina, from Iraq). Attending mixed-gender and culturally diverse schools was also a new thing for Iraqi students, who were used to single-gender, homogenous schools. Even a

subtle cultural difference, such as how students interact with teachers, was an adjustment problem, as Amina states:

Students here sometimes are kind of annoying because they keep talking back to the teachers. They have no respect for the teachers. In my culture, you do not talk back to the teachers unless you are asked a question. They are like the parents and have your interest at heart. Why be disrespectful to them? I do not like that.

While interaction with teachers and participation in U.S. classes are considered as showing interest in the subject matter, cultural differences such as the one Amina shared can send wrong cues or mixed and confusing messages to teachers and staff who might not understand the culture. Taking just a few minutes to talk with resettled refugee students and understand how they are used to interacting with students and teachers will help avoid stereotypes and foster an atmosphere of understanding. It is important to remember not to generalize and that there is not a single “resettled refugee culture,” as resettled refugees come from various backgrounds and cultures.

Resettled Refugees’ Previous Experiences

It is important for school systems to recognize resettled refugee students’ previous experiences and culture when enrolling resettled refugee students. Researchers in the field of resettled refugee education agree that teachers must strive to first create a relationship with each student and then proceed with assessment and more formal educational activities (McBrien, 2004; Rutters, 2006; Stewart, 2011). Many of the study participants did not speak highly of their experiences in the ESL

classes, as shared by Jolly, from Bhutan who said “the moment they [school staff] hear that you are [resettled] refugee, ESL comes to their mind. I think they think that [resettled] refugees do not know anything...”

Support at Schools

Teachers and school staff have the potential to provide ongoing support for resettled refugee students in ways that increase protective factors and foster resilience (Frater-Mathieson, 2004 in McBrien, 2004). These relationships are an important component of resettled refugee students’ success. Teachers and staff need to be sensitive and responsive to the ways in which resettled refugee students may be affected by their experiences, such as placing them in classes that they do not feel is right for their level, as in Jolly’s statement above, as well as the ways in which refugee trauma, loss, and grief may appear within the school. This requires general understanding of the cultural realities of young resettled refugees and how these cultural views/issues may be expressed. Taking time to do thorough initial and follow-up assessments might help in meeting learning needs. In helping enroll a resettled refugee student into school, Akadir, a mentor from Bhutan, shared this experience:

Some schools are really very rigid. For example, I took a girl to a school only a few blocks from her apartment and the school folks said they will not admit her as she was approaching 18. She was not yet 18 and I know the policy that students can stay in school till when they turn 21. I spoke with the Vice-Principal and told her to at least let her study for this one year and get exposure to the school environment and then you can send her out. By that time, she might be able to go to some GED center and improve her skills. They refused.

In another interview, Faiza, a mentor from Iraq, shared something that amounts to outright discrimination when she tried helping enroll a student in a school. The comment allegedly made was: “People like her go to that other school. Take her there.”

During my work at the Arizona State Refugee Coordinators office, experiences such as these have also been reported by refugee resettlement agencies. While these can be considered as isolated incidences, they are illegal and may reflect the receptivity of the community-at-large to resettled refugees. After all, it can be said that the school is a reflection of the community and therefore a yardstick to measure acceptability. While both students in these examples did ultimately enroll in public high schools, sentiments such as these can foster mistrust and “othering” of the resettled refugee students.

Urban Schooling

Like many immigrants, the great majority of resettled refugee children attend poor urban schools. All of the participants in the study attended inner city urban schools. Their neighborhoods are characterized by greater levels of unemployment (Wilson, 1997), violence, and barriers social services (Massey & Denton, 1993). Intense segregation by race and poverty is also common (Orfield& Lee, 2006; Orfield& Yun, 1999), and these areas tend to have overcrowded, understaffed schools, face high teacher and staff turnover, are poorly resourced, maintain low academic expectations, and are plagued by an ever-present threat of violence and

hostile peer cultures (Garcia-Coll& Magnuson, 1997; Mehan et al. 1996). Despite legislation in the 1960s designed to reduce segregation, U.S. schools have become increasingly resegregated in recent years. This new pattern of segregation tends not to be just by color but also by poverty and linguistic isolation, or so-called triple segregation (Orfield& Lee, 2006). Orfield and Lee frame this as deeply troubling, as these types of segregation have proven to be inexorably linked to negative outcomes, including climates of low expectations and academic performance, reduced resources, lower achievement, greater school violence, and higher dropout rates. In such settings, students' opportunities and experiences are limited in a variety of ways: minimal college counseling because very few students go on to four-year colleges, inexperienced teachers teaching outside their content area, low morale, and high staff turnover.

Perception

When I asked the question, "What did teachers, staff and other students think about you?" many of the respondents alternated between "okay" and "I do not know because I did not talk much with anyone." Pi shared, "I know most American students looked down on me because I could not speak like them." Amina said:

When I was at the ELD class, I didn't feel bad because I was with people who did not speak good English like me. But, when I went to the Math class, I felt out of place. I felt like not understanding anything the teacher said and so I wrote everything the teacher wrote on the board in my notebook. I remember people looking at me and saying "oh, you don't speak English?" but I didn't care because I knew I am learning and that I am better than them because I know two languages.

The last part of Amina's quote "I am better than them because I know two languages" was shared by many of the participants. It is important to note that most of the participants had positive view about schools and were not affected by minor minutiae that might affect their time in school.

Lax shared that "teachers were pretty good. Students too but some were a little racist. Some teachers treat us like other regular American students [proficient in English and school culture] and some were more caring than others." And here is what Jolly said when I asked her the same question:

Most people think I was a smart student. They put me in ESL class and the teacher said I need to talk with the counselor so as to move me to an advance class. Same for my Algebra class. But I was shy to talk with my counselor.

While it can be argued that resettled refugee students in high schools might not pay much attention on how they are viewed by others, it is critical to have good induction processes that create smooth transitions and build students' self-esteem. Been placed in ESL class was seen by many as reducing them to some low-level literacy. In addition, there wasn't individualized plan for each student as they were in cohorts. Some of the participants in the study had better commands of English than others but when these students were placed in classes that in their own judgment of their ability to comprehend academic English was much lower, the perception is that "these teachers"[and Counselor] have low-expectation about the student, a deficit orientations to language difference

that circulate broadly in the U.S. landscape, which is a hard task for resettled refugee student to overcome due to their respect and sometime fear of authority.

Safety

Restoration of a sense of safety is a top priority for resettled refugees. With long stay in refugee camps and in volatile security situations, it takes some time for resettled refugee to gain sense of normalcy. Some resettled refugee students might be struggling with post-traumatic stress after what they or their parents went through in the wars that drove them from their homes. Coupled with cultural difference and adjustment issues, any form of unfairness or threat, whether intended or unintended, has great impact on the resettled refugee child. Schools need to create safe environment within the school and individual classrooms. Many students in the study expressed their concern for safety at school. Especially due to the persistent segregation of Hispanics in Arizona, many of the participants were skeptical about befriending or sitting next to a Hispanic student. They also had reservations about African-American students, who were believed by many of the participants in the study to be “carriers of drugs and violence at school” (Nara, Jolly, Pi, and Ali) – not a good label, to say the least. Oblivious to this generalization, some of the students were placed with Hispanic and/or African-American students to help with orientation into school as depicted in Ali’s statement below:

My counselor assigned me a Mexican student to help show me my classes and be my mentor as I learn the places. I was scared to

death and was very uncomfortable for the first week even though he was nice to me. I was afraid that he'll give me drugs and then kill me...

In another interview, Amina expressed the importance of having a native-born Caucasian student as a guide or buddy to help at school, “when you have other Americans [meaning white students] as a friend, you learn English quickly and they do not do drugs like Mexicans and Blacks. They know the importance of education.”

Although most of the schools that the participants attended were poor urban schools, compared to the situations from which these resettled refugee students come from, especially for those from Burma and Bhutan, these urban schools were seen as “high class.” Many of them had never done basic science experiments in a formal laboratory or visited a library to expand their knowledge beyond what is taught in class. Participants from Burma and Bhutan reported only having a few “exercise books” (a term used to refer to notebooks) for note taking, while participants from Iraq spoke about attending fully functional and well-equipped schools, both in Iraq and while as refugees in Jordan and Syria. The thought of participating and/or competing in the same class with native-born U.S. children, who have had more academic opportunities, was hard to comprehend for most participants from Burma and Bhutan. Four out of the eight participants said they were initially skeptical about whether they could make it in school and felt intimidated by English-proficient students. However, they realized that most of the science and math

concepts were topics that they studied while in the refugee camps. Two of the four Iraqi students felt that American education was “diluted” as captured in Amina’s quote below:

I remember, I know everything that was going on in class, but just it wasn’t in Arabic. I wondered why they are learning these concepts at this time in their schooling. It is just the difference in language but I was taught in the refugee camp in lower grades. They took me to ELD class so as to focus on English more.

Discrimination

Not all participants reported good experiences at school. As previously discussed, the schools were all in run-down neighborhoods, and students were mostly on the look-out for any aggression and ill-behaviors in school, that might put them in danger. Nine out of the twelve participants reported discrimination and low expectations from the teachers. The following illustrates the extent of racial issues:

Some students say any racial comments to me; I just reply them and go on. We argue but just friendly. But I know friends who were victims of racism because they do not talk back because may be their English isn’t good or they are afraid or shy..... While most teachers were pretty good, some, I think were a little racist (Lax).

Due to these perceived issues, eight of the twelve participants transferred from the first schools they were placed in by the refugee resettlement agency. Ali, from Iraq shared his experience with one of his teacher; “...and she came close to my face and told me “You should go back to where you came from...”Because of comments such as this, subtle and insensitive comments, and the lack of school administrators not doing anything about it even when brought to their attention, Ali had to move to

another school. Three (Ero, Ali and Mo) reported that they had moved between three schools in their three years of schooling. It is possible to speculate that it was not easy for Ero because her family was one of the first Burmese refugees to come to Tucson and so no familiar community members to turn to and share their experiences. The host communities were also just learning about the new group. Ali and Mo kept running into negative comments about Iraq that made them very uncomfortable and sometime personal and emotional. It is their mentors and support from their parents that helped them overlook these comments, avoid situations that might put them in discussions about the invasion of Iraq and when brought on them to politely excuse themselves out of such discussions.

Coupled with students' harassments, most of the resettled refugee students in the study were not very comfortable at any of the schools. Faiza, a mentor from Iraq spoke about numerous instances where Ali, her mentee met with her at the verge of dropping out of school. Here is how Faiza puts;

“I had to constantly remind him of the bigger picture. Help him see the sweet fruits of his perseverance when he completes high school. I had to also talk with his parents to help in guiding and motivating Ali. They were very grateful and did their part.... But you know how teenagers can sometime be difficult”.

It is important to note that the belief in self, staying the course to complete high school and go beyond, participants preserved all trivial things as long as they were safe at school and in community and were able to continue learning. Seeing the bigger picture, kept them going.

Views of Teachers and Administrators

Teachers' attitude can greatly affect students' performance (Rutter, 1994; Stewart, 2011). From my experience working in refugee resettlement, it has been noted by resettled refugee-serving organizations that teachers and school administrators are sometimes unsuspecting offenders, hindering resettled refugee students' success at school. Four of the mentors in the study also alluded to this assertion. While prejudices generally are not expressed as overt hostility, resettled refugee students report to detect subtler forms of insensitivity, ignorance, or indifference and feel marginalized by negative attitudes or exclusionary structures and practices in place (Carey & Kim 2010). This is troubling in light of evidence indicating students' motivation and efforts in school correspond with their connection to their teachers. In other cases, teachers are at loss in knowing how to respond to resettled refugee youth, particularly in handling disciplinary problems or potential mental health issues; at the same time, they may be unaware of the available resources and community support that may exist. In some cases, participants reported verbal abuse and discrimination from teachers and students in schools. Below are just a few examples that pertain to teachers and administrators, as shared by study participants. Ali stated:

Teachers are generally okay if students respect them. One white female teacher did not like immigrants [Hispanics and resettled refugees] and kept giving me hard time. I turn in my homework and she kept saying I didn't. One time I tried to remind her when I turned in my homework and she came close to my face and told me "You should go back to where you came from." Where I came from

has nothing to do with the homework. I felt bad and I reported to the Principal but was not believed. I cried and filled with anger, could not talk and kept staring at the Principal as drops of tears run down my cheeks. When I was finally able to speak, I asked the Principal “I came to you to report my problems and instead of looking at it why do you dismiss me?” He reluctantly asked me “do you have witness?” Of course, I had witnesses. It happened in class, why would he ask me? After I gave names of the students, he called them one by one to ask what happened. Nothing was done to the teacher.

Going by Ali’s experience, it is clear that the teacher and the principal were somewhat sure that they can get away with this behavior towards this student because Ali did not have parent or guardian who could come back to the school to hold them accountable for their words. When I asked Ali whether he shared the comment with his parent, he said “there’s no need”.

In many cultures, Iraqi included, teachers occupy a higher status in terms of respect next only to parents. When teachers and school administrators are not supportive of the myriads of struggles that resettled refugee students go through, it is disheartening. The teachers’ comment communicated to Ali that he does not belong there. Such comments alluded to the sense of “othering” and marginalization, which in turn can affect student’s self-esteem. In another example, Nara shared:

While most teachers were pretty good, some, I think were a little racist. Some teachers treat us like other regular American students and some were more caring than others. Some teacher use big vocabulary word and we do not get them. When I ask what the word means, you get some kind of attitude and brush off my question. It is shame to keep asking but the teachers seem not to care too... I wish they could understand that we speak different languages and have different culture and focus just a little about refugee students’ English language because most refugee students are good in Math and respect the teachers better than American kids.

Strengthening his verbal comments above was his non-verbal cue. Nara was somewhat uncomfortable as he spoke about this. However, as he said towards the end, I interpret it as his strength to soldier on as he had other areas of strength.

Jolly summarized her perception about teachers and principals as:

Some teachers and principals are not very helpful. You go to them as a “parent” to explain your circumstances with the hope that you can get some guidance but they do not even respond to your concerns. I think they do not care and students get disappointed.

Whether racism and/or discrimination are perceived or real, most participants (both students and mentors) observed that racism was evident in the school system. Both Ali and Nara’s comments illustrate some teachers’ negative attitude towards resettled refugee students. Other terms used to refer to this phenomenon were “not a good person” by Amina; and “not nice” by Sangay. Only when I probed a little further did the students hint that racism was observed or experienced. Such feelings of rejection can lead resettled refugee students who come to the U.S. with such high expectation to feel a sense of disappointment. Three of the Iraqi students voiced their concerns about name calling by students and implicit [and even explicit] discrimination from teachers. Mo complained about comments made by other students like “Because of your country’s mess, my brother died in the war.... This is in reference to the U.S. occupation of Iraq in which many U.S. soldiers died and which continued to divide the U.S. between those who supported the war and those who did not at the

time of data collection. Ali was told by the teacher to “...go back to your country.” Amina also reported been picked on by students because of her head scarf, but stated that she was readily “accepted” by her peers because she able to explain to her class the importance of the scarf and because of her involvement in extra-curricular activities and student organizations. Amina also shared that she comes from a family with businesses in Iraq and had exposure to other cultures. She was always upbeat, determined, and with a contagious smile.

In reference to the usage of “big English words” in class, Pi was able to seek help where most teenagers might not, as he shared:

I know most American students looked down on me because I could not speak like them but that helped me put in more effort. I used YouTube to learn English word, other lessons, and explanations about how words can be used; pronounced, etc. you can repeat as many times as you want and you do not get that from the teacher in class. Another very nice website is called Khan Academy that has all levels and subject areas.

One-size-fits-all approach

It is important for teachers to be willing to adapt and modify their curriculum to meet the changing demographics of U.S. classrooms, which are no longer one-size-fits-all. While it can be argued that resources are needed to meet the growing and varied needs of immigrant and resettled refugee students, teachers’ creativity and willingness to change their teaching style for the betterment of all students is critical (Stewart, 2011). The frustration I noted from the participants was related to their observations and experiences that some teachers were not willing to take

time to make adjustments to better fit the needs of all their students, which in turn can seriously hamper students' academic success. In most cases, participants were requesting for as simple things as teachers getting time to sit down with the student or pair the student with peer to understand the topics. It also takes proactive administrators to be aware of their students' needs and play key roles in creating a fair and accepting culture in the school and not dismiss students who are struggling to come to terms with many foreign concepts and cultures. In the era of high stakes testing, where every teacher is determined to raise the test scores of his/her students, resettled refugee students who might need accommodation, except for those covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) might be seen as a burden. , I think you are on to something here. I think that there is a LOT going on in schools these days that is completely out of teacher's hands and that requires even good, experienced, well-intended teachers to engage in practices that do not foster genuine engagement and learning. The needs and situations of students who require more than a one-size-fits-all approach get sidelined and ignored. However, none of the students in the study reported as having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). An IEP, done correctly, can improve teaching, learning and results. Each child's IEP describes, among other things, the educational program that has been designed to meet that child's unique needs.

In an interview, Nara, who was an “A” student, complained about the low expectations that teachers had about immigrants in general and resettled refugee students in particular. Nara spent 12 years in a camp. He started schooling in the camp and was a very committed and an excelling student. Nara has always been the top child in his class. He loved world geography and history, and in his words, “may be gifted” in math. I have left the following narrative from Nara in its entirety to illustrate teachers’ attitude, as this reflects a finding that came up in several of the interviews.

I think, most teachers think that resettled refugees do not know anything. The moment you mention that you are a resettled refugee, ESL comes to their mind. I didn’t like the ESL classes because they were very basic and I had better English but because that is where they want me to be in, I didn’t know I had alternative. I was good at Algebra and Geometry. My English is good as I attended schools in India and they use English. ...Yes, a little different English but very similar. I was in 10th grade for only a few months and the school closed. When it opened, I was a senior. That I liked but until the end of the 11th grade, I did not know that there were things like Honor classes or Advanced classes. One day, as I was working on a group project, a white guy asked me if I had ever spoken to my Counselor about Advanced classes. I asked him what that was and when he explained, I told him, I do not know and I am not sure I am that smart to be in those classes. Even though I knew I always got straight As, I wondered why my teachers and Counselor didn’t tell me about that. I thought about it for a few days and gathered the courage to speak with my Counselor. She’s good, but I was not sure. I was finally put in Honor classes and graduated with a 4.2 GPA and got scholarship to attend ASU this fall. I also got the Pell grant.

The aforementioned examples illustrate the pervasiveness of the experience of students in this study, in terms of perceived bias of school administrators, teachers, and staff and calls for fairness by the school system toward all students. In addition, because resettled refugee children

are enrolled into schools days after their arrival in the U.S., there is lack of smooth transition and time to fill the gap in their educational needs. Nara only attended 10th grade for eight weeks and had to take the state test; Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). This timed and sometime computerized-test is one that even native-born students dread and take the time to prepare for the test both with the help of teachers and their parents, an opportunity that Nara did not have.

Inner-city urban school are faced with challenge of limited staff and high turn-over, I can only speculate that Nara's Counselor was either thin-stretched, new to the school or both. In addition, if there were some sort of peer-mentoring, it would have been possible for Nara's exceptional academic abilities to be recognized, guided and improved even better.

Striving for a better life and commitment to family

Coming to America, "the land of honey and money," as one participant put it, is seen by many resettled refugees as an opportunity to regain dignity and enjoy a better life. But for resettled refugee children and parents, the opportunity to lead a normal, safe, and predictable life, to have belongings, and for children to attend schools, play, and enjoy childhood, is God sent. Throughout my work with refugees over the decade, I have heard of many resettled refugee parents talk about their children as their hope that glitters, their sole investment – the equivalent of United States' social security (for retirees) and the only safety net to rely on. Many resettled refugee parents will do anything they can to get their

children the best education. In coming to the United States in search of a better life for their children, resettled refugee families care greatly about education and have high aspirations for their children. As resettled refugee children enter school, they are optimistic about their future and tend to work hard (Olneck, 2004; Fuligni & Hardway, 2004; Shields, 2004). These characteristics were shared by all study participants. Two of the participants from Bhutan mentioned that their parents had to pay for them to study in schools in India while the parents remained in the refugee camp. Two others from Iraq shared how their parents sacrificed to have them in the best schools in Iraq and even in Jordan and in Syria as they awaited resettlement. Such family commitments makes these and other resettled refugee students obliged to remain in school, attain better grades, and help their parents who have sacrificed for them. As Mary reflected,

My dad's number one thing is education. He'll do anything to get you education. He says, I can go back anytime to Iraq because I have properties and live like a King there but I am here in the U.S. because of your education. Education here is way better than in Iraq because for example, my dad knows a guy who was the head of a big hospital in Baghdad but when he came to the U.S., he was told "we won't recognize your degree." If you stay here and finish your education, you can go and work anywhere in the world. I do not want to let down my father and I hope to make him proud and support him when he needs me, just like he did for me.

Amina put it this way,

In Syria, within the first week my dad took us to school and since we were not citizens, he was asked to pay for it. He didn't have any job and had to struggle to find one so that he could pay for our education. At times, when I remember, I feel like crying as I do not know how I will repay my dad for all the things. That's why I really

like to go to college to earn money to repay my dad in kindness because I know I can't pay him.

She continued and talked about her father's continued effort to support her in the United States, where he is also struggling to not only learn the culture but also the language. These two quotes and the one below, illustrates the driving force behind the participants' determination to complete their high school education. Both Mary and Amina feel compelled not to let down their parents who have struggled to get them the best education possible. In fact, Amina was a little emotional as she explained her deep appreciation for the support and the strong will to help them in return by completing her education – a factor contributing to her (and others') successful completion. Here is Amina again:

I remember my dad bought a dictionary and made me to learn how to spell and write 10 English words every day. He pushed me so hard for me to learn English. Always, when I get back from school, I do the homework and then the 10 words. He just opens a page and gives me the 10 words yet he doesn't speak English well.

Such experiences were also shared by Lax, who said,

Although my parents never had the opportunity to attend school, their number one priority of coming to U.S., is to help us, for the children get good education. They have gone through many struggles and even sent me to India with the little they had. They do not want their children to go through similar difficulties. I am lucky and have responsibility to pay back my parents although anything I do can't pay them the love and care they offered me.

It is evident from Amina's and Lax's quotes above that parent know that it is important to learn English language to succeed in America. When children see the struggle and determination in their parents, they tend to

put in more efforts as compared to when parents are laidback as in the case of Amina.

Researchers in the field of resettled refugee and immigrant education (Hamilton, 2004; Hornberger & Vinity, 2009; Miller, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Gaytán, 2010) have noted the importance of *behavioral engagement* – a component of academic engagement that specifically reflects students’ participation and efforts in academic tasks, such as expending their best effort in completing class work and homework, turning in assignments on time, paying attention to class work, classroom behavior, and attendance. High performers are significantly more behaviorally engaged in school than other students who performed lower on tests. All the participants displayed these desirable characteristics, arguably because of their commitment to course and the long-term goal of becoming a successful individual able to support self, family, and parents.

It is worth noting that the 12 study participants had a grade point average (GPA) of between 3.5 and 4.2. Five of them earned scholarships to a four-year college in the state. These are impressive results given their time in U.S. Nine of the participants spoke about their friends who had to drop out of school either to work so that they could help support self and family, were influenced by bad peers and “carried by the waves of drugs,” and others whose family couldn’t manage in the area and had to move out of state so they could find work and support from their ethnic group.

None of the participants in the study reported having any problems with schools administrators or police. Participants reported the presence of police on campus. When asked the question, “have you ever been in trouble at school in the U.S?” most participants responded “never” except for Nara, who shared the following:

One time I was eating dried ethnic fruits in class and the teacher thought I was on drugs. I was taken to the Principal’s office, inspected everywhere including my shoes, wallet, and everywhere. I was asked many questions about drugs that I did not know. After I explained to them that it was ethnic dried fruits from Nepal, I was let go.

Jolly, from Burma, complained about transportation. He recalled,

When I first started school, I had problems with bus schedule, I was running late to the bus and had to ask neighbor to drop me to school. We also had five minutes to get between classes when the school is crowded and that was difficult for me. I remember been detained one time for coming late to class.

They felt that they have done terrible things, especially when summoned to the Principal’s office or when they were given school detention for being tardy. Sociocultural framework assumes that individual development and learning are mediated by culture as individuals participate in socially produced, culturally mediated, and historically contingent human activities (Cole &Wertsch, 2007; Engestron, 1987, 2001). Sociocultural theorists claim that learning is situated in everyday social contexts. As such behavior is learned in different cultures, the essence of time is perceived differently. In Iraqi and many African cultures, being five minutes tardy isn’t considered as late. Being summoned to the Principal’s office for eating fruit may also be due to

cultural misunderstanding not worthy of sending the student out of class and subjected to interrogation. This is an example that demonstrates the need for cross-cultural training for teachers, staff, and resettled refugees.

Sue, a Caucasian American community volunteer who was one of the mentors interviewed in the study, shared the following with me:

The concern is that the school districts need to understand the various cultures. All parties need to be involved – school districts, students, parents, resettlement agencies need to understand each other. Cultural accommodations are critical here. More cooperation, communication is important because everyone is working to achieve the same goal. There is always a lot of work and the need for more mentors, people to get involved.

Sue became involved in resettled refugee resettlement by chance when fliers were passed around at her church asking for volunteers to help resettled refugees. Because she speaks French and was an ESL teacher, she volunteered. A few days later, she was contacted to work with a Burundian family. This was to be her first encounter with resettled refugees and wasn't sure what to expect. She has never seen anyone from Burundi and wasn't given any cultural training. She did an internet search to learn more about Burundi resettled refugees and prepared for her first family visit to the resettled refugee family. The family wasn't sure about her role, but with time they were able to build rapport. Sue became very engaged with resettled refugees and kept recruiting other volunteers to help these new Americans. Soon, she was involved with Burmese resettled refugees and became a mentor for one of the participants. Sue, a retired teacher, believes in total language immersion programs. She said:

For high school kids, and that's their first experience in U.S., I'd recommend for the total English immersion program till their English is very good enough to take on other classes. I am saying this from experience.

Several participants shared their career aspirations of becoming doctors, nurses, and ambassadors to help in building relationships between their countries of origin and the United States. These are bold aspirations, and the participants are ready to stay the course to one day realize their dreams. Here are just two examples. Mary shared:

I want to become a nurse and help people. I want to go back to Burma border and help those people who are really suffering. I want to help my Burmese people first. My mom and dad will be happy and proud if I do that. I took summer classes, studied hard while having dictionary by my side to look up words.

Nara also shared:

I used to participate in many clubs like Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Finding My Voices in which we shared cultures. It was really fun when in Finding My Voice club you speak your language and another person speak their language and make jokes. We organized programs together. In FBLA, we spoke about business stuff and most of them were American student and we could talk with them about doing businesses in Nepal. We had lots of conversations. Participating in these two clubs was my best time in school and I want to build on that. I want to specialize in Business or International Relations and may be a minor in Journalism so that I can help advocating and writing about U.S.-Nepal relations.

From only the two quotes above that I provided as examples, these larger community-focused goals helped keep the participants motivated and focused in spite of the many obstacles they faced. This is a larger theme, strongest borne out of this research. Students who had such goals succeed more easily than those who did not.

Resilience and efficacy

Both resettled refugee children and adults have been known to exhibit a high degree of resilience (Watters, 2008; Chang-Muy& Congress, 2009). Resilience is defined in psychological literature as “a dynamic developmental process reflecting evidence of positive adaptation despite significant life adversity” (Cicchetti, 2003). As discussed earlier, Schweitzer et al., (2007) referred to resilience of resettled refugees as “having high expectations for the future,” which helps in coming to terms with situations more appropriately. The quote below that I used at the beginning of this chapter speaks of this statement, in which Amina shared: “I know that I shall overcome these dark moments because ... Allah is there for me and I am determined. I also have the support of my parents, especially my dad.” Jolly puts it this way: “you just have to believe in yourself...and go for it,” while Ali shared “Stay on your feet. Life is tough but don’t give up. Choose good friends and be careful.”

Due to the rigorous rote learning in Iraq and in refugee camps in Burma and Bhutan, most participants did not feel stressed about the amount of homework that they had to deal with in the U.S. schools as compared to the schools in the resettled refugee camps and/or in Iraq, Jordan, or Syria. Most of them reported as completing their homework at school and helping in domestic chores when they got home. In one example, Jolly said the following in response to school work here in the U.S.:

I do not do homework at home because I complete them while still at school and they [the parents] were like “why are you not doing homework? Aren’t you going to school? And I say, they do not give us homework and the parents ask “what kind of school is this?” Back in Nepal, we do not have time to talk with our families because we are very busy studying but here, I don’t even feel like I am going to school.

Five of the study participants reported as working part time during weekdays and full time on weekends to support themselves and their families. The completion of homework can be attributed mostly to their commitment to excellence and their determination to prove themselves to other students and teachers who look down upon resettled refugee students. These resettled refugee students have an intrinsic motivation coupled with delayed gratification to change their lives and their families for the better.

Attitudes of immigrant students (including resettled refugees) toward school have been shown to be more positive than those of their native-born peers (Fuligni, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Resettled refugee students’ attitudes towards school are not just related to grades, they also have stronger associations with cognitive and relational engagements. Suarez-Orozco and Gaytán (2010), define *cognitive engagement* as the degree to which students are interested in and curious about what they are learning. Curiosity can serve to engage students in their learning experiences. For example, a cognitive engagement scale can examine the degree to which students are engrossed and intellectually engaged in what they are learning (e.g., “I enjoy learning

new things”). They also defined *relational engagement* as the extent to which students feel connected to their teachers, peers, and others in their schools (ibid). Successful adaptation among immigrant (and resettled refugee) students appears to be linked to the quality of relationships that they can forge in school settings (Dubow, 1991; Wentzel, 1999). Social support in school has been implicated in the academic adaptation of all students, and immigrant students, including resettled refugees do not appear to be an exception (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). I argue that quality relationships foster cognitive engagement and/or relational engagement for these students and that in the case of the 12 students who graduated from high school, the mentor relationships enabled this kind of engagement.

In response to my question to mentors regarding what they observed in the student that made them get more involved in his or her education, Akadir, a PhD engineer involved in helping many Bhutanese resettled refugees, stated:

It was her burning desire to attend school and I liked that. I have enrolled and supported over 20 other resettled refugee kids like Lax in school. In her family were four sisters and they all wanted to go to school as their dad worked. Later on, they all got part-time jobs and were able to continue on to college working.

Akadir came to the U.S. from Nepal to do his Masters and after completing it, he was accepted into a doctoral program at Arizona State University about two decades ago. He was already fluent in English before coming to the U.S. and has had many years of work experience in both Nepal and

India. While he was able to successfully complete graduate level classes in U.S. universities, adjusting to the culture was one difficult thing that he remembers most and can relate to what newly arriving resettled refugees go through as they adjust to their new society. He shared:

From personal experience, I have had many troubles getting my education and I know how hard it can be. I do not know how to define mentor but I am a helper. If somebody needs help, I will help. If I can't, I'll try to find them help. This is because many people have helped me in my life and I consider this as "paying it forward." I wouldn't be where I am if it were not the help I got from many people.

Education as the most effective avenue for success is a conviction embraced by many resettled refugees and other immigrant to the United States and this belief is transmitted to young immigrants and second generation resettled refugee. In many countries around the world, Western education, especially education in the United States, is highly valued and has proven to be a formidable criterion for upward mobility since the days of European missionaries (Halter & Johnson, 2010). With the rise in globalized knowledge-based economies and tight competition, the desire to seek better and quality education plays more of a role today than even a decade ago and is a major driving force behind migration, including that of resettled refugees.

The Importance of Allies

Research shows that healthy and supportive relationships can reduce stress and improve overall health and promote a sense of well-being (Crockett, Iturbide, Torres, McGinley, Raffaelli, & Carlo, 2007; Rao,

Apte & Subbakrishna, 2003). In their study of 148 Mexican American college students, Crockett and colleagues found out that peer support moderated the relationship between acculturative stress and anxiety symptoms. In my interviews and discussions with resettled refugee youth and their mentors, the following were the most common words used: “encouraged” or “encouragement” was mentioned 52 times, “supported” was mentioned 39 times, and the word “motivation” or “motivated” was mentioned 27 times. As mentioned earlier and documented by many previous researchers (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien, 2004; Stewart, 2011; Suárez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Waters, 1999), resettled refugee parents’ support for their children’s education is among the top priorities after their safety. Although most students felt supported by their parents to the extent possible, there were things that were unfamiliar to the parents but critical for the students’ success in school.

In what seemed to many of the resettled refugee students as a competitive sink-or-swim, left-to-chance culture, having someone to turn to when in need is extremely important to any person. It is even more important if the person is a teenager in a foreign country. For many participants, entering the U.S. school came with a mixed reaction; a reaction of joy and “I can make it now that I am in the land of opportunity” and a “where am I?” when faced with challenges – big or small. “I was skeptical at first” shared Jolly, and “I was afraid and shy” was how Ero put it. Lantolf (2000) maintained that sociocultural theorist Vygotsky

perceived the human mind as a functional system in which the properties of the natural or biologically specified brain are organized into a culturally shaped mind through the integration of symbolic artifacts into thinking. These artifacts are culturally grounded and directly impact higher mental capacities like voluntary attention, intentional memory, planning, logical thinking, problem solving, and the effectiveness of these processes (ibid).

Family, school, and community factors influence the psychosocial adjustment of children affected by armed conflict. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) term, these systems of social ecology do not function independently of each other; rather, they function transactionally. That is, they are parts of the child's world that are dynamically intertwined and interact with one another, with each transaction potentially influencing the child's adaptation and functioning in one or another system. In addition, for resettled refugee teenagers in the stage of what Erickson's personality development terms "identity versus role confusion," they are becoming independent, transitioning from childhood to adulthood – a critical time to have a trusted individual, someone who cares, is concerned, and understands them. Erickson maintains that at this stage, children are becoming more independent and begin to look at the future in terms of career, relationships, families, housing, etc. During this period, children explore possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations. This sense of who they are can be hindered, which results in a sense of confusion ("I don't know what I want to be

when I grow up") about themselves and their role in the world. Sue, the mentor, puts resettled refugees' experience as similar to "been dropped off on planet Mars where everything is foreign."

Resettled refugee students need many supports as they navigate the U.S. school system. From school orientation to homework assistance and class choices, many times, resettled refugee children's attempts to succeed in U.S. high schools can be an uphill battle. This is not because they can't manage the workload but because of the difference in education systems coupled with other environmental factors. The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) produced "Mentoring Immigrant and Resettled refugee Youth: *A Toolkit for Program Coordinators*" in 2008, which maintains that while resettled refugee and immigrant students face significant challenges and barriers, many also possess enormous strengths and resilience. In the toolkit MENTOR references Act for Youth Upstate Center of Excellence (2004) in New York as having cited four common immigrant (and resettled refugee) youth assets that offer key insights into openings for mentoring programs and how mentors can make a difference. These assets are: a) a layer of protection created by the support and guidance of extended families, community needs valued over individual needs, and an emphasis on collective decision-making; b) bilingualism—which reflects increased skills and leadership in a quickly growing multicultural society; c) increased opportunities for healthy development when an immigrant youth overcomes negative circumstances and risks;

and d) learned ability to navigate through competing cultural demands, which fosters resilience, flexibility, and skills related to interpersonal relationships.

With intrinsic motivation and the strong resilience, all student participants wished that they had a friend, an active counselor, or a mentor to help them in making decisions regarding school. Parental support alone is not enough because most parents are either illiterate in even own language and/or not familiar with the U.S. educational system. In response to the question regarding who provided them with support and guidance, two students named a mentor provided by their school. None mentioned a formal mentoring organization. Nine of the total sample named unrelated adults, and only one named a community leader. I asked students who they were most likely to turn to when they needed academic support, such as help with homework, talking with them about the future, and providing information about getting into college. Three students found help from people at school or after-school activities, nine of the students reported as having no source of help with homework, and none reported as relying on their family for help with homework. Regarding college choices and readiness, only two students received this information from a logical and more knowledgeable source: counselors and teachers in school or after-school sites. Alarming, 10 of the participants reported having no source of information about college access

whatsoever, not even from family members, as most of the participants are the first in the family to attain a U.S. high school education.

Although all the participants reported that their schools had guidance counselors, mentors shared that many resettled refugee students do not know what classes to take so that they can graduate on time. For many, as long as they are taking classes and passing tests, that was enough to graduate. They did not know the difference between required and elective classes. Mostly, participants reported as enrolling in classes that their friends were in. In one situation, Rasa, who worked for Tucson Unified School District (TUSD), shared that it was almost a fight when a resettled refugee student was told he couldn't graduate because he did not have enough core credits. She explained that the particular student had 38 elective credits and no social studies class, which was required for graduation. On average, students in TUSD need to have 21 to 23 credits to graduate (TUSD, 2012). The student thought that his credits had been "stolen from him and given to Mexican students to graduate."

I asked if the parents spoke with them about school. Nara said: "Not really. My parent never went to school and I am thinking if they did, they will help me out. I had to figure out by myself or ask for help from outside people that I knew." Ero also shared "They [the parents] told me, if you are educated, it is easier to get good jobs. They encouraged me to go to school, believe in self and do what I wanted to do. They say 'never give up and always give your best shot'." Amina shared that, in addition to homework,

they spoke about scholarship and community services so as to earn extra points. This was an exceptional case because of the knowledge and exposure of her parent.

In Ma's situation, who came to the U.S. as an "attached minor" (without parents or blood-relatives), here is what he had to say in response to the question: Did you or your parents talk about schooling and education?

No. I was an attached minor. Both my parents I think were killed in the war. I grew up in streets. The family that I was attached with really did not know the importance of education. All their children were much younger than me too.

Resettled refugee children arrive in the U.S. under many different circumstances. Children who do not resettle with their own parents or blood relatives (attached minors) are often at higher risk than are children who travel and resettle with their own parents. These minors are attached to, traveling with, and resettling with non-relatives deemed to be the best option available at the time of refugee processing and resettlement.

From the responses above, it can be concluded that, similar to other communities, parents' involvement in their children's school is varied. But for these young men and women, someone to help walk alongside them in their schools is critical as portrayed in the responses below. Each participant was asked to give the names of two persons in the order of priority who helped them in the completion of their high school education. The next question was, "What do you think would have happened if you did not meet them?" A few of the responses are: Pi said "I don't think I would have graduated to get my high school diploma" and Nara said "I

wouldn't have progressed; I would not know who to talk with and I would have been frustrated and drop out of school. I am where I am, because of them." While both the students in the example came with both of their parents, it is clear from their statement that mentors were critical in their high school completion. Further on, Nara shared "I think I would have been carried away by drugs and my life spoilt forever."

The mentors also confirmed the above response by sharing the following examples.

Rasa shared:

I think early prevention is the key to resettled refugee students' success. As soon as they arrive in the country, if they get the right orientation, right registration and placement, immediate follow-up to help explain the U.S. education system, one-on-one mentors – people who understand their culture, are patient with them as they go about asking all and every questions sometime a couple times to understand. Otherwise, they will be lost...have a good mentoring program like Project REACH. Give mentors enough training on how to handle stress, prioritize tasks, how and where to refer students/families with non-academic issues to resources, also for school staff to learn about available resources and use them, encourage mentors and appreciate.

Dipe, a young mentor, younger than his mentee, shared:

It depends on the student too – whether they are willing to go to school or otherwise, whether the student has someone in their life who understands the U.S. school systems and both cultures, how to solve problems, if not this can be difficult leading to high incidence of drop out.

Dipe was Nara's mentor. Both are resettled refugees from Bhutan. Dipe is a year younger than his mentee. Dipe heard about Nara's superb performance at school while they were still in the resettled refugee camps. He always wanted to be like Nara although the two never met while in the

camps. Upon arrival in the U.S., their families attended a community get-together, and the two met for the first time. Dipe was shocked at Nara's condition. Nara shared that he "was in the company of some bad boys doing bad things." The two decided to meet after school to talk. It was during this talk that Nara shared the difficulty he's family was going through with adjustment and the lack of employment. Dipe told me that Nara looked depressed and was doing whatever he was doing (dealing in drugs) so as to support himself, gain acceptance from peers at school, and also help his family. Dipe's family arrived a few months before Nara's family and both his father and sister were employed. Dipe also had "a small business of selling candies at schools" and had some savings. After their second meeting, Dipe had a surprise for Nara – he took him to buy a pair of shoes (basketball shoes that Nara wanted but could not afford), a shirt, and a pair pant. As demonstrated by this generosity and invaluable advice, Nara was touched and decided to avoid the "bad company." At the time of the interview, not only are the two friends, but Jolly and Dipe are business partners in a web-based business and are doing great both in their schooling and in supporting their families.

In this chapter, I have provided a brief overview of background information about situations that made the three groups (Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi) resettled refugees. For comparative purposes and to provide further educational and state context, I also provided Arizona high school graduation rates for the period of the study (2007-2010) and

provided key thematic issues that students and mentors considered as important to the graduation of resettled refugees from high schools in Arizona. To reiterate, these main factors broadly categorized are school context and attitude; striving for a better life; and commitment to family coupled with resilience, efficiency, self-determination, and the availability of supportive significant person(s).

A welcoming school environment eases the anxiety of resettled refugee students and their families. While schools are locally governed, it is important for the leadership to develop policies that aren't dependent on the whims of the principals to give it any support, but engraved in the school philosophy of every child is unique and deserves nothing less than the best educational opportunities. Better school and classroom environments in which children felt safe and welcome increase the chances of continued enrollment and associated positive outcomes.

Determination and resilience are words almost synonymous with resettled refugees. We need to learn from the experiences that resettled refugees come with and build on their passion to learn and their yearning to start a new life. In addition, they are also optimistic about life and "count their blessings" while yearning to make the best of the situations.

A supportive significant person is critical in helping resettled refugees succeed in their overall adjustment to life in the U.S. and school. This can better be understood only if we put ourselves in the students' shoes and travel back in time. Put yourself in a resettled refugee camp

where you are unfamiliar with the culture and the language. We all need the right person(s) to help us out. Providing this support rests not only with the classroom teachers but also with the school administrators. Mentors were key in all of the participants' success to stay in school and not only complete their high school education but get better grades.

In the final chapter, I situate the findings within a broader theoretical discussion and compare findings with those in the literature. I also draw broad conclusions and implications for policy, practice, and research. I conclude with a personal reflection.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, the unit of analysis was the factors that newly arrived refugee students graduating from Arizona high schools thought contributed mainly to their successful high school completion. I chose to study three newer refugee groups resettling in Arizona: Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqis. In total, twelve (six female and six male) individuals with four participants from each group were interviewed individually and in focused group discussions. Each participant was also asked to give the names of two individuals who were instrumental in their high school graduation, in order of importance. If those individuals were available for an interview, they were also invited and interviewed regarding the student they supported. The previous chapter presented overall findings, based on my analysis of interview and focus group transcripts and comparing my findings to broader related literature in several instances.

This chapter offers discussions about resettled refugee youth and while looking at implications, suggests recommendations for future work. While the items presented here are exhaustive, I chose to focus on those that relate specifically to my research. The chapter closes with a quote from one of the participants.

It is not possible to examine resettled refugee children's education in isolation from social and/or other issues that resettled refugees go through as they adjust in to their new country. I therefore analyzed

student responses in terms of cultural models, coping strategies in resettlement, survival, adaption, and adjustment in order to see the bigger picture of the socially situated context (McInerney, Walker, & Liem, 2011). Prior studies strongly suggested that resettled refugee and immigrant students and parents view schooling as vital in their educational, psychosocial, and economic adaptation and subsequent outcomes in the United States (Ager, 1996; Lee, 2001; Levinson & Holland, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Summerfield, 2000). Most of these studies incorrectly categorize refugees in the same group as other immigrants and they are a distinctive group with different shared experiences and challenges. Refugees were uprooted from their homes and had to flee for their lives while other immigrants usually plan to leave their home country in search of better opportunities. The limited literature on immigrants and refugees in the United States offers very generalized characterizations about these groups. As Bal (2009) rightly stated, “we cannot completely understand newly arrived refugee students' complex lives with overly simplified systemic and theoretical categories and address their needs and strengths” (p. 245).

Although the United States has resettled more than half of the refugees who get the opportunity to resettle in a third country since 1975, research about refugees is still lacking. Comparatively, great strides in research leading to innovative programming have been made in Australia and the United Kingdom, countries that resettle a relatively low number of

refugees. Furthermore, among traditional refugee resettling countries, only the United States resettles refugees solely on humanitarian grounds without consideration of ability to integrate or earn a living. While this is a great philosophy, policies need to be in place to maximize the success of these individuals flowing into the country. Tides have shifted, and 1980s policies aren't quite applicable to today's refugees. In addition to the lack of literature, the complexity and frequency of wars and civil unrest happening all over the world makes cultural and linguistic relevant programming difficult. By the time refugee service providers have learned about a particular group, the resettlement of the said group ends, and a new wave of refugees from different parts of the world might be coming in. In the last decade alone, the United States has resettled refugees from Somalia, including Somali-Bantus who had unique and distinct needs and ethnic minorities like the Benadiri and Barawa; Burundian refugees who have been in Tanzania since 1972; Sudanese refugees, including the Lost Boys and Darfuris; Iraqis, including religious minorities and Special Immigrant Visa eligible applicants; Rwandese; Congolese; Ethiopians; Afghans; Burmese; and Bhutanese, to name but a few. Each of these groups has specific cultural traits that make it challenging for service providers to tailor programming. In this study alone, the Bhutanese and Burmese had long stays in refugee camps while Iraqis have not. Refugee camp programming is not uniform, and long stays in the camps have long-term effects on individuals. Most of the students in the study from Burma

and Bhutan were either born in the camps or came to them as toddlers. The psychological and cognitive readiness of a child born, raised and lived her/his entire life in desolate refugee camps is much different than those that have had stable, predictable and “normal” ways of living in their countries. Refugee children’s lives are in indeterminate state for all the years they live in the camp because their families try resettlement opportunities and are interviewed more than several dozen times for possible consideration for resettlement. This suspense has effect on student’s ability to stay focused on their education and have long term ambitions.

English Language

Academic English is necessary to succeed in school and the workforce, and learning it takes much more time than many policy makers would like. In fact, Collins (1991), Collier (1992), and Klesmer (1994) maintain that while verbal proficiency can be developed within a couple of years, acquiring the level of language skills necessary to compete with native-born peers in the classroom takes on average *five to seven years* (emphasis added) under optimal conditions. Suarez-Orozco and Gaytan (2010) eloquently summarize refugee and immigrant youths’ experience with English language as:

Refugees and other immigrant youth may be able to pick up enough English to discuss with ease the latest ball game, video game fad, or fashion frenzy but verbal academic language abilities in more complex

domains are slow to gain. Majority of refugees and immigrant students cannot possibly be expected to master complex intricacies of academic English in one year of study, particularly in the highly dysfunctional schools where huge numbers of newly arrived refugees and immigrant students concentrate. Due to multiple failures in high-stakes testing, many refugee and immigrant youth check themselves out of the school – a tragedy for the child and loss for society.

Improving how we expose refugee youths to the English languages is beneficial to them and the host community. Policies such as Arizona's four-hour English only hinder meaningful exchanges and friendships between newly arrived refugee youngsters and native-born students. The *status quo* can generate immeasurable missed opportunities; refugees and immigrant youth have little exposure to the linguistic modeling their American-born peers could provide, and American students, who desperately need to learn about the world beyond their country's borders, are also missing out by not connecting with resettled refugees and immigrant peers. Many of the study participants did not appreciate the English Language classes that they were placed in. This lack of motivation can hinder their learning. Especially students from Burma and Bhutan who already had exposure to learning in English language could have benefitted better from a targeted approach aimed at helping them with their pronunciations rather than put together with students who have had no or very little exposure to English language. Such targeted approach will

also reduce the student's time spent in this drawn-out classes putting student in a better footing to learn with and from native-born peers.

Education Policy for Refugees

Years of research in schools serving large numbers of immigrant and resettled refugee youth have made it painfully obvious that the U.S. have no coherent policies for optimally educating [refugee and] immigrants – especially those arriving during middle and high school years (Fix, & Clewell, 2001; Ruiz-de-Velasco). Nor does it have any significant frameworks to ease their transition to college or the labor market. The U.S. currently institute a policy of “non-policy”: a sink or swim approach that seems to rest on the belief that after people enter the U.S., the logic of the market and the magic of American culture will work to somehow turn them into proud, loyal, and productive citizens (ibid). Sue, an American native-born mentor in this study used the analogy of dropping someone on Mars and expect them to do well without having suitable person (s) to guide.

After-school and tutoring programs can be critically important to resettled refugee and immigrant students in providing them with homework help (Noam, Miller, & Barry, 2002). While many of the schools that the participants attended have Supplemental Education Services (SES) that came about with the 2001 passage of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) for the purpose of giving low-income students the opportunity to have a private tutor to assist them in meeting academic goals of the law

(1116e of NCLB), none of the participants or their mentors spoke about it. Schools have SES Coordinators and/or student counselors who should be familiar with this service. There are over a dozen SES providers in Maricopa and Pima Counties alone. Many refugee families by-and-large cannot provide the kind of academic support that enhances their children's academic performance. Although refugee families have high educational aspirations for their children, they are often unable to help with homework or provide informed advice on accessing higher education. In such situations, even where there are policies and resource in place to help students, it would be beneficial to have those entrusted with helping inform students and their parents about the resources to actively do that in the interest of all.

Today's globally linked economies and societies are unforgiving of those without the higher-order cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, cultural sophistication, and ability to manage complexity that are imparted in our better secondary and tertiary education settings (Suraez-Orozco and Qin, 2004). The Gates Foundation (2006) argues that the new global economy requires schools to provide "new 3 Rs": *rigor* in challenging classes; *relevance* to engaging topics that "relates clearly to their lives in today's rapidly changing world"; and *relationships* with adults "who know them, look out for them, and push them to achieve," though far too few resettled refugee students attend schools that provide these experiences. Furthermore, middle-class Americans understand that non-service sector

jobs require a college education, although too many resettled refugee and immigrant youngsters receive mediocre high school educations that preclude them from attending college (Suarez-Orozco & Gaytan, 2010). As I mention in the paragraph above, refugee students and their mentors do not know about all of the available and important services aimed at assisting students. One domain that desperately needs creative policy work that could greatly help refugee families is mentorship. The evidence in this study and other prior works (Hamilton & Moore, 2004; Noam, Miller and Barry, 2002; Suarez-Orozco and Gaytan, 2010; Watters, 2008;) suggests that carefully planned and well-staffed mentor programs can help all children and may play an especially important role in the lives of disoriented new arrivals in need of guidance. Suarez-Orozco and Gaytan maintain that mentors can act as cultural guides to help new arrivals find their way during the tumultuous adolescent years in a new country. In addition, these caring adults can illuminate college pathways that even native-born middle class parents find daunting and newcomer resettled refugee parents find incomprehensible. Youth in this study, especially boys, encountered serious difficulties as they transition to their new homeland and mentoring opportunities can help ease these challenges. Behind nearly every successful resettled refugee youth's journey, there is at least one mentor from faith groups, after-school programs, and/or a community center who takes the youth under his or her wing. However, ten of cases in the study, the mentorship relationship began due to a

chance encounter. Only two students in this study had a mentor assigned to them by their school.

Welcoming Community

School context, environment, and attitudes all affect student performance. While prejudices generally are not expressed as overt hostility, resettled refugee students in this study reported that they detected subtler forms of insensitivity, ignorance, or indifference and feel marginalized by negative attitudes or exclusionary structures and practices. Only two cases reported explicit discrimination and hostile comments. Resettled refugees suffer from a lack of knowledge about U.S. public and higher education systems and the lack of social infrastructure supporting education. While parents are zealous in their belief in education for their children, they lack the knowledge of *how* to help their children. In addition, resettled refugee parents also struggle with English language acquisition and are overwhelmed by financial concerns, acculturation, and employment demands; therefore, they are unable to offer appropriate support and guidance to their children.

Although these youth have to cope with numerous challenges as they resettle in the United States, these challenges are mitigated by a powerful source of personal agency and drives propelled by hope. In this study, many youth spoke about their hope for a better tomorrow, hope for a good college education to support themselves and their family, and aspired to become ambassadors of their native countries (even for those

who have never seen their country because they were born in refugee camps) in forging international relationships with United States.

Similar to other immigrant groups, resettled refugee youth are at higher risk of failing academically. Resettled refugee youth contend with education disruption, learning a new language, adjusting to an unfamiliar culture, discrimination, and racism, all while dealing with an identity crisis in response to the cultural demands of their parents and their new peers. As we have seen in this study, it is even more difficult for older resettled refugee students who have to deal with academic placements that do not provide an opportunity to advance at an accelerated pace, and their situations are exacerbated by difficulties navigating the U.S. educational system and pressure to work full time. Therefore, the challenges that refugee youth face are distinct, complex, and pressing.

Limitation of my Research

For a long time as I worked with refugees, I have had the interest in research on this topic due to systemic issues that I continued to see or hear. When the opportunity for this research presented itself, I struggled as to what aspect of resettled refugee children's education to pick for the study. In other words, I had to constantly self-check because of how much I knew coming in to do this research. Making familiar strange isn't always easy and I was very careful to capture and document participants' views and not those that came from my previous knowledge and/or bias.

My research looked at the less than 10% of resettled refugee children who entered U.S. high schools and graduated. There is a great need to look at the more than 90% that did not graduate from high school so that the findings from the research can be used to inform service providers with the hope of initiating corrective, innovative programs that can help increase the high school graduation.

Also, my research looked at the three latest groups of refugees resettling in the U.S. It is possible that the findings from my study might be different from studies with resettled refugee groups that have been in the U.S. longer than these three groups.

Implications

Below, I offer some recommendations that might help to alleviate these conditions and put resettled refugee youths on the path to maximizing their potential and enriching the fiber of American society.

Policy and Research

It is necessary to pay attention to the needs of resettled refugee youth and develop appropriate policies and concrete support for action-oriented research and effective program initiatives. The hope that they will magically learn the language and adjust after entering the U.S. is not realistic. Familiar is the refrain that “children hold the key to our future”. We depend partly on these resettled refugee youths to build tomorrow’s America. Neglecting their unique needs is the equivalent of the proverbial ostrich burying its head in the sand and assuming that if it can’t see its

attacker, the attacker can't see it. In other words, the end result will be young adults who are unable to compete in the increasingly knowledge-based economy.

Whereas elementary and middle school students experience less academic pressure and generally learn English language quickly, high school-age resettled refugee youth struggle to meet demanding academic requirements in a short period of time. Repeatedly, these youth are enrolled in public schools on the basis of their age, even if they have never attended school. Public school curricula and staff-to-student ratios are not designed to address the unique needs of resettled refugee students. In fact, in most schools in the study, the students were “invisible”. Only one school district had a Welcome Center with culturally and linguistically appropriate staff. Carey and Kim (2010) reference a 2006 interview with the International Rescue Committee Program Manager and suggest that these staff can be trained to conduct linguistically and culturally appropriate assessments of cognitive and linguistic abilities and the emotional and social development of refugee students, as well as identify and respond to resettled refugee students with learning or other disabilities. It is recommended that school districts, in partnership with refugee service providers, have a multipurpose Welcome Center where newly arriving refugees have opportunity to understand the school and other systems. Initial and continued orientation can be held at these

centers. In addition, cultural events and cross-cultural trainings can be held at these Centers.

It is important to conduct research on factors that contributed to the high number of resettled refugee student drop-out of school. The findings can be used as a starting point to not only remedy the system but build on and proactively look out for the interest of resettled refugees. Schools that have specific policies and procedures that ensure the creation of a mutually adaptive relationship between the resettled refugee student, his or her parents, and the school and surrounding community have been found to be better at dealing with cultural issues (Brizuela & Garcia-Stellers, 1999). These policies should target promoting and supporting the development of clear communications and understanding between school and the family. Teachers' understanding and support for the needs and interest of the resettled refugee child should be at the core of such policies. Simple gestures such as either visiting the resettled refugee child's home or inviting parents to meet with teachers and/or staff at school will go a long way in establishing rapport.

Support to Resettled Refugee Groups

The problem of social infrastructure related to education is multifaceted. While a simple lack of knowledge is part of the problem and can be combated through dissemination of information, most community groups do not have a reliable source of funding. Usually called Mutual Assistant Associations (MAA), these ethnic community-based

organizations formed by earlier resettled refugees depend on meager membership fees that are not even enough to pay for their office expenses, let alone provide funds for forging alliances with schools and/or effectively instituting awareness campaigns about important resettled refugee community issues. Added to this problem is the fact that each small organization (even within the same ethnic group) is doing its own work and scrambling for funding or other support, sometimes in direct competition with each other. There is no umbrella organization that can organize larger actions. What is needed is a coordinated strategy that would include school districts, universities, local elected public officials, the State Refugee Coordinators' office, the Arizona Department of Education, and MAAs with the goal of promoting school attendance, retention, successful completion, and subsequent college enrollment. To achieve this, there is a need to promote and strengthen the capacity of MAAs by providing funding that enables them in their nonprofit organizational development.

Mentorship Projects

Establish a refugee mentorship project that can be a joint venture between earlier resettled refugees, formal mentoring organizations, and schools. Mentors need to be individuals (preferably resettled refugees from same cultural background) who are educationally and professionally successful and passionate about mentoring. Based on best practices laid out in the works of Rhodes (2002) and Rhodes and DuBois (2006), the

project should seek long-term commitments to mentees, usually a year or more. A way to understand this type of mentoring is through the concept of social capital, which refers to relationships that give an individual access to resources (financial, informational, or simple “know how”) that facilitate success (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). From my experience working with refugees, they are very compassionate and willing to help whenever they are approached. What we need to do is ask and coordinate the effort. After all, refugee resettlement agencies are already recruiting families from the host community to welcome and help newly arriving refugees as they settle into their new country. The same effort of reaching out to both earlier resettled refugees and host community can be extended to help these youth stay and succeed in schools. These social capitals can be expanded to help resettled refugees with other areas of need beyond education. Suarez-Orozco and Gaytan (2010) suggest that when starting a mentoring program, it is optimal to first seek feasible sites for intervention that are identified through refugee community involvement. The mentors may need to go through an orientation course to better equip them with the skills to attend to issues that might arise during mentoring. After completion of the course, each mentor is matched with a mentee. It is important to first create relationships. Mentors can help mentees with academics, applying to colleges, assist parents in understanding the American education system, and help in other informal ways as needed. This project can also facilitate building relationships between parents and

schools, which in turn can help inform parents and students receive information relating to college applications, making the process less mysterious and forbidding. Mentors can also advise parents on dealing with the school system and alert the school to important issues in the community it may not know about.

Critical school role unique to resettled refugees

Similar to the fundamental role that refugee camp education plays in mitigating the effects of war-related trauma, providing structure and stability, advancing social and cognitive development, contributing to psychological and social well-being, enabling youth to regain hope and dignity, and preparing youth for constructive adulthood, education is vital to the healing, healthy acculturation, and future success of resettled refugee youth in the U.S. Because students spend most of their time at school, having a welcoming, safe, and trusting school and classroom environment can go a long way in helping refugee children with healing from the trauma of wars and hardship. This has direct effects on students' learning and academic achievements.

The importance of leadership and the belief in justice, equity, or fairness are critical in combating school racism and discrimination (Stewart, 2011). Stewart, in his study of resettled refugee students from Africa attending schools in Canada, found that the perception of inequality heightens the likelihood of situations being considered racially motivated or discriminatory. As long as the perception is there, students believe that

they are been treated unfairly because of their race or culture. Whether it is true or not, students' perception needs to be addressed. A stressful school climate, characterized by perceptions of academic pressure, danger, discrimination, and the absence of supportive relationships, can undermine students' well-being, taxing their abilities to cope (Karatzias et al., 2002). Conversely, a more supportive educational context can have a protective effect on students' well-being (Samdal et al., 1998) and general academic achievement. Reactivating stress and trauma experienced by resettled refugee youth can adversely impact their learning and academic success. Hence, the need for a calm and accommodating but challenging and engaging school environment for resettled refugee students can yield a higher graduation rate.

Build on available resources and experience

Refugee resettlement organizations have decades of experience providing support to newcomer youths arriving as refugees, such as counseling and community orientation to aid with disorientation; language classes; and access to jobs, housing, and health care, among others. Building on the lessons learned and the infrastructure of these organizations and others, like Bridging Refugee Youth and Children Services (BRYCS) of the United States Conferences of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning, a Denver-based nonprofit has been providing language training, direct services, technical assistance, training, and consulting services for individuals, communities,

organizations, and corporations regionally, nationally, and internationally (Spring Institute, 2012) is a sensible and efficient way of meeting the needs of refugee youth. Depending on their funding and the organization structure, many refugee resettlement agencies have school liaisons that are tasked with facilitating cross-cultural understanding between refugee students and their schools. This staff is in addition to various other staff (like Caseworker, Employment Coordinators and Job Specialist) working with the family. It is important to also note that the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has grants for State and State-alternative programs to support impacted school districts with funds necessary to pay for activities that promote effective integration and education of refugee children. Services target school-age refugees between the ages of 5 and 18 years of age with program activities that include English as a Second Language instruction, after-school tutorials, programs that encourage high school completion and full participation in school activities, after-school and/or summer clubs and activities, parental involvement programs, bilingual/bicultural counselors, interpreter services, and others (ORR, 2012). These funds cannot be used to supplant other federal resources and are in addition to Title I and Title IID grants that schools receive to help students with academic enrichment and support.

Educate students and staff about refugees

Provide students and school staff with knowledge of cultures, human rights and personal stories about refugees. Highlighting the

strengths of resettled refugees and celebrating the achievements they made is important. This way, native-born American students get the opportunity to get the glimpse into worlds outside of the U.S.

Accountability

In today's day and ages of accountability, schools, which are the mirror images of the communities, are expected to meet the need of every child. I believe, schools should be accountable to the parents and neighborhoods. Let communities decide what standards must be met, and how to measure this. Parents and neighborhoods then become responsible for implementing the change they would like to see in their schools. Even if this is done, resettled refugee students might be at disadvantage because their parent might not be informed enough to go to the school and advocate for their children. This is where mentors can help bridge this gap.

The importance of proper documentation and accurate data is key to informing service providers about refugee student scholastic performance. From my experience overseeing the implementation of the Refugee School Impact Grant in Arizona, there is a lack of reliable and verifiable data regarding the number of refugee children in Arizona. I have observed schools that classified all children who do not use English as the home language as refugees. This is incorrect, considering that Arizona has a large number of Hispanics who do not necessarily use English in the home. My own experience while conducting this research attests to this allegation; I was provided with demographics that were inconsistent with

refugee arrivals in the state. In addition, except for desk monitoring (where invoices are sent for reimbursement), there is paucity in the effectiveness of this grant due to lack of program evaluation. Arizona Department of Education administers the Refugee School Impact Grant and has a fulltime State Coordinator for Refugee Education. Although the department has regulatory oversight of all schools in the state to ensure the success of every student, I have yet to see *any* initiative aimed at helping resettled refugee children succeed at school. In the age of accountability, it is critical to prove if and how these funds are helping refugee children. Though a state employee, the State Refugee Education Coordinator is supposed to be someone with authority to advice, guide, educate and bring to forefront issues that specifically affect resettled refugee and recommend policies. It is also important to seek other sources of funding to supplement the grant and increase programming.

In closing, in the words of Suarez-Orozco and Gaytan, (2010),

“[T]he development of more coherent education policies to ease new refugee students’ path to college and their eventual transition to the knowledge intensive economies of the global era is a must”
(p.165).

Countries that better coordinate their immigration objectives with proactive integration policies, including language and education policies, tend to have better outcomes with regard to longer term adaptation of refugees and immigrant youths, as measured by better schooling

performance (OECD, 2005). Today's urban American schools, especially in cities that are being transformed by large-scale refugee resettlement and immigration, should be the very frontlines of an ambitious new incorporation agenda. A thorough investigation of the organizational and policy issues concerning refugee resettlement would extend far beyond my research.

With immigrant-origin youth, including resettled refugees, comprising the fastest growing sector of the U.S. child population, there is much at stake for the future of our economy and society. In the words of one of the mentors, "refugees are the bravest [and most resilient] people only next to our service men and women." It is time for our policy makers to pay attention to the needs of this population and match 'the humanitarian effort' of resettling the most desperate of the world refugees with policies and actions that can put them on their way to economic and social self-sufficiency.

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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Elizabeth Swadener
EDUCATION

From:  Mark Roosa, Chair
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 06/22/2011

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 06/22/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1106006530

Study Title: Educational factors considered by students and mentors which contribute to successful high school students in Arizona

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B
RECRUITMENT LETTER
KEY INFORMANTS

Educational factors considered by students and mentors that contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

I am a graduate student in Education Policy and Leadership Studies under the direction of Professor Beth Swadener at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore educational factors considered by students and mentors to contribute to the successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

I am recruiting individuals on a first-come-first-serve basis who:

- Are resettled refugees, 18 years or older
- From Iraq, Bhutan, or Burma
- Started United State schooling at grade 10 or above
- Have completed high school education in Arizona in 2007 or after, and
- Have the time to participate in an individual interview session and a focus group discussion each of which will take about 60-90 minutes.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Your responses will be anonymous. I would like to audiotape all interview/focus group discussions. You will not be recorded unless you give permission. If you give permission to be audiotaped, you have the right to ask for the recording to be stopped. The electronic recordings will be kept as password-protected files for the duration of the study and data analysis and will subsequently be deleted once they have been transcribed. Those transcripts will also be destroyed within two years of completing the study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study, or if you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at (480) 332-1414 or my advisor, Beth Swadener, at (480) 965-7181.

With appreciation,

Eman Yarrow

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM/INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Educational factors considered by students and mentors that contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Beth Swadener in the College of Education at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore educational factors considered by students and mentors that contribute to the successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

You were recommended by a former resettled refugee high school student as a significant person in the participant's high school completion. Thank You! I am inviting your participation in this study, which will involve 60-90 minutes of one-on-one interview with a researcher at a time and place of your convenience. In total, there will be 24 people who will participate in this study. You have the right not to answer any question and to stop the interview at any time.

There are no known risks from taking part in this study, but in any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. If you experience discomfort and need support during the interview or any time throughout the study period, I encourage you to contact the supervising faculty or myself. Our phone numbers are included in the cover letter. We will assist you in finding an appropriate professional in the area if needed.

The potential direct benefit of participation in this study is the opportunity to express one's opinion as part of information that will later be shared with the schools and used to guide interventional programs that will improve high school completion of resettled refugee students in Arizona. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Your responses will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym during the interviews instead of using your own name to ensure complete confidentiality. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications, but only your assigned 'pseudonym' and not your own personal name will be used. Results will only be shared in aggregate form.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is ok for you to say no. Even if you say yes now, you are free to say no later and withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Arizona State University or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

While your ideas are extremely valuable in this study, at this time, there is no payment for your participation in the study. The researchers want your decision about participating in the study to be absolutely voluntary.

Any questions you have concerning the research study or your participation in the study, before or after your consent, will be answered by

Eman Yarrow
Arizona State University
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Tel: (480) 332-1414; E-mail: eyarrow@asu.edu

Or

Professor Beth Swadener
Arizona State University
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Tel: (480)965-1781; E-mail: bswadener@asu.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk; you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at 480-965 6788.

This form explains the nature, demands, benefits, and any risk of the project. By signing this form you agree knowingly to assume any risks involved. Remember, your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. In signing this consent form, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this consent form will be given (offered) to you.

Your signature below indicates that you consent to participate in the above study and any associated follow-ups for clarification.

Subject's Signature	Printed Name	Date
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By signing below, you are agreeing to be audio-taped.

Subject's Signature	Printed Name	Date
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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

"I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits and possible risks associated with participation in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature. These elements of Informed Consent conform to the Assurance given by Arizona State University to the Office for Human Research Protections to protect the rights of human subjects. I have provided (offered) the subject/participant a copy of this signed consent document."

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Educational factors considered by students and mentors that contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

Interview introduction (*after Informed Consent has been obtained*)

Before we start the interview, I want to share with you some important facts about these questions.

1. You don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Just let me know and we'll skip it.
2. You can quit at any time. Please just tell me when you would like to stop.
3. We can take a break whenever you want.
4. You can ask me any questions at any time.
5. What you say to me is completely private and will be kept confidential. That means that I will not tell anyone else.

We will conduct this interview in English. I will be happy to repeat or reword the questions as much as you want.

We are also going to use a tape recorder today. I need to capture all our discussion and later listen to the tape and type up what you said. It will help me to have everything you have said typed up so that I can look at it later. Any names or specific places you mention will NOT be typed up. You can use fake names for people if you want to. You can also ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time. I may take a few notes also.

After I have talked to other people like you, I will write a report and paper describing some of the experiences and recommendations of the people I interviewed. But your name or anything that could let people know who you are will not be mentioned anywhere. No one, besides me will even know you were in the study unless you tell them. The tape, the typed up version, and my notes will not have your name on it. They will have a number but only I will know that it refers to you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The last thing is: there is no right or wrong answers. I want to know what you think and how you feel. In other words, I don't want you to tell me what you think I may want to hear. You are the expert on your own life and schooling experiences. I'm just here to learn from you. This is a chance for you to talk in depth about your own experiences in the United States, and educational factors considered by students and mentors which contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona as well as your general views and

beliefs on education. I would like you to tell me as much as you can and tell me stories that help me to understand what you have experienced and how these experiences made you feel.

I'm going to turn the tape on now, OK?

Interview introduction (*after Informed Consent has been obtained*)

Before we start the interview, I want to share with you some important facts about these questions.

1. You don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Just let me know and we'll skip it.
2. You can quit at any time. Please just tell me when you would like to stop.
3. We can take a break whenever you want.
4. You can ask me any questions at any time.
5. What you say to me is completely private and will be kept confidential. That means that I will not tell anyone else.

We will conduct this interview in English. I will be happy to make you understand the question as much as you want.

We are also going to use a tape recorder today. I need to capture all our discussion and later listen to the tape and type up what you said. It will help me to have everything you have said typed up so that I can look at it later. Any names or specific places you mention will NOT be typed up. You can use fake names for people if you want to. You can also ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time. I may take a few notes also.

After I have talked to other people like you, I will write a report and paper describing some of the experiences and recommendations of the people I interviewed. But your name or anything that could let people know who you are will not be mentioned anywhere. No one, besides me will even know you were in the study unless you tell them. The tape, the typed up version, and my notes will not have your name on it. They will have a number but only I will know that it refers to you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The last thing is: there is no right or wrong answers. I want to know what you think and how you feel. In other words, I don't want you to tell me what you think I may want to hear. You are the expert on your own life and schooling experiences. I'm just here to learn from you. This is a chance for you to talk in depth about your own experiences in the United States, and educational factors considered by students and mentors which contribute to successful high school completion for

resettled refugee students in Arizona as well as your general views and beliefs on education. I would like you to tell me as much as you can and tell me stories that help me to understand what you have experienced and how these experiences made you feel.

A. Demographics (10 minutes) (to be administered only at the individual interview session)

To start with, I would like you to complete the questionnaire below:

Name _____ Age: _____ # Siblings: Boys ___ Girls ___
Your birth order _____ # Years in the US _____
Did you come to the U.S with all your family members? Yes _____ No _____
Do you live with your parent (s)? Yes _____ No _____ if no, when did you
move out? _____

Parent (s)

Native language: _____ Read _____ Write _____ Speak _____
English Read Write Speak

Highest education level attained: Mother: _____ Father: _____

Parent's school language of instruction?

Parent (s)Employment status

Mother: Full Time Part-Time Unemployed- for how long?

Father: Full Time Part-Time Unemployed- for how long?

I'm going to turn the tape on now, OK?

B. Pre Migration (20 minutes)

I am now going to ask you to talk about yourself birthplace.

1. Tell me in general about your country/birthplace (*Probe along the lines of form of livelihood, extended family system*)
2. What are your memories of schooling? (*Probe along lines of : language of instruction, hours/days at schools, teachers, general culture, discipline and testing*)

C. Life in Resettled refugee Camps (Trans-migration) (15 minutes)

3. Tell me about your memories in the resettled refugee camp (s) (*Probe: # of camps, years in camp, camp life*)
4. How would you describe your schooling experience in the camp (s)? Tell me more about that. (*probe: grade attained, language of instruction, teachers, class size, resources/materials*)

5. Did you remember working in the resettled refugee camp? (*Probe: type of work, balance between school and work*)

D. Life in the United States (40 minutes)

Now let's turn to your life in the United States.

6. Tell about your arrival in the US and your early experiences (*Probe: duration in US, how long before starting school, culture shock, early days at school including grade started at*)
7. Tell me something funny or interesting that happened to you at school.
8. What did teachers, staff and other students think about you? (*probe along race, English language, challenges in fitting in, peer pressure, respect, responsibility, ability, and how did they make you feel?*)
 - a. Have your teachers been mostly men or women?
 - b. What has been the difference? Who do you prefer? Why?
9. Did you or your parents talk about schooling and education? (*probe: perception about schooling*)
 - a. What did you like most in the school? What didn't you like most in school?
 - b. Have you ever been in trouble at school in the U.S? If yes, how many times? Tell me more (*Probe: What happened, How troubles were resolved, who helped?*)
10. What are some of the barriers that resettled refugee children experience at high school?
 - a. What suggestions may you offer to help students overcome these barriers?
11. Who were the most helpful people around you at school? How? (*probe along: Encouragement, guiding, counseling, mentoring*)
 - a. In the order of priority, give me two names of individuals who were instrumental in the completion of your high school education. How did these people help you?
 - b. What do you think would have happened if you did not meet them? (*probe: in trouble, poor grade, drop-out*)
 - c. How often do you stay in contact with them?
 - d. Is it okay if I interview them regarding your relationship and schooling life? (*If yes, get names and contacts. If no, ask why?*)

12. How did you feel about your life in school? (*Probe: motivation of staying in school, performance, challenges, resilience, graduation, college, work, how about free time?*)
 13. Tell me more about the neighborhood. What difficulties did/do your family face in the U.S? (*probe: language, culture, isolation, discrimination, transportation, housing and employment opportunities, coping mechanisms*)
 - a. What are some of your suggest for helping newly arriving resettled refugees in the U.S?
 14. What do you like most in the U.S? (*probe: college, equal opportunity, peace, rule of law*) What don't you like most in the U.S?
 15. What do you want to achieve in the U.S? Do you feel you are on track to become what/who you want to be? If no, what do you think could help people like you achieve their professional ambitions?
- E.** In closing and in summary, is there anything else you would like to say or add to our discussion today? Are there anything that you would like education and other resettled refugee services providers to know that would help us better meet the educational needs of your community? (5 minutes)

This concludes our interview. We hope the insights you provided will help us identify ways to improve high school graduation and education for resettled refugees in general.

Would you like to receive any reports that I may write or any recommendations that come from this report? If so I will make note of it. If interested, I will also invite you to any public forums where recommendations from these interviews will be presented.

I thank you for your time.

APPENDIX E
SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Educational factors considered by students and mentors which contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

Interview introduction (*after Informed Consent has been obtained*)

Before we start the interview, I want to share with you some important facts about these questions.

1. You don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Just let me know and we'll skip it.
2. You can quit at any time. Please just tell me when you would like to stop.
3. We can take a break whenever you want.
4. You can ask me any questions at any time.
5. Most importantly, due to the nature of the study, the research team cannot guarantee complete confidentiality of your data. It may be possible that others will know what you have reported. However, what you all say to me is completely private and will be kept confidential. That means that I will not tell anyone else. I hope we all keep it only amongst ourselves.

We will conduct this interview in English. I will be happy to repeat or reword the questions as much as you want.

We are also going to use a tape recorder today. I need to capture all our discussion and later listen to the tape and type up what you said. It will help me to have everything you have said typed up so that I can look at it later. Any names or specific places you mention will NOT be typed up. You can use fake names for people if you want to. You can also ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time. I may take a few notes also.

After I have talked to other people like you, I will write a report and paper describing some of the experiences and recommendations of the people I interviewed. But your name or anything that could let people know who you are will not be mentioned anywhere. No one, besides me will even know you were in the study unless you tell them. The tape, the typed up version, and my notes will not have your name on it. They will have a number but only I will know that it refers to you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The last thing is: there is no right or wrong answers. I want to know what you think and how you feel. In other words, I don't want you to tell me what you think I may want to hear. You are the expert on your own life and schooling experiences. I'm just here to learn from you. This is a chance for you to talk in depth about your own experiences in the United

States, and educational factors considered by students and mentors which contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona as well as your general views and beliefs on education. I would like you to tell me as much as you can and tell me stories that help me to understand what you have experienced and how these experiences made you feel.

We will use the similar interview guide that I used with you during our individual interviews.

I'm going to turn the tape on now, OK?

- (1) Flight, resettled refugee camp and early resettlement experiences
(Probe along: form of livelihood, # of and years in the camps, camp memories of schooling, transition to United states)
- (2) Now let's talk about your experiences in U.S. schools.
 - a. Tell me more about the neighborhood. What difficulties did/do your family face in the U.S? *(probe: language, culture, isolation, discrimination, transportation, housing and employment opportunities, coping mechanisms)*
 - b. Earlier days as you settle-in at school *(Prober along: teachers, students and staff perception of resettled refugees, peer pressure, responsibility, ability, and how did they make you feel?)*
 - c. What were greatest challenges you faced in high school? *(Probe: culture shock, English language instruction, curriculum and homework, any troubles at school)*
- (3) How were you able to meet these challenges and graduate? *(Probe along: who were most helpful and how; encouragement, counseling, mentoring)*
 - a. How did you feel about your life in school? *(Probe: motivation of staying in school, performance, challenges, resilience, graduation, work, how about free time?)*
- (4) What do you like most in the U.S? *(Probe: college, equal opportunity, peace, rule of law)* and what don't you like most in the U.S?
- (5) What suggestions can you offer to help students overcome these barriers?

- a. Advice to teachers and school staff, students, families and others working with resettled refugee students.

(6) What is your aspiration/vision for the future?

(7) Any closing remarks - is there anything else you would like to say or add to our discussion today?

This concludes our interview. We hope the insights you provided will help us identify ways to improve high school graduation and education for resettled refugees in general.

Would you like to receive any reports that I may write or any recommendations that come from this report? If so I will make note of it. If interested, I will also invite you to any public forums where recommendations from these interviews will be presented. I thank you for your time.

APPENDIX F
MENTORS' INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Educational factors considered by students and mentors that contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona.

Interview introduction (*after Informed Consent has been obtained*)

Before we start the interview, I want to share with you some important facts about these questions.

1. You don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Just let me know and we'll skip it.
2. You can quit at any time. Please just tell me when you would like to stop.
3. We can take a break whenever you want.
4. You can ask me any questions at any time.
5. What you say to me is completely private and will be kept confidential. That means that I will not tell anyone else.

We will conduct this interview in English. I will be happy to repeat or reword the questions as much as you want.

We are also going to use a tape recorder today. I need to capture all our discussion and later listen to the tape and type up what you said. It will help me to have everything you have said typed up so that I can look at it later. Any names or specific places you mention will NOT be typed up. You can use fake names for people if you want to. You can also ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time. I may take a few notes also.

After I have talked to other people like you, I will write a report and paper describing some of the experiences and recommendations of the people I interviewed. But your name or anything that could let people know who you are will not be mentioned anywhere. No one, besides me will even know you were in the study unless you tell them. The tape, the typed up version, and my notes will not have your name on it. They will have a number but only I will know that it refers to you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

The last thing is: there is no right or wrong answers. I want to know what you think and how you feel. In other words, I don't want you to tell me what you think I may want to hear. You are the expert on your own life and schooling experiences. I'm just here to learn from you. This is a chance for you to talk in depth about your own experiences in the United States, and educational factors considered by students and mentors which contribute to successful high school completion for resettled refugee students in Arizona as well as your general views and beliefs on education. I would like you to tell me as much as you can and

tell me stories that help me to understand what you have experienced and how these experiences made you feel.

I'm going to turn the tape on now, OK?

A. Demographics (10 minutes)

To start with, I would like you to tell me about yourself and your family. (*Probe: family life, travel out of the US, schooling, employment,*)

1. Tell me about any relocation experience you and/or family were involved
2. Tell me your general knowledge about resettled refugee and how you got involved
 - a. What do you know about any particular ethnic groups and the circumstances that brought them to America?
 - b. What are your earlier memories? Expectations, challenges and issues

B. Tell me about X (20 minutes)

3. How/where did you meet him/her first?
4. Explain your first impression of X. Then what happened?
5. Did you sense any feeling of distress in him/her (*probe along the lines of: challenges, separation, adjustment, poverty, disconnect from education, intergenerational issues, peer pressure*)
6. Describe what you found in the student that made you involve in the education? (*Probe: Assets like family value, bilingualism, and problem-solving. Strengths like resilience and flexibility, family value, community bond, value of education, and strong work ethics*)
7. Share your opinion about US schooling for resettled refugee students
8. What are the challenges facing these children and their families?
9. What other needs does resettled refugee child have that could be filled by a volunteer? (*probe: tutoring, language acquisition, reading, college applications, work readiness skills*)

C. Let's talk about mentoring (20 minutes)

10. Do you consider yourself a mentor? Tell me know about what this entails.

11. What did you hope to get from being a mentor? (*probe: both in terms of personal and professional development or anything else*) Tell me more about this.
12. How were you coping emotionally? Is mentoring what you expected?
13. To what extent were you expected to solve your mentees' problems?
14. Any concerns/difficulties?
15. Do you have any suggestions of ways to improve the mentoring programs?

Recommendations for successful resettled refugee students' completion of high school education (20 minutes)

16. In your opinion, how best could resettled refugee students and their families be supported as they transition to life in the U.S? (*Probe: with resettlement, at school, getting job*)
- D. In closing and in summary, is there anything else you would like to say or add to our discussion today? Are there anything that you would like education and other resettled refugee services providers to know that would help us better meet the educational needs of students from resettled refugee groups? (5 minutes)

This concludes our interview. Thank you very much for your time. We hope the insights you provided will help us identify ways to improve high school graduation and education for resettled refugees in general.

Would you like to receive any reports that I may write or any recommendations that come from this report? If so I will make note of it. If interested, I will also invite you to any public forums where recommendations from these interviews will be presented.

I thank you for your time.