EXPLORING THE SENSE OF BELONGING OF WAR AFFECTED REFUGEE

YOUTH

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

in Partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

For immigrant and refugee youth, the experience of migration presents significant life changes in their environments, communities, and interpersonal affiliations (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-Anisef & Khattar, 2001). Before immigrating to Canada, some refugee youth experienced horrific events that can be traumatic to the fragile identities and sense of belonging of developing children and adolescents. Once in Canada, loneliness, isolation, language deficits, different cultural practices, and in some cases different skin colors may isolate refugee youth and thus jeopardise their sense of belonging in their new country. This study investigated a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth during their pre-migration and post-migration periods, as well as the factors that may enhance or hinder their sense of belonging. Fifteen participants were interviewed and their responses clearly indicated their desire and need to belong in their new country, to be liked, loved, respected, included, and be part of their new society. Recommendations on how educators can support their quest for belonging and inclusion are discussed.

Key words: war affected refugee youth, pre-immigration, post-immigration, resettlement, a sense of belonging

Acknowledgements

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late aunt, Amina Nakate, mother, Zalika Nakalya, and father,

Alizikala Segujja for having given me the gift of education and instilling in me the love of

learning. I'm thankful for having you as my first educators. Your dedication to advocate

for the education of all children including me remains an inspiration to me. I thank you

for having provided me with a sense of belonging through your unconditional love and

support. Katonda abawe emirembe gyemuli.

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Introduction

Researcher interest

Living through war, fear, and uncertainty was once the norm in my daily life. Not knowing whom to trust or who were and were not enemies, was enough to make me want to hide and disassociate myself from the country that had forced me to flee to an unknown land. Escaping war and finally settling in a safe place that was willing to take me, gave me hope for a new beginning. However, in my new country, Canada, I found myself constantly being asked, "Who are you", "Why did you come here" and "What made you choose Canada". After living in Canada for 28 years, which is longer than the time I lived in my country of origin, Uganda, I am still being asked these questions by my fellow Canadians. It's hard not to wonder who I am. Am I Ugandan, Ugandan Canadian, or Canadian Ugandan? I am a Canadian citizen and hold a Canadian passport. To go to Uganda, I am required to obtain a visa to enter the country, but it feels strange to report at the airport customs as a foreigner! So who am I and where do I belong? These questions are constantly at the back of my mind and sometimes give me the urge to try harder to clarify my identity. On the other hand, these same questions make me feel like giving up, as it is too much work to discover who I really am. This dilemma has led me to research the effects of a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

Given the fact that adolescents generally undergo a developmental phase searching for their identity and their place in society, war affected refugee youth do so in the context of all the other challenges they face (Crowe, 2006). I can relate to Bromley's (1988) conclusion that, the question of "Who am I" takes on special significance for the

adolescent refugee in Anglo-American foster family home, group home, or institutional setting where unaccompanied refugee youth end up after fleeing to safety. Fantino and Colak (2001) have noted that the uprooting, disruption, and insecurity inherent in migration affect psychological and social development, making the process of identity formation a more difficult balancing act between two or more sets of cultural notions and values. Most of the children interviewed by Fantino and Colak (2001) struggled to create or maintain a name, a voice, a space, and a sense of self (Palmer, 1997) that was adaptive to their new environments and yet also preserved the continuity and coherence of their pre-refugee experiences.

Research question

I set out to find out what a sense of belonging means to the war affected refugee youth and how the lack or presence of a sense of belonging may affect them. Specifically, my objective was to discover answers to the following questions:

- What were the experiences of a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth, and how were they affected by the presence or lack of a sense of belonging during their pre-migration and post-migration periods?

- What relationship, if any, exists between war affected refugee youths' experiences of a sense of belonging during their pre-migration and post-migration periods?

- What strategies may be utilised by educators to enhance a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth to reduce their feelings of alienation?

The ways in which war affected refugee youth experienced a sense of belonging before and during the war period were examined as part of the pre-migration period. The

pre-migration period included the flight stage characterized by loss, uprooting, and

uncertainty, and familial separation, as well as camp life and school experiences in the

temporary settlement stage. The sense of belonging experienced by war affected refugee

youth after fleeing war zones was examined as part of the post-war period; including life

in refugee camps and other temporary placements as well as life in their new host country,

Canada. The post-immigration period explored resettlement experiences in the host

country, including isolation, acculturation stress, identity crisis, school experience,

language deficits, discrimination, and parental support challenges. My hope was that a

better understanding of the sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth at different

stages of their lives might provide valuable background knowledge to shed light on what

educators should do to promote a sense of belonging among these learners.

Definition of terms

I chose to use the term 'War affected refugee youth' to guide my research in order

to focus on refugees who have been affected by war experiences, as opposed to refugees

who have been affected by other experiences. 'War affected youth' are defined as children

who have, as a result of war: (a) lived in a war zone, (b) participated in war by killing,

(c) experienced threats of being killed, (d) been tortured or injured, (e) been displaced by

conflict to become refugees, (f) been recruited as soldiers or sex slaves, or (g) suffered

from starvation and disease due to poor sanitation and malnutrition (Beiser, 2009;

Kalifani, 2008; Summerfield, 2000). Walugembe (2008), in his study of the war in

Northern Uganda, reported that:

> Children as young as 8 years old are abducted as child soldiers and slaves by
>
> armed forces. While boys typically were used as soldiers, girls more often [were]

used as sex slaves or porters. Children are trained to kill, especially those who try

to escape. Children constantly attempt running away from the war zone, both

with and without parents. Such children may end up sleeping in the open

verandas, bushes, or anywhere they find shelter. They are raped, harassed by

soldiers, and molested. Most of war affected children are between 8 and 16 years

of age and about half are female. Most of these children live in appallingly

unsanitary conditions (slides 4-5).

In as many as 30 countries across the globe, children are caught up in armed

conflicts, not only as bystanders, but as deliberate targets. In times of war, children are

subjected to barbaric acts of physical, psychological, and sexual cruelty. Their families,

schools, neighborhoods, and communities are subjugated and destroyed. Child soldiers

serve as spies, cooks, and messengers (Free the Children Canada, 2010). The presence

and participation of children in war, as casualties and as soldiers, is not a new

phenomenon. Africa has the largest number of child soldiers. Child soldiers are being

used in armed conflicts in Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo,

Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Uganda. It is estimated that there are between 250,000 and

300,000 child soldiers [under the age of 18] involved in war somewhere in the world at

any given time (Rosen, 2012).

Refugees are defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) as persons who reside outside their countries and cannot return due to a

well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political

opinion, or membership in a particular social group (UNHCR, 2000). For the purposes of

this paper, it is necessary to note that the term 'refugee' is not intended to evoke any

negative connotations. Refugees often are labelled as cheats, queue jumpers, and

imposters based on utterly decontextualized analyses (Kumsa, 2006). In his study of

young Oromos (a tribe in Ethiopia) in Toronto, Kumsa noted that, the cry, "No! I'm not a

refugee!" is also "No! I'm not a cheat!" It signifies a cry for a different understanding.

The term "belonging" is a compound word encompassing two parts; "be" and

"longing". "Be" is to exist or live, "longing" is to feel a strong yearning, wish earnestly,

thus "belonging". Belonging is to have a proper or suitable place, to be part of, be related

or connected to, to be a member of, to be owned and to be the owner (Webster's New

World Dictionary, 1993). As explained by Fiske (2004), belonging is the human need to

be an accepted member of a group. Whether it is family, friends, co-workers or a sports

team, humans have an inherent desire to be-long and to be an important part of something

greater than themselves. Belonging, as defined by Faircloth (2009), is the need to form at

least a minimum quantity of affectively positive connections within one's context;

connections to key individuals within one's school, for example. Oleson (2004) noted that

the fulfillment of physiological, safety and security needs drives individuals to seek social

needs such as belonging, companionship and social acceptability. It is of interest to me to

find out, through this study, whether the physiological, safety, and security needs of

refugee youth are met after resettling in Canada and, if that is not the case, if they are

driven to seek opportunities that satisfy their social needs including a sense of belonging.

For the purposes of this study, I used an analysis proposed by Hagerty, Lynch-

Sauer, Patusky Bouwsema and Collier, (1966). Based on a literature review and analysis

of interviews and focus group data investigating a conceptual model of human

relatedness, these researchers found two defining attributes of sense of belonging:

1) experiences of being valued, needed, or important with respect to other people, groups,

objects, organisations, environments, or spiritual dimensions and, 2) experiences of

congruence with other people, groups, objects, organisations, environments, or spiritual

dimensions through shared or complementary characteristics (p. 174). Such attributes will

be explored in the current study to find out how a sense of belonging is experienced by

war affected refugee youth. Further, as presented by Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky

Bouwsema and Collier, (1966), it is imperative to note that "a sense of belonging occurs

in relation to various external influences which include other persons, groups, objects,

organizations, environments (both physical and social), and spiritual dimensions"

(p. 174). For example, they noted that a person may experience a sense of belonging with

animals but a deficit in sense of belonging with people. Further, Anant's definition of a

sense of belonging, sighted by Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier

(1966), provides an explanation consistent with the current study in that a sense of

belonging is the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that a

person feels to be an integral part of that system or environment. Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer,

Patusky, Bouwsema, and Collier (1966) further explained that a system can be a

relationship or organisation, and an environment can be natural or cultural (p. 173). In the

current study, the school represents the system and the environment where war affected

refugee youth may experience the lack or presence of a sense of belonging through their

interaction within this natural and cultural setting.

Research rationale

Research has demonstrated the indispensable importance of belonging in human

learning. For example, Goodenow (1993) found that students' belonging explained

significant portions of their motivational experiences, which in turn predicted effort and

achievement (Faircloth, 2009). If students' motivation and engagement in school are

affected by their sense of belonging, then educators should find ways to enhance a sense

of belonging among children, especially war affected refugees. In terms of Maslow's (1999) hierarchy of psychological needs, the need for belonging must be met in order for motivated engagement to become the norm. In a classic review of his participation-identification theory, Finn (1989) singled out the value of students' sense of belonging as a pivotal determinant of whether students withdrew (affectively and literally) from school (Faircloth, 2009). The Auditor General's report (Crowe, 2006) cited a study in Alberta which examined the dropout rate of English as Second Language (ESL) students (including refugee youth) who entered grade 9 between 1989 and 1997. The findings of this study indicated that students entering grade 9 with beginner level of ESL training had a dropout rate of 90% compared to ESL students at all levels who had a dropout rate of 74% and ESL students at the advanced level with a dropout rate of only 50% (Crowe, 2001). These findings of 50% dropout rate for even the most advanced ESL students, suggests that more than language proficiency is at play and justifies the need to investigate non-academic variables, such as fostering a sense of belonging among war affected refugee children and youth. In Ontario, the dropout rate for ESL students continues to be higher than for Canadian-born students whose first language is English despite the implementation of ESL or English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs in schools for refugee and immigrant youth (Crowe, 2001).

Kumsa (2006), in his study of young Oromos in Toronto, examined some intricate aspects that surround a sense of belonging in reference to the experiences of refugee youth. He noted that a growing number of studies indicate identity construction and reconstruction is a central need of newcomer youth in Canada. He further explained that the simultaneous processes of post-migrant identity development and the maintenance of cohesion with a pre-migration identity interweave simultaneously to create a sense of

"be-longing". Kumsa (2006) developed dispersal-affinity as a theoretical construct to analyze refugee experiences. Kumsa (2006) describes dispersal–affinity as follows. In the dispersal-affinity construct, dispersal signifies the violence of disrupting social ties and hurling refugee bodies into a global space; it signifies dislocation and displacement. Affinity signifies refugee resistance to disruption, dislocation, and displacement. It signifies their yearning to relocate disrupted social ties, and their intense longing to be-long (P. 236). Fine (1986) and Wehlage (1989) each reported that students who perceived themselves as socially isolated or outside the social mainstream at school were more at risk of dropping out (Faircloth, 2009). Therefore, employing practices that foster a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth will be investigated in this study to determine whether this aspect may impact these learners positively as opposed to pre-existing services such as ESL/EAL programs and counseling services primarily based on western values.

In cases where war affected refugee youth are suspected to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), schools tend to consult school psychologists or guidance counsellors for support. The *Swedish Save The Children* (1994) study reported that the number of children with psychiatric symptoms who needed institutional care was extremely low. However, a UK study of Somali children found that 62.4% of refugee children up to 18 years experienced psychological suffering, one year after the experience of war. This study also found that about 35% of the refugee children met DSM-III criteria of mental or behavioural disorders. Yet, these numbers may be misleading as the diagnoses were done outside of the cultural contexts of the children. For example, refugee youth might meet or fail to meet PTSD criteria by answering questions incorrectly, or

because they misunderstand the language and terms (Davis & Webb, 2000). In addition, school staff may not be trained to deal with the combination of the students' disorders and cultural differences. Misdiagnoses of these youth, combined with school counsellors who are not culturally attuned to address these children's psychological difficulties, might lead to inefficient or ineffective services. Kanu (2008), in her study of African refugee students in Manitoba, found that students suggested "access to culturally appropriate psychological counselling" as one of the interventions needed to assist youth from war-affected backgrounds. De Jong and Kleber (2007) noted that fine-tuning interventions to the cultural settings and specific immigrant community contexts in which they live is vital for the acceptance and the uptake of services by refugee youth.

In addition to ESL/EAL and counselling interventions for war affected refugee youth, there are numerous supports put in place by teachers, school administrators, government personnel, and community agencies. As outlined by Kanu (2008), such supports include, (a) refugee transition centres, (b) teacher training on war affected refugee students, (c) ESL programs for parents and grandparents, (d) afterschool programs, (e) the hiring of individuals of the same cultural background as the war affected refugee students, (f) schools working with community agencies such as the Needs Centre in Winnipeg where students receive homework help and other recreational activities, and (g) inclusive practices for refugee students to join in school clubs such as drama, choir, and basketball programs (see appendix A). In a research project I conducted (Mbabaali, 2010) as a part of a qualitative research course at the University of Manitoba, student refugee interviewees indicated that their schools had adopted sports familiar to refugee students, such as soccer, as a way of making them feel welcome and comfortable. One of the participants in my study reported that her school had established a parent

buddy program, where Canadian-born parents signed up to support an immigrant family to help orient them to the school culture.

Canada is facing an influx of school age immigrants. "About one quarter of all immigrant children younger than age 12 enter Canada as refugees (Beiser, Dion, Gotowiec, Hyman, and Vu (1995). There also are unaccompanied school age youth, between the ages of 12 and 20 years, that enter the country without parents. In 2004, about 51, 000 immigrants were children under 15 years of age. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2011) has estimated that one-half of the world's 35 million refugees and displaced persons were children and women. Every day, nearly 5,000 children become refugees, with a vast number growing up and spending their entire lives in refugee camps (Fantino and Colak, 2001). In 2005, over 8,000 immigrants settled in Manitoba, the highest recorded level in the last 15 years (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005). Kanu (2006), citing Mackay and Tavares (2005), noted that seven out of Manitoba's top ten refugee source countries over the past seven years have been African countries, representing well over half of the refugee population in Manitoba. Kanu (2006-2007) added that at the time, the current composition of the refugee population in schools reflects the major source countries including Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. A Winnipeg Free Press investigation (January 18th, 2012) reported immigrants landing in Winnipeg come from 51 African countries. In March 2007, Statistics Canada reported that by the year 2030, immigration could become the only source for population growth as the peak of the baby boomers reach the end of their lifespans. In 2008, 5,517 refugees living in Canada were between the ages of 5-14 years and 4,859 were between the ages of 15-24 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). Consequently, refugees are likely to remain an important component of Canada's overall

immigrant intake. The education of these new comers is central to preparing them for the

work force and the responsibilities of citizenship. As Kanu (2008) noted, most recent

refugees since the 1990s, fleeing from violence in Sub-Sahara Africa, Afghanistan, and

other middle-Eastern countries are unlikely to have high levels of education or the skills

valued by their host countries in the West.

The integration of these refugees into host countries such as Canada will require a

strong focus on building a sense of belonging along with developing their educational and

work skills. Insecurities over the ultimate fate of asylum applications may be pervasive.

Beyond that, refugees must negotiate disrupted life trajectories, loss of status, loss of

sense of place, and culture shock, as well as the attitudes of the host society – ranging

from acceptance to discrimination (Summerfield, 2000).

Crowe (2006) reported that:

The Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS) examined the level at which different groups

feel comfortable or out of place in Canada based on their ethnicity, culture, race,

skin colour, language, accent or religion. According to their findings, 24% of all

visible minorities feel uncomfortable or out of place all or almost all of the time.

…Feeling uncomfortable and out of place may indicate the lack of a sense of

belonging among many new immigrants. For most immigrant and refugee

children in their teen years, schools are the first point of contact with their new

world. …Many face teaching methods, learning styles, and systems of rules very

different from those they are used to. Some come from monoculture communities

and must cope with classrooms full of children from a diversity of cultures and

backgrounds. For some refugee children, this transition is even more difficult

because they have little or no experience of formal schooling. …Schools and

teachers have to be ready to not only deal with English language acquisition, but also a lack of literacy in the refugees' first languages, their unfamiliarity with the routines and norms of school, social and emotional issues caused by traumatic events in their war torn country of origin, and huge challenges in engaging with their parents (p. 15).

As this quote suggests, a significant challenge to well-being in the context of the settlement process is seeking a sense of belonging and welcome in the new society of which one is now a part, as well as feeling valued and respected by members of that society. This may include a positive sense of one's ethnic, racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity; as well as feeling oneself to be a member of a community in the host country, one's native country, and/or a transnational community (Bernhard, Goldring, Young, Berinstein, & Wilson, 2007). Identifying with the language and history, religious and ceremonial rituals, and codes of behaviour of a culture contributes to the sense of identity, security, and self-esteem experienced by children and youth (Hakka-Ices, 1988). For example, Kiva and Mayers (2006), in their research paper *"Integrating ESL Students in Canadian Schools"* noted that there is a void or an empty space inside newcomers when belonging is not fostered. Often a lack of acceptance results in "a diminished sense of self and belonging" (Williams, 2003, p. 11).

Drawing from my own experiences as a war affected refugee, loss of one's identity may include loss of one's name, culture, language, nationality, and the record of one's birthdate as a result of war. Loss of some or all of these self-identification aspects may create an identity dilemma, which may lead one to yearn for the re-establishment of an identity and the recovery of a sense of belonging within a new society. In addition, war affected learners may feel excluded by the new language, skills, food, clothing, housing,

and the daily living routines in their new community. They may find themselves in a nuclear family system versus the communal family system they were used to. Therefore, the lack of a sense of belonging may lead to loneliness, isolation, depression, low self-esteem, low motivation, and low achievement (Faircloth, 2009). By contrast, as noted above under the definition of 'belonging', the presence of a sense of belonging may lead to happiness, involvement, high self-esteem, high motivation, and high achievement (Faircloth, 2009).

In addition to facing the usual and highly intensive developmental issues specific to adolescence, (a time typically associated with difficult processes of growth and a transition to independence) at least in the western world environments, immigrant and new comer youth must start a new socialization process, learn a new language, meet new academic challenges, learn new school routines, deal with teacher and parent expectations, gain acceptance into new peer groups, and develop new kinds of social competence (Seat, 1998).

While educators face the challenges of adapting to the needs of refugee learners, these students face the challenges of adapting to school and community norms. With various mental health problems, English language deficits, cultural differences, and limited educational skills due to frequent interruptions in their schooling, these students may require more than just 'specialised' supports such as traditional "western" counselling and English as a Second Language instruction. Enhancing a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth may be a crucial starting point that may lead this group of learners toward successful integration into school and society and, ultimately, make positive outcomes more likely.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

The general wellbeing of war affected refugee youth has been and continues to be studied by a number of researchers in different disciplines including psychology, psychiatry, sociology, medicine, and education. Psychologists, psychiatrists and medical researchers have focused on the mental health issues; mainly addressing the social and emotional wellbeing and resilience among war affected refugee youth (Summerfield, 2000; Jones, 1998; Beiser, Hyman, Vu, 1996; Attanayake et al., 2009; Goodman, 2004; Summerhays, 2006; Prince-Embury, 2006). On the other hand, sociologists have studied the ethno cultural challenges refuge youth experience in their new countries, including acculturation, assimilation, adaptation, and cultural discrimination (Delpit, 1996). Recently, researchers in education have begun to study the school supports in place for war affected refugee youth, specifically in the areas of English as an Additional Language (EAL) instruction and the multitude of other school related challenges faced by refugee youth and their teachers. For example, school reception, curriculum relevance, and appropriate age and grade level placement for refugee youth have been three of the areas of focus in educational research and scholarship (Kanu, 2006, 2007; Magro, 2007; Crowe, 2006).

Research that indicates that a sense of belonging among school age youth may be paramount to their motivation and engagement in school has centered on adolescents. An examination of a sense of belonging and its effect on war affected refugee youth is necessary to understand if and how belonging affects this group of youth differently from the general adolescent population without war experiences. This literature review

provides an overview of research into the experiences of war affected refugee youth, with

the focus on their sense of belonging. Literature on their pre-resettlement and post-

resettlement experiences and the effects of those experiences on their sense of belonging

also will be reviewed. Finally, school interventions for war affected refugee youth and the

factors that may enhance a sense of belonging among these youth are addressed.

Pre-migration experiences

   War experiences. War affected refugee youth must learn to cope with

experiences that occurred before immigration. However, the war experiences of refugee

youth vary in many ways depending on their differing circumstances. For example,

Lasser and Adams (2007) noted that, according to Jensen and Shaw (1993), the "massive

exposure to war overwhelms the child's defenses", whereas "moderate exposure probably

leads to development of adaptive, self-protective strategies" and "minimal exposure may

not invoke self-protective mechanisms". Therefore, the effects of war can have a negative

effect on children's "developing security and emerging personality" (Jensen, 1992, p.

986). Children living in conflict zones often experience major disruptions to their daily

living activities. Their schools close down, recreational activities end, they are no longer

safe playing in their neighbourhoods with friends, and their home life often is altered due

to a lack of shelter or having to move to another area (Lasser & Adams, 2007). Children

not living in or near direct combat zones often are exposed to war through television,

movies, and overhearing adult conversations. So, according to Lasser and Adams (2007),

whether the child has suffered from direct or indirect exposure, the psychological effects

of exposure to war can be significant.

   A study conducted by the Family Services Association (FSA), a non-profit social

service agency based in Toronto, Canada, explored the issues faced by youth coming

from Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. It was found that many of those

interviewed had experienced the "consequences of ethnic cleansing, extremely dangerous

situations, cruelty, combat, killing, pain, extreme threat, constant artillery and gunfire,

separation [and] forced isolation" (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman- Anisef, and Khattar,

2001). Due to these experiences, war affected refugee youth may feel that they do not 'fit

in' anywhere and are persecuted everywhere they go (Kilbride, Anisef, Baichman-

Anisef, and Khattar, 2001). Such feelings may undermine a sense of belonging in war

affected refugee youth especially in their transition into a new society. Erik Erikson's

(1963, 1968) psychosocial theory of human development explains that an individual goes

through eight developmental stages. In each stage he or she must face and cope with a

central psychosocial problem or crisis. The eight crises outlined by Erikson are: basic

trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry

versus inferiority, identity versus identity confusion, intimacy versus isolation,

generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair. An individual's resolution

of each of the crises is supposedly reflected in the attitudes, which develop as the

outcome of each crisis stage. These basic attitudes theoretically contribute to an

individual's psychosocial effectiveness and subsequent personality development.

Erickson's, (1959) fifth stage of human development is adolescence, beginning with

puberty and ending around 18 or 20 years old. The age group of war affected refugee

youth investigated in the current research fall within this stage. According to Erikson, the

task during adolescence is to achieve ego identity and avoid role confusion. Ego identity

means knowing who you are and how you fit in to the rest of society. It requires that you

take all you've learned about life and yourself and mold it into a unified self-image, one

that your community finds meaningful. War affected refugee youth have had multiple life

experiences as they moved from their war torn countries of origin to various temporary

settlement places before settling permanently in a host country as newcomers. These

multiple places may have created multiple self-images that may lead to identity confusion

among war affected refugee youth. Therefore, the challenge facing these youth is to blend

their new life experiences in their host country with their past life experiences, and to be

able to mold them into a unified self-image that will be respected and found meaningful

in their new community. Keeping this in mind, educators may need to be aware of the

possibility of identity confusion among war affected refugee youth and to be able to

design provisions that may assist this group of youth in forming a firm identity that may

lead them successfully to the next human development stage, adulthood. To reach the

adulthood stage, according to Erickson (1959), there are a number of things that make

things easier. First, we should have a mainstream adult culture that is worthy of the

adolescent's respect, one with good adult role models and open lines of communication.

Also, society should provide clear rites of passage, certain accomplishments and rituals

that help to distinguish the adult from the child. For example, as discovered by Erikson, in

[some] societies, an adolescent boy may be asked to leave the village for a period of time

to live on his own, hunt some symbolic animal, or seek an inspirational vision. Boys and

girls may be required to go through certain tests of endurance, symbolic ceremonies, or

educational events. As a reflection of these theoretical explanations, educators may

therefore present themselves as the positive role models for this group of youth, as well as

help them learn and participate in some of the rituals that Canadian adolescent boys and

girls may be expected to perform before adulthood. Such ritual may require these youth to

participate in programs like the Girl Guides of Canada, and the Boy Scouts of Canada. Also, in addition to the Canadian adolescent rituals, educators should encourage and promote the rituals war affected refugee adolescents may bring with them from their countries of origin. Such practices by educators may present clear expectations regarding these youth's self-images and identities. Further, Isenbruch (1988) has suggested that the adolescent refugee faces an upsurge of earlier psycho-social "crises" – "Is he safe?" (basic trust), "Can he act freely?" (autonomy), "Can valued goals be pursued?" (initiative), "Is the application of intelligence and competence worthwhile?" (industry), and "To which individuals and ethnic groups will he owe and expect allegiance?" (identity). These questions raise the issue as to whether the sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth is intact or disrupted by their war experiences. It is likely that a sense of belonging among these youth may have been reduced or completely lost due to their war experiences. For example, being shot at and finally chased out of one's country as a victim of ethnic cleansing, clearly demonstrates that one is not needed and therefore does not belong in the country where one ought to belong. Under these circumstances, war affected individuals might take the chance to start over in a new country to rebuild their disrupted self-identities and social worlds.

Some refugees have experienced years of oppression in their own countries, forbidden to use their language like the Kurds in Turkey or to practice their religion like the Bahai in Iran (Rutta, 2003). Others are discriminated against due to racial differences and are killed as a result of ethnic cleansing, as the Hutu and Tusi in Ruwanda, and the Croats and Serbs in Bosnia (Rutta, 2003). Such experiences may cause refugees to feel resented by people in their country of origin, which may lead them to lack a sense of

belonging and therefore have a heightened desire to belong. It is my intention to find out whether this is the case among war affected refugee youth in Canada.

      Escape to safety. The process of fleeing can, in itself, be fraught with difficulty and danger, and is often the most frightening of all the refugees' experiences. Rutter (2003) noted that flight may include dangerous crossings by boat, difficulty obtaining and protecting valuables, money, papers, and passports and having to bribe officials to leave the country. Further, Rutter (2003) has explained that the difficulties refugees endure during asylum seeking involve the process of making a claim for asylum, waiting for the decision and, if refused, making an appeal that often takes an extremely long time, possibly several years, during which time the refugees remain uncertain of their fate. This process becomes even more difficult for unaccompanied youth seeking asylum. Because they are dealt with under the *Children Act* (Rutter, 2003), it is not always realised that unaccompanied children may make an asylum claim. Unfortunately, under the *Children Act* (1989), when an unaccompanied refugee youth reaches the age of 18 years, his or her need for asylum may no longer be recognised (Rutter, 2003). In addition to the previous indicators of exclusion, the process of asylum seeking may further confirm that refugees are unwanted in both their country of origin and the country they are trying to migrate to. Other hardships during the refugees' escape are encountered during their travel to safety. Some refugees, like a group of unaccompanied refugee youth from Sudan (Corbett, 2001), traveled for months by foot over very large distances through forests and deserts. They moved in groups of 10s, or even 100s, travelling mostly at night, trying to avoid hostile government troops, rebel recruitment squads, slave traders, and rival tribes. These unaccompanied refugee youth from the Sudan described the dangers and hardship of

travelling in hostile territory. Their journey through Sudan to Kenya was replete with

dangers from wild animals and hostile enemies, disease, hunger, and thirst (Goodman,

2004).

      Loss and uprooting. The psychological experiences of adolescent refugees are

ones of loss and uprooting. They experience individual losses of family, home, school,

town, friends, relatives, and former identity; and collective losses such as country,

community, culture, and language (Jones, 1998, Bromley, 1988). Eisenbruch (1990) uses

the term cultural bereavement to describe these losses. However, the massive losses

suffered by refugees have no prescribed rituals for healing and little social support.

Society does not easily acknowledge the grief of a person who has lost everything they

hold dear in their former country. In addition, refugee families may be so busy

"adjusting" during resettlement that they cannot give themselves permission to grieve

(Fantino and Colak, 2001). Unfortunately, the host society seldom recognises the grieving

process in refugee children. It may be necessary for refugee youth to have proper closure

to their past losses in order to create new ties and relationships. Jones (1998) was in

agreement with Erickson's (1964) comment that "the danger of any large scale uprooting

and transmigration is that exterior crises will, in too many individuals and

generations, upset the hierarchy of developmental crises and their built-in correctives; and

man will lose those roots that must be planted firmly in meaningful life styles" (p. 543).

Further, Erickson (1964) went on to state that, a man's true roots are nourished in the

sequence of generations and he loses his taproots in disrupted developmental time, not in

abandoned localities. Under the same notion of displacement, Kumsa (2006) noted that

the term "displaced" constructs "the refugee" as the antithesis of the national. While the

national has state, the refugee is stateless. The national has country, the refugee is

placeless. The national is stable, the refugee is in flux. This notion was further

emphasised by Malkki (2006) through an explanation that the refugee is the displaced

person with no country, the dangerous roamer and unattached wanderer outside the

family of nations. Therefore "the refugee is like some homeless body with no origin or

destination but always on the move – on the move but going nowhere" (Kawash, 1998).

In Kumsa's (2006) study, participants shared that they had moved away from spaces of

perceived violence and oppression towards spaces of perceived healing and liberation –

toward spaces of be-longing. However, their country of origin remained unavailable to

refugees. Those who went from country to country, in search of a nation to belong to,

came to realise that they were only outsiders and onlookers of others' nations. It is not

such a farfetched notion to imagine that the sense of belonging among war affected

refugee youth easily might be undermined, given these circumstances.

Jones' (1998) study of support groups for adolescent Bosnian refugees

revealed that the normal adolescent task of identity formation is more easily undertaken

when the boundaries of family, peer group, community and country are stable, visible and

defined. Jones (1968) acknowledged that the teenagers in his study were regarded as

normal people in abnormal circumstances, which included the ruptures and losses of

uprooting and the current circumstances in the camp, such as lack of structure, isolation

from a host community, and a lack of both personal and public spaces. Bertrand (1998)

noted that in the global space, constructionist discourses of globalization view refugees as

just a form in the contemporary global displacement of peoples,

arbitrarily locating them among immigrants, tourists, and other travellers. Therefore,

Kumsa (2006) concluded that, "In constructionist views, be-longing is a constant move-

ment through social space and it is neither final nor binding" (p. 246). In consideration of

this constructionist view of globalization, one can anticipate that war affected refugee youth may have feelings of uncertainty regarding their place in the global space. Insecurities over the ultimate fate of their asylum applications may be pervasive. Beyond that, refugees must negotiate disrupted life trajectories, loss of status, loss of sense of place, and culture shock; as well as the attitudes of the host society – ranging from accepting to discriminatory (Summerfield, 2000). According to Summerfield (2000), refugee families are not necessarily 'lonely' but are often short of relationships with people who share the same pattern of meanings. When educators and other professionals in hospitals, social services, and social life sectors unintentionally make the refugee family and their history almost invisible, refugee children become children without a history (Fantino and Colak, 2001). One intention of this study was to examine if the refugee youth had discovered ways of intentionally recognising and promoting their histories, thus re-instating their sense of belonging.

     Uncertainty. Life for children during war and migration is often unpredictable. They are unable to discern when or why things happen. As a result, some children stop looking to the future and live purely in the present. The greatest danger in this is that children who stop looking to the future, stop hoping and dreaming (Tolfree, 1996). Jones (1998) explained that uncertainty arises as a result of the numerous situations that become unclear during war and the escape to safety. Adolescents may wonder what their role is when their parents are injured, dependent, missing, or dead. Alternatively, they may be faced with conflicting demands when their parents encourage greater loyalty to their ethnic identity, and their new friends and teachers demand greater loyalty to their host country as an aspect of more rapid assimilation. Finally, in a long war, how do they choose between a perceived duty to return and defend their native country and the desire

to begin again elsewhere? Bromley (1988) noted that, whether refugee youth escaped by

land or sea, inevitably they had to cope with a fear of capture, starvation, disease, and a

tremendous fear of the unknown.

     Separation. Another facet of contemporary conflict is the increasing likelihood

that children will be separated from their families. For example, before the genocide

events of 1994, there were 20 children's homes in Rwanda. By 1995 there were 70

centres housing 12,000 children. There were also many households headed by children.

Institutionalizing children, however well intentioned, may mean the loss of a family name

and place of origin (Petty & Jareg, 1998). As noted by Prendes-Lintel (2001), leaving

someone behind due to an injury, death resulting from malnutrition, personal injury, or

encountering perpetrators may create heightened anxiety, thus heightened longing to

belong, due to un-anticipated separations.

     Refugee youth camp experiences. In some situations, refugee youth live in

camps after fleeing war zones. Camps are made up of temporary shelters that often lack

proper housing structures. Many accounts of the conditions in refugee camps focus on the

stark, crowded conditions, and prisonlike barbed wire perimeters. Refugee camps have

often been described as crowded places, with limited food supplies, inadequate healthcare

services, and poor educational opportunities (Merali, 2008). In some cases, refugee youth

continued to witness violence while in camps. Peter, a participant in Goodman's (2004)

study, told about:

    …the refugee children's ongoing experience of fear of violent and the related

    helplessness they experienced, even in the refugee camps. At night they [local

    Turkana tribesmen] would come and shoot people. And you didn't know who was

shooting at you and where they came from. You never knew. We were innocent

and we didn't know where to go (p. 1182).

Some refugee youth stay in camps for long periods of time with little hope of getting out.

Kirk and Winthrop (2008) noted that some refugee youth from Sudan had lived in

Kakuma camp in northern Kenya for 8 years, and some of them had stayed there until

they were adults (Barry, 2001). A young woman in Magro's (2007) study described life in

a refugee camp as being in a "state of limbo". She explained that she spent almost all of

her youth as a refugee and never had a normal teen life. She added that, in a refugee

camp, one loses his or her childhood and becomes an adult overnight. Developmentally,

these refugee youth embody the desires and interests common to adolescents, but

realistically, they have responsibilities that surpass those of many adults. In essence,

camp life is a temporary place for refugees that do not reinforce a sense of belonging.

School experiences in temporary settlements. While schooling does not exist in

some refugee camps, it often is precarious when and where it is available. For example,

Kirk and Winthrop (2008) found that the emergency education programs in Ethiopia were

delivered by teachers chosen by the refugee community, and although the men and

women who were selected were among the most educated in the population, very few had

completed their own education. Often classes were held in a range of environments,

including under trees, in small rooms, and in partitioned gateways in the teachers' own

compounds and in the main prayer rooms of mosques (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008).

Interestingly, 24% of the students in these refugee camp emergency schools shared that

making and spending time with friends were two of the elements that they enjoyed and

valued in school most (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008).

Post-migration experiences

 Resettlement experiences. When war affected refugees arrive in their host community, they have to deal with challenges that follow such a change of location. Davies and Webb (2000) noted that disadvantageous factors following their arrival include: (a) racial discrimination, (b) homelessness, (c) unrecognised professional credentials, (d) language difficulties, (e) uncertain residency status, (f) difficulties adapting to peace, and (g) imprisonment. Researchers like Kanu (2007) and Magro (2007) have outlined several factors that posed challenges and barriers to integration and school success, including: (a) poverty, (b) separation from family, (c) loneliness, (d) cultural dissonance, (e) acculturation stress, (f) perceived racism, (g) lack of access to psychological counselling, (h) difficulty with required academic skills, (i) limited proficiency in the English language, and (j) academic gaps due to disrupted schooling. Poverty is another challenge that refugee families face in their new resettlement country. In 2001, 42% of immigrant children under the age of 15, including refugees, lived in poverty compared to a rate of 17% for Canadian born children (Crowe, 2002). According to Crowe (2002), poverty among recent immigrant families continues to worsen. For example, 49% of children under 15 years of age who immigrated between 1996 and 2001 were considered poor, compared to 31% between 1991 and 1995, and 25% between 1986 and 1990.

 Parental support challenges. According to Davies and Webb (2000), refugee children in exile continue to experience chronic adversity, having lost the support of their family or community while adjusting to the considerable demands of the host country. Newcomer children often lose some of the support of their parents, grandparents, and communities. These support people often are busy; preoccupied with economic survival,

working more than one job, and going to school. As Kanu (2008) pointed out, parents

struggle with challenges such as: (a) a slower pace of acculturation and adaptation than

their children, (b) a perceived loss of parental authority in their new culture, (c) limited

English, (d) loneliness and frustration, (e) loss of status due to the no acceptance of their

educational and professional credentials from their countries of origin, (f) lack of

affordable housing, and (g) low wages. As a result of all these challenges, parents are

ill-equipped to provide the supports needed by their children to succeed in school. In

addition to inadequatefamily and community support' adolescents may be sensitive to the

burdens carried by grieving parents and often are anxious to protect them (Jones, 1968).

This may create stress and frustration in war affected refugee youth. Without adequate

parental and community support, this group of youth may find themselves vulnerable to

gang members who often recruit young and unstable youth looking for a support system

and a group to belong to (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003).

      Cultural challenges. As defined by the Canadian Healthy Department of

Children and Youth (2001), "culture" refers to common identity based on such factors as

same language, shared values, similar attitudes, and similarities in ideology. When

settling and integrating into a Canadian community, immigrant children and youth may

find themselves pressured to conform to the dominant culture, to retain their original

culture, or to embrace both cultures. The dilemma created by the challenge of identifying

with any of these cultural groups, may lead refugee youth to pursue their cultural identity

and a sense of belonging by joining already existing gangs. Participants in Rossiter's and

Rossiter's (2009) study of twelve stakeholders involved with immigrant and refugee

youth reported that refugee youth were particularly vulnerable to recruitment by gang

members. Their research revealed that refugee youth were recruited into gangs and

became involved in illegal activities at ages as low as 10 years. However, the majority of criminal activity was estimated to begin around the ages of 13 to 15 and to drop off at about 18 to 20 years when youth transitioned to adulthood. Considering these reports, refugee youth who fall into the hands of gang members are at a sensitive developmental stage of adolescence when identity formation and a need to belong are very important to their wellbeing. Unfortunately, it is at this age when refugee youth are most likely to drop out of school and therefore continue to maintain gaps in their schooling.

Kumsa (2006) has emphasised that a growing number of studies show that identity construction and reconstruction is a central need of newcomer youth in Canada. Zine (2001), in her study of Muslim youth in Canadian schools, commented that, "Trying to 'fit in' to the dominant social norms within schools became a pitfall for some students" (p. 405). The need to belong and be part of their new community may override the need to maintain unique cultural practices that may make them appear "different" and isolated. Moreover, Bliatout et. al. (1985) concluded that the ability to withstand stress and to resolve life problems gains strength from the integrity of one's sense of identity. Therefore, these arguments make it vital for me to explore whether the enhancement of culture among refugee youth is one of the aspects that could strengthen their sense of belonging.

Acculturation. According to Sam and Berry (1995), acculturation is a concept used to refer to behavioural and psychological changes that occur as a result of contact between people belonging to different cultural groups. Acculturative stress may occur through the process of acculturation. In their discussion, Sam and Berry (1995) explained that newcomers have to deal with two issues regarding acculturation: a) the maintenance of their own cultural identity, and (b) contact with the culture of their new resettlement

country. There is no doubt that war affected refugee youth, as any other newcomers, are

most likely to be in a predicament when it comes to self-identity and a sense of

belonging. Sam and Berry (1995) summed up this predicament as follows:

> As a pupil in a mandatory school system of the host society, the child is inevitably
>
> confronted with the values of the majority society, and may feel "left out". By
>
> accepting the values of the host society, he or she may feel disloyal to his or her
>
> parents. At home, the child is also confronted with the values of the parents,
>
> values which may be held by a small minority. The child may within this context,
>
> experience some sense of shame if he is to identify with them. For non-immigrant
>
> children, their parents are likely to support the values and the norms of the society
>
> they live in, and the society in turn confirms the parents' exhortations. In the case
>
> of the immigrant child, their parents may look down on the values and norms of
>
> the resettlement society, while the society, in turn rejects the immigrant parents'
>
> values and culture as a whole (p. 20).

This explanation clearly shows that the sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth

is likely to be undermined by their circumstances. Reconstructing their sense of belonging

may be complicated by their desire to be accepted by their peer group, their parents, and

their host community. Lee (1988) concluded that, perhaps the greatest threat to these

children is not the stress of belonging to two cultures but the stress of belonging to none.

New-comer youth may find themselves caught between two worlds of cultural identity, as

they may not completely fit in any of the two cultures they are trying to identify with.

Research conducted by Phinney and Ong (2002) in Los Angeles, California, revealed that

Mexican-American adolescents talked about alternating between home and school, being

"traditional" at home while being "American" when with friends or at school.

School challenges. War affected refugee youth are more likely to feel isolated and out of place as a result of the many challenges they face at school in their resettlement community. In her study of African refugee students in Manitoba, Kanu (2008) found that:

> Separation from family not only created acute loneliness for many of the students but also robbed them of the role models who had provided the example, stability, and structures needed to thrive academically. Several of the students reported living with single parents or on their own, having lost their parents and coming to Canada as unaccompanied minors. Others were living in reconstituted families consisting of friends they had made while in transition in refugee camps (p. 924).

Stewart (2011) reported that, when school becomes difficult due to language barriers, racism and home challenges, students may choose to go on the street and make a living by selling drugs or joining a gang. Many of the newcomer students interviewed by Stewart commented that they would rather be "bad" than "stupid". During a CBC radio commentary (Jan. 25, 2010), a Sudanese refugee parent in Winnipeg, Manitoba was interviewed and expressed his disappointment in the education system. This parent explained that his son came to Canada at the age of 11 and was enrolled in grade 6. He dropped out of school in grade 8 and joined a gang and, in his twenties, faced deportation due to criminal activities. Other school challenges outlined by Kanu (2006-2007) included: (a) poverty, (b) cultural dissonance and acculturation stress, (c) perceived racism, (d) lack of access to psychological counselling, (e) difficulty with academic skills, (f) limited proficiency in the English language, (g) academic gaps due to disrupted schooling, (h) inappropriate grade placement, (i) assessment procedures, (j) fear and

distrust of authority figures like teachers, (k) fear of speaking in class and in public due to the lack of a Canadian accent, and (l) fear of being attacked by gangs in their poor inner-city neighbourhoods.

　　　　School interventions for war affected refugee youth. Canadian schools are making a tremendous effort to assist war affected learners to integrate into schools and to perform better academically. There are about six common support services employed by schools. First, priority is put on providing first language translation services to parents and students during registration, teacher/parent conferences and where possible, school newsletter translation. Agencies in Winnipeg such as Society for Manitobans with Disabilities (SMD), Immigrant Centre Manitoba Inc., Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM), and the Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (NEEDS) provide translation services in specific languages to newcomers. However, it's only SMD and Manitoba Immigrant Centre Inc. that provide translation services outside their agency, which includes schools (see Appendix A, for services provided to newcomer families with disabilities including language translations).The other agencies provide translators to newcomers who are registered with them. Unfortunately this causes a scarcity of translators that can be available to support newcomer students in schools. In my experience as a support teacher, my colleagues and I have had difficulty accessing language translators for parents and students. As reported by a staff at Manitoba Immigrant Centre Inc., most of the translators volunteering with them are immigrants themselves and work during the day time when schools need them. Also, due to the increased number of students in need of translation services in various schools in Winnipeg, there tends to be fewer translators to circulate around the schools in need. Further, not all languages have a translator available.

Teachers and newcomer students tend to use the computer for translation support. Although this technological support seems to be the most accessible to students and teachers, not all languages are available, and the translations are not always accurate. Due to the above circumstances regarding language translation services, schools may have to rely on hiring staff that represent various languages of newcomer students. Other means such as utilising various newcomer students as translators may also prove to be more accessible to teachers. I would argue that by utilising newcomer students in their area of expertise may in turn reaffirm their sense of belonging as this may allow them to participate as an integral part of their school community.

The second intervention implemented in schools is to provide English as an additional language (EAL) classes for newcomer students requiring it. Manitoba Education provides a financial grant to support newcomer students in all schools in Manitoba (see Appendix B, for guidelines for EAL support grant in Manitoba). Manitoba Education mandates schools to provide newcomer students in grades 6 to senior 4 with specialised intensive language literacy, fundamental academic skills, and cultural orientation, for a period of six months to two years. All newcomer students at elementary level requiring EAL programming are expected to be integrated into the regular English program/classrooms (Manitoba Education, 2000). Based on my observations as a learning support teacher, I contend that integrating students in the regular classrooms for English language acquisition purposes does not mean enhancing their sense of belonging. Teachers still have to devise other strategies to foster a sense of belonging among this group of students. Also, I argue that the time set by MECY for newcomer students in junior and senior levels to spend on learning the skills as specified above, is questionable. Learning the language and culture of in their new communities may take longer than six

months to two years. I wonder if additional sustainable interventions involving ideas from newcomer students themselves may be more practical. By interviewing war affected refugee youth, I was able to find out some of the ideas of how to best enhance their sense of belonging through their voices.

The third intervention is to assist newcomer students and their families by providing them with settlement services. Baichman, Khattar, and Kilbride (2001) reported that schools in Manitoba and Ontario have placed settlement workers in schools to act as catalysts for improvements in the education of newcomer youth, to become bridges between them, mainstream youth, and their teachers, and to promote communication between their parents and the school system. Funding from Manitoba Labour and Immigration enables school divisions to employ settlement workers to reach out to immigrants including refugees and facilitate their integration into their communities. For example, the settlement workers help newcomers by linking them with various programs and key services areas such as: a) neighbourhood activities to enhance community involvement in the integration of newcomers, thus addressing social isolation, b) newcomer youth programming, which involves initial assessment for newcomer youth to identify gaps and supports needed, c) providing more recreation activities linked to existing neighbourhood programming, d) providing more EAL programing, e) increased after school/extracurricular activities, and f) increased opportunities for training and work experience (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, April 2008).

Each school division has a settlement worker who works out of one of the schools within the division. School staff is made aware of these settlement workers and may consult them regarding newcomer students and their families. Settlement workers may provide community orientation to the family, help them to access English language

classes and job banks, help them to fill out forms, and may assist them with referrals to health, social services and professional counselling services (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, April 2008).

The fourth intervention is to provide English language classes to immigrant parents with pre-school children. Manitoba Labour and Immigration funds this program to enable school divisions to hire an EAL teacher to conduct these classes three half days a week. These classes are free and babysitting is provided. I worked in a school where these EAL classes took place. From my experience, I observed immigrant parents come into school, attend EAL classes and leave without any other connection to staff and students in the school. While it is of great benefit to have these parents learn English, schools should take an advantage and utilise the skills of these new immigrants by encouraging them to volunteer in areas of their interests. For example, they can cook food or teach dances, songs, crafts and art from their culture. Their English classes can be designed to spend some time in various classes within the school and learn from the students while the students learn from them. This in turn may boost the newcomer students' self-esteem and thus a sense of belonging. Also, the Canadian born students will learn about the new emerging cultures and hopefully develop respect toward the diverse communities we all live in.

The fifth intervention implemented by schools is to provide heritage language classes to all students that are interested in learning their heritage language. Manitoba Education funds this program (Manitoba Education, 2002). This is a great service especially for newcomer students who may lose their languages as time progresses. However, it is unfortunate to have such a good cultural component that to be conducted after school hours. The scheduled time for heritage languages may not be conducive to all

students in that it may create negative feeling toward the intended languages. While other students are going home to play or attend recreational activities, those in the heritage language classes have to continue 'doing school' work. Scheduling heritage language classes during school hours may be of benefit to those learning them as well as to those teaching them.

The sixth intervention in place in all divisions is to provide newcomer students in Grades 10 to 12 with an option to earn up to four credits by taking a Special Language Credit Exam. As outlined by the department of Education in Manitoba, A Special Language Credit Option (SPLCO) allows students in high school to obtain credits in languages other than English or French, which are the two official languages of instruction in Manitoba (Manitoba Education, 2012). The languages for which students may challenge for credit vary from year to year depending on students' interest and thus demand. Special language exams are given by qualified examiners usually with a background in Education and teaching (Manitoba Education, 2012, see Appendix C, for documented languages for which SPLCO exams have been offered). This intervention is positive, to some extent, as it supports newcomer students who may feel more successful in languages for which there is no instruction during the regular school day. However, as a special language option examiner myself, I realize there are problems in implementation that require some attention and remedy. In my experience, the examiner sets an exam without knowing the language proficiency level of the students other than their grade level. I would argue that some of these exams could be inappropriate despite being given in languages spoken by the students. Spoken language is not always at the same level as academic language (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). I found myself trying to learn about the student's language level a few minutes before I presented them with a pre-set

examination. Moreover, the students in regular English or French language classes are examined in language areas they have been prepared for. I would suggest that special language examiners should spend some time with the students they are setting the examination for prior to the exam. I am curious to find out how the students feel about the special language exam.

Another intervention common in some school divisions is to offer bilingual programs that are geared toward teaching heritage languages and cultures to specific cultural groups. As stated by Winnipeg School Division (http://www.wsd1.org, 2012), to run a bilingual program, the enrolment in the first year of the program must be 23 at the elementary level, 20 at the grade 7 level, and 18 at the grade 10 level. Also the language program must follow a curriculum approved by Manitoba Education. Further, bussing is provided for K-4 students in the language and alternative programs subject to the distance requirement of 1.6 kilometer. Examples of bilingual programs offered include, English-Ukrainian Bilingual and English-Hebrew Bilingual in both Winnipeg School Division and Seven Oaks School Division; and English-German Bilingual in River East Transcona School Division. Considering the increasing number of newcomer students in Winnipeg, Manitoba Education should consider the establishment of bilingual programs in some schools that cater to groups of students in other languages that present sufficient numbers for this program. War affected refugee students may benefit from a bilingual program by lessening the number of challenges they face in a new country. Also, I believe that a bilingual program that presents the students' languages and culture may have higher chance of enhancing a sense of belonging in war affected refugee youth.

Although some of the above interventions are common in school divisions in

Winnipeg, there are some interventions that differ from one division to another as well as

from one school to another. For instance, Louis Riel School Division (2012), has

established a newcomer family reception centre located in one of their schools known as

Rene Deleurmme Centre (see Appendix D, for a brochure that outlines the services

provided to newcomer families). Staff at this centre assist newcomer families by linking

them to important resources in the schools and the community, and provide them with

initial reception and educational assessments to gage their education level to help with

appropriate placement in schools (http://www.lrsd.net/school/rdc). Rivereast Transcona

School Division (2012), has a partnership with the Center of Education and Work

(University of Winnipeg) to support the development and implementation of a series of

Family portfolio programs which provide various groups of newcomer Canadians the

opportunity to come together and celebrate the culture of their country of origin, at the

same time learning more about the language and culture of their new Canadian

communities (http://www.retsd.mb.ca). The Winnipeg School Division provides support

through community liaison services and the settlement counselors at Welcome Place

(immigrant and refugee settlement agency at 397 Carlton Street in Winnipeg).

Community liaison workers (hired by the division) and settlement counselors (funded by

Manitoba Labour and Immigration) support students, parents, teachers and administrators

by providing services such as school orientation, language interpretation, counseling, and

referral to outside agencies.

In a qualitative research study (Mbabaali, 2010), I found that there were a number

of programs in place in various schools to support refugee students in Winnipeg. The

participants in the study reported that school support programs included intensive

academic programs, delivered by learning support teachers and English as an Additional

Language (EAL) teachers outside of the regular program. Integration of newcomer

students into the regular program depended upon their acquisition of the academic skills

pre-requisite to the regular program. The challenge that arose from such programs was

that students who had never been in school and who were six or more years behind, could

not acquire the skills that were age appropriate in a short time. However, all students were

integrated in physical education classes, music, industrial arts, and art. It would be

interesting to find out if and how these segregated EAL and academic support programs

enhanced or hindered a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth. In her

research, Kanu (2008) found that some schools were creating the following initiatives:

a) opening refugee transition centres where refugee students are taught Canadian life

skills, b) providing teachers with workshops on war affected children, c) providing a

workplace preparation program for students, and d) including foods familiar to refugee

students on the menu in the school cafeteria.

Other interventions found in my study (Mbabaali, 2010), included schools

following a common initial reception procedure for refugees and war affected students.

Schools in my research reported the use of an additional form apart from a regular

registration form to collect more detailed information from the students and their families.

This information assisted school staff in providing the appropriate support for each

student. However, it was evident throughout my interviews that supports for refugee and

war affected students differed from one school to another, and from one school division

to another. While some schools had liaison workers to assist families with filling out the

forms, some schools did not have access to such people readily available. One participant

shared that his school division provided parent and children information discussion

evenings where a psychologist, social worker, parents, teachers, and children discuss their difficulties and possible solutions. In this particular division they had a global village program located in one of the schools to provide additional information to all new newcomer families. Another participant's school had a parents' buddy program, where Canadian born parents signed up to support a new family by orienting them to the school culture. This division also provided transportation to all the students as they lived very far from the school. The participant from this division stated that, "Most of our refugee and war affected students live downtown in some unsafe areas. …The good thing is that all students come from all over the city but they are transported to school by the division's school bus. …This is a good safety aspect of our school". A third participant said she didn't know of any division wide programs, apart from the special resource room at the school that provided academic support to refugee students. In her school, the resource teacher tended to various needs such as finding housing or opening up bank accounts for the students, in addition to teaching academic skills.

All the participants in my study reported that they had accessed outside agencies to assist students with counselling, homework, after school recreational activities, and to meet economic and social challenges. The agencies accessed by the refugee youth included: The Needs Centre, Welcome Place, New Directions and the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre (MATC). One of the participants noted that it was helpful to have MATC on board to work with war affected students, as "MATC had a psychological component with trained psychologists to deal with war trauma", Mental Health Services for Children, Youth and Families, (2012). Additional supports mentioned by the participants were provided by churches and national associations where refugee students received assistance from community volunteers.

The above interventions and initiatives to support refugee youth in schools are moves in the right direction with good intentions. However, access to some of the services may be difficult due to bureaucracy or their location in vicinities distant from the schools refugee youth attend. When students are referred by school staff to services such as health and social services, and professional counselling services, there often is a delay in the process to access direct services. For example, agencies such as Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre (MATC) and the Anxiety Clinic at St. Boniface Hospital have waiting lists and sometimes require a parent to attend with their child. Unfortunately, some struggling immigrant parents may not be able to attend due to work commitments and other challenges associated with resettlement. Consequently, referred students may end up missing appointments or not attend at all. It is possible that, if teachers were well equipped with strategies to promote a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth with the intention to tend to their social and psychological needs, some of their challenges might be alleviated. As Perry & Szalavitz (2006) stated, war affected children like all traumatised children, "…need a rich social environment, one where they could belong and be loved. They need a healthy community to buffer the pain, distress and loss caused by their earlier trauma" (p.232). Unfortunately, there is a lack of availability of services mentioned above to support war affected refugee youth in rural Manitoba. As noted by Silvius and Annis, (2005):

> For rural communities, it remains challenging to offer services with a sufficient degree of specialization. Programming comparable to that available in larger centers remain difficult to ensure due to challenges in providing human and material resources and complexities around developing and delivering models suitable to rural challenges. Some of the services necessary to support immigrants,

are limited by the information gap regarding immigrants and the community, as well as the distance between well-established service providers, usually located in urban areas, and the local communities (p. 8).

In her study of African refugee students in Manitoba, Kanu (2006-2007) reported that principals expressed the need for increases in government funding to support programming needs of refugee youth. For example, (a) the establishment of continuous professional development for administrators and teachers, (b) creation of psychological counselling programs "that are right here in the school …", (c) after school academic bridging programs that decrease refugee students' knowledge gap, (d) English learning programs for refugee parents, (e) hiring Educational Assistants to provide more one-one in class instructions to refugee students, and (f) hiring a staff member to liaise between the school and communities (p. 117). Teachers in Kanu's study (2006-2007) commented on how complex their roles and responsibilities were when working with refugee students. Besides teaching, these teachers took on other roles such as counsellor, social worker, mentor, and refugee service provider (117). These facts make it clear that more needs to be done in schools besides relying on the already existing interventions supporting refugee youth. Promoting a sense of belonging in war affected refugee youth may be another area to focus on. An examination of the attributes of sense of belonging may lead to the design of specific practices that teachers may employ in an effort to strengthen the involvement and productivity of war affects refugee youth to enable them be an integral part of their new communities.

Wilkinson (2002) has suggested that school interventions for refugee youth should include programs that create opportunities for their parents to learn about: (a) the educational content, (b) teaching methods and styles, (c) the roles of the teachers,

(d) relationships between teachers and students (e.g., instructing, coaching, monitoring, counselling, etc.), and (e) the types of relationships that are fostered among students. Wilkinson (2002) added that schools should have a place where family members are genuinely welcomed and assisted with their questions. Also, she recommended that newcomer youth and their parents should be taught about Canadian culture to allow them to have a better understanding of what is expected of them in their new settlement communities. While all the above interventions are worthwhile and well intentioned, it is important to mention that a number of them usually are geared toward immigrant youth in general as opposed to specific groups, such as war affected refugee youth. Kanu (2008) reported that the lack of targeted and specialised refugee support programs can impede the ability of refugee students to adjust and learn. Another point to be mindful of is that the success of various school interventions for war-affected refugee youth depend on number of variables, as listed by Rutter (2003): (a) the duration and intensity of war trauma of each individual refugee youth, (b) his or her age, personality and character, (c) the quality of child-care, and (d) the individual's experience in a new country.

Considering the challenges war affected refugee youth experience during their pre-immigration and post immigration periods, they may have needs too great to be overcome through existing educational provisions. In addition, as noted by Kanu (2008), these recent refugees present cultures, religious beliefs, work skills, education levels, skin colours and physical features that differ from those of the majority of Canadians and previous immigrant and refugee groups. Therefore, a number of stakeholders, including the departments of multiculturalism, labour and immigration, housing and social services, and education must work together toward common goals to support refugee youth to become successful citizens in their new community.

Factors that may foster a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), a key component in the healthy development of children who have escaped from an impoverished childhood, is the cultivation of psychosocial resilience which is a combination of personal and social resources. Social resources, as a measure of social integration, include good, confident social relationships with family and friends, and access to support networks. It may be important for educators to give priority to enhancing the social resources of war affected refugee youth to foster their sense of belonging before directing their efforts primarily toward academic outcomes. Once a person's social resources are strong, he or she may have a better chance to excel in other areas, including academics, at school. As specified by Faircloth (2009), engaging students in the following activities may enhance a sense of belonging among war affected refugee learners: a) allowing students to "speak their identity", b) listening to their life stories - a person's life story is his or her history and a person's history is his or her identity, c) using novels and topics that relate to the students' lives, d) fostering peer relationships, and e) providing them with a caring teacher.

Allowing students to speak their identity. Faircloth emphasised the importance of giving students the opportunity to draw on their own family, community, or background. The students in her study described schoolwork as interesting to the degree that they were able to bring their life lessons and personal culture or background into their work. Bromley (1988) suggested the use of life story books and personal scrapbooks, as well as engaging refugee youth in discussions that promote their cultural norms, customs, and values. Faircloth (2009) concluded by stating that a powerful result of students'

experiences with self-expression is the support it provides to their sense of "voice". One of the students in her study commented that, "It is fun to show our classmates who we really are" (p. 338).

Listening to students' life stories. Boyden (2003) explained that listening to children sometimes produces surprising results. Through listening to refugee youth, McMullen (1999) found that Palestinian war-affected children were more preoccupied with hygiene and other matters reflecting the collective culture in which they lived. Therefore, McMullen (1999) emphasised that educators are more likely to respond to these students' needs appropriately after knowing what they consider important. Further, Boyden (2003) noted that:

> Disregarding children's perspectives may result in [inefficient] interventions that do not address children's real problems or concerns and may even pose a threat to their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Children must be encouraged to provide real insight into their feelings and experiences. If children are to be helped to overcome highly stressful experiences, their views and perspectives need to be treated as a source of learning and strength, not weakness (p. 17).

For example, in his study of 1200 children from asylum-seeking families in Glasgow schools, Smyth (2006) found that teachers had successfully employed a strategy of teaching refugee students by encouraging them to write about the food they missed from their countries of origin. Woods (1990) emphasised the importance of curricula and teaching practices that operate within a broad range of accepted social values while being attuned to students' identities and cultures. In a research study conducted by Baichman, et.al. (2001), the participants recommended the following strategies to enhance a sense of

belonging in refugee youth: a) encouraging refugee students to teach their classmates

about their countries of origin, (b) helping them to present facts in an accurate and

contemporary way, to their Canadian born classmates about the ways in which daily life

is experienced there, (c) assisting refugee youth to provide fair historical accounts of the

contributions of others from their homelands to Canada so that all students may have a

better picture of the way in which this nation was built, (d) promoting programs that

explain their culture to Canadians, and Canadian cultural ways to their communities,

(e) creating recreational activities as a way to increase interactions among all youth,

including sports such as soccer and cricket, and activities such as chess, music, and dance

common to the cultures of the refugee youth and Canada, and (f) establishing drop-in

centres and other meeting places offering homework clubs and other after-school

activities. Meece and Kurtz-Costes (2001) noted that educators will be most successful

when they are cognizant of the cultural beliefs, assumptions, and behaviours of the

families they are serving, and when they attempt to tailor school instruction to the cultural

backgrounds of their children.

      Using novels and topics that relate to the refugee students' lives. Using novels

that relate to students' lives may reinforce a sense of belonging as they may see

themselves being acknowledged through the novels. Students in Faircloth's (2009) study

commented that they liked how the books they read in class related to their everyday life.

Also, students frequently expressed a preference for assignments that had something to do

with things they were interested in like sports.

      A caring teacher. Students in Faircloth's (2009) study highlighted their

relationships with their teachers as central to their connection to school, and their en-

gagement in school learning. Specifically, these students explained that their teachers'

persistent support; offering extra help, responding positively to them, and being flexible, inspired them to work harder. The safety they felt in class, their teachers' interest in their learning, and the feeling that their teachers cared for them, were important aspects of their school belonging. In Faircloth's (2009) view, one of the ways that teachers can enhance their students' sense of belonging is listening to them share their personal stories and ideas. Brooks (2004) concluded that strengthening a student's self-worth is not an "extra" curriculum that takes away time from teaching academics; if anything, a student's sense of belonging, security, and self-confidence in a classroom provides the scaffolding that bolsters the foundation for enhanced learning, motivation, self-discipline, and caring.

At a middle school where I worked for three years as a support teacher, teachers have engaged students in the following activities to reinforce a sense of belonging:

a) encouraging students to share their culture through food, clothing, games, songs, dances, and languages, b) having students teach a topic or present their projects in their first languages, c) utilizing students' expertise in their areas of strengths such as music, sports, or math, and d) creating and encouraging interactions between refugee and Canadian born students. It is hoped that by engaging students in such activities, students may feel valued and respected, and gain a sense of belonging.

The following recommendations were suggested by Rossiter and Rossiter (2009 as ways that may foster a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth:

1) Teachers should receive pre-service and in-service education to deliver effective differentiated instruction. (As newcomer youth present different learning and academic skills, especially those with schooling gaps, teachers may require practicing differentiated instruction to address the various needs within their classrooms).

2) K-12 teachers, as well as other staff, should be recruited from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds to provide role models in the schools.

3) Youth need opportunities to develop positive relationships and to participate in school life; peer ambassador programmes that carefully match newcomers with more established immigrants from the same culture can also be very helpful.

4) Responses to discrimination and bullying within the larger school community should be immediate and restorative, in contrast to existing zero tolerance policies, which emphasise exclusion and punishment (Morrison 2007; Stinchcomb et al. 2006).

5) Goal-setting guidance, career counselling and improved accessibility to funding for further education should be available to all immigrant and refugee youth. In addition, schools should work closely with ethno-cultural communities on a continuous basis. School-based after-school or weekend outreach programmes for family members of all ages should be provided (e.g. intercultural communication skills, cross-cultural parenting, orientation to systems in Canadian society), based on expressed needs and interests.

In addition to the above recommendations, I would recommend the book, '*Breaking barriers: Excellence and equity for all',* by Glaze, Mattingley, and Levin, (2012), for more valuable suggestions regarding culturally responsive teaching of culturally diverse student populations. The following are some of Glaze and Mattingley's (2012) key suggestions: 1) Differentiating instruction, 2) promoting cross-cultural integration, 3) building bridges between school, home and community, 4) assessing the diversity within the classrooms and becoming familiar with the range of cultures and their diverse worldviews, epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogical practices, 5) Setting high

expectations for all students, 6) designing lessons and activities that are culturally responsive to student needs, 7) ensuring that school libraries have resources that reflect the diversity of the student population, and 8) work in collaboration with community agencies such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, the YMCA, and the Learning Disabilities Association, to provide after-school programs.

Conclusion

As Qingwen Xu (2007) put it, schools are one of the more consistent points of contact with the host culture. Educators, especially teachers and classmates, are in a powerful position to impact positively on the lives of refugees. All individuals involved should strive to ensure that the school climate is nurturing, accepting, caring, characterised by tolerance, and that there are many opportunities for student social interaction through peer support programs. This will require school staff to create opportunities for newcomer students to make friends, to develop self-esteem, and to broaden their knowledge of and interaction with members of the local social community (Qingwen Xu, 2007). Omidvar and Richmond (2003) explained that inclusion also means assisting all students and staff to value the diversity that newcomers add to the Canadian society. While this can be done through the curriculum, it can also be achieved when interactions takes place on an equal footing among students, staff, and parents. By doing so, a more secure sense of belonging among newcomer youth may be achieved.

The wellbeing of newcomer youth in Canada often is challenged by their pre-migration and post-migration experiences. Pre-migration experiences may consist of loss, separation, uprooting, and uncertainty. These experiences may affect a sense of belonging among newcomer youth, which may be crucial to how well they progress in school in their new resettlement society. Moreover, theory and research have indicated

that positive school affect such as belonging supports students' motivation, engagement, and achievement (Connell and Wellborn, 1991; Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan, 1996; Faircloth & Hamm, 2005; Juvonen and Wentzel, 1996). Post-migration experiences which include isolation, acculturation stress, identity crisis, and perceived discrimination, may further undermine these newcomers' sense of belonging. The combination of these experiences can impact significantly the adaptation of war-affected refugee youth in school and community settings, given their potential effect on identity development and self- worth (Crowe, 2001)). Since one of the most critical factors in a successful transition to Canadian society is education (Anisef and Kilbride, 2003), it is necessary for all the stakeholders involved in the education of this new group of youth to create activities and programs that promote their sense of belonging as integral members of their new communities.

Although several recommendations to enhance a sense of belonging among newcomer youth have been suggested by researchers (Anderson, & Baichman, 2001; Faircloth, 2009; Meece & Kurtz-Costes 2001; Smyth, 2006) there is little research evidence that relates a sense of belonging to the academic success or failure of war-affected refugee youth in particular. Therefore, the findings of this study may contribute to the existing literature by providing concrete practices to enhance a sense of belonging among this group of youth and its relationship to their educational outcomes. Previous research has been centered on challenges including: English language acquisition, counselling services, post-traumatic stress disorder, acculturation stress, crime and gang involvement, as well as services that support successful resettlement and adaptation. I hope that the current study will add knowledge to the existing literature by

providing interpersonal and relationship factors that may enhance a sense of belonging

among newcomer youth.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

The goal of this study was to explore if and how a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth might influence or support their schooling and academic engagement while in their new host country. Since this research study relied on the personal experiences of the participants, a qualitative phenomenological study method guided the investigation. This chapter describes the qualitative research paradigm, phenomenological framework, participant selection, data collection, data analysis, evaluation of the study, and ethical considerations.

Qualitative research paradigm

To gain a better understanding of the views held by the participants and their perspectives on their sense of belonging, a qualitative research approach was utilised. Richards and Morse (2007) noted the following as the main purposes for using qualitative methods: a) to better understand an area where little is known, b) to make sense of complex situations, c) to learn from the participants' experiences in the way they experience it, and d) to understand a phenomenon in detail. In this research, a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth is a complex area about which little is known. By employing a qualitative research method, I hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of this group of youth. As Bogdan and Biklen (2006) noted, I was interested in understanding how people negotiate meaning, and how they make sense of their lives. Further, using a qualitative research method in this study allowed me to understand the participants' point of views of the events and actions that they experienced. Therefore, my research findings reflected multiple views from similar

events (refugee experiences) as noted by McMillan (2008). As a qualitative researcher, it was important for me to use only the participants' words and actions in my research findings to depict their actual interpretations of the events being studied.

Other features of a qualitative research method as outlined by McMillan (2008) were utilised as they were applicable to the nature of this study. The research was conducted in a **natural setting**, which was the Needs Centre where the participants went often to receive homework support services. Conducting research in a familiar setting was expected to put the participants at ease while participating in my research interviews, thus allowing them to speak and express their views freely. Interviewing war affected refugee youth directly allowed me to **collect data from the source**, as opposed to collecting data from other people's (parents or teachers) reports on their behalf. By collecting data from the youth themselves, I hoped to obtain **detailed narratives that provide in-depth understanding of the contexts** of their experiences. Data was analyzed through **generalizations induced from synthesizing gathered information** from the interviews. As mentioned above, the study focused on the participants' experiences of the events in their lives during the pre-migration and post-immigration periods, as well as their understanding and interpretation of the term 'a sense of belonging' as part of their life experiences.

Methodological framework

Phenomenological approach. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2006), researchers who use the phenomenological approach "attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions of ordinary people in particular situations" (p. 25). Van Manen (1990) explained that phenomenological human science is discovery oriented, geared toward finding out what a certain phenomenon means and how it is experienced. War

affected refugee learners present a phenomenon that is worth investigating in order to get

a better understanding of whether and how their sense of belonging affects their social

functioning and learning at school. The rationale for using this methodology was mainly

due to the fact that people's interpretation of events and situations vary. To understand

what a sense of belonging means to war affected refugee youth and how their sense of

belonging might enhance or hinder their ability to function in school, it was suitable for

me to use a phenomenological approach to collect data regarding this phenomenon.

According to Van Manen (1990), a phenomenological research is a study of a)

lived experiences, b) essences – the very nature of the phenomenon, c) the attentive

practice of thoughtfulness, d) a search for what it means to be human, and e) a poetizing

activity. Lived experiences are people's immediate experience of the world, not how they

conceptualize, categorize, or theorize about it. Phenomenology is less concerned with

how and why a phenomenon happened. For example, instead of asking how children

learn a particular concept, a phenomenological study asks, what is the nature of the

experience of learning, so that the researcher can better understand what this particular

learning experience is like for the children. Paying attention to practice thoughtfulness

involves a mindful wondering about the project of life, of living, of what it means to live

a life. Van Manen (1990) stressed that "phenomenological research [reveals] other

people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to [present] a

better understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human

experience, in the context of the whole of human experience" (p. 62). Also,

phenomenological research searches for what it means to be human. Therefore the sense

of belonging of war affected refugee youth is a human need (Fiske, 2004), that justifies

the use of phenomenological research approach. Van Manen (1984) explained that:

> As we research the possible meaning structures of our lived experiences, we come
>
> to a fuller grasp of what it means to live in the world as a man, a woman, a child,
>
> taking into account the sociocultural and the historical traditions which have given
>
> meaning to our ways of being in the world (p. 2).

Considering that war affected refugee youth are trying to establish their identity and status in their new country, it was fitting to investigate this phenomenon through the use a phenomenological research method. Phenomenological research as a poetizing activity, aims to involve the voice into an original singing of the world (Van Manen, 1984). Therefore, through the use of a phenomenological research method, I had to listen to the voices and authentic language used by the participants in order to get a deeper under-standing of their world experiences.

The research questions, participant selection and data collection in this study followed the guidelines of a phenomenological research approach as outlined by McMillan (2004). My research questions focused on what was essential for the meaning of the events of war affected refugee youth. Participants were selected because they had lived the experiences being investigated, which involved war activity, flight and escape from war zones, loss, resettlement in temporary shelters, camp life and finally resettlement in Canada. Data was collected through the use of personal, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The duration of the interviews was between forty five minutes to one hour (interviews in a phenomenological research are typically long). Also, the researcher may have several interview sessions with each participant. This is due to a heavy reliance on a single method of data collections. Having employed a phenomenological research method, I was able to reflect on my own experiences and integrate them with those of the participants. However, I had to bracket my biases

regarding my refugee experiences. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), and Psathas (1973), phenomenological researchers begin with silence in an attempt to grasp what it is they are studying by bracketing their own biases as well as the ideas the participants take for granted. This means that the researchers act as if they do not know what things mean to the people they are studying. Through the use of a phenomenological research method, I hoped to gain authentic information by listening to the actual voices of war affected refugee youth, without placing any judgement on their views.

Theoretical Background

Freire's critical pedagogy and Maslow's hierarchy of needs theories were used to provide a perspective on an education system that could be used to better understand the sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth. Paulo Freire's (1997) critical pedagogy is a theory that is grounded in the critical theory, which traces its tradition to the Frankfurt School (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006). The Frankfurt School began as a group of Marxist philosophers such as Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, whose influence lead to the development of critical theory as a research paradigm for many social sciences including education. What ties these critical theorists together is the belief that their research looks to "empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices" (McLaren, 1994, p. 168). Therefore, a major function of critical pedagogy is to critique, expose, and challenge the manner in which schools impact upon the political and cultural life of students (Darder, 1995). Educating war affected refugee youth may require educators to critique and challenge the current educational curriculum focus to support and consider the different cultural and past political experiences of these youth. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) stated that, critical theorists would rather benefit those who are marginalized in the society because they believe that the current way society is

organized is unjust. Although it may be unintentional in some cases, war affected refugee youth may find themselves marginalized through discrimination by people in their host communities.

Practicing critical pedagogy may lead educators to become conscious of their practices, thus adjust and employ strategies that support students including war affected refugee youth. This in turn may alleviate some of the challenges refugee youth usually face in a new country. Moreover, Kincheloe (2008) and Freire (1970) noted that when education is geared toward the development of critical consciousness, it enables learners to recognize connections between their individual problems, experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded.

As a qualitative researcher in education, I chose to structure my study based on the ideologies of critical pedagogy to provide some guidance to what may benefit war affected refugee youth as they go through a new education system in their new society. Kincheloe (2008) reported that Freire (1970) believed education to be a political act that could not be divorced from pedagogy. Therefore, under this notion, teachers and students must be made aware of the "politics" that surround education. As noted by Correa-Velez, et. al (2010), schools are one of the first points where newcomer youth get knowledge about the different expectations in their new country. To gain the necessary knowledge that will help to shape newcomer youth into valuable citizens of their communities, educators may need to embrace some of the ideologies of Freire's critical pedagogy, which emphasize the importance of developing and using multiple literacies. This means that educators may need to design social literacies that are functional, cultural, and critical; literacies that both recognize the importance of cultural differences and the

importance of individuals communicating across various social, cultural, and political

borders (Kincheloe, 2008). The following are some of the roles of critical pedagogy in

education as explained by Giroux (1999):

1) The role of teachers should be to construct curricula that draw upon the cultural

   resources that students bring with them to the school. This suggests not only

   taking the languages, histories, experiences, and voices of the students seriously,

   but also integrating what is taught in schools to the dynamics of everyday life.

2) The role of schools should be seen as a resource for the larger community. In this

   sense, teachers and members of the community become co-owners of the school

   and in doing so collectively determine what is taught, how the school is organized,

   and what role the school might play in the affairs of the community and

   neighborhood agencies.

3) School can be used as a strategic site for addressing social problems and helping

   students understand what it means to exercise rights and responsibilities as critical

   citizens actively engaged in forms of social learning that expand human capacities

   for compassion, empathy, and solidarity.

Giroux's (1999) explanation of the role of critical pedagogy supports Kellner's (2000)

statement that critical pedagogy considers how education can provide individuals with the

tools to better themselves and strengthen democracy within their societies.

Considering the increasing school dropout rate among newcomer youth (Crowe,

2001), one may wonder if this is partly due to schools, as social organizations, failing to

promote the interests and values of newcomer youth, thus giving privilege to Canadian

values and practices at their expense. If this is the case, would teachers' practices that

reflect a critical pedagogical approach promote a sense of belonging among newcomer youth and thus enhance their learning potential? According to Kellner (2000), critical pedagogy provides tools so that individuals can dissect the instruments of cultural domination, transform themselves from objects to subjects, and transition from passive to active agents in their own lives. As newcomers establish themselves in a new society, they need to be well equipped with strategies and life skills to utilize and transform themselves from being seen only as 'refugees' to fully contributing Canadian citizens. Therefore, the fundamental commitment of critical educators is to empower [war affected refugee youth] by providing them with the necessary skills required for an individual to become a valuable member of the society they live in (McLaren, 1998). This argument is inextricably linked to the fulfillment of what Paulo Freire (1970) defines as our "vocation" – to be fully humanized social agents in the world. Hence a major function of critical pedagogy is to critique, expose, and challenge the manner in which schools unite knowledge and power and how through this function they can work to influence or thwart the formation of critically thinking and socially active individuals (Darder, 1995). It is therefore crucial for educators to adapt Freire's critical pedagogy theory and strive to empower refugee youth by teaching them the skills necessary for them to voice their needs and challenge any social and economic injustice they may face. Reinforcing their cultural values, allowing them to "speak their identity", and listening to their life stories will strengthen their identity, their sense of belonging and their self-worth (Faircloth, 2009). With a strong identity and a better understanding of their rights, it is possible that war affected refugee youth might have a greater chance to advocate for themselves, and gain the respect of their Canadian born peers. I believe that having a voice in the decisions that shape one's life can motivate people to strive and become productive

citizens.

Figure 3.1.   Maslow's hierarchy of human needs
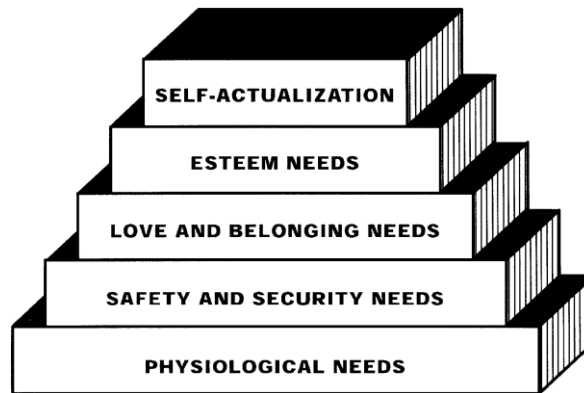
Source: Mark Oleson, (2004).

Maslow (1970) outlined a motivational hierarchy (see Fig. 3.1) consisting of five categories of human needs arranged in ascending order: Physiological – basic needs satisfied by such stimuli as food and sleep; safety and security – need for a safe environment free from immediate threat; social (love and belonging) – affiliative and love needs, a desire for social competence; esteem – need for enhancement and acceptance of self; and self-actualization – striving for full realization of unique characteristics and potentials (Adler 2011).

According to Maslow's theory, before individuals can strive to attain their dreams and capabilities (self-actualization), they must first satisfy the four sets of needs. However, the need hierarchy theory had been criticized for its conceptual imprecision (Adler, 2011) due to the fact that it derived most directly from clinical experiences (Maslow, 1970). The theory was largely based on Maslow's observations of the stages in the improvement of mental patients in therapy (Adler, 2011). Therefore, it should be noted that, although I used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, not all the needs applied to the participants in my study – in the order they were proposed to occur. However, it is

true that when immigrants and refugees first arrive in Canada, they are pushed by various

factors toward the bottom of the hierarchy. Physiological needs and safety and security

become their main focus during the first months in the country. After satisfying these two

needs, newcomers may progress to seek the next needs – love and belonging, esteem, and

self-actualization. Despite such situations, "what constitutes basic satisfaction remains

problematic [as] this involves individual differences" (p. 445). For some individuals, as

this study findings indicated, the needs hierarchy may not occur in the precise order as

suggested by Maslow (1970). For war affected refugee youth, the physiological needs,

safety and security needs depended on their caregivers' status in attaining these needs.

Therefore, the youth in this study did not focus so heavily on these particular needs, as

their caregivers would. Social needs may have been a greater focus for these youths.

As described by Rossiter and Rossiter (2009), youth need to satisfy belonging

needs – for friends and family to provide love, and the sense of affiliation with a group or

community; and esteem needs – based on respect and appreciation for self and from

others for individual competencies and accomplishments. Unfortunately, the demand to

achieve these needs may cause additional stress on war affected refugee youth who,

according to Erik Erikson (1959), are already struggling to achieve ego identity (given

their past experiences). Having been forced out of their countries, they may have created

doubts regarding their identity and sense of belonging.

Immigration, as noted by Adler (2011), is a major disruption in the life pattern of

an individual. Also, Adler (2011) and Ben-David (1970) explained that the arrival of an

immigrant in a new country may be called a "personality crisis", the stress of the

experience creating an "impoverishment of the immigrants' ego (p. 370). Therefore, in the

face of immense stress and frustration, a regression to the lower levels of the needs

hierarchy may take place (Barker, Dembo, and Lewin, 1941). Further, Adler (2011)

summarised the immigrants' struggle by stating that:

> Adjustment, then, can be seen as a recovery process in which the immigrant
> gradually moves up the hierarchy toward self-actualisation. Progress up the
> hierarchy involves people overcoming insecurity, overcoming loneliness,
> overcoming self-confusion, in other words, recovering from a temporary state of
> disability known as "cultural shock" (p. 446).

In this research study, I intended to explore to what extent Freire's critical pedagogy and

Maslow's needs theory relate to the sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth

while settling in their new country, Canada. As stated earlier, my investigation was based

on the following key questions to guide the findings of this intricate phenomenon:

- What were the experiences of a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth,
  and how were they affected by the presence or lack of the sense of belonging
  during their pre-migration and post-migration periods?

- What relationship, if any, exists between war affected refugee youths' experiences
  of the sense of belonging during their pre-migration and post-migration periods?

- What strategies may be utilised by educators to enhance a sense of belonging
  among war affected refugee youth and to reduce their alienation?

Participant selection and recruitment

I recruited fifteen participants between 12 and 19 years old from the Needs Centre

Inc. in a western Canadian provincial city, Winnipeg in Manitoba. The Needs

(Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services) Centre was established

in 1999 as a non-profit, charitable organization for refugees and immigrants. The agency

was created by immigrant and refugee women for newcomers to Canada. These women developed the Centre's programming based on their own personal experiences and needs assessments of their clients. The Centre's mission is to provide accessible services and support to immigrant and refugee children and youth and their families. Their goal is to enhance the newcomer's integration into Canadian society by providing youth with employment, education, and social recreation programs supported by psychosocial educators (Needs Centre Volunteer Orientation Manual, 2011).

There were 5 female and 10 male participants in the study. Overall, there were more male than female youth who attend the centre during the evenings. The participants' backgrounds reflected experiences of war in their countries of origin. Initially I had intended to interview youth between fifteen and twenty years of age. However, twelve year old youth were interested and requested to be interviewed. Their interest in being interviewed might have been due to the fact that they were present at the centre and had older friends that were participating. I included this age group as it fell within the age range that represented the highest percentage of refugees in Canada (Crowe, 2006). I intended to interview two types of youth; those who dropped out of school and those who were still in school. As the statistics have indicated, 74% of newcomer youth drop out of school (Watt & Roessingh, 2001), so it was of high interest for me to verify whether the lack of a sense of belonging played a part in causing these youth to drop out of school. On the other hand, investigating youth that were still in school could shed light on whether the presence of a sense of belonging is a motivator for war affected refugee youth to stay in school. However, it was the second group of youth that was available and that agreed to be interviewed. The first group of youth, as mentioned by the counsellor at the

centre, were either working or no longer interested in coming to the centre as they were not in school anymore. The group that I interviewed were all attending school and they frequently came to the centre to get help with their homework. Although the participants were recruited using a single setting from the *Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services* (NEEDS) centre, I selected participants who: a) came from different countries to help me get a cross section of opinions of students at the Needs centre, b) came from countries that reflected different levels of similarities to Canada, and c) had lived in Canada for five years or less.

Although there was a counsellor available during the interviews, the participants' answers to the interview questions were not influenced by the counsellor. Sub-themes were used to describe each theme in detail, sighting some of the participants' direct quotations to illustrate the actual meaning of their answers and explanations of their experiences. Given the ages of the participants, the results of this study may shine some light into the school experiences of war affected refugee youth in relation to their sense of belonging in their new communities.

Participants' background information

The majority of the participants came to Canada with their immediate families as their caregivers. Out of fifteen participants, five came with two of their biological parents (a mother and father). One of the participants came unaccompanied with her younger brother, and because she was 18 years old, she was her brother's caregiver. This girl was going to school as well as working to support her brother. Six of the participants came with a single biological parent. Only one participant had a deceased parent, and three of the participants had left their parents in a refugee camp and had come with their uncle.

All the participants except one were from Africa. There were seven participants from Somalia, two participants from Ethiopia, two participants from Uganda, three participants from Congo, and one participant from Bhutan. While twelve participants had been in Canada for duration of two to five years, there were two participants that had spent just over a year and one participant had been in Canada for only seven months. All participants had schooling gaps due to war activity, relocation and resettlement. Instead of using the participants' actual names in this study findings, pseudonyms were used to protect their identity.

Data collection

Since a phenomenological research methodology was used in this study, research data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews. According to Biklen and Bogdan (2006), "…the interview is used to gather data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (p. 103). One of the major characteristics of qualitative research is that the data is collected within natural settings and the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2009).

Following approval from the University of Manitoba - Education Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB), I recruited participants through the use of a recruitment invitation letter (see Appendix E and F, for samples of the recruitment letters and letters of informed consent). The recruitment letter clearly stated that participation in the study was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study at any given time. They were made aware of the fact that the information they provided was confidential and pseudonyms instead of the actual names of the participants were used. The participants

were informed that a counsellor was available to assist them in case of an emotional

breakdown during the interview process. To assist participants to understand the

interview questions, they were asked to bring a translator of their choice. Upon

acceptance to participate in the study, participants signed an informed consent form. The

consent form provided detailed information about the study, and the duration of the

interview. Participants were informed that any personal identifying information such as

name of their school or residence will not be revealed in the research. Also, participants

were told that their direct quotes along with pseudonyms will be used in the research to

provide the best message pertaining to the research. Further, participants were informed

through the consent letter that all information collected from them will be locked up in

my personal filing cabinet until I complete and defend my theses. After signing the

consent letter participants were contacted to set up the interview date and time convenient

for them. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' permission. The

interviews lasted approximately 35 to 40 minutes. I transcribed the interviews using a

computer, which allowed me to listen to the participants' responses multiple times for

accuracy of their messages. However, parents or guardians of participants under the age

of eighteen years received the recruitment letters and consent forms. Both the parents or

guardians and their child (participant) signed the consent form before taking part in the

study.

Data analysis

          After transcribing the data, I organised them by searching for common patterns,

ideas, explanations, and understandings, as suggested by McMillan (2008). To summarise

the data, I used a constant comparison of the information collected in my interviews, then

categorised it into themes that had emerged from the data. Out of these themes, I

developed a construct map (see Appendix G for a sample of a construct map) as suggested by Thomas (2009), to show the connections among these themes. Examples of participants' quotations were noted to support the themes and their sub themes. A construct map enabled me to analyse the data as it was intended to highlight the connectedness of all the themes.

Bracketing my own ideas and experiences as a war affected immigrant in Canada, was an important validation strategy I carefully observed. Cresswell (2007) noted bracketing as one of the validation strategies in a phenomenological research. Also, De Castro (2005) noted that the researcher aims to 'bracket' or suspend previous assumptions or understandings in order to be open to the phenomenon as it appears. Another validation strategy I used in this study was peer debriefing. In this process, I was able to exchange ideas and perspectives with a colleague regarding my data interpretations, meaning and conclusions in relation to my research question. Further, I respected the importance of capturing the actual experiences of the participants. This is reflective of Biklen and Bogdan's (2006) statement that "Phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us … and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality" (p. 26). My reality and experiences twenty five years ago were definitely different from the reality and experiences of war affected refugee youth today.

Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985), trustworthiness addresses four areas: a) credibility - an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent a "credible" conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants, b) transferability - the degree to which the findings of the study can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the

project, c) dependability - an assessment of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation, and d) confirmability - a measure of how well the inquiry's findings are supported by the data collected.

I focused on **credibility** to support the argument that the inquiry's findings were "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). To ensure **credibility**, I asked the counsellor at the Needs Center to be present during the interviews. The counsellor translated and clarified my interview questions as well as the participants' responses. Further, I was able to apply member checking with four out of fifteen participants. These participants were requested to review written summaries of their interview responses as well as the findings of the study. The eleven participants that did not participate in this type of member checking were hard to reach, as their parents and guardians did not provide their contact information. However, the four participants who reviewed the summaries of their interview responses all supported the manner in which their data was presented.

Transferability was exercised through the use of participants from different countries of origin, thus different sources. This study involved participants from different countries, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Congo and Bhutan. However, transferability in this study was not fully supported due to the fact that I used a small sample of participants – only 15 youth, and due to the fact that all the participants but one were from Africa. Thus transferability of these findings to other war affected refugee youth should be done with great caution.

Dependability was guaranteed by clarifying and bracketing my biases from the outset of the study. Also, by taking notes and audio-taping the interviews, I ensured that the study findings were dependable. I cross checked my interview notes against the

recorded interviews to make sure the responses matched in both cases. The audio-taped

interviews were transcribed through the use of a computer. The computer allowed me to

replay the tape recorder as many times as I needed to make sure the participants'

responses were their actual words. Moreover, this enabled me to depict the participants'

exact meaning and interpretation of their experiences. A blind coding system was used to

organise the data and to identify themes from the data. Blind coding, according to

Creswell (2007), allows the researcher to analyze data without knowledge of, or

expectations for, the outcomes of the data. Therefore, by using blind coding, I further

ensured dependability of my findings. Dependability also was strengthened by following

the framework of data collection and analysis specified under the phenomenological

research methodology suggested by McMillan (2004).

Confirmability was enhanced by the fact that the findings of this study confirmed

several of the seminal ideas presented in the literature review. The findings, especially

where the experiences of the participants were closely related to the suggestions and

views in the literature review, substantiated the themes and perspectives that emerged out

of data. Also, confirmability was exercised by the fact that the findings confirmed two of

the theoretical frameworks used in the conceptualization of this study - specifically,

Freire's critical pedagogy and Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Overall, the trustworthiness of the data collected in this study suggest credible and

dependable findings with respect to the perspectives of the fifteen participants in the

study, meaningful relativity to the existing literature, and an important contribution to

existing research of war affected refugee youth; but with limited transferability beyond

the context of the study.

Interview Questions.

The interview questions were divided into three sections which included:

a) experiences and definition of a sense of belonging, b) pre-immigration experiences,

and c) post-immigration experiences. Under these sections, I was able to gather

information that supported my research questions, which focused on whether a sense of

belonging is central to the education of war-affected refugee youth while settling in their

new country. Probing questions were used to get clarification, elaboration and examples

of the participants' responses. Also, I used questions that emerged out of the participants'

responses. Following the guidance of these questions, I was able to gather detailed data

filled with information that revealed the participants' perspectives. The interview ques-

tions are listed in Appendix H.

Chapter 4

Findings and Interpretation

Participants' understanding of a sense of belonging

In this study, the participants' definition of a sense of belonging was not very different

from the definition provided earlier in the first chapter. The following table illustrates the

participants' understanding of the presence or lack of a sense of belonging:

Table 4.1.   Definition of sense of belonging

Attributes of the Presence and Lack of a Sense of Belonging among War Affected Refugee

Youth

Attributes of the presence of a sense of belonging as defined by the participants	Attributes of lack of a sense of belonging as defined by the participants
Being part of something really big Having fun with friends at school Kids asking you to play with them People loving you People helping you People welcoming you wherever you go Feeling at home Feel free in the society Having the same rights as the other people When people like you for who you are When people show interest in your culture and where you come from Having fun in the school –hanging out with friends	Feeling excluded and weird When people laugh at your accent Feeling uncomfortable People calling you names Looking stupid because you don't know what to do When no one picks you to be on their team or in their group When you are looked at as a refugee all the time Always in your little corner, isolated, with no one talking to you

Note. Attributes of a sense of belonging were generated from the participants' responses
indicating what they understood by the presence and the lack of a sense of belonging.

Isaac reported to have experienced a sense of belonging when, "…people like you for

who you are. I like it when Canadian people ask me – what's my name and where I come

from. I feel special. I feel they want to know about me. I feel proud to tell them about me.

Maybe they are interested in my country". Unlike Isaac, I've never felt a sense of belonging when people asked me and continue to ask me such questions. These questions always seem to send me a message that I don't belong to Canada, a country I've lived in longer than my country of origin, Uganda. Therefore, I wondered whether Isaac's comments could be a result of globalization and the current wave of communication through various modes of technology. Through the use of the internet, and cell phones, newcomer youth may see themselves as part of the world and find it legitimate for other people to ask them where they come from. At the time of this study, media representation of different people from different parts of the world was and continues to be the norm, thus the participants may have felt more receptive to constant questions regarding their origin. Through my conversations with the participants, internet use was talked about as a means to get information about the whole world including their countries of origin. From these conversations, I would assume that the participants in this study regarded themselves as part of the world thus when people asked them where they came from, they did not interpret such questions negatively as I did in the 1980s.

Although participants like Isaac indicated clear knowledge of their culture and their country of origin, some participants were not sure of the cultures they belonged to. Emily shared her feeling of a lack of a sense of belonging this way, "My family fled when I was two years old. I didn't see the war but it affected how my family lived. We travelled a lot until we settled here in Canada. We never lived in a place for more than a year. You don't feel like you are anything or if people really like you for who you are. I sometimes don't want to say how I feel. I don't think anyone cares if I belong or not". Also, Babirye expressed that, "I really don't know which country to say is my real country, like where your roots are. Congo is my birth country, but I know nothing about that country. I can't

call Uganda my country but I know more about this country than I know about Congo. I even speak Luganda and Swahili, but not any language from Congo, not even French. That's why my parents took us to a French school. I don't know where I belong really".

David and Michael were not very sure of the countries to regard as their countries of origin. Their comments were as follows: "I don't know. I go where my mom go. Now we are in Canada. That's it", David responded after a long pause and some prompting and encouragement from me. Michael responded by saying, "I come from Africa. My mother is from Ruanda and my father is from Congo. We speak Swahili [a language common in central Africa, including Congo and Ruanda]. I guess I'm from Congo and Ruanda". It was interesting to hear Michael mention speaking Swahili as a family, a language that is common to both his parents, thus a uniting factor that may provide him with an identity. Emily, Babirye, David and Michael's comments illustrate the dilemma of cultural identity and the sense of belonging that war affected refugee youth may face. Therefore, I wonder whether such confusion and dilemma could be eliminated by the warm welcome and positive treatment by the people in their host country - especially by the educators and peers within the school environment, a place where newcomer youth spend most of their day time.

The above findings reflect the literature reviews that confirmed the cultural identity struggles experienced by refugee youth. As defined by the Canadian Healthy Department of Children and Youth (2001), "culture" refers to common identity based on such factors as same language, shared values, similar attitudes, and similarities in ideology. When settling and integrating into a Canadian community, immigrant children and youth may find themselves pressured to conform to the dominant culture, to retain their original culture, or to embrace both cultures. The dilemma created by the challenge

of identifying with any of these cultural groups, may lead refugee youth to pursue their

cultural identity and a sense of belonging by joining already existing gangs.

Participants' sense of belonging before war experiences

It was clear throughout the interviews that all the participants' sense of belonging

before the war was intact. They were happy, contented, knew who they were and to whom

they belonged - for example, their parents, extended families and their country of origin.

Their immediate and extended families were consistently mentioned as integral parts of

their lives. The participants' sense of belonging was enhanced by the presence of their

parents and members of their extended family. Eighteen year old Pujan stated that, "I was

living in Bhutan, my country. I was happy and all my family was there". Isaac noted that

his sense of belonging before the war was "… awesome, you live with your mother and

father and all your family and you feel happy. You see your friends every day, playing

with your friends. We all belonged to the same country and everybody liked each other.

There [was] no fighting". Mohamed only shook his head and said, "I can't remember".

Nakate in a comic way noted that, "I guess my sense of belonging was pretty good since

my parents held on to me, before war, during war, which I can't remember and went to all

these different places with me and my brothers and sisters." Kamal's responded by saying

that, "I was little, two or three years old. Everything I know is after the war". Moreover,

five of the participants were young before war broke out. I can only imagine how

newcomer youth may feel especially when they can't fully recall parts of their life

experiences. Having gaps in their life experiences may be problematic as these youth may

struggle to rebuild their identity which is partially based on their past. According to

Erikson (1959), the task during adolescence is to achieve ego identity and avoid role

confusion. Therefore, Erickson's developmental theory confirms the struggle some war

affected refugee youth may go through. Erickson stated that, in their search for sense of continuity and sameness, some adolescents have to refight many of the crises of earlier years. Educators may assist these youth to renegotiate their past crises by providing them with a strong sense of belonging – listening to their stories, and allowing them to speak their identities, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (2005).

Participants' sense of belonging during war experiences

During war, participants who witnessed war shared that their sense of belonging was shattered, leaving a void that still haunts them in their new settlement country Canada. They shared feelings of losing control of the things that were part of who they were such as language, tribe, land, villages and homes. In a sad voice, Kelia, a young girl from Ruanda noted that, "A home you've lived in for so long and someone comes to invade it, you feel like they are taking over, and you are nothing". Mina, a girl from Congo stated that, "You feel like you are losing everything, you don't want to say who you are in case they take you, you hide your tribe and you don't speak your language. You feel like you are inferior and the other people are superior". David recalled that during war, "You feel sad and you are on the go, go. The people you loved are taken away from you. It seems as if no one cares". Uncertainty was expressed by Kamal as he reported that it was hard for him as he never knew what was going to happen. Overhearing parents' conversations about moving from one place to another created anxiety among the participants.

The participants, who were young during the flight period, were not able to share any experiences from that period of their lives. Many of them were either under the care of their parents or extended family members. Some participants, who experienced the flight period expressed feeling scared, worried about being separated from their parents

and feared that they might be killed. Kamal shared that all he wanted was "get out of there". Once they had escaped to safety and were in their temporary settlements, the participants shared that they experienced a lot of disappointment due to the conditions they lived in. Even those too young to remember reported feeling lonely, estranged and insecure within their temporary settlements. While the majority of the participants lived in camps, two boys lived with distant relatives and friends in their temporary settlement. All participants reported that people in their new resettlements didn't seem to care. Isaac explained this feeling this way, "You meet new people who talk to you every day and they say 'I love you' but you don't see them all the time. Loving you is not real and you know it." Kamal, noted that, "There was no sense of belonging because wherever you are, you don't feel at home. We went to Tanzania first, then Kenya, and finally came to Canada. We were in Tanzania for almost a year, but we stayed in Kenya for a long, long time. In Tanzania and Kenya you didn't feel like you belong because you are looked at as a refugee. I didn't go to school. I wasn't young but I didn't go to school for almost 2 years because I was a refugee". Isaac noted that, [during war] I'm not supposed to talk to anyone. I'm lonely and scared all the time". Mohamed's response was, "I don't go outside. You don't play with your friends [during war]. When asked about his war experiences, Pujan sighed, then said, "my parents tell me … (sigh), war is so sad – they are very sad". Comments such as Pujan's are interesting as he may not have experience war directly but became aware of war effects through his parents. This coincides with previous literature which indicated that children not living in or near direct combat zones often are exposed to war through television, movies, and overhearing adult conversations. So, according to Adams and Lasser (2007), whether the child has suffered from direct or indirect exposure, the psychological effects of exposure to war can be significant.

Participants' sense of belonging upon their arrival in Canada

Mixed feelings prevailed when participants were talking about their sense of belonging upon their arrival in Winnipeg, Canada. While some felt alienated and uncomfortable, others were just glad to finally arrive in a place where they would 'stay for ever'. To those who were relieved, feeling a sense of belonging was not a priority compared to a safe place to stay and to call home. In reference to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, these youth were focused on achieving the first two needs; psychological needs and, safety and security needs. Kamal commented that, "The first few months you don't feel like you belong but you feel you don't have to move again. That's good. You feel this is it, no more moving again and you feel this is home at last, no more running". The relief of being in Canada seemed to override the need to belong during the first few months in Canada.

Unlike Kamal, some participants indicated a strong need to belong, as they felt out of place and uncomfortable during their first few months in Winnipeg. They had strong ties with the people they left behind in their countries of origin. It didn't matter to them how they were treated by the people in the new host country Canada during their first few months. They just missed being together with family members they left behind and yearned to reconnect with family members that had preceded them and were already in Canada. Pujan noted that, "I came in winter and it was very bad. As soon as I came here I went to see my aunt who was here, it was no problem to be in cold. I went with my brother and we [got] lost on the bus. I just want to see my aunt". Connecting with family members seemed to be a priority for Pujan. The need to belong may be one of the reasons why participants expressed their need to read books that reflected the way of life in their countries of origin. Also, they expressed their need to have opportunities to interact with

people with whom they shared similar cultural rituals, languages and experiences. Mina

shared that the best thing that happened to her in her school was to have an EA that came

from Uganda and spoke Swahili. Mina's comment coincides with Kanu's (2006-2007)

findings in her study of African refugee students in Manitoba. Kanu reported that

principals expressed the need for increases in government funding to support

programming needs of refugee youth including the hiring Educational Assistants with

similar cultural backgrounds as refugee youth to provide more one-one in class

instructions to refugee students.

Emily remembered her first few days in Winnipeg this way, "Oh, so bad, so bad.

One day I went to central park and this little girl say, "Hi" and I didn't know what she

was saying. Her mom explain that she is saying 'How are you?' I felt awkward. I was

embarrassed, she was little and I'm old but I didn't know what she was saying". When

asked about his first days in Winnipeg, James smiled, then said, "I was so shy, so shy".

Kelia's response to the question was, "I know when I came here I was so skinny, but after

a month I gained a lot of weight, and that was embarrassing". When asked why she felt

embarrassed about her weight, Kelia replied by saying, "I can't fit my clothes and I don't

want to look like some big people here. You don't see that in Africa". Kelia and Emily, as

adolescents, were conscious of their image and how they fit in their new society. These

responses relate to the need to belong as specified in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but at

the same time contradicts the order in which these needs should occur. The participants,

especially those who were living with their parents were not so concerned with the

physiological, safety and security needs as the first priority upon their arrival in Canada.

They were more concerned about their image and how they were perceived by others –

starting with the third need on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. As simple as this may seem,

educators may need to be aware of this particular concern for the youth and pay

attention to it. Instead of being overly concerned about the newcomer students' need to

learn English or French languages, educators' attention should be geared first toward

promoting and protecting their identities. That is to acknowledge, thus value their cultural

practices by using culturally sensitive material and inviting them youth to share their

cultural practices within the classrooms as well as the school at large. Hopefully by doing

so, educators will be able to verify and create strong identities for these youth. Fine

(1986) and Wehlage (1989) each reported that students who perceived themselves as so-

cially isolated or outside the social mainstream at school were more at risk of dropping

out (Faircloth, 2009). Efforts to avoid this prediction

Emergent themes

The themes that emerged from the interviews as a way to enhance a sense of

belonging among war affected refugee youth, included: a) equal treatment vs, unequal

treatment, b) lack of preparedness for social skills, school, and day-to-day expectations,

and c) genuine care. These three themes were evident throughout the interviews as the

participants felt that the presence of these identified aspects allowed them to gain or feel a

sense of belonging in their schools as well as in the general community. The perspectives

leading to the themes were drawn directly from verbal conversations with war affected

refugee youth.

Equal Treatment vs. Unequal treatment

Equal treatment involved positive acknowledgement of their unique culture, and

acknowledgement of their abilities. They felt that equal treatment provided them with

equal opportunities to participate in activities within their classrooms, schools and

communities. As shared by the participants, war affected refugee youth move from country to country in pursuit of a safe and permanent settlement place. However, such movements and resettlements led many of them to struggle with their sense of belonging in multiple places due to unequal treatment by people in their various host countries. Pujan recalled that, "From Bhutan we went to Nepal. We lived there for many years, but we don't have citizenship in Nepal. We are refugees there for a long time." Despite the fact that Pujan was young when his parents went to Nepal as refugees, he never felt he was a part of the community in Nepal because he was always treated as a refugee by his playmates.

Once in Winnipeg, participants with similar experiences to Pujan came to Canada expecting to relive the same unequal treatment they had experienced in their past temporary settlements. Kelia illustrated this feeling of unequal treatment this way, " When people ask me where I come from, I tell them that I'm from Africa, I know Africa is so big but I [generalise] because we moved so much and I don't feel I belong anywhere. I don't consider my birth place, the Congo, as my country". Babibre commented that, "If you ask me what is my country, the country I came from; I don't know what to say. My parents say it's Congo, but I don't know anything about Congo. I can say Uganda is my country, but is it really? So there". Nakate retorted, "At least in Uganda we looked the same. We were all black and people treated you the same until they found out you don't speak their language. At least over there you can hide, but not here, oh my God". Here in Winnipeg, Kelia, Babirye, Nakate and others noted that it is hard for them to think that people will treat them equally, especially due to the fact that they can't speak English or French, and their skin color is different from the majority of the people.

To these newcomer youth, it was clear that being looked at and treated differently is something they continue to live with. Isaak expressed this feeling by saying that "…it's there, I am black and I don't speak good English. This makes me different and it's true even when people don't treat you differently, you feel it and you know it. When people look at you and laugh, you think they laugh at you. It's hard. Sometimes it doesn't matter if people treat you good or not, you know you are different, and that's it". Teacher actions that were perceived as reflective of racial discrimination included being ignored, not being helped, pronouncing names wrongly causing peers to laugh, 'shouting or talking so loudly' making them feel stupid, and looking at them strangely (some facial expressions were interpreted as rude or belittling). When talking about equal and unequal treatment, the participants were very passionate about their belief that coming to Canada meant that everything was going to be fine, but recognised that they were faced with some challenges. However, despite experiences of unequal treatment, all the participants said they had experienced some equal treatment when teachers didn't act in ways that they perceived as racial discrimination.

Teacher actions supporting equal treatment

When teachers provided one-on-one assistance to these students they regarded this as equal treatment to their Canadian born peers. They felt that by providing them with one-on-one support, their teachers wanted them to do well and be 'at par' with their classmates. When teachers took time to acknowledge their abilities, they felt equal treatment as well. Mohammed noted that, "When we played soccer, I scored 5 goals and everybody likes that. The kids started talking to me because I'm good playing soccer. The teacher gives me soccer shoes and that makes me feel good. Now I know people are o.k. with me". Mohammed's comment affirms that this group of youth might feel a sense of

belonging through simple acts of kindness and acknowledgement of their abilities from

their teachers and peers. Until that point, Mohammed felt as though he had nothing to

offer or to compare with his peers. Kazia, a 15 year old girl recalled how good it felt

when her peers started to pick her for a partner during gym and in French class because

they realised and acknowledged her strong abilities in these areas. Kazia proudly said,

"There's a saying at my school that 'African kids are so fast'. So everyone tries to get me

on their team. In French kids now know I'm really good so they ask me to help them. You

know what's really nice, my teacher tells the kids to go to me for help. If they help me in

English, I know I don't look stupid because it's the same as me helping them in French.

This makes everyone the same, you know". Utilising the expertise newcomer youth bring

with them may help them feel part of the class especially when their strengths are

highlighted by the teachers and their peers. Educators may need to find out the strengths

newcomer youth have and make an effort to acknowledge and highlight them. Such

actions in turn may enhance the newcomers' sense of belonging. As discussed earlier in

chapter two, with a strong sense of belonging, these youth may increase their motivation

to learn and to have positive social interactions.

Acknowledgement of newcomer cultural practices

Classroom discussions about newcomers' cultural practices from their countries of

origin, including food, dance, clothing and language, were thought to be indicators of

equal treatment from their teachers. Including food from different countries in the

cafeteria was mentioned as one of the ways that schools can show that they respect the

cultures of these youth and thus support equal treatment. Pujan noted that, "In Nepal we

eat rice a lot but we don't have that in the cafeteria, it's nice to have rice". Emily was

impressed with her teacher when she was asked to demonstrate to her class how to cook

an African dish. "My mom could not believe it! She wanted everything to be done right, so she made me practice making perfect chapatti and bean sauce. When we made chapatti, it was really fun. The kids kept telling me how good my food was," Emily recalled. Kelia noted that, "I feel that everything that's you, does not originate from here. Everything that makes me be who I am does not originate from here. I still eat Ugali (corn meal), that's my food from my parent's country". Providing an opportunity for Kelia to show the class how to prepare a dish like Ugali in her class may be a positive gesture toward enhancing her sense of belonging. Also, Mina recalled, "For the first few months in school here, our mom told us to pack the food we eat at home for school. I mean real African food like muwogo, Ugali chapatti and sauce. I remember all the other kids staring at me eating and that is hard. I stop eating and put away my food at first. You know what was cool? One day one kid ask me if she could taste some of my food and I gave her some. She really liked it. From that time, kids didn't stare like before. After learning how to make sandwiches at school, we started to take sandwiches sometimes. It was very weird at first". Mina was fortunate to have one of her peers to break the ice by trying some of her food. This action seemed to be what was needed for Mina to feel as a part of her class. Her peers' ignorance about her food seemed to have been resolved. Therefore, educators must make an effort to bridge the gap between newcomer youth and their Canadian born peers by addressing the different cultural aspects of the students in their classrooms as a way to reduce the stigma and ignorance among students.

When educators acknowledge the cultural practices of newcomer youth within their classrooms and schools in general, they attempt to support the views of critical pedagogy theorists like Freire (1997), Giroux (1999), and Kincheloe (2008). For example, Kincheloe (2008) noted that critical pedagogy requires educators to design social

literacies that are functional, cultural, and critical; literacies that both recognize the im-

portance of cultural differences and the importance of individuals communicating across

various social, cultural, and political borders. Moreover, this theory supports the

participants' views on how to enhance a sense of belonging through acknowledging their

cultural practices. The participants said that by allowing them to teach their Canadian

peers how to prepare food or play games from their countries of origin made them feel a

sense of belonging and equal treatment within their classrooms. Also, Giroux's (1999)

strongly suggested that, a) the role of teachers should involve constructing curricula that

draws upon the cultural resources that students bring with them to the school, b) the role

of schools should be seen as a resource for the larger community, and c) schools should

help students understand what it means to exercise their rights and responsibilities as crit-

ical citizens actively engaged in forms of social learning that expand human capacities for

compassion, empathy, and solidarity.

Preparedness for school and community rituals and routines

Preparedness for social skills and day-to-day interactions and expectations included

both school and community routines and rituals. School routines and expectations

involved English language acquisition, non-verbal gestures, gym activity rules, and

understanding school bells, late slips, and general school rules. Learning the English

language was a challenge for all the participants including those who spoke English prior

to coming to Canada. A girl from Congo, (via Uganda) had learned English while in

Uganda, but still had a hard time understanding what people were saying. This girl shared

that she did not speak in school for a while and that had caused her teachers and peers to

believe that she did not speak English at all. Attending English classes was mentioned as

support that had helped all the participants feel somewhat more comfortable in the regular

classroom. More time to practice reading in English as well as more help with science subjects were noted as strategies that provided better preparedness for the participants to function within their regular classrooms as well as in their subjects.

School entry preparation programs

Most of the participants acknowledged the fact that going to school at the Needs Centre, before entering the regular school, had been advantageous. They reported that by spending a few months at the centre, they were able to learn more English and what to expect at regular school. Another aspect participants found positive at the Needs Centre, but not at the regular school, was interacting with familiar people with whom they shared similar languages and circumstances. Enrolling these youths into a regular school or classroom immediately following their arrival seemed to be detrimental to the enhancement of their sense of belonging. Kamal explained this aspect this way:

> I feel a sense of belonging in school because they had a program for immigrant
> students. I had this teacher for new immigrant students. She was good. She still
> calls me now to check. This teacher worked with us and she understood us more
> than the others. This program took it easy on the immigrant kids because we are
> not like the other kids. For my first day, it was so awkward, I didn't understand the
> language and everything was so different from back home. You know back home
> school is so open and here we are in the building all the time. In this class, we
> learn English and History. They teach us from down and up. Even now my
> country's history and geography is still in my head and I can even do an exam in
> this and pass. It was my country and I knew it.

In segregated classes, the participants felt that they were learning at a slower pace which allowed them to remember the facts about different aspects of their new country. They felt

that starting out in smaller classrooms that catered to immigrant students' needs had

helped to prepare them for regular classrooms. In such small settings, students shared that

they were able to play all kinds of games including cards, Monopoly, Sorry, Shreds, and

Pictionary. They all reported that when they joined the regular classroom, they knew how

to play games with their peers, thus they didn't look 'stupid'. Also, they noted that

spending time with other new immigrant students helped them to make friends with

whom they could hang out at lunch time. Many of the participants reported that lunch

time was very challenging as they all needed people to hang out with.

Role playing different school scenarios was another school preparation activity

that was noted to be of benefit to the participants. Mohamed put it this way, "We used to

do a little bit of acting. It's called a – a – pretense play. You pretend that you are in

cafeteria, or in group working on project. That really help. The best was when we pretend

to play pretense basketball and football. We just learn about the rules and use the ball and

pretend to play basketball and football but not in the gym. It's funny even now I don't

understand the game. You run around with the ball and that's a foul. I'm just a soccer guy.

I wish we played more soccer". Although mastery of all the activities was not always

achieved through role playing, an opportunity was provided where the youth could

practice the language and rituals appropriate in different scenarios.

General school rules and routines

School bell intervals were something participants wished they would have been

prepared for. They all felt that every time the bell rang they 'looked stupid' as they did not

seem to know what was expected of them. Greeting the teachers while standing up was a

routine the participants exercised in their countries of origin and continued to practice in

school in Winnipeg. However, by doing so, they found out quickly that this routine was

an embarrassing gesture, which made them look different from their peers. Late slips that students at the high school level needed to pick up from the office and present to their teachers were confusing to many of the participants. The participants felt that when they were late, their teacher would know as they were going to class anyway. They often forgot to collect a late slip from the office, which resulted in their classroom teachers sending them back to the office. This was interpreted as an embarrassing event which made them look stupid in front of their peers. Not being aware of what different people in the school did also was confusing to the participants. In our discussion of their initial contact with the school, most participants acknowledged that they couldn't remember everything they were told during their orientation.

Continued practice of the school routines, rules and revisiting different rooms in the school building were suggested as some of the ways newcomers could become more aware of their school and thus be better prepared for school. Mohamed noted that, "When I go to school, I don't know anything and I saw different people. Some people in the office know my name and I don't know why for long time. I think I'm in trouble but I don't know, I'm scared, it is really bad." In addition to the information provided during the orientation day, newcomer youth may require extra explanation of school and classroom routines as well as be reintroduced to different people including the secretaries, custodians, administrators and support teachers; people they may need to approach for help who don't usually work with them on a regular basis. I'm aware that many schools are good at introducing newcomer students to the key people in the school and giving them a tour around the school during their initial visit to the school. However, keeping in mind that some newcomer students may have insecurities and anxiety around new people and new places as a result of their war and displacement experiences, school staff may

need to provide extra time and more than one school tour and orientation. Also, "a welcome committee" of peers from the regular school who meet the students at the Needs centre and then mentor their introduction and acceptance at the school they transfer to, might help newcomer students have a smooth transition into their new schools.

Winter weather preparedness

The use of winter clothing in relation to different temperatures was vocalised as another area of difficulty for these students. Jamie, a grade 9 student reported that during winter he went outside and instead of wearing his gloves, he put them in his pocket and forgot he had them. When his fingers were so cold and they hurt, he cried and didn't know what to do. Jamie needed to know where to seek help while outside and an extra reminder of the temperature and the importance of dressing appropriately. Such reminders may seem irrelevant especially in the higher grades, but when a student lacks the language and is new to all the dressing routines in different weather situations, he or she may need some practice in these areas. This is not to say that experiencing the pain from the freezing hands doesn't teach these kids a lesson in how to dress appropriately. Pairing a newcomer student with a buddy or buddies from the class could help in situations like Jamie. Perhaps a buddy might have reminded Jamie to wear his gloves.

The use of indoor and outdoor shoes also was mentioned as something that participants did not understand very well, as they were not accustomed to this practice. The participants shared how embarrassed they were due to the continuous reminders from their peers to change their shoes when going outside and when they came into the classroom. Michael noted that, "When we go outside, we had to wear outside shoes, outside shoes look the same as inside shoes. I look so stupid when they laugh at me". Mina recalled that, "I used to put my shoes inside my desk. No one told me to put them in

the closet. I remember kids pointing to my shoes in my desk and laughing. I was shy to ask why. You don't want to look at people after that, especially when you have to do group project. I think all the time no one wants to be with me because my papers and pencils are in my desk with my outdoor shoes". In some cases, particular students with a war background may already be anxious about new places, and it may be necessary to reduce their anxiety by providing them with better explanations of different school routines and expectations, things that Canadian born teachers and children may take for granted.

Preparedness for gym routines and game rules

Gym class was an area where all participants required more preparation. All but one younger (12 year old boy) participant dreaded attending gym classes due to the fact that they were expected to participate in games they didn't understand. Emily recalled her experience in the gym, "School was o.k. until you go to the gym. The games are different and dodge ball is the worst. When people hit you, it feels like they don't like you and they are taking you out of the game all the time because you don't know the rules of the game". Mohamed shared that, the games in gym were really hard especially football. Whenever the ball was passed to him, he was always told to run but didn't know where to run. Mohamed noted that, "You just don't know what to do in gym. At least in the classroom you can be quiet and pretend to do your work. No one will bother you and you will not be embarrassed". David reported that basketball was his worst because he didn't know where to shoot the first time he played. He recalled that, when he hesitated and just stood holding the ball, everyone was getting mad at him and the teacher was "yelling" at him asking him to "shoot up in the basket". Mohamed recalled, "I didn't see any basket. I was so sad and embarrassed. You don't want to look at anybody after gym. Kids don't

like you after that". Kelia jokingly noted that the basket was just a net because, according

to her, "…a basket don't have a big hole at the bottom". When he played football, Jamie

reported that people caught him by the waist and he got scared, as he didn't know why

they are holding him that way. Babirye suggested that it would have helped her to sit on

the bench and watch her peers play before she actually joined them in any game.

 The participants reported that Gym teachers were unfair especially when they

asked students to select their peers to form teams. This practice often resulted into

Canadian born students not selecting their newcomer peers. The participants shared that

when they were continuously not being selected by their Canadian born peers, they felt

extremely embarrassment and rejected. Emily noted that, "I fought once. The teacher

asked some people to pick people for their team and they pick all their friends and you are

the only black person left every time, what do you think that is? For me that was

excluding and it was about color. This one time, I went to the boy who was picking

people on his team and said you better pick me and he did, so his girlfriend comes and

say no to him, and that's when I started fighting. I was in trouble after that, my parents

were called and you know what that means, serious trouble at home. It is not fair".

 Changing into gym clothes in the same changing room was routine that female

participants expressed as a challenge. Mina noted that:

> The first day in gym my hair was short so the gym teacher took me to the boys'
>
> change room. I saw the boys and run out. My day was ruined. I didn't tell the gym
>
> teacher what happened. I didn't even know there were signs to show boys' or
>
> girls' change room. That was bad". I went and stayed in the washroom until I
>
> heard the girls back in the change room, after gym class. The next gym classes I
>
> followed the girls to the change room, but I didn't like it. Everyone was taking off

their clothes. I couldn't do that. I went in the girls' bathroom to change there, but

one time I was there when the guy who cleans the school came in to change a door

handle. That was it. I just stopped changing. My gym teacher went to the principal

to tell him that I don't change into gym clothes and that sometime I was hiding in

the bathroom until gym was done. When I told the principal why, he was really

good about it. He said that they are going to do something about it and put little

rooms for us, and then it will be private.

Moreover, at the time of the interview Mina shared that she continues to change for gym

in the washroom, hoping that one day the change room will be modified to accommodate

her values and practices.

Changing publicly was something Mina was not accustomed to. It was very

difficult for her to follow this gym routine. Avoiding changing in a common room along

with her peers by hiding in the washroom, might have caused Mina to stand out, thus

putting her sense of belonging at jeopardy. Further, Mina shared that she was very

uncomfortable to go to YW/MCA, a trip usually organised by her gym teacher as the

same changing routine was exercised at this facility as well. Mina noted that, at the

YW/MCA, she just sat and didn't do anything".

Preparedness for school grade level placement

School grade level placement was a concern to the participants. While some

participants preferred grade placement according to their chronological age, others

appreciated being placed in a grade according to their academic abilities, regardless of

their age. However, all the participants shared that they and their parents did not

understand the Canadian grade level system before entering school. Most participants

reported that they were placed in grade levels according to their age, even those who

preferred to be placed according to their academic abilities. In particular, the older

participants (15 years and above) preferred to be placed in a grade lower than their age

appropriate grade level. This group of youth noted that it would have been beneficial to

them if their previous schooling was considered before placing them in a specific grade

level. Kamal reported that, when he started school in Winnipeg, he was supposed to be in

grade 9, but he was placed in grade 8 due to previous gaps in his schooling. Kamal shared

that due to his frequent moves from Uganda, to Tanzania to Kenya, and finally to Canada,

he wasn't able to attend school consistently. For Kamal, being placed in a grade lower

than his age appropriate grade level was a positive move. He noted that, "… I was lucky

to start from grade 8. I see my friends come and they go to grade 10 or 11, and they say

it's so hard for them." Pujan felt that he needed to start from the 'beginning' especially in

subjects such as chemistry and physics. Pujan recognised that it was not fair to him to be

in the same science class with peers who had some background knowledge in science,

while he had never studied science before coming to Canada. From these remarks it is

clear that educators may need to get a better understanding of the students' academic

background and comfort level regarding grade level placement. After all, in Manitoba,

under *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act*, "… children have

the right to attend school until the last school day of June in the calendar year in which

they become 21 years of age (http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/).

On the other hand, participants like Mina (a grade 8 student) preferred to be

placed in their age appropriate grade levels. Mina commented that she and another

newcomer girl were placed in grade 7 when they had completed that level while living in

their temporary settlements, Uganda and Botswana respectively, before coming to

Canada. Mina recalled that, "After a few days, I and the other girl went to another class,

to grade 8. We just moved ourselves. After that, the school called my parents and my parents were mad at me. My mom just said, 'you do what the school tells you what to do'. My mom believes whatever the teachers say. I kept going back to grade 8 until they let me". David shared that, "It is so embarrassing to be put in grade 5 when you are grade 6. People will think you are stupid. Back in my country, when you repeat a class, everybody knows you are stupid". Younger students under 14 years preferred being placed in age appropriate grade levels.

Preparedness for community routines and rituals

Community routines and rituals were expressed as areas in which the participants required explicit explanations and practice to 'save' them from embarrassment, feeling weird, and feeling like they didn't belong in their new settlement community. In addition to the misunderstandings caused by language barriers, there were subtle cultural routines and rituals that newcomer youth had to deal with. Unfortunately, the participants in this study, being teenagers, weren't patient to wait and learn these cultural rituals and routines gradually. They hardly realised that they needed to practice these rituals and routines several times before they could become the norm in their lives. The transit bus routines, taxi services, and shopping routines were addressed throughout the interviews as areas that made the participants feel out of place. They explained that they never seemed to know what they were doing and this made them feel embarrassed and weird. Pujan shared his experience in a store: "I saw the prices of the things in the store and I was confused because in Nepal there is no price on the things, you ask how much and sometime you give what you can and maybe comeback and pay when you have money. The prices on the stuff are so cheap. I was buying ice cream and the lady in the shop said more money than what was on the ice cream and I was confused so I ask why, the lady say that there's

tax. So I thought is she talking about taxi outside to take you home? I say I don't need

tax. This is so hard. I'm so stupid. I leave the ice cream." Pujan and many other youth in

the study expressed their confusion around shopping after being used to a bargain system

common in their countries of origin. The prices on the items seemed to be so cheap

compared to what they were used to. The Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and Goods Sales

Tax (GST) were very confusing as well (see Appendix I for a definition of 'PST' and

'GST').

       Taking the transit bus caused some challenges for the participants. The difference

between a bus ticket and a bus pass was not clear to all the participants. Although they

acknowledged the fact that someone at the Welcome Place

(http://www.411.ca/business/profile/6500149) explained the transit bus routines upon

their arrival to Winnipeg, they couldn't remember all the procedures. Mohamed noted

that, "I take a bus and I have a ticket but I forget and I just show the ticket and go sit

down. The bus man say come back, I'm so scared, I did something bad". Instead of

dropping the ticket in the ticket slot, Mohamed like the others forgot this routine. This

might not be crucial to an adult but it almost 'crashes' the teenager's self-image. Role

playing community routines and rituals such as taking a transit bus or shopping could

help to prepare newcomer youth function better in their new settlement community.

Genuine care

       Genuine care referred to teachers spending more one-on-one time with the

participants, helping them with their school work, and including them in community

activities. Participants in grade 9 and up found it valuable to spend time in pre-teaching

sessions with one-on-one support or in a small group in all subjects. Isaac shared that, "I

think the better way is to go and learn the words in a novel for example, before the

teacher reads the book and gives you work after that. I went with a teacher to learn the book and then when I go back to class, I understand a little bit better. I enjoyed that and I don't look stupid". Another boy shared that pre-teaching sessions helped him in science as he had never done science before. He noted that he had no background in science terminology.

When teachers showed interest in the participants' cultural backgrounds, this gesture was acknowledged as genuine care by the participants. Godwin explained that during a sharing circle, he was happy to tell everyone about his past, because everyone listened to him. Participants felt that being asked to share ideas about their background meant that people respected them which made them feel a part of the class. Isaac shared that in his school they had a book club where they read and discussed different books from other countries. When they read a book about a Somali girl, it made him feel accepted and important because he knew a lot of things in the book. When classroom teachers made connections with these students' countries of origin through classroom or school fundraising events to support people in their countries, this made participants feel that their teachers genuinely cared about them and the things they regarded important. David shared that his school held a fundraising event to help people in Ethiopia. Although this wasn't David's country of origin, it meant a lot to him since Ethiopia and his country of origin, Somalia, are in the same continent, Africa. David commented that when Canadian people help people in Africa it means that Canadians care about people in Africa. To David, this meant that people at his school cared about him as well.

Lunch clubs for newcomers where they ate together with their Canadian born peers in a small group with teacher supervision, was regarded as genuine care by their teachers. Lunch hour was reported to be a challenge for all participants in grades 8 up to

12. This group of participants shared that having an organized lunch with a few peers during the first few months of school reduced their feeling of loneliness. Such a lunch club seemed timely, especially when newcomers had not yet formed friendships and had no one to 'hang' out with during lunch. Also, newcomers' participation in a lunch club meant spending time with people who had shared similar experiences and had different types of food. When teachers tried to learn and use some words from the languages spoken by newcomers, it made them feel comfortable and they said it implied genuine care.

Upon their arrival in Canada, the participants reported that they were all provided with the same jackets in colour and style. Michael shared that when his family walked on the streets, people kept staring at them because of their jackets. He wondered why they were not given different jackets, at least different in color or style. All the participants said that different jackets in varying color and styles would express genuine care. Participants shared that contact with their extended families, mainly through telephone calls, reassured them of who they were and thus helped them became more resilient in situations where they were not treated with genuine care.

Self-determination

Self-determination as a motivator to work hard and stay in school emerged as another theme strongly expressed by all the participants. Each participant shared that he or she just needed to be strong, work hard and take advantage of the many opportunities Canada had to offer despite the challenges they face. Challenges like language, learning, unequal treatment, and racial discrimination were regarded as 'nothing' compared to the challenges they had to endure in their past. Kamal explained that being able to go to school in Canada overrides any other challenge he may face. He noted that, "… Back

home, we didn't have school. Now we do. I know that for us immigrants we have a lot of advantages. We have a reason to work harder". Also, Babirye, stressed that "… What I've seen before I came here was hard work. That's why I ask teachers questions when I don't understand. I want to get better and go to university. You know, maybe I could not go to university if I wasn't here, in Canada I mean. When I see some Canadian kids saying bad words to the teachers and even throwing things at them, I can't believe. They don't know what would happen to them in other places". Kamal, Babirye and Pujan (all 18 years old) seemed to be motivated by the educational opportunities available to them here in Canada. Also, Madina, who came here unaccompanied, expressed that she was determined to work hard and make a better life for herself and her younger brother. With teary eyes and in a shaken voice she said, "Oh, oh, oh, I don't know what to say, my mother here is my guidance counsellor at my school. She is like a mother to me. She gives me and my brother everything, food, clothes. She looked for an apartment for us. Now she helped me get a job. My brother is only sixteen, that's why I have to work. I have to quit school to work but I will go back to school one day. I have to work hard. I will not give up". Regardless of the challenges, participants seemed to be motivated by the schooling and work opportunities available to them in Canada.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study explored what a sense of belonging meant to war affected refugee youth and how the presence or lack of a sense of belonging might have affected them during their pre and post-migration periods. Also, the relationship between their pre and post-migration sense of belonging was investigated. Further, the study explored strategies and practices that may be utilised by educators to enhance the sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth. Overall, the findings in this study were consistent with previous literature that indicated identity construction and reconstruction are a central need of newcomer youth in Canada (Kumsa, 2006). Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that the challenges war affected refugee youth experience during their pre-migration and post immigration periods may play a significant part in enhancing or hindering their sense of belonging, thus affect their well-being. While loss, uprooting, uncertainty and fear were endured by war affected refugee youth during their pre-migration period, they found themselves faced with isolation, loneliness, acculturation stress, identity crisis, and discrimination after immigrating to Canada. The participants revealed that their experiences during the pre-migration and post-immigration periods challenged their sense of belonging. However, they also identified educational programs, teachers' actions, and peer supports that helped them feel belonging and genuine care in Canada.

Pre-migration period and a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth

According to the findings of this study, a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth was undermined by the feelings of uncertainty during their pre-migration situations.

Pre-migration experiences including the war period, their escape to safety, and living in multiple temporary settlements created uncertainty and lack of trust among war affected refugee youth. Living in fear of the unknown and always moving to unknown destinations seemed like living in a vacuum for the youth interviewed. Not understanding the reasons why war broke out in their countries and having very little input toward the planning of the escape created a lot of anxiety due to heightened levels of uncertainty. As mentioned earlier, in Chapter Four, Kamal expressed his anxiety by saying, "I never knew what was going to happen next. I only heard my parents talk, and you know, children don't sit with adults to talk about important things". Also, the participants indicated a lot of mixed feelings during the pre-migration period. This is the time when separation from family members took place. Leaving their countries of origin knowing that some of their relatives were dead, lost or injured and unable to join them, created resentment toward those countries. On the other hand, the participants seemed to have more attachment to their countries of origin if they still had friends and relatives living there and were more likely to feel guilt for leaving. Pujan, a boy from Bhutan shared that, a few days after his arrival in Winnipeg, he and his brother got on a transit bus to go visit their aunt who had migrated to Winnipeg before them. The same boy went on to say that all his family misses the relatives they left behind, especially the grandmother and grandfather, whom they often called despite the little money they had at that point (Pujan's family had only been in Winnipeg for nine months at the time of the interview). Further, some of the participants, who were born in temporary resettlement countries, shared having feelings of anger, guilt, and resentment toward the war as they couldn't relate to any country as their country of origin. They referred to their countries of origin as their parents' countries of origin. As Babirye stated during her interview, "I don't know where I belong really". In

addition to Babirye's comments, Emiliy summed up her feelings about 'her roots' this

way, "You don't feel like you are anything or if people really like you for who you are".

She continued to say that, "I don't think that anyone cares if I belong or not". There was

no doubt that such feelings about the pre-migration period affected their identity and

sense of belonging in the post-migration period.

The implications of the unclear identities of war affected refugee youth can be

understood in terms of Erikson's (1959) fifth stage of psychosocial development that

occurs between the ages 12 – 18 years. According to Erikson (1959),

> Youth during this stage are concerned primarily with consolidating their social
>
> roles and forming their ego identity. With a sense of identity, thus self-esteem,
>
> confirmed at the end of each major crisis, [leads] to a conviction that one is
>
> learning effective steps toward a tangible future, that one is developing a defined
>
> personality within a social reality which one understands (p. 89).

However, war affected refugee youth like Babirye and Emily, who are unsure of their

identities, may not have developed 'a defined personality' as they have been living and

continue to live in social realities that they may not fully understand. Erikson (1959)

emphasised that:

> Any loss of a sense of identity exposes the individual to his or her own childhood
>
> conflicts – as could be observed, for example, in the neuroses of World War II
>
> among men and women who could not stand the general dislocation of their
>
> careers or a variety of other special pressures of war (p. 94).

Since the findings of this current study match Erikson's theory of psychosocial

development among adolescents, it can be concluded that war affected refuge youth, may

arrive in their new country, Canada, with a vulnerable sense of identity and a lack of a

sense of belonging. Therefore, rebuilding their sense of identity and sense of belonging, qualities that may boost their motivation to work hard and become valuable contributing citizens, will require people in their host country to extend a welcoming and caring hand and provide the necessary supports to ensure a sense of belonging among this group of youth.

Post-migration period and a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth

Once in their new resettlement country Canada, the reconstruction of the threatened identities of war affected refugee youth became paramount in their lives. However, the participants did not foresee the challenges involved in establishing a sense of belonging in their new country, as they had high expectations in anticipation of beginning a new life in Canada. One of the participants commented that she had thought life in Canada would be easy and that everybody was rich. The following three aspects stood out for the participants as challenges to re-establishing their sense of belonging in their new Canadian communities: a) a lack of social connectedness, b) a lack of preparedness for life in Canada, and c) a lack of the acknowledgement and acceptance of their unique cultures, which they often interpreted as discrimination.

Lack of social connectedness. During their first few months in Canada, the participants felt isolated and lonely as they didn't have friends or acquaintances. Having English and French language deficits made it hard for them to make friends easily. Even the participants who could speak English or French had a hard time making friends due to their accents. Some participants shared that they got tired of repeating themselves when people in their new communities often asked them to repeat what they were saying. The action of repeating themselves put these adolescents in awkward and embarrassing situations. As adolescents, avoiding appearing different from the norm was crucial for the

participants. These feelings of war affected refugee youth are supported by Erickson's (1959) explanation of what these youth may be going through. He describes their development this way:

> "…The growing and developing young people faced with this psychological revolution (psychosocial development stage) within them, are … sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others as compared with what they feel they are and with the question of how to connect the earlier cultivated roles and skills with the ideal prototypes of the day. In their search for sense of continuity and sameness, some adolescents have to refight many of the crises of earlier years, and they are never ready to install lasting idols and ideals as guardians of a final identity (p. 89).

 In consideration of Erikson's (1959) explanation of what adolescents may experience socially, it is evident that the war affected refugee youth in this study may be renegotiating crises of their earlier years and it may be difficult for them to re-establish sustainable ideals to guide the development of their identities. Being aware of these dynamics, people in the host communities of the newcomer youth must provide supports that will assist them to develop the identities they need so badly.

Organisations like The Needs Centre and Interfaith Immigration Council, Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM) provided the immediate social connections for the participants. At these centres, there were newcomer youth sharing similar situations that allowed them to develop a cohesive group. Once they had established a social group at these centres, it was easier for them to make connections with their Canadian born peers as a group as opposed to as individuals. Involving newcomer youth in teacher organised clubs such as lunch clubs, games clubs, and recess buddies supported

them in developing social groups that reduced their isolation and loneliness. Lunch time

and recess or spare periods were noted to be very challenging as they would often be left

alone, which made them feel 'weird, stupid and unwanted'. Although difficult at first, the

guided social clubs in school presented a safer environment as well as the social

connectedness the participants required to feel and develop a sense of belonging.

      Lack of Canadian life preparedness. As they began their new life in Canada, the

participants felt unprepared to function as expected in a variety of areas including, social

interactions, schooling, and the use of public facilities. For these youth, not knowing what

to do in various situations caused them to isolate themselves from their Canadian peers. It

is most likely that if they had been left alone without any intervention, they might easily

have been lured into ant-social groups seeking comfort. Fortunately, some of the

participants had opportunities to learn about the Canadian life skills shortly after their

arrival in Winnipeg. The participants that attended the Needs Centre were able to begin

feeling part of their new Canadian community through various life skills preparedness

programs. The Needs Centre provided them with skills and essential day-to-day

knowledge including information about: (a) appropriate clothing during different seasons,

(b) food, (c) shopping, (d) transportation, (e) banking, (f) health care, (g) information on

drug and substance abuse, and (h) school and public facility expectations, norms, rules

and regulations. These programs helped to alleviate their feelings of unpreparedness in

their new life. Knowing what is expected in their communities made them feel a part of

the group and that they were not being perceived as being "stupid". Also, the participants

said that their schools provided some common support programs to help with routines and

expectations outside school, including drug and substance abuse and family life (safe sex

and healthy choices). However, according to the participants, school routine preparedness

requires repetition and more practice time to let them gain a better understanding of the system. Gym routines were pointed out as the most challenging aspect of school preparedness. Pre-teaching the games, and general gym rules including changing into gym clothes was shared as a strategy that might assist newcomer youth to integrate more smoothly into school. They felt that whatever happened in the gym transpired into other areas of the school, thus the mistakes or triumphs they made in gym haunted or uplifted them while back in their regular classrooms.

Only one participant commented on unpreparedness regarding banking or housing. This may have been due to the fact that all but one of the participants lived with their parents or aunts and uncles. The girl who came with her brother, unaccompanied by an adult, shared that banking and housing were difficult for her and that her school guidance counsellor helped her by orienting her to the necessary processes. As indicated in the findings, this girl was very appreciative of her guidance counsellor's support – connecting her to the appropriate agencies to access government housing and even to fill out some forms to open up the bank account. It is important to note that school staff seemed to be the first people through whom these youth could access a variety of Canadian life skills. Therefore, educators should work more closely with outside agencies, especially immigrant support workers, to facilitate some of the necessary life skills for this group of youth within the school setting. By providing war affected refugee youth with information regarding Canadian life skills, they may be empowered to work and compete side by side with their Canadian counterparts. Also, the necessary knowledge about Canadian life skills, including their rights, may enable them to advocate for themselves as well as any other Canadian citizen.

Lack of acknowledgement and acceptance of cultures of war affected refugee youth. Respect for and acceptance of the cultural values and practices of war affected refugee youth was noted as a challenge they experienced while in their new communities. Moreover, war affected refugee youth, in general, face social, cultural and academic adjustments that are often exacerbated by racism, conflicting cultural values, educational gaps, language difficulties, culture shock, physical health problems, poverty, isolation and/or symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Rossiter and Rossiter 2009). The participants' initial experiences were that their English language deficits and skin colours placed them in a group that did not belong to the majority in their new communities. Considering these differences , some of which are genetically part of the war affected refugee youth, many found it difficult to 'fit' in their new society. Several programs have been developed and put in place by various stakeholders including social services, schools, and the immigration department to combat racism and to create more accepting environments for the newcomers. However, while such programs are usually helpful, the people who implement them have to fully understand the sensitivity around racism and how to reduce or eliminate racist behaviour. The participants affirmed that it is others that need to work on their attitudes toward people from different cultures. Schools and organisations that accept and celebrate different cultures convey a welcoming message to people coming into Canadian society. Schools, classrooms and community centres that hold different ethnic potlucks, sports, and cultural events involving both new immigrants and Canadian born individuals encourage the development of human relatedness and a sense of belonging for all. These were cultural celebrations that all participants had attended and were fond of. Their comments regarding Folklorama were that it provided them with a feeling of belonging in Canada. Employing practices that reflect the cultures

of war affected refugee youth may provide them with a reassurance that they are valuable

individuals in their new communities, thus enhancing their sense of belonging.

The lack of a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth

While the majority of the participants felt a lack of a sense of belonging when

they were treated unfairly or discriminated against by their peers and community

members, a few of them considered the opportunity to escape war and finally settle in

Canada overrode any mistreatment and feelings of a lack of a sense of belonging. This

particular finding supports the conclusion that the presence or lack of a sense of

belonging among war affected refugee youth should be viewed on an individual basis due

to different personal traits and circumstances.

One sentiment shared by three participants over 18, was the fact that gaining a

sense of belonging was not paramount to their well-being. These three youths shared that

escaping war, coming to Canada, and finally settling in one place superseded their need to

belong. They said they put their energy into working hard and persevering and succeeding

in school in order to become respected members in their new society. They regarded these

opportunities as dreams and expectations they never imagined happening in their lives

before coming to Canada. I find that these sentiments challenge Maslow's (1943)

hierarchy of needs theory, which suggests that before individuals strive to attain their

dreams and capabilities (self-actualization), they must first satisfy four sets of needs –

(physiological, safety and security, love and belonging, and esteem). Moreover, the three

participants mentioned above indicated that once they had satisfied the first two stages

(physiological needs and safety and security needs), they skipped over the third and

fourth levels, and began to focus on the fifth, self-actualisation. These youth worked hard

in school as they foresaw a better future for themselves. Moreover, the findings of this

study did not indicate that any of the participants followed Maslow's five stages in the same ascending order he suggested. Their motivation was mainly based on their need to get better jobs in order to help the relatives they left behind in their countries of origin.

Strategies to enhance a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth

Strategies to enhance a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth that were derived from the participants' interviews mainly focused on actions and practices that reflected positive social interactions with peers, school staff and community members. Human relatedness is a term used by Bouwsema, Collier, Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer and Patusky (1966) and it depicts the participants' views on how to establish their sense of belonging while in their new country, Canada. It was clear that despite the traumatic events experienced in their lives, the majority of these youth just wanted to be accepted as part of the communities they lived in. They echoed each other by saying that they wanted to have friends, to be valued, to be needed, and to have their cultures acknowledged and respected by the people in their new settlement communities. As one boy commented, "I'm so happy when people ask me my name and where I come from. It mean they are interested in me". Since gaining a sense of belonging as described by Bouwsema, Collier, Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer and Patusky (1966), requires personal involvement in a system or environment, the schools represent the system and the environment where war affected refugee youth begin their pursuit toward developing a sense of belonging. Therefore, teaching practices and the schools' systemic structures, including routines and expectations, are features that may constrain or enhance a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth. The participants felt that the following practices assisted them in developing a sense of belonging: a) equal treatment, b) acknowledgement of their cultures, c) school entry preparation, d) appropriate grade level placement, e) preparation

for school rules, expectations and routines, f) genuine care, and g) preparation for community routines and rituals including shopping and transportation. The participants agreed that these practices could make a difference in helping refugees become confident and comfortable within their new environments.

Implications for Educators and suggestions

Education is one of the most valuable socializing activities for most youth. For the majority of young people in society, education is the most direct way a country can promote its own economic and social welfare and lay the foundation for a democratic society (United Nations Children's Fund, 2000). Educators play a significant role in shaping the lives of the young people under their care. As indicated in this research, war affected refugee youth enter Canada full of hope and anxious to go to school as a way to revitalize their dreams for a better future. Therefore, educators as well as community members in the host country, have an obligation to support these youth to reach their potential, in order to curtail their desire to seek attention and support through other venues such as gang groups.

This study presents a challenge for educators to make an effort to foster one of the human needs, 'a sense of belonging' among newcomer students, especially war affected refugee youth. This is not an easy task as it may depend on individual personalities and temperaments. Also, fostering a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth may require practical activities that may consume personal energy and time. In the busy lives of educators, it is difficult to invest time in learning about the experiences of the students within one's school. The major task for educators is to take time to listen to the views, feelings and sentiments of war affected refugee youth. By doing so, educators will have a better understanding of the backgrounds of newcomer youth, thus be better

equipped to put in place the appropriate supports for this new group of learners. Although

providing educators with workshops that address newcomer backgrounds has been

suggested by various researchers, more in-school activities and programs that involve

educator and student interaction may result in more in-depth information gathering and

understanding of the situation at hand. Most of all, by having educators increase their

interaction with war affected refugee youth, strong relationships may develop thus

increase their sense of belonging. Therefore, I contend that educators cannot continue to

work in isolation of one another, but in collaboration to support students with diverse

needs. This collaboration may allow all educators regardless of the requirements of their

individual job titles, to work with a common goal to assist and provide the necessary

supports for all students.

In addition to working collaboratively with other stakeholders, such as 'Welcome

Place', Immigrant Settlement Workers, The NEEDS Centre, and Social Services,

educators may need to connect with the parents of these youth on an individual basis

outside of school structures. For example, having potluck dinners with newcomer parents

and their children may result in better relationship building and working partnerships. As

Perry and Szalavitz (2006) noted, "relationships matter: the currency for systemic change

[is] trust, and trust comes through forming healthy working relationships. [It is] people,

not programs, [that] change people" (p. 80). Also, there is a need to bridge the gap

between the immigrant support workers, immigrant families, newcomer youth, and

educators. Regular one-on-one contact with the people in organizations who work directly

with these youth outside of school may be another way to foster a sense of belonging

among war affected refugee youth. Erickson's (1959) statement relates to the findings of

this study, "It is clear therefore, that we must bend every effort to present our young men

and women with the tangible and trustworthy promise of opportunities for a rededication

to the life [before them]" (94). War affected refugee youth are part of Canada, and

equipping them with the necessary strengths to participate fully their new nation is a task

to be carried out by all Canadian citizens.

Recommendations

    Below are some recommendations that were suggested or referred to by the

participants in this study as positive ways of enhancing a sense of belonging among war

affected refugee youth. Also, I have included some of the recommendations that reflect

practices in the schools I've worked in. These recommendations may reinforce a sense of

belonging among newcomer students as well as students that are new in the school.

Recommendations reflective of the participants' suggestions

1) Schools may consider creating a parent reception centre to welcome and provide

    information to all parents including newcomers. Having the center open to all

    parents may create opportunities for newcomers to interact with Canadian parents,

    thus foster a better understanding of each other's cultures. By having their parents

    or guardians present in the school, newcomer youth may feel more accepted and

    welcome in the school.

2) Newcomer youth and their parents should be paired with Canadian families with

    students in the same school as part of a buddy system. The two families may

    schedule meetings outside the school for coffee and talk about school expectations

    and other children's programs outside school. Connecting with one Canadian

    family may allow the newcomers to ask questions comfortably as opposed to

    getting the information from teachers in an office or structured environment.

3) Organized lunch clubs where a teacher, guidance counsellor, support teacher, or an administrator eats together with newcomer students and some of their Canadian born peers is a social practice that is worth exploring in schools. Such clubs could be run throughout the year and should be open to newcomers as well as students who are often shy and isolated during lunch time.

4) A school wide or classroom games club run on a weekly basis could foster a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth. Playing board games or oral/action games common within the Canadian context may provide social skills that newcomer youth may need and utilise, thus be part of the group when a situation arises where familiar games are being played.

5) Allowing newcomer youth to show their Canadian born peers how to prepare a dish or how to play a game from their countries of origin may create a feeling of acceptance, thus a sense of belonging among this group of young people.

6) Use of storybooks reflective of cultures of newcomer youth was mentioned as a way to bring pride to these youth, thus reinforcing a sense of belonging. If such books are not available in the school, teachers should ask newcomer youth to bring books familiar to them, and be encouraged to share them.

7) Teachers need to slow down in delivering their lessons and assignments in order for newcomer students to have a better understanding of what is being taught. This may mean that students may have to work on a project for a longer time, or pre-teach and post-teach concepts. Instead of having students work on several assignments a year, teachers may focus on fewer projects that may require integrated concepts and skills including math, science, or social studies. The book,

'Learning in Depth', by Egan (2010) outlines ideas on how to integrate topics and teach them for long periods of time.

8) Allowing newcomer youth together with their Canadian born peers to act out different scenarios involving school routines such as gym expectations and gym game rules, cafeteria expectations, and general school expectations and rules. Participants who had opportunities to act out the basketball game, shared that they felt less anxious when they were expected to participate in this game during gym.

9) Providing private changing rooms for girls during gym period will alleviate the discomfort experienced by some newcomer youth whose cultural practices do not allow changing clothes in public rooms with others.

Recommendations drawn from my experience as a support teacher

1) Create family groupings within schools that involve one or two educators to team with a group of eight to ten students, multilevel, to meet and work as a family throughout the school year. Such family groupings may allow newcomer students, their Canadian born peers and their family group teacher/s to eat lunch together, meet to talk about different issues, share and celebrate their successes whenever possible. Connecting with one group of people consistently throughout the year may help in creating a sense of security and belonging for all the students involved.

2) School wide or classroom based potlucks held on a monthly basis – where students and their parents bring in a dish from their country of origin, may create a sense of pride and a sense of belonging among the newcomer students.

3) Use of picture storybooks at any age level will only help newcomer youth gain a better understanding of what is being conveyed in the story.

4) Use of novels that have a movie that students can watch to provide a visual

    support to the content read would be beneficial to newcomer students.

5) Encourage and include newcomer youth in school social and political committees

    like 'social justice, student council, and sustainable living committee. By

    including newcomer youth in such committees, they may feel valued thus

    contributing members of their school community.

6) Involving students in Canadian life skills experiences through teaching them about

    picnics, camping, going fishing, swimming, and participating in these activities as

    part of school programing, may be beneficial to newcomer students.

Limitations to the study

There were some limitations to this study that should be mentioned. Having

participants come from one setting, the Needs Centre, may have excluded other refugee

youth that didn't attend the facility. Although the participants came from different

countries, the majority of them were black African youth, with the exception of one

participant from Bhutan. This means that the overall refugee youth population in

Winnipeg was not represented. Also, some of the younger participants, twelve and

thirteen years old, were less vocal during the interview sessions compared to the older

participants. Being less vocal may have limited these youths' views, which might have

been valuable information to the research.

Final conclusion

Correa-Velez (2010) noted that, by definition, the refugee experience is one of

being cast out, of being socially excluded, where belonging – to family, community and

country – is always at risk. Formal resettlement in a third country not only offers a safe

haven for building a stable life and a hopeful future but also the opportunity to belong.

Establishing a sense of belonging in the early resettlement period is foundational for

wellbeing among youth with refugee backgrounds (Beirens, Hughes, Hek, & Spicer,

2007; Hek, 2005; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; O'Sullivan & Olliff, 2006) for whom the

transition from childhood to adolescence to adulthood is only one among many life

changes they face.

Belonging is a human need to be an accepted member of a group. Whether it is

family, friends, co-workers or a sports team, humans have an inherent desire to belong

and to be an important part of something greater than themselves (Fiske, 2004). Given the

fact that adolescents generally undergo a developmental phase searching for their identity

and their place in society, war affected refugee youth do so in the context of all the other

challenges they face (Crowe, 2006). The uprooting, disruption, and insecurity inherent in

migration affect psychological and social development, making the process of identity

formation a more difficult balancing act between two or more sets of cultural notions and

values (Fantino and Colak, 2001). Many of the participants in this study clearly

acknowledged their desire and need to belong in their new country, despite the various

challenges facing them. They wanted to be liked, loved, respected, included, and feel free

in their new society. They wished that people would show interest in their cultures and

accept them. They yearned to have the same non-racist treatment as their fellow

Canadians, and most of all they just wanted to have fun in school, hanging out with

friends. In consideration of the fact that war affected refugee youth enter Canada with

high expectations, dreams, and potential to become valuable contributing individuals in

their new communities, members of their host country, Canada, may need to work hand in

hand with this new and growing number of future Canadian citizens. Moreover,

integration is idealized as a two-way process of adaptation of both the newcomer and the host society (Kallen, 1995). Newcomers make some adjustments in order to successfully integrate, while the host society also makes some changes in order to accommodate the newcomers (Correa-Velez, Ignacio, Gifford, Sandra, Barnett, Adrian, (2010). When people feel that they belong to a group or country, it is more likely for them to take ownership and work hard to protect and contribute to the place they now call home.

Considerations for Future Research

The question of how computer technology, especially the use of social media, might enhance a sense of belonging of refugee youth was evident in this study's findings. This query may be a worthy future research investigation given the frequent use of technology by all adolescents including war affected refugee youth. The participants in this study indicated the use of the internet, especially Facebook and blogs, as ways for them to connect with the people left back home, as well as finding out the war situations in their countries of origin. The second area worth investigating is whether a sense of belonging is one of the reasons causing newcomer youth to drop out of school. As indicated earlier, Crowe's (2006) findings indicated a 50% dropout rate for even the most advanced ESL students in Alberta. This suggests that more than language proficiency is at play and thus justifies the need to investigate

non-academic variables, such as fostering a sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth.

APPENDICES

A – I

Appendix A – Services provided to newcomer families with disabilities including

language translation

Appendix B – Guidelines for the English as an Additional Language (EAL) support

grant

Appendix C – Documented languages for which Special Language Credit Option

(SPLCO) for newcomer students are available

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Appendix I – Definitions of The Goods and Services Tax (GST) and The Provincial

Sales Tax (PST)

Appendix A

<u>Services provided to newcomer families with disabilities including language translation</u>

SMD is a family of organizations that are working together to **improve the lives of persons with disabilities** in

Manitoba

Ethno-Cultural Services

The Cultural Resource Facilitators of SMD's Ethno-Cultural Program help people and families living with disabilities

that come from a variety of ethnic communities connect with much-needed social services and supports. We provide a

support system for newcomer families in accessing services and supports that are available in Winnipeg.

Our program aims to fulfill the following goals:

- In association with internal and external Case managers, to provide direct cultural interpretation and facilitation services for individuals with disabilities, and their families, who are facing language and cultural barriers.
- To ensure that individuals with disabilities of ethnic origin, and their families have access to assistance in navigating health, rehabilitation and social services.
- To support and educate service providers by increasing their awareness of, and sensitivity to, the cultural values of consumers of SMD's Ethno Cultural Program

Cultural Resource Facilitators respect other languages and culture and it is this respect that enables them to create positive experiences for people. Positive experiences, in turn, give people greater confidence in Manitoba's health and social services.

At the same time, SMD's Cultural Resource Facilitators help people gain confidence in their own ability to access resources and support, which encourages them to take action on their own, secure in the knowledge that any service providers they meet through SMD will respect their cultural differences and beliefs.

The program can provide services in as many as eighteen different languages, including:

- Amharic
- Arabic
- Bosnian
- Cantonese
- Croatian
- Dari
- Dinka
- Filipino
- French
- Hindi
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Pashto
- Persian
- Punjabi
- Serbian
- Tigrigna
- Vietnamese

For more information, call:
Telephone: (204) 975-3010
Toll free: 1-866-282-8041 (Canada/US)
TTY: 1-800-225-9108 (Canada/US)
http://www.smd.ca

Appendix B

Guidelines for the English as an Additional Language (EAL) support grant

Funding Support

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth provides funding for eligible students to enhance the capacity of Manitoba school divisions to provide EAL learners with appropriate programming and services. The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Support Grant is available for pupils with limited proficiency in the English language who are receiving EAL curriculum, instruction, and related services and are reported in the enrollment on September 30 of each school year. Funding is provided for a maximum of four consecutive years.
Support rates per eligible FTE* pupil receiving EAL support are specified below.
*FTE—full-time equivalent
Note: Accountability for funding is presently under review. This document will be updated to reflect decisions about reporting.

Support Rates Per Eligible FTE Pupil Receiving EAL Support			
Year 1 of EAL Programming	Year 2 of EAL Programming	Year 3 of EAL Programming	Year 4 of EAL Programming
$775	$750	$750	$600

FTE—full-time equivalent
Note: Accountability for funding is presently under review. This document will be updated to reflect decisions about reporting.

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca

Appendix C

Documented languages for which Special Language Credit Option (SPLCO)

for newcomer students are available

Categorical Grants for both languages of study and bilingual heritage language programming are available to public schools. Manitoba Education maintains a list of registered examiners for Special Language Credit Option purposes. Examiners may not be available for all languages. For a list of examiners or to register as an examiner, please contact Tony Tavares (see contact information). **Range of Languages Manitoba Education –**

www.edu.gov.mb.ca./k12/cur/eal/languagecredits/index.html

The specific languages which are examined on a year to year basis vary according to student requests and availability of examiners. Below is a chart which provides a list of languages for which students have been examined and awarded credits in the last few years.

Special Language Credit Option: Languages Reported		
American Sign Language	Albanian	Afrikaans
Amharic	Arabic	Bangla (Bengali)
Bembe (Ebembe)	Bosnian	Bulgarian
Burmese	Cambodian	Chinese - Cantonese
Chinese - Mandarin	Cree	Creole
Croatian	Czech	Dakota
Dari	Dinka	Dene (Chipewyan)
Dutch	Farsi (Persian)	Filipino (Tagalog)
Finnish	Flemish	Gaelic
German	Greek	Gujarati
Hebrew	Hindi	Hokkien
Hungarian	Icelandic	Igbo
Inuktitut (Inuit)	Island-Lake Dialect	Italian
Japanese	Korean	Krio
Kurdish	Laotian	Latin
Luganda	Macedonian	Malay
Malayalam	Nepali	Norwegian
Ojibwé (Saulteaux)	Pashto	Polish
Portuguese	Punjabi	Romanian
Russian	Serbian	Sinhalese
Slovak	Somali	Spanish
Swahili	Tamil	Thai
Tigrinya (Eritrean)	Turkish	Twi
Ugandan	Ukrainian	Urdu
Vietnamese	Yoruba	

Appendix D

Services provided to newcomer families in Louis Riel School Division

Newcomer Family Reception Centre
Welcoming the World
René Deleurme Centre
511 St. Anne's Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2M 3E5
Tel: 257-7308
Web: http://www.lrsd.net/schools/rdc
Bishop Grandin Blvd.
St. Anne's Rd
When is my appointment?
Date:
Time:
With: EAL Teacher

The Newcomer Family Reception Centre supports the educational needs of newcomer students and families in the Louis Riel School Division. It links newcomer families to important resources in schools and the community and provides initial reception, educational assessment, school and neighbourhood orientation, and other informational services. The Centre also assists people who may need support for English as an additional language (EAL)—also known as English as a second language (ESL).

Who should visit the Centre?

All families who are new to the Louis Riel School Division and who have arrived in Canada during the past four years, are requested to visit the Newcomer Family Reception Centre. At the Centre, an EAL teacher conducts an initial assessment of your child's language and academic skills, and records information about your child's school history. A Settlement Worker meets with parents or guardians to discuss many important topics about your new community. Canadian-born students, whose first language is not English and who are entering Kindergarten to Grade 4, are also encouraged to visit the Centre for an initial assessment.

Why assess a Newcomer Student?

Initial or introductory assessments provide schools with important information about students' learning strengths

Initial assessments allow students to demonstrate what they know and how they learn.

Learning assessments are used to determine a student's oral language, reading, writing and math skills. An interpreter may help to assess the language used in a student's home.

Bring the following documents with you to the appointment

one (1) of the following documents as proof of child's age•
birth certificate
passport
Manitoba Health Card•
one (1) of the following documents as proof of address•
Manitoba driver's licence
Manitoba Health card
copy of a bank statement
telephone or electrical bill
apartment lease with your name and address
any school records you may have from previous schools • (if possible)
proof of legal guardianship if the child is under 18 years of age • and does not live with the birth (biological) parent
one (1) of the following documents as proof of child's • immigration status
Canadian passport
Record of Landing (IMM1000) and the passport used for entry
Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM5292)
Permanent Resident Card
Employment or Student Authorization
Visitor Record
Any other documentation about your status in Canada
level of education •
educational history •
special needs •
interests and goals •
family needs •
education plan•

Appendix E

Recruitment letters

Letters of Recruitment –Youths (eighteen years and older)

Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

Title of Research Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. The purpose of this study is to explore a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth in Winnipeg. A sense of belonging as experienced by war affected refugee youth during both pre-immigration and post-immigration periods will be examined. Factors that may enhance a sense of belonging as well as those that may reduce alienation among war affected refugee youth will be explored, with the intention of providing educators with best practices for educating this new group of learners. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to come and join me for coffee and desert after school and learn about a research study that you may be interested in participating in. If you are unable to attend this information session, please feel free to contact me directly at 253-4096 or through email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca. If after learning more about my research you decide to participate, I will send you a consent form to sign and arrange an interview time. The interview process would take approximately 60 to 90 minutes in a mutually agreed upon location outside of school and work hours. In case of any emotional breakdown or distress that may occur during the interview session, you will be able to access counseling services to be provided by the staff at the NEEDS Centre. I would also like to ask impromptu questions for the purpose of clarification, throughout the interview process. All verbal dialogue would be digitally recorded in order to be transcribed. You may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty by advising the researcher. (All interview questions attached). This invitation is being sent to the parents/guardians and students, from various countries with war experience, between the ages of fifteen and twenty years of age who attend the NEEDS Centre after school. However, please be advised that your decision to participate or not to participate has no impact on your partici-

pation/use of the NEEDS program. Also, you may access translators at the NEEDS Centre to assist you with interview questions and clarifying any information you may not understand due to the English language used. You will not be dropped out of the research due to English language proficiency reasons.

Upon receipt of this letter I will contact you in regards to completing a letter of informed consent that you will be required to sign. Once the letter of signed consent is completed we will proceed with setting an initial interview date.

If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my course advisor, Dr. Richard Freeze by email rfreeze@cc.umanitoba.ca or at 204-474-6904.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a participant. However, this does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you are interested in learning more about this project, please complete and return the form below providing your contact information that is that best way of connecting with you and I will phone or email you to answer any questions you may have. You may also email me. I look forward to speaking with you and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

_____

Participant's Name (please print)

Participant's Contact information: please contact me by phone _____ or through email_____

_____

Researcher's Signature   Date

I am agreeing to: (please check the ones that are applicable to you).

_____ contacted by the researcher, Fatumah Mbabaali, in order to complete an informed consent and participate in her research.

I would like a summary of the results yes/no. Results to be sent to the following address:
_____

Letters of Recruitment – Parents/Guardians of youth under eighteen years

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

Title of Research Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. The purpose of this study is to explore a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth in Winnipeg. A sense of belonging as experienced by war affected refugee youth during both pre-immigration and post-immigration periods will be examined. Factors that may enhance a sense of belonging as well as those that may reduce alienation among war affected refugee youth will be explored, with the intention of providing educators with best practices for educating this new group of learners. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you and your son/daughter to come and join me for coffee and desert after school and learn about a research study that your son/daughter may be interested in participating in. If you are unable to attend this information session, please feel free to contact me directly at 253-4096 or through email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca. If after learning more about my research you decide you would like your child to participate, I will send you a consent form to sign and arrange an interview time. The interview process would take approximately 60 to 90 minutes in a mutually agreed upon location outside of school and work hours (interview questions attached). In case of any emotional breakdown or distress that may occur during the interview session, your son/daughter will be able to access counseling services to be provided by the staff at the NEEDS Centre. Your son/daughter may decline to answer any of the questions if he/she so wishes. Also, your son/daughter may decide to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty by advising the researcher. This invitation is being sent to the parents/guardians and students, from various countries, between the ages of fifteen and twenty years of age who attend the NEEDS Centre after school. However, please be advised that your decision to participate or not to participate has no impact on your participation/use of the NEEDS program.

Upon receipt of this letter I will contact you in regards to completing a letter of informed consent that you will be required to sign. Once the letter of signed consent is completed we will proceed with setting an initial interview date.

If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my course advisor, Dr. Richard Freeze by email rfreeze@cc.umanitoba.ca or at 204-474-6904.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your son's/daughter's participation in this research project and agree that he/she will participate as a participant. However, this does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your son/daughter is free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions he/she prefers to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your son's/daughter's continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so he/she should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout his/her participation.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you are interested in learning more about this project, please complete and return the form below providing your contact information that is that best way of connecting with you and I will phone or email you to answer any questions you may have. You may also email me.

I look forward to speaking with you and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

_____
Parent's Name (please print)

Parent's Contact information: please contact me by phone _____ or through email_____

I am agreeing to: (please check the ones that are applicable to you).

_____ contacted by the student researcher, Fatumah Mbabaali, in order to complete an informed consent for my son/daughter to participate in her research.

I would like a summary of the results yes/no. Results to be sent to the following address

_____

Appendix F

Letters of informed consent

Letter of Informed Consent – Executive Director, Newcomers Employment and Education Development Services (NEEDS Inc.)

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Title of Thesis Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. I am conducting research for my thesis in order to complete a Master's in Inclusive Special Education through the faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. My faculty advisor is Dr. Richard Freeze. If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information, please contact me by email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Richard Freeze by email at rfreeze@cc.umanitoba.ca or at 204-474-6904.

This letter is a request to contact the youth program coordinator at the NEEDS Centre via work phone or email in order to ask permission to contact the youth about participating in my research that I will be conducting during the month of August 2011. Also, I am requesting support from your organization to provide me access to potential youth participants attending NEEDS Centre, a room to have coffee and desert during my information session, and a room to conduct my
interviews. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what the youth involvement would entail if they decide to take part. Once I have received your

permission, the youth program coordinator will be contacted and asked to sign an informed consent letter to allow me meet with the youth and parents/guardians for an information session about the research study. The following will be the exact copy of what will be sent to the Youth program coordinator.

Letter of Informed Consent – Youth program Coordinator (NEEDS Inc.)

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Title of Thesis Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. I am conducting research for my thesis in order to complete a Master's in Inclusive Special Education through the faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. My faculty advisor is Dr. Richard Freeze.

This letter is a request for you to distribute a recruitment letter to the youth on my behalf. I am sending you a youth recruitment letter in order to invite them to participate in research I am conducting for my thesis (recruitment letter attached). I'm sending you two types of recruitment letters; one to distribute to potential participants' parents and guardians of youth under eighteen years of age, and the second one for participants over the age of eighteen. Through the recruitment letters, I will invite potential youth participants and their parents or guardians to come and join me for coffee and desert after school and learn about a research study that they may be interested in participating in. After hearing about the research study and they indicate interest in participating in the research, I will give them a consent letter outlining what is involved in taking part in the research project. All interested participants and their parents/guardians will be required to sign the consent letter before they participate in the research interview. In case of any emotional breakdown or distress that may occur during the interview session, I would request participants to have access to counseling services to be provided by the staff at the NEEDS Centre. Please be advised that if there are any disclosures of abuse during my interview sessions, these will be reported to you and other necessary services. I would like to provide you

with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide you would like to take part.

The purpose of this study is to explore a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth in Winnipeg through the pre-migration and post-migration stages.I have appended a copy of the recruitment letter that would be distributed to your youth and parents upon receipt of this signed consent form as well as the interview questions.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in the research project and agreement for me to forward my recruitment letters to you. However, this does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. The youth are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (s) and a representative (s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to my research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my faculty advisor Dr. Richard Freeze by email at rfreeze@cc.umanitoba.ca or at 204-474-6904.

I look forward to speaking with you or reading your responses and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

I am agreeing to: (please check the ones that are applicable to you).
_____ allow the researcher, Fatumah Mbabaali to contact my youth about their participation in her thesis research.

I would like a summary of the results yes/no. Results to be sent to the following address:
_____

Youth program coordinator's Name (please print)
_____

_____
Youth program coordinator's Signature   Date

_____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Letter of Informed Consent – Youth (eighteen years and older)

Title of Thesis Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refuge youth.

Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. I am conducting research for my thesis in order to complete a Master's in Inclusive Special Education through the faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. My faculty advisor is Dr. Richard Freeze. I would like to provide you with more information about my research and what your involvement would entail if you decide you would like to take part. The purpose of this study is to explore a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth in Winnipeg through the pre-migration and post-migration stages.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You would be interviewed once by me for approximately one hour in length. The interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location and time outside of school and work hours *(interview questions were appended in the recruitment letter you received and have already signed).* You may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded to facilitate the collection of accurate information, and later transcribed for analysis. All information provided is considered confidential. Your name or any other personal information identifying you will not be used in the thesis paper resulting from this study, or in any presentation that I may give at the completion of my thesis. However, with your permission quotations may be used along with pseudonyms to protect your identity. Transcriptions and/or tapes collected during the study will be retained until my research is completed and defended, in a locked box in my home office then shredded or erased.

 Please be advised that if there are any disclosures of abuse during my interview sessions, these will be reported to you and other necessary services. In case of any emotional breakdown or distress that may occur during the interview session, you will be able to access counseling services to be provided by the staff at the NEEDS Centre. Also, you may access translators at the NEEDS Centre to assist you with interview questions and clarifying any information you may not understand due to the English language used. You will not be dropped out of the research due to English language proficiency reasons. You may benefit from the professional dialogue and reading the final results of my research which I will make available to you. There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Richard Freeze at 204-474-6904.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research and agree to participate as a participant. However, this does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (s) and a representative (s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to my research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I look forward to speaking with you or reading your responses and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

I am agreeing to: (please check the ones that are applicable to you).
_____ be interviewed once for approximately one hour
_____ to answer impromptu questions throughout the process
_____ allow my comments to be used in the reporting of the data collected.

I would like a summary of the results yes/no. Results to be sent to the following address

_____
Participant's Name (please print)

_____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Letter of Informed Consent – Parents/Guardians of youth under eighteen years

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Title of Thesis Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

Student Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. I am conducting research for my thesis in order to complete a Master's in Inclusive Special Education through the faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. My faculty advisor is Dr. Richard Freeze. I would like to provide you with more information about my research and what your son's/daughter's involvement would entail if you decide you would like him/her to take part. The purpose of this study is to explore a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth in Winnipeg through the pre-migration and post-migration stages.

Participation in this research is voluntary. It will involve allowing me to interview your son/daughter for approximately one hour in length. The interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location and time outside of school and work hours *(interview questions were appended to the recruitment letter you already signed).* Your son/daughter may decline to answer any of the questions if he/she so wishes. Furthermore, your son/daughter may decide to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate the collection of accurate information, and later transcribed for analysis. All information provided is considered confidential. Your son/daughter's name or any other personal information identifying him/her will not be used in the thesis paper resulting from this study, or in any presentation that I may give at the completion of my thesis. However, with your permission quotations may be used along with pseudonyms to protect your son's/daughter's identity. Transcriptions and/or tapes collected during the study will be retained until my research is completed and defended, in a locked box in my home office then shredded or erased. Only my advisor and I will have access to the data. Please be advised that if there are any disclosures of abuse during my interview sessions, these will be reported to the youth coordinator at the NEEDS Centre and other necessary services. In case of any emotional breakdown or distress that may occur during the interview session, you will be able to access counseling services to be provided by the staff at the NEEDS Centre. Also, you may access translators at the NEEDS Centre to assist you by clarifying any information you may not understand due to the English language used. Your child will not be dropped out of the research due to English language proficien-

cy reasons. You and your child may benefit from the professional dialogue and reading the final results of my research which I will make available to you. There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at fmba-baali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Richard Freeze at 204-474-6904.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your son's/daughter's participation in the research as a participant. However, this does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your son/daughter is free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Also, please note that in order to participate; both you and your child must be willing to participate in the study by signing the consent form. Your child consent letter is attached to yours. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your son/daughter's participation.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (s) and a representative (s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to my research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I look forward to speaking with you or reading your responses and I thank you in advance for your
assistance in this project.

I am agreeing to: (please check the ones that are applicable to you).

_____ my son/daughter to be interviewed by the researcher.
_____ allow my son's/daughter's comments to be used in the reporting of the data
                        collected.

I would like a summary of the results yes/no. Results to be sent to the following address
_____

_____
Parent's Name (please print)
_____
Parent's Signature   Date
_____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Letter of Informed Consent – Youth (under eighteen years)

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Title of Thesis Study: Exploring a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth.

Researcher: Fatumah Mbabaali

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic ideas of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a learning support teacher in 7 Oaks school division as well as a Master's student at the University of Manitoba. I am currently working on my thesis and am in the data gathering stage. I am conducting research for my thesis in order to complete a Master's in Inclusive Special Education through the faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. My faculty advisor is Dr. Richard Freeze. I would like to provide you with more information about my research and what your involvement would entail if you decide you would like to take part. The purpose of this study is to explore a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth in Winnipeg through the pre-migration and post-migration stages.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You would be interviewed once by me for approximately one hour in length. The interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location and time outside of school and work hours *(interview questions were appended in the recruitment letter you received and have already signed).* You may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interviews will be audio-recorded to facilitate the collection of accurate information, and later transcribed for analysis. All information provided is considered confidential. Your name or any other personal information identifying you will not be used in the thesis paper resulting from this study, or in any presentation that I may give at the completion of my thesis. However, with your permission quotations may be used along with pseudonyms to protect your identity. Transcriptions and/or tapes collected dur-

ing the study will be retained until my research is completed and defended, in a locked box in my home office then shredded or erased.

Please be advised that if there are any disclosures of abuse during my interview sessions, these will be reported to the youth coordinator at the NEEDS Centre and other necessary services. In case of any emotional breakdown or distress that may occur during the interview session, you will be able to access counseling services to be provided by the staff at the NEEDS Centre. Also, you may access translators at the NEEDS Centre to assist you with interview questions and clarifying any information you may not understand due to the English language used. You will not be dropped out of the research due to English language proficiency reasons.

You may benefit from the professional dialogue and reading the final results of my research which I will make available to you. There will be no compensation for participating in this study. If you have any questions regarding this course project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at fmbabaali@gmail.ca or at 204-253-4096. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Richard Freeze at 204-474-6904.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research and agree to participate as a participant. However, this does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Also, please note that in order to participate; both you and your parent/guardian must be willing to participate in the study by signing a consent letter. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

This research has been approved by the Education Nursing Research Ethics Board. The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (s) and a representative (s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management / Assurance office may also require access to my research records for safety and quality assurance purposes. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 204-474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I look forward to speaking with you or reading your responses and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

I am agreeing to: (please check the ones that are applicable to you).

_____ be interviewed once for approximately one hour

_____ to answer impromptu questions throughout the process

_____ allow my comments to be used in the reporting of the data collected.

I would like a summary of the results yes/no. Results to be sent to the following address

_____
Participant's Name (please print)

_____
Participant's Signature   Date

_____
Researcher's Signature   Date

Appendix G

Data analysis using a construct map to organize study findings themes

```
Threatened
sense of
belonging
```
→
A sense of belonging among war affected refugee youth
→
```
Enhancing a
sense of
belonging
```

```
Pre-migration
period
```

```
Post-migration
period
```

Before war
*strong sense of belonging
*family living together
*Homes and belongings

Equal treatment vs unequal treatment

During war
*weak sense of belonging
*loss of family members and friends, houses, personal material, identity
*feeling unwanted
*fear, uncertain of the future

Acknowledgement of newcomer cultural practices

Preparedness for school and community rituals and routines

During flight period
*weak sense of belonging
*living in multiple settlements – refugee camps
*Feeling unwanted
*fear, uncertain of the future, mistrusting others

Genuine care

Rebuilding a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth
→
Strategies to enhance a sense of belonging of war affected refugee youth

Appendix H

Research questions

1.   What do you understand by the term "a sense of belonging"?

2.   How would you describe your sense of belonging before the war broke up in your country?

3.   How would you describe your sense of belonging during war?

4.   How would you describe your sense of belonging during your temporary settlement before coming to Canada?

5.   How would you describe your sense of belonging in Winnipeg?

a) What would make you feel a sense of belonging in your school and the community you live in?

b) What are some of the things that teachers, peers and community members do to make you feel like you belong or don't belong?

c) Do your teachers invite you to share your experiences in class?

d) Do your teachers use curriculum materials that reflect your experiences and your cultural background? How does this make you feel?

e) Who makes you feel like you belong in your school and in your classroom? What do those individuals do to make you feel like you belong?

Pre - migration

1.   What is your country of origin?

2.   Where did you live before coming to Canada?

3.   How many languages do you speak?

4.   When did you come to Canada?

5.   Who did you come with?

6.   What was your experience of war?

a)   Were you separated from your parents and how were you separated?

b)   Did you lose family members and friends during the war?

c)   Do you still have family and friend living in your country of origin?

7.   Would you please describe how your war experience affected your sense of be longing?

Flight/Transition period

8.   How did you escape from war and where did you go? How did this experience affect your sense of belonging?

a)   Did you live in a refugee camp? If yes, please explain your experience living in a refugee camp. How did this experience affect your sense of belonging?

b)   Did you live in another country temporarily before coming to Canada? If yes, which country was that? Please explain your experience living in that country. How did this experience affect your sense of belonging?

c)   Did you go to school before coming to Winnipeg? Where did you go to school?

d)   How would you describe your school experience before coming to Winnipeg?

e)   Did you go to school while in a refugee camp or out of camp before coming to Canada? If yes, how would you describe your sense of belonging in school while in camp?

9.   How did you immigrate to Canada?

a)   Would you explain how the Canadian immigration process was for you?

b)   How did that process make you feel?

Post-migration

1.   How did you feel during the first three months in Winnipeg?

a)   How would you describe your sense of belonging during these first three months

        in Winnipeg?

2.   Where do you live now and how do you feel about living there?

3.   When did you start school in Winnipeg?

4.   How did you select the first school you attended in Winnipeg?

5.   How do you feel about going to school in Winnipeg?

a)   What type of things does your school do to make you feel a part of the school

        community/or not a part of the school community

b)   What type of things do your teachers do to make you feel a part of the classroom

        and school community or not a part of the classroom and school community?

c)   What type of things do your peers do to make you feel a part of the classroom and

        school community/ or not a part of the classroom and school community?

d)   How important is a sense of belonging to you?

e)   Does the sense of belonging affect your learning? In what ways does a sense of

        belonging affect your learning?

f)   What subjects do you feel more comfortable to participate in/not comfortable to

        participate in?

g)   What classroom and school activities do you feel comfortable to participate in /not

        comfortable to participate in?

h)   What are some of the activities would you like to do in school in order to feel like

you belong?

i)   What do you usually do after school? Please describe these activities in relation to

your sense of belonging.

j)   What is the most important aspect for you in school and why is it important?

k)   What type of career would you like to do?

l)   What do you feel about schooling in general?

m)   What are your future schooling plans? n) What would you like to do after

graduation?

Appendix I

Definition of a PST and GST

The Goods and Services Tax **(GST)** (French: Taxe sur les produits et services, TPS) is a multi-level value added tax introduced in Canada on January 1, 1991, by then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and his finance minister Michael Wilson. The GST replaced a hidden 13.5% Manufacturers' Sales Tax (MST); Mulroney claimed the GST was implemented because the MST was hindering the manufacturing sector's ability to export competitively. The introduction of the GST was very controversial. The GST rate is 5%, and [became] effective January 1, 2008. In Canada the goods and services tax or GST is a federal tax of five percent on most goods and services sold in Canada for domestic consumption. Some goods and services are exempt from the GST, for example basic groceries, prescription drugs and exports.
http://www.vec.ca/english/2/gst.cfm

The Provincial Sales Tax, commonly referred to as **PST,** is a provincial tax imposed on the consumers of most goods and particular services in a particular province. PST, sometimes referred to as Retail Sales Tax (RST), must be charged on the sales of all tangible property, unless exempt. The Government of Manitoba defines "tangible property" as "anything that can be seen, weighed, measured, felt, or touched; that is, anything that we can perceive with our senses." It also includes computer programs, and electricity. The PST in Manitoba is 7%.
http://sbinfocanada.about.com/cs/taxinfo/g/pst.htm

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