They Survived War and Conflict; Can They Now Survive School?
A Study of Newcomer and Refugee Youth Participants in an After-School Program

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba. For many new immigrant and refugee youth, being able to attend school and achieve is the ultimate aspiration.

Given the important role that the PVP has in fostering the learning and development of refugee students in Winnipeg, and that little attention in previous studies have focused on the level of students' participation in after-school programs, this evaluative study examined the outcomes of the youth, particularly newcomer youth attending the Peaceful Village Program after school programs. More specially, this study evaluated the processes (i.e., how well was the program delivered as intended) and outcomes (i.e., how much did students benefit from participating in the PVP) of the PVP.

The improved self-worth and sense of belonging were the most obvious and significant findings in this study. Immigrant and refugee students develop self-confidence, a risk-taking spirit, and a sense of optimism about future opportunities as their self-esteem and sense of belonging improve, which leads to higher academic achievement.

Based on the findings of this study, it is reasonable to conclude that immigrant and refugee students can do well in school if their schools support, welcome, and love them. Refugee students must feel safe and valued in their new surroundings, and they must be supported in their new communities while having their unique perspectives and abilities recognized. When programs like the PVP and others, including schools, go beyond the academic system to support immigrant and refugee students' integration and settlement, it is critical that their holistic needs are met.

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Dedication

First, I would like to dedicate this thesis to two important people in my life. Without the memory of my late father, Catechist Pellegrino Doggale Morbe, and late mother, Madelina Poni Jada, I would not have gotten this far. I'm sure they're very proud of me up there.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The Peaceful Village Program (PVP) began in 2009 on the recommendation of action research by the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). The program started in two inner-city schools in Winnipeg, Gordon Bell High School and Hugh John MacDonald School and had a combined enrollment of 40 students. The initial programs were relatively small, with one Program Coordinator, a Team Lead for each of the two schools, ten Community Development tutors, and approximately ten to fifteen community volunteers. The PVP currently serves 800+ youth, particularly newcomer youth (95% refugee coming from war impacted countries) and their families in six locations in Winnipeg: Gordon Bell High School, Hugh John MacDonald School, Community Site (1008 Wall Street), Glenlawn Collegiate, Fort Richmond Collegiate/Acadia Junior High and St. James Collegiate/ George Waters location. The comprehensive program includes academics (after school program which targets literacy and numeracy, homework help), social (activity-based learning) and financial support through scholarship incentives towards post-secondary education or training for newcomer youth (ages 12 – 21) through various strategies. The average claim wait time for the scholarship is two years as some students often upgrade their English or choose to work for a year prior to enrolling. The program receives funding from both federal and provincial government, as well United Way Winnipeg and other foundations. The program's initial goals for newcomer youth were to per PVP:

- attend school regularly,
- complete academic courses and pass their classes,
- feel like they belong in the PVP and are connected to each other and to their schools,
- develop their leadership skills and feelings of self-efficacy, and
- attend and complete post-secondary education/training.

The initial goals for newcomer families were to

- communicate with program staff,
- build relationships with school staff and program staff, and
- have a space inside the schools and in the community to advocate for their children's education,

- receive extra support to achieve their educational goals.

Given the important role that the PVP has in fostering the learning and development of refugee students in Winnipeg, and that little attention in previous studies have focused on the level of students' participation in after-school programs, this evaluative study examined the outcomes of the youth, particularly newcomer youth attending the Peaceful Village Program after school programs. Specifically, this study evaluated the processes (i.e., how well was the program delivered as intended) and outcomes (i.e., how much did students benefit from participating in the PVP) of the PVP by addressing the following four research questions:

1. How does students' participation in the PVP lead to their development in selected academic and social outcomes?
2. In what ways do parents benefit from their children's participation in the PVP?
3. How involved are students and their parents in the PVP?
4. How well are the staff and volunteers providing support to PVP to students and parents?

My Position

As a former refugee from war-torn South Sudan, I have seen myself in many participants since I began working with the Peaceful Village Program. Many youths who participate in the Peaceful Village Program see it as a source of belonging, empowerment, friendship development, job opportunities, and recreation.

I was born in the early 1980's in what was then known as the Republic of Sudan. I was born during the country's civil war between the North and the South. I grew up during the civil war, which began in 1983 and ended in 2005 with a comprehensive peace agreement. Following the referendum in 2011, it became the Republic of South Sudan, breaking away from North Sudan.

As the war raged on, education suffered greatly as the government diverted all resources to finance the war. The country's limited educational opportunities and lack of security prompted many young people to seek refuge and better education in neighbouring countries, including Uganda. I was among the few who made it to Uganda and became a refugee in a refugee camp in Northern Uganda. Life in the refugee camp was harsh and dangerous because it was located where Ugandan warlord and rebel leader Joseph Konyi was actively fighting the Ugandan

government. His forces constantly attacked the refugee camp, mostly carried out violently because it involved kidnapping, killing, rape, and looting.

The situation compelled me to relocate to Kampala, Uganda's capital, for better security and to seek a better education, as education at the camp was frequently disrupted and lacked adequate resources for books, teachers, and infrastructure. I was extremely fortunate to have finished high school in Kampala. Due to a lack of scholarships, my search for college or university was extensive, prompting me to seek opportunities elsewhere. I crossed many international borders without legal documents, including Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, and South Africa, in my quest for continued education and safety. Beginnings were the most difficult in South Africa, as one typically must start life on the street.

My quest for education was my top priority because I saw it as the only way to better myself and help others. I was fortunate to be accepted into the University of North-West, Potchefstroom Campus in South Africa, to study education to become a teacher. Following graduation, I was hired as a teacher in a public school. My teaching contract had to be terminated because my application for private refugee sponsorship to resettle in Canada was successful. The decision to relocate to Canada was the most difficult for me to make. As I settled into my teaching position in South Africa, I knew that if my foreign credentials and certification were not recognized in Canada, I might not continue as a teacher there.

I moved to Canada in 2010 and settled in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which has been a life-changing experience. I sent my resume to every school division in Winnipeg with my teaching certification, but full-time teaching opportunities were scarce. Even though it took me a year and few months to obtain my teaching certification, the opportunity to work in an educational setting provided the best settlement relief. In 2011, I was hired to work in the Peaceful Village Program, an after-school program (PVP), initially as a Team Lead for one of their locations. As the PVP's director, I can easily relate to the many youths and families I work with within the program based on my own experiences.

The PVP is a multi-faceted program that operates in six locations throughout Winnipeg. It is designed to benefit youth, particularly newcomer youth, by addressing academic, financial, and informational needs and barriers many newcomer students face when pursuing post-secondary education. The program assists high school students in preparing for post-secondary education by providing one-on-one academic tutoring, scholarships, and academic

counselling/career planning opportunities. Furthermore, the PVP includes socializing time and group outings during school breaks and summer, allowing staff and students to build trust and one-on-one relationships. Reflecting on my personal experiences and life journeys, I can say that these relationships define the program's dynamic. Staff and students can connect through shared mutual experiences and, as a result, build trust. This dynamic allows staff to serve as friends, older siblings, and supporters as well as tutors. The PVP is more than just an academic tutoring program; it is a community, a family, and an excellent example of what a cohesive global community can look like when we choose to come and work together in love and support of our differences and backgrounds.

Statement of the Problem

I conducted this study for two reasons: first, in my job with the Peaceful Village, I saw the daily struggles that immigrant and refugee students faced in navigating academic, social, settlement and graduating from high school, and second, I witnessed the implementation of what I considered a highly functioning after-school program in the Peaceful Village. I believed that a program like the Peaceful Village Program could provide a viable link for immigrant and refugee youth to succeed in school and eventually graduate from high school.

Significance of the Research

I wanted to investigate that belief by talking to students in a research setting. I am very concerned about students not graduating from high school because I have seen the success of many immigrants and refugee students as well as the failure of a student who gave no indications that he was considering dropping out of high school due to numerous challenges. This research assisted me better understanding the needs of immigrant and refugee high school students for an after-school program like the Peaceful Village for them to stay in school and graduate.

In addition, these detailed perceptions may well be of interest to various groups such as teachers, after-school programs, immigrant organizations, and policymakers and possibly bring to light areas that should be explored in further study. As Jowett et. al., (2020) states, community organizations can provide vital inschool and extracurricular support.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant, and refugee students enrolled in Winnipeg, Manitoba's middle and high schools. This chapter discusses the past research on the needs of refugee youth, the barriers they face, and the consequences if those needs are not met adequately. It also examines current research on after-school program, including their history, the academic and social impact they may have, and the subsequent effects on graduation rates. It also reviews the facilitators and barriers to high school graduation for refugee students and the strategies that may be employed to prevent individuals from dropping out. This literature was essential for the researcher to accurately understand the data that obtained during the research process.

Immigrants and Refugees

Addressing and responding to the international flow of immigrants and refugees is a major concern for governments around the world. In recent years, instability in the Middle East and Northern Africa has caused a migration crisis (Metcalfe-Hough, 2015), with many people fleeing their native countries to avoid violence and seek improved economic opportunities. In 2017, there were 258 million international migrants, where the total number of asylum seekers and refugees is estimated at 25.5 million (Zong et. al. Migration Policy Institute, 2017).

It is common for people to classify immigrants and refugees as the same (Hos, 2012; Edwards, 2015), but the two classifications are arguably distinctive groups. While each of these groups represent people who have moved from one area to another (Edwards, 2015), their motivation for migration is escalated by dissimilar conditions. Understanding these differences is crucial for understanding how refugees' educational experiences have been heavily impacted by their past experiences and why supplementary educational support is more crucial for refugees compared to immigrants.

A person classified as an *immigrant* can be seen as typically having an advantage in their motivation and autonomy for migration compared to someone classified as a refugee. That advantage in migration pattern is the choice and desire to voluntarily leave their home country for another (Edwards, 2015; Hos, 2012). Having the capacity to make a conscious decision creates a big separation and distinction between the two groups of people. An immigrant has made the choice to resettle elsewhere, and it could be for reasons pertaining to hardships within their country such as low wages, no employment, little food, poor economy, or the presence of

extended family in the country of immigration (Edwards, 2015). An immigrant can be viewed as someone whose incentives fuel their move, which is often undertaken with some autonomy and planning, and they usually do not need to make an immediate and urgent exit from the country due primarily to tremendous fear (Edwards, 2015). The lack of urgency gives an immigrant time to plan to resettle and to cope with the potential challenges that come with resettlement. Having the decision of when, how, and where one will relocate is extremely beneficial as it allows for one to better prepare mentally and physically for the resettlement process (Cortes, 2004).

In comparison, those categorized as *refugees* are primarily driven by survival, which influences their unintentional migration. A person with refugee status frequently migrates without notification, without physical or mental preparedness, and with the option of living or dying due to their helplessness in the circumstance or the situation they are forced to flee. To illustrate,

> The 1951 Refugee of Conventions defines a refugee as someone who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR 1951 Refugee of Convention).

A person of refugee status is motivated by an immediate fear to migrate and will likely face various uncertainties in the process of trying to resettle. Many refugees have commented that they never wanted to leave their country of origin and that they would have preferred to stay if they did not feel their lives were in danger (Kibreab, 2003). They fled their homes in urgency without planning a destination, just in the hope of reaching safety. There are many cases of refugees facing long journeys through several countries, having to live in the shadows, detention centers, refugee camps, and/or prisons before even getting a chance to permanently resettle in another country (Kibreab, 2003). Having no time to prepare and nothing in tote, refugees rely on the mercy and grace of their host countries. It is clear that a refugee's migration situation is much harsher than that of their immigrant counterparts. In sum, it is the migration journeys that reflect the main difference between immigrants and refugees.

Refugee Crisis

An increasing number of newcomers live in Canada, and the province of Manitoba is leading the trend with approximately 286,000 newcomers in 2017 to an estimated target of 340,000 in 2020 (Gov. of Canada 2017). Between January 2015 and July 2017, over 84,000 refugees were resettled to Canada, including refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Afghanistan. Almost half of this group (43%) consisted of school-age youth (under 18), who enrolled in schools across Canada (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2017). Currently, the focus is shifting from refugee students' resettlement to refugee students' wellbeing (School Mental Health-Assist, 2016). Schools around Canada, and in Winnipeg in particular are working with refugee families and students to make the transition process easier for everyone involved. In addition to necessities like food, shelter, clothing, and medical care, many young refugees are in desperate need of social and cultural support, as well as the ability to communicate in their new surroundings and learn about their new cultures and languages. Some of these needs are more difficult to address because of the various challenges many refugees have endured such as interrupted schooling, trauma, displacement, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and insufficient literacy. Once they have arrived in Canada, many refugee youths faced additional challenges including discrimination, social exclusion, poverty, intergenerational conflict, and resettlement stress, all of which affect their access to education (Kanu, 2008).

Education can play a protective role in the lives of refugee youth when larger social issues such as racism and intergenerational conflict, as well identity formation, affect youth mental health and wellbeing (Hyman et al., 1996). School age refugee youth are required to attend school as soon they arrive in their host country Canada. While some refugee youths have attended school in their home or at the refugee camps, others have interrupted education, and some have had virtually no access to formal schooling in their home countries or the transit countries where they resided before coming to Canada.

Most under-schooled refugees cannot read or write in any language and are several years behind their native-born peers in mathematics and other subject areas. They are typically placed in remedial courses with other English language learners, as well as native-English speaking students, where they receive little or no linguistic support (Short & Boyson, 2004). Immigrant and refugee youth whose parents have had little or no formal education are especially dependent

upon the school system for academic and social guidance. Immigrant youth who arrive in Canada when they are at least 10 years old are more likely to drop out of secondary school than Canadian-born students and students who immigrated to Canada as younger children (Corak, 2011). The risks of not graduating from high school are estimated to be about 15% for boys and 11% for girls who came to the country before 9 years of age. They increase by over 1 percentage point for every year past this age, reaching 20% to 25% for those arriving in the country after the age of 13. According to Corak (2011), these findings are robust when the possibility that the first exposure to English or French occurred before migration is taken into consideration. For refugee youth, the pursuit of a high school education comes at a time in their lives that is marked by upheaval, uncertainty and profound changes in lifestyles and family fortunes.

Needs of Refugee Youth

In the context of this thesis, a "need" can be described as a desired characteristic of a refugee student that can be improved through participation in the PVP. The opposite is true when it comes to extrinsic obstacles that prevent the “needs from being met. Combatting these outside obstacles does not result in immediate benefits for refugee students; rather, mitigating them through the supports provided at the PVP strengthens student’s ability to address their own needs students to have more opportunities to address their own needs.

Educational Attainment. Perhaps the most pressing need among many refugee youths is assistance in attaining an age-appropriate level of education. Gunderson (2007) discovered that while approximately 60% of late-arriving immigrant students had low academic achievement and dropped secondary-level academic courses (while remaining in school), the percentage for refugees was even higher. Many refugee youths have never attended a single day of school or have had their education interrupted. Those who did attend school were most likely receiving a poor education. These students have significant learning gaps and have had few opportunities to develop age-appropriate language and literacy skills in their first language. A lack of primary education and literacy in the first language contributes to lower academic success in high school (Garcia, 1999). Refugee students who arrive in Canada require specialized services and transitional and adapted programming, such as guidance about where to access services and extra support for their academic work and curricula to succeed in the Canadian educational system in the short and long term.

For refugee youths, a lack of prior education or interrupted schooling creates both immediate and long-term challenges. On the one hand, these students require instruction in the fundamental concepts and skills required for academic success, such as how to study and take notes and how to participate in class discussions. On the other hand, their academic success is dependent on meeting increasingly complex standards and English-language assessments. Rather than focusing solely on fundamental and remedial skills for students who are not fluent in English or formally educated, it is critical to offer lessons designed to develop their critical knowledge, using content that reflects the students' lives, interests, and culture (DiCerbo & Loop, 2003). Failure to meet grade-level expectations due to a lack of essential skill acquisition is a significant predictor of dropping out (Sweet et al., 2010).

The lack of prior educational opportunities and literacy in the first language can contribute to a lack of academic success in high school (Garcia, 1999). Thus, the characteristics that are typical of students with interrupted or limited formal education place this group at odds with traditional English as an additional language (EAL) immersion model prevalent in high schools in Canada that requires literacy in one's first language. These challenges place them at a greater risk for developing marginalized or oppositional identities (Ogbu, 1987), or of dropping out of school. During formative adolescent years, young newcomers are simultaneously grappling with various migration pressures, settlement stresses, as well both cultural and linguistic barriers that challenge sufficient mastery of Canadian school curriculum content and requirements (Rumens, 2008).

English Language Proficiency. Related to their educational need is the need to help improve their proficiency in English, the main language of instruction in many Winnipeg schools. Absences or interrupted education makes the formal school transition more difficult for refugee youth, which in turn, makes learning English much more difficult (Hos, 2012). When a child cannot read or write, even in their native language, it makes it problematic to teach a child another language. It is often assumed that the language needs of refugee or immigrant youth are simple. For instance, they can attend English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes, where they are expected to learn to read, write and speak in the new language of instruction. Gunderson (2008) found that the academic abilities among English as a Second Language (ESL) students varies widely, ranging from students who have never learned to read in their first language or attended school prior to immigrating, others have attended school and have learned to read some

English and yet others have learned to read and have studied advanced academic subjects in their first languages.

Two Canadian studies reported the extent of the English language proficiency needs among refugee students. Toohey and Derwing (2008) reviewed the academic achievement records of 1,554 ESL students in Grades 10-12 from 1997-2002 from two west end (professional and upper middle class-independent immigrants) and two east end (mainly working class-family class and refugee immigrants) in Vancouver secondary schools. Although the secondary data in this study did not focus directly on refugee students, they found that ESL students in low Socioeconomic Status (SES) schools tended to avoid language-heavy courses and focused more on courses with strong visual or hands on components, which typically led to either dropping out of or avoiding academic courses that would lead to post-secondary education (PSE), or in some cases, dropping out of school altogether.

It is detrimental to assume that refugee youths' language needs are separate from other needs. Refugee students' academic success is dependent not only on their English language acquisition, but also on their social and emotional development if they are to learn properly and be prepared for schooling (McBrien, 2005; Birman & Tran, 2005). Their lack of English proficiency can lead to other difficulties such as bullying (Roxas, 2011). Inadequate language fluency can delay progress, as mastery of languages takes many years. For those students entering Canada at an older age and with little or no official language learning prior to entry, progressing though school can be much more difficult (Gunderson, 2007), which in turn, affects their educational outcomes (Willms, 2003).

Social Integration. In many situations, a refugee student's social integration into the new learning environment is accompanied by numerous challenges. Most of them have few or no friends among the local student population, they tend to feel more comfortable among other refugee or immigrants' students than with their native-born Canadian classmates, which might limit their participation in extracurricular activities. They must learn about and adjust to a new culture and physical environment, develop relationships and friendships, learn basic life skills, all while trying to master academic content in several school subjects (Shakya et al., 2011).

Social support is one of the most significant mediators for refugee children and adolescents in creating a smooth transition process (Gagné et al., 2012). More specifically, Gagné and colleagues noted the following three observations: (1) refugee students have faced a

lack of peer support, including loss of pre-exile friendships, post-exile exclusion, bullying, and rejection; (2) familial stressors for refugee students included baby-sitting, cooking, cleaning, and translating for parents; and (3) all these social challenges tend to be greater among older refugee students, which leads to a corresponding loss of social networks.

Psychological/Mental Health. Mental health is often defined broadly as a "state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to contribute to his or her community" (WHO, 2014, para 1). Good mental health is thought to be a precursor to a student's academic, employment, and life success. Mental health issues can manifest in youth in a variety of ways from clinically defined experiences like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression, to social withdrawal, bullying, poor self-esteem, negative socialization, and risk-taking or delinquent behaviours (Pieloch et al., 2016; Georgiades et al., 2007). Thus, mental health challenges are diverse and can involve complex family, school, and community processes. Experiences of trauma or loss, stress during the migration process, discrimination in the host country or challenges with language acquisition can impact the mental health status of youth, in turn affecting their ability to achieve academic and life success in their new home.

Refugee youth who are unfamiliar to their new school and community environment may experience challenges related to mental health. Refugee students' psychological challenges included a lack of trust due to the stigma associated with the "refugee" label (Kilbride et al., 2001). Adaptation to the new country, loss of identity, and loss of culture may diminish the refugee students' sense of belonging. Additional psychological challenges included post-traumatic stress disorder, stolen youth, and misdiagnosed student abilities (Kilbride et al., 2001).

Many refugees across the world have endured harsh resettlement challenges. Refugees are often persecuted in their native countries due to their ethnicity/race, religion, political affiliation, gender or sexual orientation. In other cases, many refugees are forced to flee because of war, genocide or natural disasters (UNHCR, 2010). In the process of fleeing, many have been separated from loved ones and may have witnessed and possibly experienced horrible atrocities (CIC, 2012). Refugee life experiences often include trauma, loss of loved ones, torture, rape, poverty, prolonged stay in the refugee camps, ongoing violence and insecurity (Beiser, 2005), which can lead to psychological challenges such as complex trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) when they arrive in Canada (Beiser, 2005; 2009; Keyes 2000). This trauma is

further increased by challenges related to access to language skills, employment, education and health (Dow, 2010; Morris et al., 2009).

From a mental health perspective, school is the place where issues of mental wellness can be supported. According to a study in People for Education (2010), mental health has not been a priority for professional development and less than half of secondary schools have regularly scheduled access to either psychologists or child and youth workers and just under two-thirds report any scheduled access to a social worker.

Safety. Many refugee children have experienced war, conflict and unsafe environments and thus, need to feel safe in their new countries. They provide safe spaces for new encounters, interactions and learning opportunities. However, refugee children can also suffer from discrimination and bullying in schools in host countries. This can also be seen as a security concern if refugees do not feel welcome and safe in their new country (Nakeyar et al., 2017). For example, one study in Canada found refugee children and youth (12-21 years) experienced various forms of bullying, such as teasing, social exclusion, physical bullying, unfair treatment, racial insults and intellectual belittling (Wesley Urban Ministries, 2014).

Barriers to participation include the need for feeling safe, which usually means being with people like themselves. This is much harder to achieve for newcomers from small ethnic communities (Gunderson, 2007). In a Winnipeg school, there may not be very many other students who came from the same ethic community. Schools can be a stabilizing feature in the unsettled lives of refugee young people (Matthews, 2008).

Barriers Before Arriving in Canada – Refugee Camps

Barriers in this thesis are defined as ‘external factors’ that either prevent or interfere with addressing the needs of refugee students. This means that either removing/reducing or mitigating these barriers should make it easier to address the needs of refugee youth as outlined above.

While in the refugee camps, the camps often face funding challenges which makes it more difficult to provide necessities such as adequate schools for children and youth. In many instances, students must walk very long distances to arrive at school (Mareng, 2010). Within the schools, curriculum is often a disputed topic. It is unclear which country’s curriculum should be taught and why. Due to language and qualification issues, finding appropriate teachers to teach the programs can also be difficult. While education is a highly valued commodity, its priority can become secondary at times when survival in refugee camps and having food to eat must come

first. In many cases, young girls are denied access to school because of cultural and familial beliefs (Mareng, 2010).

For instance, according to UNHCR (2017), about 120,000 refugee children of school- age in Dadaab camp in Kenya attended about 35 primary and 7 secondary schools. In Kakuma camp, nearly 75,000 students attended 22 primary schools, and about 5,700 students attended 5 secondary schools. Lack of sufficiently trained and qualified teachers and insufficient teaching and learning materials are key shortcomings to the attainment of accessible and quality education in the camps.

Flemming (2017), noted that the average teacher to pupil ratio is 1:69 in primary schools in Dadaab. The report also indicated that 70,000 of school-aged children are currently out of school. In Kakuma, while primary schools have an average of 140 students per class, the rest of Kenya has about 40 per class. By looking at the ratios at the refugee camps compared to those of Kenya as a nation indicates the barriers refugee students face while in the refugee camps.

Barriers After Arriving in Canada – Winnipeg Schools

Inappropriate Grade Placement. In Manitoba, newcomer youth, which includes refugees and other categories of immigrants, represent an increasing proportion of students (Healthy Child Manitoba, 2017).

Bedri et al. (2009) in their exploration of issues affecting new refugee and immigrant youth found that newcomer students were forced to repeat grades supposedly to catch up. This produces a vicious cycle of lowered value (Bedri et al., 2009) as the students internalize a sense of not being as smart as local students and rationalizes the achievement gaps as due to their own failings, rather than to school policies, programs, and practices (Gibson et al., 2009), which results lower performance (Bedri et al, 2009). Streaming also has a direct impact on refugees eligibility for some job training programs as young adults (Wilkinson, 2002).

According to Kanu (2008), grade placement issues represent one of the more prominent barriers that interfere with academic achievement among refugee students. Refugee students are sometimes placed in age appropriate/grade inappropriate classes, which may differs from their current aptitude level. This may lead to much frustration and worry for refugee students in their effort to catch up to the rest of the class as they may be quite behind and feel lost in their classes. Parents worry about this a lot because this is the first wave of children for whom they had visions

that the future would be bright and successful. This does not seem to be happening to the degree they had hoped (Kanu, 2008).

Low Finances. The economic situation of the parents of refugee children influences the educational experiences and outcomes of youth from refugee backgrounds because it places additional pressure on them to contribute to the family income. Hospital for Sick Kids (2005) concluded that the low socio-economic status of refugee parents might necessitate that refugee youth take on jobs while in school. Francis (2010) found that while education is a core value, the pressure to contribute to family finances might mean refugee youth cannot take advantage of the support programs that are available. It also leaves little time to attend to the rigours of schoolwork. Additionally, when youth see their parents struggle with poverty, some feel they have to help by dropping out of school (Francis, 2010). Kanu's (2008) study showed some youth worked eight-hour jobs daily, which contributed to poor academic performance and frustration. A study by Chirkov and Geres (2009) in Saskatoon also found that the need to work created challenges at school such as sleeping in class, attendance problems, and incomplete homework. Moreover, youth who work part- or full-time appeared to make slower academic progress (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

The lack of financial resources available for refugee students usually heightens the need for them to hold jobs after or even during school. For some newcomer youth, working in lower-paying jobs over the long term often leads to reduced career options (Lauer et al., 2012). Some refugee youth with greater financial needs and insufficient employment options may feel compelled to enter gangs or to support gang membership or criminal activity to generate income more rapidly to help repay an immigration loan from the Canadian government (Government of Canada, 2018).

Discrimination and Bullying. Experiences of discrimination in the school setting is another challenge commonly faced by refugee youth. Discrimination can exacerbate acculturation challenges and lead to low self-esteem, stress, depression, poor academic performance, school dropout, substance abuse, and behavioral problems (Kanu, 2008; Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012). The bullying and teasing that take place in schools can also lead to the marginalization and isolation of minority youth. Males tend to be victims of bullying and violence, whereas females more frequently suffer teasing or taunting because of their lack of English, immigrant status, or newness to the school (Anisef et al., 2003). Similarly, Oxman-

Martinez et al. (2012) found that immigrant children from single-parent families are more likely to endure discrimination from peers and teachers, feel more like an outsider at school, and obtain lower grades. Berry et al. (2006) found that discrimination discourages involvement in the receiving society and contributes to an increased orientation toward newcomers' own ethnocultural groups or ambivalence about their involvement in the new culture, thus hindering cultural integration and the development of a pluricultural identity.

Some refugee youth find themselves targets for bullying (Yau, 1995; Clancy, 2007). Being preoccupied with settlement needs, they are less able to defend themselves as they feel rejected and alienated by their peers (Clancy, 2007). For example, a participant in the Clancy (2007) study described being perceived by others as 'new' and 'different' as undesirable qualities that made her vulnerable. Victimized students reported they sometimes found it difficult to inform their teachers or caregivers because of the pressure not to talk of their pain or for fear of further isolation. Coping mechanisms used by these students included minimizing the pain, hiding their true feelings, acting tough or retaliating, which often brought negative consequences (Clancy, 2007).

Lack of Family Support. Addressing the needs of the family is crucial in addressing the needs of the youth, and must include reinforcing the family members' belief in the value of education and the importance of staying in school (Sersli et al., 2010). The experience of being new and sometimes the length of time it takes for refugee families to access services, secure economic independence, find adequate and decent housing and form supportive networks presents challenges.

Parents often experience worries and frustrations regarding other aspects of settlement that affect them personally, such as language barriers, changes in status and personal identity, and their relationships within the family and mainstream society (Seat, 2003). When youth adapt to the receiving society and its cultural values (e.g., gender roles, fashion, curfews, and dating) more quickly or easily than their parents, intergenerational conflict may arise (Anisef, Kilbride, & Khattar, 2003; Chuang & CISSA, 2010; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Family and school relationships may deteriorate especially due to role reversal because youth may assume some adult roles in helping the parents with interpretation or translation as they may have learned the English language faster. This can result in the unravelling of youths' self-concept, identity, and

sense of belonging, and this in turn can lead to other serious problems including, dropping out of school, joining gangs, and impasses with the law (Ngo, 2010).

According to Ennab (2017), not being able to communicate with school caused families to feel stressed and isolated, especially when there were material and emotional issues requiring attention and support from outside of the home. It also limited parent interactions with the schools. Parents with low English fluency are more limited in the support they can provide for their children in completing their homework and in involvement with the school. When parents are working multiple shifts or jobs, they may be unable to ensure that their child devotes enough time to their schoolwork and to support their child's punctuality and attendance at school. They may also be unable to provide supervision after school. Due to limited English proficiency parents may experience barriers in communicating with the school about their child's needs.

Frequent Relocation Due to Housing Problems. Housing is a major challenge for most immigrant families. Upon arrival in Canada, new immigrants often have high expectations for housing. However, research suggests that most newcomers experience some form of discrimination by landlords (Teixeira, 2008). Clancy (2007), noted that when refugees move from reception houses to various other cities and neighborhoods in search of cheaper houses or better opportunities, this unsettlement follows the children into the school system. The children always feel new, which leads to feeling more vulnerable, ruptured friendships and a reduced sense of community – all of which may adversely affect children's school transitions.

In sum, the volatility of pre–migration situations, followed by a long and uncertain transition to a new host country and the challenges of settlement such as disruption in education before coming to Canada, challenges related to adjusting to new school environment, bulling and discrimination, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), precarious residency status and the long process of determination of refugee claimant application, disintegration of family units, frequent relocations, desperate financial situations and intense cultural isolation, negatively affect the social and emotional wellbeing, and the educational achievements of refugee students (Yau, 1995). They also struggle with many of the same issues and challenges that other Canadian youth face: feelings of isolation and loneliness, mental health challenges, bullying, racism, etc., but with fewer resources to help them cope. Not surprisingly, the greater needs and barriers of refugee students often lead to a greater likelihood of them dropping out of school.

Consequences of Needs not Adequately Met

Various factors have been shown to contribute to disengagement, a lack of educational success and the desire to leave school early and/or being "pushed out" of school for refugee students (Anisef et al., 2005; Gunderson, 2007). The higher rates of dropping out of high school for refugee students are complex and multi-faceted. may be attributed in part to a lack of quality English-language education in their countries of origin or in refugee camps. As summarized above, refugee students have various needs that often exist at greater levels compared to other students, and they often face barriers that make addressing their needs more difficult. What can be especially worrisome about the effects of not adequately addressing their needs are the more immediate negative consequences including diminished academic achievement and reduced overall well-being.

Dropping out of School. Older refugee youths with interrupted schooling face unique challenges due to multiple, interconnected barriers beyond learning a new language (Jowett et al, 2020). Academic success is often viewed in the education literature as the precursor to life success, as it opens doors for post-secondary education, higher earning potential, and a range of employment prospects. In addition, student integration within the formal school system has been linked to better psycho-social outcomes and the ability to cope with the stressors of life (Barnett, 1995). For this thesis, dropping out school can be defined as any student who leaves school for any reason before graduation or before the completion of program of studies without stopping or transferring to another school (Bonneau, 2015).

Perhaps the worst and ultimate consequence resulting from not addressing the needs of refugee students' is that they may drop out of school. Students coming from war-torn or famine-stricken countries are often forcefully displaced, and have limited education, and therefore will likely need additional educational support on arrival to help to improve their language and academic skills to grade-level expectations. A long-term research study by Gunderson (2007) found that in one school district, 60% of late-arriving students were behind their peers of the same age and these immigrant students disappeared from academic classes by grade 12. In contrast, 46% of the early-arriving immigrants remained in grade 12. However, of those students who remained only about 10% were enrolled in the academic classes required for admission to university. In Alberta, Watt and Roessingh (2001) found that about 74% of ESL students dropped out by grade 12, which was even higher among students of refugee backgrounds.

Refugee and Immigrant youth who arrive in Canada as older students are more likely to drop out or be pushed-out of school than Canadian-born students and students who immigrated to Canada as younger children. People for Education (2006) found that in Ontario high schools, only 50% of ESL students passed Ontario Secondary literacy test compared to 82% of the general population. As the high school curriculum requires more advanced linguistic skills, newcomer ESL students are at greater risk of dropping out of school.

According to the Canadian Council of Learning (2008), dropping out of school has both intangible and tangible costs. The intangible costs of not completing high school include diminished social growth, a reduced sense of control over one's life and life circumstances, and less personal satisfaction. The tangible costs are no less numerous and include fiscal implications for government, society, and individual school leavers in terms of expenditures in health, social services and programs, education, employment, criminality, and lower economic productivity (Canadian Council of Learning, 2009).

Feeling Socially Isolated. For the purpose of this thesis, feeling socially isolated can be defined as the absence of satisfying and unconditional social relationships (Condeluci, 2020). According to Hancock (1986, p. 3), "loneliness equals failure, having people around us equals success". Taking this statement further, it means being isolated can hinder a person's psychological well-being. Thus, learners who either form poor relationships or have difficulty in forming sound relationships with either their parents, peers or teachers, will inevitably suffer developmental constraints while others may progress towards adulthood more successfully. Unsupervised time among youth has been linked to risk-taking behaviors, victimization and poor academic outcomes. (Dwyer et al., 1990; Newman et al., 2000). Conversely, increased social involvement after school is associated with lower levels of delinquent behavior, risky sexual behaviors and substance abuse.

The literature suggests that newcomers value and want to participate in activities but, for various cultural and social reasons, they could not or did not participate in such activities (Gunderson, 2007). Barriers to participation include the need to feel safe, which usually means being with people like themselves. This is much harder to achieve for newcomers from small ethnic communities (Gunderson, 2007). Archambault et al. (2009) contend that disengagement can be prevented through building relationships with mentors, individual interventions, home-school communication and holistic support for learning. Engagement in school and social

activities, working limited hours, and parental support and involvement were found to be important protective factors for staying in school (Hospital for Sick Kids, 2005). Having strong and positive ties to family and friends within school and the community has been found to be essential to school engagement (Anisef et al., 2005; Rumberger & Rotermund, 2012).

Gang Association and Crime. Ngo et al. (2015) interviewed 30 gang-involved youth in Calgary from immigrant families. They found that gang-involved youth had experienced multiple, severe and prolonged personal and interpersonal challenges in all facets of their lives and that gradual disintegration of their relationships with family, school and community had resulted in the unravelling of self-concept, ethnic identity, sense of belonging and sense of citizenship and progressively propelled them towards membership in high-risk social cliques and criminal gangs. Their findings brought attention to the need for coordinated, comprehensive support for youth from immigrant families through family-based, school-based and community-based programs. Youth gang members account for a large amount of criminal behaviour and a variety of criminal offences have been consistently linked to gang membership including property offences, drug trafficking and importation, fraud, robberies, assaults with weapons, homicides, and the trafficking of women and girls (Boyce & Cotter, 2013).

Pyrooz et al. (2013) found that involvement in the gang lifestyle can also lead to problems for its members, including: dropping out of school; lack of employment success; exposure to and involvement with drug and alcohol use; and teenage parenthood. Participation in gangs reduces gang members' connections to other prosocial activities and they may cut ties to prosocial groups and organizations such as family, friends, schools and religious communities in order to focus more intensively on gang participation. The longer an individual is involved, the more severe the effect is likely to become. Contact with the criminal justice system may lead to community supervision or placement in a custodial facility resulting in a criminal record that can further limit individual growth and progress in education and/or employment domains.

Youths 10 – 18 are at a heightened risk of falling victims to crime, using drugs or alcohol, or engaging in delinquent, antisocial, or criminal behaviour in the hours immediately following school (Coley et al., 2004). Participation in after school can promote time spent in academic related activities, school attendance, academic grades and performance or standardized tests (Huang et al., 2000).

Worsened Mental Health. A child in a stable environment exposed to daily routines is likely to develop a sense of security and trust. But when this routine is exposed to an abrupt and intense disruption, he or she can be significantly affected by a sense of insecurity and displacement security (Sandstorm & Huerta, 2013). Youth with past trauma left unaddressed by an adult can lead to continued distrust of adults (Shonkoff & Garner, 2011), which becomes problematic in a school setting for refugee youth. The routine in formal schools is for students to attend an eight-hour school day and to listen, respect, and trust the adults within the school. This is not an easy routine for a refugee youth whose past trauma that has been left unaddressed and ribute to rejection and wariness in adults.

Insufficient food, limited access to schools, threats to one's own or family's safety, and, for some youth, front-line combat putting them at risk for rape, torture, and war injuries were listed by Lustig et al. (2003).

There is an urgent need to address the complex needs of refugee youth because the potential adverse effects of not addressing their needs are so signficant (e.g., poor mental health, lack of employment, poor overall health, gang involvement and criminal behaviour). These social costs are significant for the individual and society as a whole and we collectively have the responsibility to change this trajectory. One way to address meet the complex needs of refugee youth and families, and to mitigate the barriers that they face is to provide comprehensive, community-based after school programming

After-School Programs

What are After-School Programs?

Roth et al. (2010), define formal after-school programs as those that (1) operate on a regular basis (e.g., daily, weekly) during non-school hours (after school, before school, weekends) throughout the academic year, (2) are supervised by adults, (3) offer more than one activity (e.g., homework help, recreation, arts and crafts), and (4) involve other youth (i.e., group based). These criteria are consistent with those commonly used in the literature to distinguish these multi-service programs from single-focus extracurricular activities (e.g., dance classes). After-school programs that meet these criteria may be provided by schools or community-based agencies.

After-school programs can provide inner-city, low-income, marginalized, and newcomer children with emotionally and physically safe places to go. As well, they provide the opportunity

to participate in learning and other activities and routines with the structure and predictability that they may not get elsewhere. After-school programs have become highly popular over the past few decades for a variety of reasons. On a logistical level, parents, practitioners, and policymakers concerned about children's unsupervised after-school hours have embraced after-school programs as a way to provide structure and guidance to at-risk youth while their parents or guardians are at work. Studies highlighting the rising prevalence of full-time employment among caregivers (Granger, 2008), and patterns in youth criminal activity (Carnegie Council Report on Adolescent Development, 1992) have emphasized the need for after-school programs that support at-risk youth by providing a positive alternative to the streets.

After-School Program Models

In the Anisef et al. (2005) review of Canadian federal newcomer integration programs, they identified characteristics of successful program models that apply to a wide range of programs to help newcomer youth settle and integrate. They found newcomers with low self-esteem and/or suffering from trauma, need individual activities where bonding can occur, whereas other immigrants benefit from group activities that foster friendships, trust and confidence. One After-school program model is based on the Centrality of Schooling, which is a Youth Host model, working in partnership with schools, to infuse schools with positive energies that would be beneficial to both newcomer children/youth and non-immigrant students and staff within the schools. A second After-school program model is called a Preventative At-Risk Model which includes ethnic-specific service provider agencies, in partnership with mainstream organizations (for example, pre-schools, daycares, elementary and secondary schools, and health clinics) that can serve as reception centres for newcomer immigrant families.

Ngo's (2009) study of immigrant youth settlement services in Vancouver, Calgary, and Toronto found that while settlement services have positive intentions to serve immigrant youth, they often lack clear goals, objectives, and specific outcomes. The programs analyzed in his study focused mostly on early settlement needs of immigrant youth, such as language, mental health and housing, with lesser attention on later needs such as identity issues, trauma related to migration, discrimination, and marginalization, or how to fully engage and participate within society. While mainstream organizations are intended to be accessible by new immigrants once they are oriented to their new community, Ngo (2009) found that mainstream organizations and institutions tended to operate with a "cultural blindness", characterized by a "one-size-fits-all"

approach, or “add-on services” such as hiring of translators rather than operating with true cultural competence whereby diversity in practices readily occurs. Ngo contended that immigrant youth services must address the challenges in all spheres of life for these youth to fully integrate into society.

Most formal after-school programs are operated by non-profit agencies, including public schools, social service agencies, community organizations, and religious groups (Pierce et al.,1999), which typically run from the time schools dismiss students in the afternoon (around 3:30 p.m.) until around 6:00 p.m. Other programs are called full-service community schools which revolve around a partnership between community agencies and schools to help overcome barriers to learning. The school component of such a system includes academic, behavioural, and social skills instructional strategies as well as consultation and supports for teachers (Scott & Eber, 2003).

Although there are a handful of programs that offer occasional programming (a couple hours a week), the vast majority provide services five days a week for two to three hours each day. In most programs, attendance is voluntary, and families/students have the flexibility of deciding which days to attend the program (Fashola, 1998; Vandell & Shumow, 1999).

Evaluation of After-School Programs

There is a growing interest in defining what high quality after-school programming looks like, measuring the delivery and outcomes of the program as accurately as possible, and using these results to improve program quality (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Granger et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2012). After-school programs that are intended to serve refugee students should correspond or align with the interests, values, and norms of students from diverse cultures. They must be flexible and less formal than school. To achieve positive outcomes, programs must also find ways to expose young people to the world beyond their immediate experience; to raise their expectations of themselves and see their potential for success. That includes enhancing their ability to make their lives better, and contribute to the communities in which they live. When programs succeed, students have increased motivation to achieve academically and the enhanced skills to realize their life goals.

Looking at the published evaluations of after-school programs, the results are inconsistent Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Durlak et al., 2010). Though some after-school programs demonstrated positive effects on youth (Roth et al., 2010) others failed to find significant effects

(Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Durlak et al., 2010). These varied findings might be due to differences in the quality of programming, with programs varying on the extent to which they involved parents, offer safe, engaging, supportive environments, or the degree to which they implemented evidence-based practices (Durlak & Wessiberg, 2007). Also, the effects of after-school participation can vary by the type of program and length of youths' involvement (Granger et al., 2007; Roth et al., 2010). Better measurement can help determine which types of programs are most effective and how often young people need to participate in the program to see the benefits.

Perhaps the most common positive effect of attending after-school programs is academic achievement. Academic support and homework assistance are resources offered at many after-school programs. Students participating in these after-school programs have shown greater academic achievement in terms of better-quality homework completion, higher standardized test scores and course grades when compared to their non-participating peers, (Afterschool Alliance, 2012). A meta-analysis of research on after-school programs also found positive effects of after-school programs on both reading and mathematics achievement, with more noticeable improvement in secondary school students compared to elementary school students (Lauer et al., 2006).

The link between participation in after-school programs and better academic performance can also result in fewer grade retentions, which translates into higher graduation rates and lower costs for special needs services (Haung et al., 2000; Riley et al., 1994). After-school programs offer tutoring and additional time for students who need to work on English and math skills, and a quiet, well-resourced space to do homework afterschool. Children who participate in after-school programs are more likely to complete their homework, and to help their peers with homework. Moreover, teachers are more likely to have positive expectations for these students. Program participants express greater interest in pursuing post-secondary education and demonstrate success in academic, social-emotional, and healthy lifestyle realms. Besides academic achievement, participation in after-school programs have been linked with other positive outcomes including reduced gang participation and criminal activity increased social integration and adjustment to a new culture (California Afterschool Network, 2014).

While there are several documented benefits of attending an after-school program, there is little prior research on how often students attend after-school programs. Existing evidence

suggests that there is considerable variation in attendance between programs (Roth et al., 2010). But such benefits cannot be obtained if children and youth do not attend programs, or do not attend them regularly. With so many activities competing for pre-teens' and teens' attention (e.g., jobs, school sports, and even risky lures, such as gang involvement), it is sometimes difficult to recruit young people to participate in out-of-school time programs. Incentives (e.g., bus tickets, scholarships, meals, field trips) offer ways to boost participation.

The Peaceful Village Program

From 2014 to 2018, the PVP has expanded to include other schools outside the core downtown community of schools. The PVP currently serves 800+ youth, particularly newcomer youth (95% refugee coming from war impacted countries) and their families in six locations in Winnipeg: Gordon Bell High School, Hugh John MacDonald School, Community Site (1008 Wall Street), Glenlawn Collegiate, Fort Richmond Collegiate/Acadia Junior High and St. James Collegiate/ George Waters location. The comprehensive program includes academics (after school program which targets literacy and numeracy, homework help), social (activity-based learning) and financial support for newcomer youth (ages 12 – 21) through various strategies.

Participants. The youth who participate in the PVP represent a diversity of cultures coming from many countries including, Burma, Syria, Iraq, Congo, South Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Burundi, Uganda, Afghanistan, Iran, Liberia, Nigeria, Korea, and China. Most of the participants have been in Canada for less than 4 years and 95% are classified as refugees (Immigration Canada).

Staffing. The PVP is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, whose basic responsibilities include determining the organization's mission and purpose, supporting and reviewing the executive director's performance, ensuring organizational planning, ensuring adequate resources and oversight, determining and monitoring the organization's program and progress, and improving the organization's public image.

The majority of the PVP's Community Development Tutors (staff) are newcomers. Some of the program's leadership opportunities arise when former students become junior tutors/staff. A significant number of PVP employees were professionals (accountants, teachers, dentists, engineers, and so on) in their home countries and are in the process of becoming credentialed in their fields in Canada. It is critical for youth and families to see that PVP staff are newcomers who speak most of the languages of the participants and understand the cultures and traditions as

Canadian citizens (or in the process of becoming). The leadership team is made up of teachers with Manitoba teaching certification as well as others with a variety of professional qualifications, degrees, and experiences (teachers, social workers, community development, psychology etc.). The program is also fortunate to have the assistance of many volunteers from the community and various educational and training institutions. All PVP staff and volunteers are required to complete a Child Abuse Registry and a Criminal Record Check. Furthermore, most of the staff have received training in Mental Health First Aid, First Aid, and Food Handling. Upon joining the PVP, all staff and volunteers are trained, and the Executive Director evaluates each person's performance on an annual basis.

Current Goals

The current goals of the PVP are to:

- provide educational assistance to youth (academic assessment and tutoring) to strengthen their English language, literacy, numeracy, and other academic skills;
- facilitate increased access to higher education through the provision of scholarships which are contingent upon school and Peaceful Village attendance, as well academic achievement;
- promote positive social connections by providing a safe place for youth to learn together, as well as programming to assist them transitioning to Canadian society;
- assist the families of youth in developing a sense of belonging in Canadian society by providing English language instruction to parents of program participants as well by hosting community events (such as Village Kitchens);
- facilitate the strengthening of positive mental health among youth by providing opportunities for youth to explore their talents (through passion projects);
- facilitate community movement toward universal safety via embracing cultural diversity by educating the community about The Peaceful Village programming and its value to the community; and
- provide opportunities for youth to develop self-efficacy, self-esteem, and leadership skills.

Why the PVP?

The aim of the PVP is to reduce educational constraints that youth, particularly newcomer youth and their families living in the inner city of Winnipeg and other surrounding

areas may face. Many newcomers who have joined the PVP are from war–torn countries, have survived grueling transmigration experiences, and arrived in Winnipeg facing numerous settlement challenges. Most newcomer families are unfamiliar with the Canadian education system and they face difficulties when trying to advocate for their children in the school system. The supports provided by PVP are intended to address several educational issues including increasing credit attainment, graduation rates, and enrolment in post-secondary education/training for newcomer youth. The program also offers a safe place to be after school, and provides social, emotional connections, friendships and recreational/artistic/musical opportunities and experiences that might not otherwise be accessible or available. The PVP is designed to support youth, particularly newcomer youth and their families as they integrate into the school communities and the larger community.

The PVP also addresses the issue of summer learning loss and programming/connections for school holidays and weekends. The program offers Adult English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays to adults to enhance their conversational English, and citizenship classes to prepare the adults for their citizenship exams. The adult EAL classes also provide information sessions to the newcomer adults on typical issues of education, housing, employment, well-being and cultural awareness. The program also conducts comprehensive literacy assessments, using a well-known assessment tool (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012) during spring and fall of each year, which allows the staff to target literacy activities for each youth participant.

Needs of Students in the PVP

The PVP aims to addresses many of the needs and barriers noted above such as:

- Educational Attainment: There are many disparities among immigrant and refugee students who come from war-torn countries because they may have interrupted or no schooling at all. There is a clear need to increase the educational attainment of immigrant students, particularly refugee students.
- English Language Proficiency: Communication barriers between students, parents, and school staff; gaps in programming for acquiring language proficiency in the content areas; inadequate assessment tools contribute to the poor graduation rates. students are functioning well below their age/grade level equivalency in literacy skills.

- They need extra time, outside the school day and school year, to build conversational English and basic literacy skills so that they are able to graduate, proceed to post-secondary education/training and engage and prosper as contributing community members and citizens.
- Financial pressures: Students will sometime leave school to earn money for food, clothing and shelter, to support family members living in the house, and sometimes those who remain in refugee camps. Newcomer students find it difficult to balance schoolwork and their jobs.
- Loss: During conflicts and the transmigration process refugee youth and families experience phenomenal losses that may include: a) death of family members, b) education, c) serious and extended periods of depression and loneliness. Regrettably, many refugee youth and families impacted by war cannot access culturally appropriate services to deal with such losses.
- Disconnection: Many youth report feeling disconnected from the school and larger community. Opportunities for positive community engagement decrease the risk of youth engaging in negative social behaviors. Youth who are disenfranchised from making positive contributions in their schools and communities are more at risk of engaging in negative social behaviors. It is the responsibility of the receiving community to ensure that its newest members can participate meaningfully in the life of the community. Newcomer youth have tremendous potential, skills and resiliency. If we do not engage the youth and their families, that potential or skills can be lost or wasted.
- Academic resiliency and proficiency: Many youths may feel misunderstood by teachers due to a lack of cultural proficiency among educators.
- Future Orientation: Some refugee youth impacted by war have difficulty imagining their futures.
- Lack of affordable housing: Many students are placed in temporary housing which contributes to instability and the need for frequent transitions including changes in places of residence and schools. Also, due to transportation costs and time, it becomes difficult for some to continue attend their first school.

- Gang recruitment and drug dealing: Gangs can offer financial incentives for refugee youth; and may target these multiple vulnerabilities.

Given these multiple vulnerabilities it is clear that refugee youth and their families require holistic, integrated support that is available at the community level. The Peaceful Village addresses these needs by providing a comprehensive array of supports that are tailored to the unique needs and barriers that are experienced by this population.

Organizational Structure and Supports Provided by the Peaceful Village

Learning Centers. Learning Centers are spaces that youth come to after school and are intended to provide an instant friendship network for the student. The learning centers are open to students Monday to Friday at Gordon Bell High School and Hugh John MacDonald School. These learning centers offer various forms of academic (e.g., tutoring, language) and social support (e.g., nutritious snacks/meal, bus tickets). The learning centers are staffed with culturally diverse staff and volunteers.

Passion Projects. Passion projects are projects that a student can choose to engage in during the academic year to learn a new passion or enhance their knowledge or experience in an area about which they are passionate. For instance, students in one school were involved in an African djembe drumming project where they were able to produce a CD with six tracks. Passion Projects take place during the Learning Centre time, where each student has the opportunity to enrich aesthetic learning experiences to reinforce their core learning. It allows youth to express themselves in artistic ways that cross language barriers and facilitate expression and engagement through music/art and dance, drumming, drama, cooking, and sports opportunities.

Village Kitchens. Village Kitchens are monthly events with PVP parents, guardians, youth, PVP staff, community members, and school staff. The event takes place in the evenings and lasts approximately two hours. Parents and guardians are invited to attend each event by the PVP site Team Leaders and when necessary, the service of interpreters is sought to extend invitations if language barriers exist. The purpose of the Village Kitchens is to:

- foster relationship between PVP families, youth, and staff,
- create a safe space for newcomer parents and guardians to ask questions and to learn important information about their sons' and daughters' education,
- have a place for newcomer parents and guardians to advocate for their children and their education, and

- for parents to develop a sense of belonging to where their children are receiving their education.

School Breaks and Summer Programming. The PVP offers programming during school breaks (Winter and Spring breaks) and during the summer months. These expanded opportunities enable youth to further develop their confidence and acquire new social skills. During the school breaks, the youth have an opportunity to go on field trips (e.g., camping), get involved in the community, and continue with passion projects. Field trips are an integral part of summer programs and school breaks for the youth, as they provide youth with first-hand experiences to engage and learn about their community. An example of a field trip might include a trip to a zoo, museum or park.

Adult EAL Programming. The PVP provides adult EAL programming to the parents of children and youth in the community. Through this support, adults are engaged in conversational English circles, citizenship classes, workshops and additional programming based on individual needs.

Gardening Initiative. The PVP gardening initiative was introduced by the parents of students, most of whom were former farmers themselves in their countries of origin. The gardening takes place every summer at two locations (St. Vital and Niverville) and the program supplies transportation and other materials such as garden tools, seeds, and seedlings. While the Gardening Initiative offers an immediate benefit for families in terms of being able to cultivate and harvest their own organic food, which can save a significant amount of money on groceries, it also has the wider benefit of providing the opportunity to meet new people and become more connected to the community.

Chapter III: Method

Research Design

This qualitative research study evaluated the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant, and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Specifically, the study evaluated selected PVP processes (i.e., how well the program was delivered as intended) and outcomes (i.e., how much did students benefit from participating in the PVP). Research participants (students, parents, staff, and volunteers) for this study were drawn from the six Peaceful Village sites. All data was collected from focus groups. The focus group method was chosen because it was the most appropriate way to document the possible range of participants' perceptions and experiences. Although the overall delivery and broader intended outcomes of the PVP are expected to be fairly consistent across schools, it is reasonable to expect some variation in how some activities will be conducted and how individual students may benefit from participating in the program.

Participant selection

Prior to inviting students, parents, and staff to participate, ethics approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba (see Appendix A). Fifty students, 15 parents and 15 staff who were invited by email to participate in the focus groups (see Appendix B – Students/Parents and Appendix C – Staff). Thirty students, 10 parents and 10 staff/volunteers were selected from across the six Peaceful Village sites. The students who participated in this study were registered and regular attendees of the Peaceful Village Program. Each student participant, 18 or over, signed a consent form to confirm their willingness to participate (see Appendix D). For each of the remaining student participants (under 18), one parent signed an informed consent (see Appendix D), and they themselves signed an assent form (see Appendix E), which clarified the purpose of the study, procedures, confidentiality information, and information about their right to withdraw at any time from the study (van Manen, 1990). Similarly, each parent (see Appendix D) and staff participant (see Appendix F) signed a consent form. Each participant was emailed a $10 Tim Horton gift card as an expression of appreciation for their time.

In terms of staffing, there are 11 full-time and 50 part-time staff members that included varied educational levels, such as teachers, social workers, doctors, students, and educational

assistants. Due to my supervisory role in the program, while I feel that I have a good working relationship with all the staff members, and students/parents, to help prevent the possibility that some staff/students/parents may feel undue pressure to participate or perceive that others may feel that way, a research assistant (a teacher in a River East Transcona School Division, who is not involved in the PVP), carried out the focus group discussions.

Focus Groups

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, and provincial health measures, each focus group meeting was conducted via Zoom and was audio recorded to provide a complete and accurate transcription of the discussion from each meeting. Each focus group meeting was scheduled for 90 minutes at a time that was most convenient for all participants. Most of the focus groups were conducted over the weekends during the day and the others were conducted during weekday evenings. The research assistant conducted at total of nine focus groups for this evaluative study - two with staff, five with students, one with parents, and one with students and parents. The number of participants in each focus group ranged from three to ten and included participants from different PVP sites to generate freer discussion from participants. Each focus group discussion took approximately 90 minutes and was conducted during July-August 2021.

For the students, there were questions pertaining to their level of participation in the program (e.g., How often do you attend?) and perceived outcomes (e.g., In what ways does the PVP help you to meet your academic needs and challenges?). Similarly, for the parents, there were questions about their participation (e.g., How would you describe your relationship with the PVP staff?), and what they feel they have gained from participating in the program (e.g., In what ways is the Peaceful Village meeting the needs and expectations of the participants' families?). For the staff focus group, the questions focused on how effectively they felt they connected with students and their families (e.g., How do the staff and volunteers support the youth and their families in the program?). The complete list of questions for students and parents are listed in Appendix G, and for staff in Appendix H.

Role of the Researcher

I am conscious of the fact that my position in the PVP may have an impact on how I conduct this study as well the interpretation of the data. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, I performed the following procedures:

The descriptive validity of the data was checked by the research assistant, who went through the data line by line and highlighted categories that emerged from the focus groups before coding them. This is done to ensure that the exact wording and meaning of participants, rather than merely coding biases, are captured.

In order to ensure that my interpretation was as valid as possible, I collaborated closely with my advisor and conducted a thorough check to ensure that my worldview did not conflict with my interpretation.

Data Analysis

All audio/zoom recordings from the focus groups were transcribed by the research assistant. The researcher and research assistant read the transcripts and developed coding categories based on standard, recurring patterns in the data. All the data for students, parents and staff were analyze separately. Creswell (2007) and Creswell (2012) defined coding as the procedure of fragmenting and classifying text to form explanations and comprehensive themes in the data. It is the process through which researcher gather or 'tag' content related to a specific theme or idea (Attride-Stirling, 2001). It aims at reducing the data by sorting out the information transcript into manageable and meaningful transcript segments with the aid of coding framework.

Once all data from the transcripts were coded, the coded categories were analyzed and organized into themes and sub-themes. Categories that appeared to be foundational were labelled as themes. A category that appeared to be a secondary branch within a theme was labelled as a sub-theme.

Chapter IV: Findings

In this chapter, the focus groups' data is presented and described, and some links to the literature are made. A more detailed discussion related to the findings is presented in the following chapter. As stated earlier, the primary questions that guided this research, and therefore the presentation and analysis of the data, are as follows:

1. How does students' participation in the PVP lead to their development in selected academic and social outcomes?
2. In what ways do parents benefit from their children's participation in the PVP?
3. How involved are students and their parents in the PVP?
4. How well are the staff and volunteers providing support to PVP to students and parents?

As these questions were the primary focus of this evaluative research study, findings are presented in sections related to these research questions. There were many themes identified that were related to the research questions. Themes and sub-themes were numbered in a tiered manner to represent more clearly, the research question it is connected to, and if it is a sub-theme. For example, theme 1.2 is the second theme connected to research question #1, and theme 1.2.1 is the first sub-theme within theme 1.2.

As this is a qualitative research study focusing on the depth and richness of data, it should be noted that the focus group was intended to give deeper insight into participants' perceptions of their involvement and how they benefit from the PVP. In addition, these detailed perceptions may well be of interest to various groups such as teachers, after-school programs, immigrant organizations, and policymakers and possibly bring to light areas that should be explored in further study. To give context to all the data, below is a brief explanation of the participant demographics is provided.

Participant Demographics

Letters were assigned to each participant who participated in the focus groups to protect privacy. Approximately 60% (30) of the participants were female, and 40% (20) were male. Student participants ranged from grade 7 to 12. Parent participants ranged from 45 years to 65 years old. The staff participants had different educational backgrounds, including teachers, social workers, and university students, and ranged from 22 to 63 years old.

Research Question 1: How does students' participation in the PVP lead to their development in selected academic and social outcomes?

Theme 1.1: Improved self-worth and sense of belonging

Student participants agreed that participating in the Peaceful Village program could enhance their personal and social skills, such as problem-solving, conflict resolution, self-control, leadership, responsible decision-making, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. For someone to have positive self-worth, a person must have respect for himself and a favourable opinion of himself (Miller, 2011). Various comments reflected a variety of issues related to this theme, such as increased confidence, a more comprehensive social net, friends with common interests, and an overall sense of belonging for students who participated in the PVP.

According to Student A, the PVP made her feel better about herself in many ways. Making friends in the PVP boosted her social confidence, artistic confidence by participating in the passion projects, and overall confidence in the school and her schoolwork. These outcomes are quite significant as she was unable to make friends in the regular school setting:

> When my family moved here, I got enrolled in the school. I was very afraid as my English was not good and everyone was different. I wouldn't say I liked school as I felt out of place until participating in the Peaceful Village Program. Bullying was a common occurrence and made me begin to hate the idea of coming to school. I didn't know anyone, and I didn't feel like I fit in, really. My friend told me to join the Village. I started getting involved in the Peaceful Village Program, and then everything started falling in place. This caused an increase in my social confidence, which similarly addressed my overall well-being and self-worth.

Student B connected with many students from his country and another part of the world participating in the PVP. He did not normally socialize as he went home right away after school. When a teacher in his school recommended the PVP to him, he had the opportunity to meet a wide variety of students - some were in the band, some played sports, and others working on their homework and assignments. These new friends shared some of his interests, making him more confident and more comfortable at school:

> Joining the Peaceful Village was the best thing for me. I met people that I would never have been in contact with regularly even though we are in the same school, and that just helped me know more people who liked the same things that I did. Making these new friends just made me feel better about myself because I lacked confidence in my poor English.

Student B believed the Peaceful Village made him a better person and those who participated in it. He stated that "I always have a place to go after school and be with my friends, instead of going home and be bored. The staff made sure everyone is taken care of. They feed us, help us with homework, bus tickets".

Student C stated that she was so thankful for the recommendation of one of her teachers, who told her to join the PVP, as they will help her with her schoolwork and meet new friends. According to her, attending the program enabled her to meet students and staff from her community who spoke her language. It helped her settle quickly, which led to her attendance improving as she always wants to come to school so that she can go to the Peaceful Village. Student C stated:

> I gained a lot of confidence when I joined the program, as I was able to complete my homework before going home, as there is no one at home to help me with home as my mom is at work and comes late always. My friends also encouraged me and the staff too. This program really gave me a lot of confidence and I feel I will graduate from high school and go to university from the support that I get from here.

Student D was encouraged by one of her teachers to attend the Peaceful Village after school. As there was no Peaceful Village in her school, the teacher connected her with students who attend the Peaceful Village Community Site, which accepts students who don't have the Peaceful Village in their own schools. According to her, "it was a discovery of the best place she wanted to be in." She attributed her improved grades, more involvement in school, self-confidence, and overall self-worth to being part of the Peaceful Village Program.

> Before joining this program, I wasn't really involved with any school stuff and looking back my attendance was poor, my grades were really dropped bad. Also, I just didn't really socialize that much with anybody because I just went through my day at school and then went home every day. (Student D)

Student E, poor school attendance, low grades, and lack of social involvement affected her in many ways. But, after joining the Peaceful Village, this changed when she started the program. According to participant E, "I was able to become more comfortable around people that I might not have known, and this helped me from a social standpoint and even a self-confidence standpoint." According to her, participation in the peaceful village program made her feel better about herself. More specifically, she participated in all activities offered after-school and making sure her homework was done. According to her, when her grades started to improve, "It was neat to be recognized by the teacher that my grades are improving." The compliments from her classroom teacher reinforced her self-esteem and self-confidence and continued to shape her identity as inspire to graduate from high school. It is worth noting that when youth do well at something, especially those coming from war impacted countries and interrupted school, it pleases other people, like their friends and the adults who care about them, like teachers and the tutors. Positive feedback also makes them feel good. And over time, they continue to build positive self-esteem.

Student F has been in Canada for one year. According to him, "school was hard, and he felt lonely most of the time." He was recommended to join the peaceful Village after-school program, which happened to be in his school. Before joining the Peaceful Village, he only has one friend who comes from his country and community. The Peaceful Village vastly enhanced his social circle because he did not have many friends before attending the program. He stated:

> I never had that many friends before coming to Canada and when I started school. The program just brought all these people together from many countries, and it just worked. It was nice to hang out with people who shared the same interests as me. I feel confident about myself and graduating from high school with all the support that I received from here. My confidence is higher than before.

Student G initially attended a school in downtown Winnipeg when he arrived in Canada. The school happened to have a Peaceful Village program, and he was recommended by the guidance counsellor to attend the program. When her family moved out of the downtown area to another part of the city, according to her, “it was the sad moment the fact that I won’t have Peaceful Village after school, with my friends.” She can make new friends and stay connected with her old friends as they usually meet during Peaceful Village events like during Winter break when collaborative activities are planned. Student G stated:

> This program happened to be in my new school helped me a lot to receive continued academic support and my overall self-confidence, and my quest to graduate from high school with good grades. I was devastated when my family told me that we were moving out of downtown, as the idea of me missing the connections I gained in the Peaceful Village. Thankfully, my worry was short-lived, as my new school has Peaceful Village.

The PVP has multiple sites and is of great help to students like Student G. It could have been very challenging to adjust to her new school. She stated, “it was easy to fit in the school because there is a peaceful Village after school where I know I will go and get help with my homework and meet new friends in the village.”

According to participant H, the peaceful Village helped her by stepping out of her comfort zone. She stated “Peaceful Village helped me to step out of my comfort zone because I didn’t really have many friends before starting peaceful village and it also helped to talk to people and gain confidence. When I talk to people, I get social anxiety and now I find it really easy to just talk and say whatever I want to say and no one judges you by anything”.

In summary, this theme revealed that participation in afterschool programs like the PVP helped all participants feel better about themselves in various ways. Self-worth stood out as a significant factor and had a direct relationship with their actions related to school on a wide scale. They became more involved in school, took more interest in their schoolwork, felt more socially relevant, made more friends with common interests, felt more confident, and were generally happier at school. These factors are related directly to the student’s possible success in school and the likelihood of that student graduating high school and continuing to post-secondary education or training.

Theme 1.2: Improved Academic Performance

Each student participant mentioned improved academic performance, literacy, and confidence in reading and writing English language skills during the focus groups. Academic motivation and confidence to succeed were also evident during the students' focus groups discussions. One of the main benefits of afterschool activities is that they boost the students' academic performance (Jaworski et al., 2018). Many afterschool activities involve helping the students out with their homework. Such events may help the students struggling with reading at home, especially newcomer youth who don't have anybody to help them with their homework. Often, most parents or guardians are either working or not sufficiently literate to support their children with their schoolwork. It also helps those students who cannot sit down to do the homework until late. Also, when a child learns something new during the afterschool activity, it could boost the child's understanding of subjects in schools - even if the activities are not directly related to the classwork (Jaworski et al, 2018).

One factor regarding high school dropouts presented in the literature review cited research that tied them to feeling a lack of connection between schoolwork and their future orientation. Participants in the Peaceful Village afterschool programs were shown to benefit academically in literacy and core areas of reading and writing, according to discussions in the focus groups.. The participants described that the PVP offers pathways to complete high school and facilitates future career opportunities. There was consensus among the students about how attending the PVP helped them improve their performance in core subject areas (sciences and math), English language skills in reading and writing, and speaking.

Sub-theme 1.2.1: Homework Completion. For many youths, particularly newcomer youth, homework completion and even its motivation are very challenging for many reasons. Some of the points that students in the focus groups mentioned include: frustration from having low literacy and numeracy levels, not clearly understanding Academic expertations, poor student habits and study skills, and little motivation to complete their homework at home. According to some students, lack of parental support as many parents/guardians works multiple jobs to support the family, and their low level of education contributes to a lack of academic support at home (i.e., no mentors at home, lack of technology), and poor environment (crowded space at home, looking after young siblings).

It was evident during the focus group discussions, the newcomer youth, particularly those of refugee background with interrupted schooling or no school at all, home environment and family are often the biggest influencers in their overall academic achievement. Without parental support at home, the teachers' efforts at school are likely to be ineffective.

According to Student I, her teacher recommended attending the PVP as she was struggling academically, as evidenced by her lack of completion of schoolwork, especially homework. She stated that "I find it difficult to complete my homework at home as I have many siblings whom I have to look after, but also I don't understand what I need to do. My parents' English is also not good, so they cannot help me". Many newcomer youths, particularly refugee youth, struggle with homework completion and the motivation to do them. Further, Student I stated:

> Since I started attending the Peaceful Village Program, I have been able to complete all my homework on time. I feel confident about myself and going to school the following day as I know my teacher won't be mad at me. The support I received in all my schoolwork from this program is amazing. I wished my teacher told me about it when I was in grade 7. It is such a good place to be after school. My friends are here, and we got time to work on our schoolwork together and play.

The academic focus of the PVP, especially during the first 1.5 hours of the program, helped students to focus more on their schoolwork. That enabled students to improve their study habits and motivation. Staff members helped them with their schoolwork, which motivated them even more.

Student J started attending the program from grade 8, when it was recommended by his uncle. Student J is in grade 11 now and hopes to graduate from high school and go to university to study mechanical engineering. He stated that "attending the Peaceful Village has motivated me a lot about school and what I am capable of doing and of becoming". This program is my second home, I can complete my schoolwork here". Creating an environment where youth feel accepted and belong can be a motivating factor in attaining education success, especially if there is no support or mentoring at home. He stated:

> Every day of the week I get homework from school and my parents are not able to help me because they are working and also, I have other siblings. In the Peaceful Village after-school program every day of the week, they help me with my homework. I feel confident graduating next year.

Student K joined the program because it was recommended by the guidance counsellor in her school. She was struggling academically. According to her "they told me I will not graduate on time if I don't improve or pass my courses". She took the opportunity to join the Peaceful Village in the hope of improving her schoolwork. She was not getting help at home with her schoolwork and her parents are not well educated to help her. She stated:

> My English was not good, both speaking and writing. When I was told I could not graduate on time, it really scared me, as my parents were looking forward to me graduating from high school. When I joined this program, the support I received really gave me hope. I am able to confidently say my marks in all the subject have improved. My teachers are happy and my guidance consoler too. I just wished I knew about this program when my family moved to Canada.

Student L often finds it hard to understand teachers' instructions in class. According to him "The teachers just explained things so quick, sometimes you ask them questions and they try to answer you quickly, and I get lost and I keep quiet because I know I will go to Peaceful Village after school. I went to Peaceful Village after school and the staff are able to explain to slowly and I complete my homework before going home. They made math be easy for me. Also, they help me to try to speak well in English. I was shy to speak in front of people, but peaceful village helped me to be able to talk in front of people."

Student M stated "I am not confident enough for my schoolwork. Nobody helps me with my homework at home. I am always behind and that makes me feel bad". But according to her, since joining the Peaceful Village, she is able to get tutoring one-on-one, which makes her understand what was covered in class and can complete her homework or assignments before going home. She stated:

> Understanding my schoolwork and completing my homework before going home are the things that keep me coming back for this program. I get time do my schoolwork as well catch up with my friends. I feel more confident than before. My parents feel happy that I am coming to this program and getting support as I don't get any help at home. Here is my second home, very supportive staff, feeding us and helping us with our schoolwork".

According to the students, a major benefit of a program like the Peaceful Village is the academic enrichment provided. Time set aside during the program for homework assistance ensures that the youth will have guided support to complete their homework, which also helps them to better comprehend what they are learning as it is done one-on-one. Completing homework assignments after school allows for the students to have less stress at night when they go home for the evening. By the program allotting time for assignment completion at the beginning of the first hour of the program schedule allows for a more relaxed and fun environment for the remainder of the program.

Sub-theme 1.2.2: Regular school attendance. Students struggling academically often disengage from school and start skipping classes because they don't see an avenue to success. For newcomer youth, particularly vulnerable refugees, skipping school means exposing them to unwanted behaviours like being prey to gang activities and drugs and alcohol usage. Some of the goals of the Peaceful Village program are to improve academic performance and influence school-day attendance, and hence the program.

Student N was always behind with his schoolwork as he found no time at home to complete his homework or any school project. He stated, "I have to look after my young siblings, as well help them with their schoolwork. My parents are not well educated, and their English is not good. It is very tough to focus. I am always distracted". After learning about the Peaceful Village, he started attending regularly. He got all the academic support he was not getting at home and developed friendships with many youths who participated in the Peaceful Village. He stated:

> I really feel more confident now. My English has improved a lot. The staff are really good; some speak my language, making it easy for me to relate easily. I feel like I belong here. I don't need to worry about my teacher getting mad at me because I didn't complete

> my homework. After all, I got it done at the Peaceful Village. My school attendance has improved as I want to be at school because of the Peaceful Village. Snacks and other activities are really good. I get a ride home after school, which gives my parents peace of mind, knowing that I am safe and getting support at the same time.

Finally, Student O stated, "my attendance was not good before joining the Peaceful Village. I was not too fond of the school lot or going to school. But since joining the village, I like coming to school every day as all my friends go there and it is fun. Snacks, we play, and we do our schoolwork. I love it"

For newcomer youth, especially those who have interrupted schooling or have no school experience, it is hard to connect well with formal school. Creating a space where they feel they belong, are accepted, and supported will help them to thrive socially and academically. To student Q, Peaceful Village is that space that she feels like she belongs and allows her to do her schoolwork and meet new friends.

Sub-theme 1.2.3. Improved grades and overall future orientation. During the focus group discussions, almost all student participants agreed that participating in the PVP has improved their performance in the core subject areas of math, sciences and English. The overall goal of the PVP is that the youth, particularly newcomer youth, have a sense of belonging in the school, do well in their subject areas and, above all, graduate from high school.

High school diplomas and college or university degrees are essential for achieving a credible job with a stable income here in Canada. Without a high school diploma, those youth, particularly newcomer youth, have a significantly lower chance of attending college and earning a degree. Two students stated that they avoided participating in harmful activities by peer pressure to experiment with drugs, alcohol and maybe gang activities by participating in an after-school program like the Peaceful Village. It is worth mentioning that a positive relationship between program staff and the youth can improve youth participant academic performance and more engagement in school and after school.

In the literature review chapter, one factor regarding high school dropouts cited research related to a lack of connection between schoolwork and their future orientation. Through the focus group discussions, many students attested that attending the Peaceful Village enables them to pass their courses, putting them on the path to graduate from high school, eventually leading

to college, university or other training. A lack of connection between schoolwork and their future orientation is even more prevalent among newcomer youth, particularly those of refugee backgrounds with interrupted schooling or no formal school before coming to Canada.

Student P is in grade 11 and has struggled to focus and complete her schoolwork. She wasn't sure about what she wants to do if she could graduate from high school. According to her, the PVP helped her focus on studies and plans for a university and what to study. She stated, "the staff are really good, and they helped me with my schoolwork, but also advising me about the university and what I can take according to my interest. The staff helped me focus on subjects that will allow me to get admission to the university, which I have done now, and I am passing them. I feel happy and confident".

Student Q attended the PVP, following the recommendation of her elder sibling who had previously attended the PVP. Student L felt very unattached to school because of she could not speak English very well and the school seemed like a place where she felt she didn't belong. She stated "when I was back home, we learned in Arabic, here we learn in English and it is very hard. I don't understand my teacher". According to her, she gained some confidence after she started to attend the PVP as she met many students who are like her and have the same challenges, but most importantly, staff were willing to support her one-on-one with her homework or any schoolwork. She stated:

> This program really helped me discover that I am capable to achieve in my studies. I am loving school now and I come to the school every day and the program. The staff are really good, they help me with my schoolwork, provide snacks and bus tickets. I am very happy of the Peaceful Village. I want to graduate from high school and make my parents and the staff of this program happy too. The staff are hardworking and care about all the student that come here.

According to Student R, "before joining the Peaceful Village, I wanted to go into business, I don't know why. But after joining Peaceful Village and talking about it more and thinking about it, it changed. I like the humanities and stuff like going into sociology in the future. Also, when we had that career talk, it was so good that they said we don't have to have everything figured out at the moment. We can change our minds, and there is no pressure."

The Peaceful Village career fairs, where they invite various higher institutions of learning and present to the youth, helped many youths make informed decisions about future careers and what is needed to achieve that. This emphasizes the connection between focusing on current studies to prepare for future careers. Student R added:

> Peaceful Village is a program for people like me. I was not doing well in my schoolwork, and I had few friends. When I started here, the help, I received help me improved my grades as well confidence to graduate from high school. The career fairs helped a lot as I now know what I want to study after graduating from high school. I have received scholarships from the Peaceful village, which will help me in my university.

For Student S, her future aspirations were shaped by the support she received from the PVP staff, who encouraged and supported her with her schoolwork. Instilling in her that confidence that she can achieve her dreams if she works hard is evident in the sustained relationships between staff and students in this after-school setting.

Student T, in grade 12, stated that her teacher informed her that she will not graduate from high school because of many outstanding assignments not submitted. According to her, "it was a very stressful time being told you won't graduate and the disappointment I will cause my parents. My only place of help was Peaceful Village, and one staff was assigned to help me with my outstanding assignments and projects". According to her, without the support she received from the Peaceful Village, she will not graduate from high school with the rest of her class. She stated:

> This program means a lot to me, and I attended this program for four years from grade nine. It keeps me from bad friends. My English was bad, and I was very shy, and I struggled with my schoolwork. Without the staff support, I was going to miss out on graduating. That will be a sad day. But thankfully, I will be graduating.

Student U felt like she would not have graduated without the support of the Peaceful Village and the staff from the program pushing her to succeed. She stated, “Every time I am

feeling down on myself, one of the program staff was there to lift me and keep pushing me." She referred to one female staff member who listened to her problems and offered support "was the best experience I had with the staff here. I feel loved, listened to, and appreciated because the staff was trying to bond with a student and genuinely help". The help she received from the Peaceful Village and its staff helped her stay motivated to keep working to catch up on her credits and not fall behind in her schoolwork which enabled her to graduate from high school. She stated:

> This program helped me a lot. My parents cannot help me academically as they are always working, and being a newcomer with limited English, peer pressure, and all are tough. Peaceful Village made me grounded. I am always here from the start of the program to the end. The staff are excellent, especially those from my home country of Ethiopia, they understand my challenges, and they can help me. I am grateful.

Student V stated, "when I joined the program, I thought accounting would be better for me, but when I joined, I read a book of the program staff gave to me, and now I'm interested in criminal law. He gave me this book because I wasn't sure about what I want to do after high school, and he gave me multiple books about careers, and I could choose what I was comfortable with and do my research. He gave me the book, and I read it, and I was interested in research about law and different laws, so now I'm interested in criminal law".

To summarize the students' comments connected to this theme – the program helped these participants feel better about themselves in various ways. Self-worth, self-esteem, and self-confidence stood out as significant factors directly related to their school experience and their sense of belonging. They became more involved in school, attendance increased, took more interest in their schoolwork, felt more socially relevant, made more friends with a common interest, felt more confident and therefore, happier at school and in the program. All these factors are directly related to the student's possible success in school and the likelihood of that student graduating from high school.

Perhaps the most vital of these outcomes is the students' increased confidence, which directly contributed to their success. Decreased confidence in school, usually leads to lower grades, which often results in children giving up on their hopes, dreams and plans.

Research Question 2: In what ways do parents benefit from their children's participation in the PVP?

Parents who are not well educated, do not speak English, or are not familiar with the Canadian educational system may find it difficult to assist their children with their schoolwork. Further, parents with limited resources (e.g., low-income single parents, overcrowding) may find it easier to have a program like the Peaceful Village supervise their children and support them to reach their full potential.

Theme 2.1: Improved English Proficiency

To respond to the literacy and numeracy needs of the parents of students in the PVP, the program offers free English as an Additional Language lessons for the parents and other community members to enhance their English. Several parents commented on what they gained from these lessons.

> My English has improved a lot since I started attending the English class. I feel confident to apply for my citizenship now. It is really good here and my teacher is the best. Peaceful Village is like a family to me as I have children attending the program. Good community. (Parent W)

Similar comments about Improved English were shared by three parents who including Parent X:

> My daughter learned the language very fast. She used to miss school sometime as she was helping me with interpretation sometimes at the doctor or bank. But now I can do all those by myself as my English has improved a lot because of me attending this English class here. The teacher is really very good.

Theme 2.2: Greater Overall Optimism for Children

There are many barriers to participation in a program like the Peaceful Village to many newcomer parents, for instance, program fees for some programs, but not PVP, the cost of equipment, location of the program in conjunction with lack of transportation, low levels of awareness among parents about the benefits of participation for children and youth, and language and cultural issues.

Parent Y came to Canada with the hope of a better future for his children. According to him, “I didn’t go far in my education in my home country, my hope is in my children to do well in this country. I sacrifice everything because of them”. According to him, learning about the Peaceful Village and what it does gave him hope, as he was worried about his son going on the wrong path like many young people in his community. He is happy that the program is free to attend, and his child attends the same school. He elaborated further:

> Peaceful Village meets the needs and expectations of my family when they provide some school materials and programs that can help our children study well. When they provide some food to children and the staff are providing materials that they can use in real life. They meet in those ways. Sometimes they provide money to help with children’s needs. They really meet my family’s needs. Families need assistance in education. They meet our needs 100%.

Theme 2.3: Academic Support that Would be Difficult to Provide at Home

It is worth noting that a majority of parents or guardians of the youth in the Peaceful Village have limited formal education or in some cases, none at all. Therefore, it is very challenging for them to support their children with their schoolwork or any educational related issues.

Parent Z stated “It is good when my son goes to the program. He cannot always get help at home (with schoolwork). The program helps me hear about education. When they are in the program everything is okay. There is teaching and correcting, and he is learning. He learns things he doesn’t know yet. This is the feeling of the program”

Parent W had a similar perception:

> Very, very helpful, for example, when they make my children sit after normal school, they ask them homework stuff and they help. PV helps them to understand the homework and helps them to correct the work. It helps them with their knowledge so that is very important for children and school. So, they don’t go to the store or roam around without doing anything. They can gain some knowledge. This shows me that the program is very important to my children.

Theme 2.4: Safe Place for Children

Some parents expressed a level of relief or appreciation that their children's involvement in the PVP reduces the chance of their children becoming involved in places or activities that are unsafe. As Parent W pointed out:

> Yes, this program creates a safe space. My future wish to my child is to study well until finishing high school or college and that is the vision for the program. It is quite safe so they can read. It can be difficult for me to explain because I don't speak English all the time.
>
> As a newcomer you go to a program, and you see someone who speaks your language, and you feel safe already. You know that at least you can communication. English may not be their first language. You see that culture is there and you feel safe enough already by that. When you enter you see the environment of the program and after participating in the kitchen and parent and staff meeting. Each one shows you that your kids are safe there.

Similar safety concerns were noted by Parent X:

> There is a big problem in his community as many youths are falling into gangs' activities and many are getting killed in their young age. Many are dropping out of school. It is sad to bury young people who we bring here to Canada to do well and be better than us. I am happy for a program like peaceful village. They keep the youth safe and engaged. They feed them, provide transport home. I work two jobs, so I feel peace of mind know my child is at peaceful Village.

Theme 2.5: Connections with Culturally Aware Staff

The staff in the Peaceful Village are mentors, role models and support systems for all the youth attending programs. It is worth mentioning that staff-student relationships create an environment in which students feel safe and supported, fostering student growth socially, emotionally and academically. Positive relationships between program staff and program

participants have been shown to improve students' academic performance and engagement in school, as well as lead to higher educational and future aspirations.

> Once we have our kids in the program, we feel like it is our second home or like a brother or sister or another parent and they are with the other house. We get the communication from the program from meetings or school events. We also get the communication from the program. More than that, some parents are involved in gardening. We wonder if we will get, when the summer is coming, and we have contact from the program that the gardening is ready and if anyone wants to join. The grade of our kids we can learn from the staff members during the village kitchen. We are happy that our kids can have a trip or explore the other land or provinces of Canada through the youth exchange. These are crucial communication between staff members. It is good communication. (Parent W)

> One unique thing about the Peaceful Village is that most of its staff are newcomers. They speak many languages, including my language. It makes it easy to communicate with them about my child education. My child feels safe that they are people from my country helping them with their schoolwork. Understanding student needs and being culture aware is good for program like peaceful village. (Parent Y)

Theme 2.6: Greater Optimism with Post-Secondary Scholarships

Each student enrolled in the PVP earned scholarships at the end of each school year if they met certain criteria set by the program, such as attendance, doing well in school, participating in passion projects as well volunteering. Scholarships are earned by students and held in trust for 7 years (or more if an academic plan is presented) and can be claimed once they are enrolled in a post-secondary institution. The average claim wait time is two years as students often upgrade their English or choose to work for a year prior to enrolling. From all graduates, 445 of them redeemed a total of $519,221.34 towards their post-secondary education or training. As illustrated below, many parents were very happy to see the future educational opportunities for their children.

I am really happy for the scholarship that the peaceful Village gives to my child. I see it as a good way to motivate the child to aim to go to the college or university as that is what the school is for. It will help my child when he graduates from high school. It is a big help for my family. (Parent X)

Because of the scholarship incentive, my child attends the program everyday whenever she can because I don't want her to miss out. It is really a good way to help newcomer parent like myself to plan for my child education when he graduates from high school. I don't have enough saving for her education because I came here as a refugee. I am thankful for the peaceful Village for the scholarship, even if it is small, it will help my daughter and inspire her to work hard. Thank you, Peaceful Village. (Parent W)

The school is really a good way to motivate my son to work hard towards university or college. There is no one in my family that went to university, so I really want my son to be the first. The Peaceful Village is really helping me so much by helping my son achieve that. I cannot help him with his schoolwork, but this program is helping. (Parent U)

I wish I can do more for this program. It has helped my family a lot. All my children attend this program and they receive scholarship which will be a big help when they graduate and go to university. Life in Canada is difficult especially for young people as they are lots of bad things like gangs and drugs and other things that will take young people attention away from school. Peaceful Village help keep the kids safe and stay in school. I am happy for that. (Parent Z)

As a new immigrant most parents come for kids' education. Once your kids are in school you have limited language, but you have people to support with homework and afterschool. This is a big burden for you taken away. This is crucial to families new to the country. The expenses after high school you have to pay for that. Peaceful village also has scholarships, which is a lot of help finically and academically as well. This is a need for us to help out with the families. For the parents that are still home they can go out and

> learn things together on Saturdays. To get to know other people. On behalf of the other moms especially, coming out is mentally another need as well. (Parent Y)

Research Question 3: How involved are students and their parents in the PVP?

Connected to this research question, students and parents were asked specific questions about their involvement in the PVP, such as: How did you learn about the PVP? How frequently do you go? Do you enjoy taking part in this program? And, what does the program offer to keep you returning for more? These questions were very straightforward, as they were about their relationships with staff as well as how involved they were in PVP activities.

Learning, participation, and involvement in the PVP, is experiential, interdisciplinary, context-specific, and interest and activity-based. These elements were identified in various activities such as tutoring, conversational English, and literacy development within the Learning Center; daily nutritious meal preparation, serving, and cleanup in Village Kitchens. The programming is based on the participants' cultural traditions while also providing them with opportunities to experience and learn about Canadian culture in varied contexts such as field trips, recreation and sports, cooking and food preparation, and a variety of art activities.

Theme 3.1: Involvement in the Learning Centres

The Learning Centers are spaces that the students come to after school and are intended to provide an instant friendship network. The learning centers in most schools are open to students Monday to Friday and offer various forms of academic (e.g., tutoring, language) and social support (e.g., nutritious snacks/meal, bus tickets). While students attended the learning centre for varied reasons and levels of motivation, most of the students in the focus group reported attending and participating almost every day that the program is open. Some attended regularly because of ongoing support and activities in which they participate, to be with friends, and overall, they felt it is the best place to be after school. In addition, the PVP provides them with good food and bus tickets or rides back home.

According to student B:

> The learning centres are fun, and fun activities. The activities are always nice and fun. Sometimes we talk to each other about issues and things we do like. I really like the atmosphere. I started attending from grade 7 and now I am grade 11. I attend every day

whenever I can. I know the leaders are really helpful and they just lend a helping hand if I need anything. This nice community and it is nice to always have people to talk to.

Similarly, Student F stated:

I enjoy being part of the Peaceful Village Program. I attend and participate every day after school in all the activities. I am participating in other programs sometimes apart from the Peaceful Village, but I find Peaceful Village to be the best. They provide me with all the help I need with my schoolwork, I get to be with my good friends and have fun together. The learning space is welcoming, and we are encouraged to learn and be our best we can. I come every day and my performance has improved and I love being part of this community of the Peaceful Village.

Several students said that they were very thankful that the PVP is available almost throughout the year, including all Professional Development Days, and throughout the Winter, Spring, and Summer Breaks. Throughout the school year, students have numerous opportunities to be engaged, involved, and participate.

Student H stated:

It is really nice to be involved in all the activities in the Peaceful Village Program like when there is no school when our teachers are having meetings, this program plan for us fun activities, also during winter breaks, spring breaks there are always activities to participate. The best part is during the summer, they planned lots of fun activities, filed trips and camping. Sometimes they take us to places my family cannot afford to take me, which I really appreciate. I did camp for the first time and it was good experience, it is part and way of life in Canada. Overall, I love the program.

Theme 3.2: Involvement in Passion Projects

While many of the Passion Projects focus on artistic/music interests, a student can choose to learn a new passion or enhance their knowledge or experience in something they are already passionate about. These projects allow students to express themselves in artistic language that

cross language barriers and facilitate expression and engagement through, music/art and dance, drumming, drama, cooking, and sports opportunities.

According to student G:

> I was shy when I joined the program. But they encouraged me to join dance group which is part of their passion project. I got to meet many new friends and I learned how to dance and I feel very confident now. I even perform In front of many people during the Village Kitchen.

The opportunity to learn new a hobby or talent is available in the Peaceful Village as attested by Student C, "I learned how to play basic guitar at the Peaceful Village. I am not able to get to the music program at school, but here I can. I want to get better at playing guitar and maybe piano soon".

Theme 3.3: Involvement in Village Kitchens

In addition to fostering relationships between PVP families, youth, and school staff members, the Village Kitchens provide another opportunity to foster these relationships. The Village Kitchens are also intended to provide a safe environment for newcomer and refugee parents and guardians to ask questions, learn important information, and advocate for their children regarding their educational opportunities.

> The Peaceful Village Kitchen is a good event, because all the parents are invited to learn about the program and meet the staff. I get a chance to meet the leader and I ask how my daughter is doing with school. I like it because I get a chance to meet other parents and newcomers who attend. I like it because they showcase different cultures of the students and the food. It is a good feast. I visited my daughter school for the first time because of the Village Kitchen event. (Parent X)

Similar comments were noted by Parent W:

> The Village Kitchen is really a good way to bring people together. Back in my country, food brings people together, and that is what the peaceful Village program together. I

> have the chance to meet with the tutors and they tell me how my son is doing in school. I met the principal of my son's school in the Village Kitchen too, which is very good. It really gives me opportunity to learn about the program and how I can support as the parent. This program is very good and I want to find a way to help and support.

Given that the theme or focus of the Village Kitchen is about the country of the parent or students, parents appreciated the opportunities to participate in the Village Kitchens, and to share their experiences with history, geography, traditions and particularly food.

Some student participants commented as follows:

> My family is usually invited to the Village Kitchens, which are fantastic events. It's a good time for students to put what they've learned from their passion projects into practice. We have a dance group, and I join them for Village Kitchen. The food is always delicious. The Village Kitchen is themed by country, and the food is always from that country. During the Village Kitchen, we have the opportunity to learn about the culture and many other aspects of the country being celebrated. (Student H)

> Village Kitchens are a lot of fun, and I got to meet some of my friends from other PV sites. I enjoy the music and the food. I like it even more when they have a theme for my country, because the music and food will be from my country. It's a lot of fun. There are many games and prizes, and both parents and students participate. I really enjoy the food. (Student F).

> The best Village Kitchen is the final Village Kitchen, which is usually held in June. It is combined because all PV sites attend. Many people attend, including government officials, such as the mayor of Winnipeg, and I like it because they come to celebrate with us the success of the students' receiving scholarships and those graduating from grade 12. Because it is the last Village Kitchen, they prepare enough food for everyone, and even members of the community come to enjoy it. (Student K).

Theme 3.4: Involvement in Gardening Activities

The gardening initiative takes place during the summer months and brings newcomer families together to cultivate organic food. The PVP provides the tools, seeds, inputs and transportation to the sites. Through the gardening initiative, it provides supplementary food to the families, which helps improve their food security and feeling of wellness.

Many refugees from all over the world who arrive in Winnipeg feel "placeless." They have often come from villages where people live in close quarters and have access to family and friendship networks, as well as a strong connection or attachment to the geography that makes their home country feel special or unique. They have made a strong presence in their respective areas. Aside from the differences in climate, arriving in any urban North American city could be similar: strip malls, gas stations, convenience stores, fast food outlets – an impersonal, homogeneous, corporate space.

> I was a farmer when I was in my home country and even in the refugee camp. We cultivate and we live and feed out of the land. When I came to Canada, we have to live in apartment. When my child joins the peaceful village, the team leader told me about the gardening during the summer. I was so happy, as I love gardening. I am able to cultivate our organic crops. I can say I harvest lots of crops and preserved some. It saves me and my family lots of money on grocery. It is also a good exercise. Thanks to peaceful village. (Parent Z)

> I like the program; they gave me piece of land where I cultivated our organic crops from my home country. It is not easy to get a land to do gardening here as I live in an apartment, but the Village provide me with land and I plant many crops. My family ate lots of organic food and I saved a lot of money I was going to buy food with. (Parent Y)

Research Question 4: How well are the staff and volunteers providing support to PVP to students and parents?

This research question yielded three noteworthy themes: the importance of developing relationships, the importance of having similar backgrounds, and the importance of holistic, needs-based support. Many staff members stated that students who participated in PVP benefited

from the tutoring program provided by the PVP. The staff stated that some of the benefits included students completing homework and school projects that were left unfinished from class, improving grades, and assisting children who would otherwise have failed to maintain or pass.

Almost every staff member in the focus groups commented about the activities they engaged in to assist the students. No staff member had any concern about any aspect of the PVP that did not meet expectations regarding program delivery.

Theme 4.1: Importance of Having Similar, Lived Experiences

Most staff members are themselves recent immigrants to Canada, many from refugee backgrounds. They are fluent in the participants' languages, reflect their cultures, relate to their experiences, and serve as culturally appropriate role models and mentors for participating students and parents. Many of the staff originate from nations where their professional credentials are not recognized in Canada or in the process of being recognized. Since its inception, former participants have progressed from junior leaders and tutors to team leaders as the program has increased in size.

Theme 4.2: Importance of Building Relationships

The Peaceful Village's staff and volunteers serve as mentors, role models, and support systems for the students who participate in the program. During the focus groups, most of the staff agreed that positive staff-student relationships created an environment in which students feel safe and supported, promoting student growth socially, emotionally, and academically. In turn, this leads to improved students' academic performance and engagement in school and after school and higher educational and future aspirations, as many youths stated during focus group discussions.

Below are some of the comments that staff members shared that highlight their active support for students and parents:

> We do informal counselling through a home visit. We build relationships with families, which is very crucial for us. If one of the kids is not showing up in the program, the outcome is not that good. The parents entrust their kids into our hands. Parenting back home (country of origin) is different from here (Canada). We do the food hamper before and after COVID. COVID never controlled our program. We continued social media, all those things to help our kids. The program before COVID, we had village kitchen to get

> together with all families. We had sports and teams. We had passion projects, girls club, boys club, art, painting, dance, and different kinds of music. We had space for these kids to see people from different backgrounds and their backgrounds because we had a long winter. The program gives them a space where they see kids like them. (Staff AA)

> At the beginning, like we have lots of culture, we do have language class for the participants with their language that they want to learn about, so they don't forget their language. Language is kind of culture of sorts in their community. For other support, we are a bridge; there are kind of three ways, student, parent and teacher. So, when they have a problem or there is a barrier of language, we (the program) have a kind of language bank where we can go and help out and support the family to talk for parent teacher conference or other stuff like in court. To understand the situation of school is different than back home (country of origin) so we are kind of a bridge for that to connect to the system between the teacher, student and parent. We are in the middle to be a bridge for them. We also support them with their language. When people are here for a while and settle in the country. We have language for the families and help to prepare them to be Canadian: to get ready for the citizen test. Those are the support. More than that, we have a long winter, and in summer we will enjoy outside. Our families enjoy outdoors back home and some are farmers so we do have gardening, which supports them mentally. You can plant and harvest vegetables, and get out of your apartment. You can have fresh fruits and vegetables to bring home and this is another level of support in this country. (Staff CC)

Theme 4.3: Importance of Holistic, Needs Based Support

The intentional planning and integration of mission-critical student academic and personal supports (from the ground up) is at the heart of the PVP holistic student and family support approach. To provide holistic student supports, a program like PVP must become student-ready by integrating and improving myriad support services into a seamless, timely, and personalized experience for each student.

Below are some comments by the staff on this theme:

The youth and families are supported through homework help and tutoring on the student side of things. To offer safe space if they need to. I think about things that maybe they aren't able to discuss with their teachers or with their parents. Maybe a place to get away from the struggles that life presents, like just home life. I think through village kitchens, they are able to bring parents into the program maybe in a way that maybe they wouldn't normally come into the schools. Through transportation and offering a safe way back and forth to programming. There are things that show up on a one-to-one basis that are part of the program that support the families. If the person has a court date coming up and they need language services, this is something that has been offered in the past. Or applying for university or if there was a death in the family and the family was really struggling and the program stepped forward and tried to help that family through a crisis. (Staff DD)

The staff and volunteers support the youth and families of the program through identifying the parents and students' needs. Like (thinking) what do they need. I can think of ways we provide support. Financial support, like scholarship for students so they have some funding to go forward to university. We really support education for students. Second is transportation. Before COVID hit, we usually gave bus tokens so students could have transportation to go back to their house. We also provide food and nutrition for the students, so they won't go home hungry. We provide academic support as well. Our program is to tutor students after school. If they need help in any specific subject, we will help them with that. Some students first language is not English and this is something where our diverse staff comes in handy because they can translate and explain, and help the students to understand as well. Now since COVID hit, we changed to online programming. We still provide tutoring services and passion projects we operate all kinds of crafts and cooking days. Things that will help the student engage and help them to cope with stress as well. (Staff BB)

As an after-school program, we tutor students on homework. The school used to serve hot meals. During the drought, we ordered food and some sites cooked it. We've also delivered food to families, which is vital. Having a pal is huge. Also, we know their names and culture. Unable to eat pork, a student said they appreciate the peaceful

> village's support because they can only eat halal food. They were ecstatic because the Peaceful Village's food is always culturally relevant. This village helps kids and families. We know their cultures. In a recent class, a student asked for my help in finding a person she needed to contact. "I need to talk to the Nigerian guy because he speaks my language," she said. And while many of the youth and families speak excellent English, it can be helpful to hear new terms or ideas explained in your own language. Where you can share ideas, learn about homework biases, and assume what you know or are very Canadian. Village kitchens, which bring families together and provide food, also help youth. Bus ticket For example, we teach them to play games with friends or drumming. It also helps some families who live in small spaces and have to help their kids after school. A two-bedroom apartment may be noisy, so let them do homework and be kids here. After their trip, they return home re-energized and ready (Staff EE)

> Our main program is tutoring. As newcomers, many lack this in the house, especially when you are coming from a background of the war zone and parents missed school because of the conflict there and the war. When they come here, they get busy with life. Mom and Dad are working to earn, and who is there for the kids? Who is there to do homework with them and check for school? I believe a peaceful village fills that gap correctly because one of the issues is that there is nobody at home who understands it. No one at home speaks English. Therefore, nobody can help these kids do English homework or math at home. The program fills that gap with tutoring. At the same time, we get their bellies full, and we feed them. We have a snack for them, dinner for them. We drive the young kids home at the end of the program. And we provide bus tickets. When it is dark in winter, we drive them home. (Staff FF)

To summarize, the importance of developing relationships with participants is stressed, as the way in which the support they provide is tailored to their specific needs. After-school programming is a critical component of support, and these themes demonstrated that there is no "one size fits all" approach to providing it. Instead, it must be adaptable and customized to the specific circumstances and needs of the participants in the PVP.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions

Summary

This qualitative research study evaluated the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant, and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The main reason for this study is that there is a strong need for research on the effectiveness of programmes like the Peaceful Village, which play a role in the settlement and education of newcomers. Canada receives more than 300,000 immigrants each year (Government of Canada, 2017), and this number is more likely to rise due to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. Evaluation research of after-school programs is vital, primarily to increase the educational attainment of incoming immigrant and refugee students, and secondarily, to show that federal and provincial funding for education programmes like the Peaceful Village must continue.

A focus-group method was used in this qualitative study to obtain more detailed data by focusing on how and why the Peaceful Village Program played a role in the participants' academic, social, and high school graduation. This method, with open-ended and questions and opportunities for group dialogue through the use of focus groups allowed me to interpret more clearly, and contextually, the students', parents and staff lived experiences during their time in the PVP.

The findings of this study back up much of the previous research on how an after-school programme like the PVP can play a vital role in the lives of students, particularly those who face many challenges in adapting to school and performing well in core subject areas. Improving self-worth and a sense of belonging is critical for immigrant and refugee students because it creates a conducive environment and conditions for learning, allowing students to graduate from high school and eventually enrol in post-secondary education or training. The findings also suggest that parents of PVP students benefit enormously, for example, improved English proficiency by attending the adult EAL programme. Also, greater hope and less worry knowing their children are in a safe space after school notably added academic support for their children that would be difficult to provide at home.The noteworthy point by the staff is the need to provide holistic, needs based support approach to students and families, which signifies that an after-school programming like the PVP is not a one-size-fit all approach, but rather, it need to be flexible and individualize to the needs and circumstances of the students and families.

Discussion

I will now discuss the main findings of this study, with references to previous research and some personal reflections, for the sake of clarity and ease of understanding. Each research question will guide the discussion in this section.

Research Question 1: How does students' participation in the PVP lead to their development in selected academic and social outcomes?

The theme that emerged from the students' focus groups that was particularly noteworthy was 'improved self-worth and sense of belonging'. Previous research found that students' interpersonal skills, interactions with classmates, and sense of school belonging improved when they participated in afterschool programmes (Hammond & Reimer, 2006). While the findings on this theme may not be surprising, these findings are nonetheless encouraging as representative comments were made from almost all the participating students (30). Perhaps what made this theme most noteworthy was that it seemed to influence several important outcomes. The students' focus group comments showed that their increased self-worth and sense of belonging contributed to their improved grades, greater academic ambition and social integration, and more active school involvement. This sense of belonging is critical to students' academic persistence (Bridgeland et al., 2006).

Given that improved academic performance is one of the main intended outcomes for students who participate in the PVP, this theme was quite prominent as it was reflected in several related sub-themes that included homework completion, regular attendance, improved school subject performance and overall future orientation. Not doing homework is likely to have an adverse effect on academic achievement and doing work that is below standards (Bryan &, Burstein, 2001). For the newcomer students in the PVP, understanding their homework and ways to complete homework efficiently can be especially challenging. Sometimes, there are so many assignments that even good students have difficulty handling them all at once (Corno, 2000). Many students do not understand the homework, do not have time, and don't know how to plan/organize (Darling-Hammond & Ifill-Lynch, 2006). For newcomer students, homework completion is more difficult as daily routines can be quite overwhelming (Xu, 2005), and faced with numerous distractions such as television and telephone (Xu & Corno, 2003). The findings in this study show that homework assistance for immigrant and refugee students is very successful because the staff are knowledgeable, students have enough time to complete their homework,

and the program meets their needs. Such support is potentially one of the most critical aspects of the program because it directly improves students' academic performance.

The courage and the resiliency of many immigrant and refugee students is worth celebrating. The Peaceful Village takes significant steps to provide holistic support for both the parents and the children most importantly. It is critical to evaluate the overall needs of today's youth in terms of academics, socialization, finances in terms of scholarships, and nutrition. Many people misunderstand the obligations and pressures that newcomer and refugee students are subjected to.

In sum, it is safe to say that the PVP is an excellent resource for steering young people in the right direction. Participating in PVP, according to more than one participant, reduces the likelihood of them engaging in antisocial or delinquent behavior after school and becoming victims of crime or violence. Because many newcomer and refugee parents work multiple jobs, youth who are expected to stay home alone after school are more likely to engage in unhealthy behaviours such as substance abuse (such as smoking, drinking, and other vices), video gaming, and failing to complete their homework or academic projects. Idle minds, it is said, are the devil's playground.

Research Question 2: In what ways do parents benefit from their children's participation in the PVP?

Out of the six themes connected to this question, perhaps the most notable were (1) improved English proficiency, (2) greater overall optimism for children, and (3) added academic support that would be difficult to provide at home, (4) satisfaction knowing their child was in a safe place, (5) increased optimism due to post-secondary scholarships, and improved food security through the gardening initaitive.

In many circumstances, parents rely on their children, who are more likely to pick up a language quickly, for linguistic help and translation. To help parents and adult participants integrate well, the program provides adult EAL lessons for adults to improve their conversational English and citizenship programmes to prepare them for their Canadian citizenship exams. Of the six themes that reflect the ways in which parents benefit from their children's participation in the PVP, the parents' improved English proficiency could be considered as the greatest benefit as it leads to subsequent other benefits and opportunities. Adult EAL classes are an excellent time

to provide newcomer adults with information sessions on education, housing, job, well-being, and cultural awareness.

Greater overall optimism for children was another particularly notable theme. optimism has been consistently found to predict lowered parenting stress and greater overall wellbeing (Ekas et al., 2010). From their focus group discussions, parents explained that participation in various activities and events is often impacted by difficulties accessing programme services, distant locations, lack of transportation, or cost. The finding cements the role the Peaceful Village plays in providing holistic support to youth and families by having multiple locations and programs based at schools and in the community. The range of PVP activities and resources available free of charge for newcomer families appears to contribute significantly to encourage their engagement with schools and strengthen communication between day school personnel and the Peaceful Village staff. For example, many of the students do not have sufficient access to the required equipment at home, such as the internet or laptop computers. Many of the students come from large families where numerous children must share a single laptop or tablet. In addition, many students are confronted with other challenges such as caring for multiple siblings or assisting their parents throughout the day, all within a limited living space. The Peaceful Village uses flexibility and space in providing support to the students. The tutors work around the youth's needs in the learning centre. Completing coursework and graduating would be extremely difficult for many of the youth without the support, especially the academic support.

As a former refugee myself, I will attest that refugee families are encouraged to look for work as soon as they arrive in Canada so that they can support their families and rebuild their lives. They are able, and more than willing to help themselves and contribute to their communities. As a result, parents are frequently required to work long hours in order to meet their financial obligations and support their families. That challenge was directly addressed by the students' experiences pertaining to two related themes. First, finding a safe place for their children remains a major concern for most refugee parents. After school, the PVP gives students a safe place to hang out, academic support to help them finish their homework, and food and transportation to get them home safely.

Research Question 3: How involved are students and their parents in the PVP?

Perhaps the most active area of involvement within the PVP, was reflected in the theme 'Involvement in the Learning Centres'. Most students from the focus groups reported that they

attended the learning centre on a daily basis, which is tracked by the PVP, whenever the program is open. While students come to the learning centres to receive academic support, these centres are also a great place for them to meet friends while participating in passion projects and other events that are organised by the program. It is my belief that operating the program throughout the year, that is, during Professional Development Days, Winter Breaks, Spring Break, and eventually Summer Breaks, contributed to the high level of student participation in the PVP program.

I think students' involvement in destructive social behaviours is reduced when they have opportunities for constructive engagement and involvement in a safe and welcoming space after school like the PVP. Disenfranchised immigrant and refugee youth are more likely to engage in harmful social behaviours because they cannot make good contributions in their schools and communities. The receiving community, which includes the PVP, is at least partly responsible for ensuring that its newest members have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in their schools as they rebuild their lives and integrate into the local community. Youth who have recently arrived in Canada has enormous potential, talents, and resiliency. Their potential or abilities can be lost if they are not sufficiently involved in meaningful and engaging learning activities after school. Every year, we have the opportunity of welcoming a large number of newcomers to Manitoba. Wisdom, culture, languages, agricultural knowledge, art/music, and environmental awareness are all gifts that these newcomers bring. We must figure out how to use this knowledge and gain from new perspectives on the world.

The Peaceful Village Program's Village Kitchen is an excellent strategy because it provides a safe location for newcomer families to advocate for their children while also breaking down communication barriers. There is an immediate formation of ties and the creation of a sense of belonging among the students, their parents, and their PVP staff as well school staff. Making connections between newcomer parents, program workers, and school staff in a courteous and inviting environment is made possible. The celebration of culture and the sharing of food are quite important, and many parents feel welcomed and accepted as a result of this.

Most activities outside of school consist of gardening activities and are carried out by parents and their children throughout the summer months. Many parents in the focus groups expressed their enjoyment of participating in summer gardening activities with their children. The opportunity to get their hands dirty in the garden, as well as the opportunity to produce

organic food for themselves, which in turn allows them to save money by eating the produce grown from their gardening involvement, was extremely meaningful.

Research Question 4: How well are the staff and volunteers providing support to PVP to students and parents?

This research question produced three important themes: the importance of developing relationships, the importance of having similar and lived experiences, and the importance of holistic, needs-based support. The staff play an important role in assisting students with their academic work as well as their overall well-being. Interestingly, the level of engagement among staff and volunteers was evident in focus group discussions.

From the staff focus groups, positive and meaningful connections between students and staff contributed to a helpful and caring environment for learning and growth. Perhaps one of the best indicators of the quality of staff-student interactions is that while staff members encouraged students to complete tasks that build on earlier schoolwork or lessons acquired and providing them with real-time feedback as they do so, they also encouraged students to develop the self-confidence to make decisions for themselves and take responsibility for their learning.

From the student focus groups, students described how the staff treated them with respect, valued their opinions, cared about their well-being, and believed in their intelligence and abilities. They also stated that they felt comfortable discussing their concerns with the staff and were always willing to help and support.

The importance of developing relationships with participants, as well as the way in which the support they provide is tailored to their specific needs, are stressed throughout the document. It was demonstrated in this theme that there is no "one size fits all" approach to providing after-school programming. As a result, it must be adaptable and customizable to the specific circumstances and needs of those who will be taking part in the PVP.

Limitations

As with any study, this evaluation study had various limitations. Perhaps the clearest and least expected limitation was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the many pandemic restrictions, I was unable to conduct the focus groups in person as would have normally happened. Instead, all focus group discussions had to be conducted remotely (Zoom), which had its own challenges that included connectivity, privacy, and timing.

While it was encouraging to know that students and parents felt very positive about their experiences within the PVP, very little was mentioned in any of the focus groups regarding suggestions for improvement. Students and parents should have been given some opportunity during the focus group discussions to comment on anything within the PVP they believe should be improved in order to better serve them, or perhaps ideas for new activities to be considered. I believe this would have been quite feasible as the focus group discussions were conducted by an external research assistant.

Another limitation is that the findings are based on one program and thus are not generalizable to other context. It also had a small sample. Also, a limitation maybe that I am directly involved in the program, though I attempted to bracket myself by sourcing for Reseach Assistant to prevent the participants from experiencing undue pressure to participate in the focus group of the study, however, it may not have been completely eliminated , which may have influenced participants' responses.

In addition, one focus group was conducted with both parents and students present; this may have been another limitation because the students' responses may have been different when their parents were in attendance.

Implications

The most clear interpretation of the findings of this study is that the participants described positive experiences and benefits from their involvement in the PVP across multiple life domains. The benefits that they described may facilitate increased high school graduation as they are indicators of high school completion. This study identified several themes that reflected various ways in which students and parents benefitted from the PVP such as improved self-worth, school subject performance and English proficiency. Immigrant and refugee-serving organizations and schools should recognize these outcomes because they are difficult to provide within normal school operations.

A second important implication is that while it might seem rather obvious and expected that students and parents would report many positive experiences, this research can identify which areas were most beneficial for students and parents. Knowing this can help the PVP and similar after-school programs focus its efforts, often with limited resources, in ways that can be most beneficial. In addition, this information can help shed light on possible program adjustments.

Another implication will be the PVP's mentorship model, in which youth in the program can become junior staff and are mentored to help other youth. When these junior tutors graduate from high school, many of them are retained in the program as tutors.

The Village Kitchen is also a good model for connecting parents and participants to the schools where the PVP operates. The PVP can serve as a bridge between families and schools.

Finally, the findings from this study provide further evidence and justification for schools, governments, and funders that an after-school program such as the PVP high school should continue to be prioritized. This is especially important as these stakeholders face increasing demands for transparency and accountability.

Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative research study evaluated the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant, and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Based on this study's limitations, it would be helpful to replicate this study with in-person focus groups, which would likely provide further validation of the current findings. Although the focus group questions were intended to be somewhat structured, the opportunity for clearer communication and interpretation from in-person compared to online meetings would likely allow the person conducting the focus group discussions to respond with more informative follow-up questions.

Another recommendation would be to focus less on parents and staff and concentrate more on immediate and distant student outcomes. For example, more detailed attention to be given to assessing students' well-being and mental health. Looking further ahead, perhaps the more important and ultimate outcomes, namely graduation rates and number of students entering post-secondary education would be beneficial to measure.

At a broader level, considering the overall purpose of the PVP, and similar after-school programs, various studies should continue to explore the links between students' participation in their after-school activities and potential future occupations.

Conclusions

This qualitative research study evaluated the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant and refugee students enrolled in junior high and high schools in Winnipeg. It is reasonable to conclude from the findings of this study, that immigrant and refugee students can do well in school if they are

supported, welcomed, and loved by their schools. Refugee students must feel secure and valued in their new environments, and they must be supported in their new communities, while also having their unique viewpoints and abilities recognised. When program like the PVP and others, including schools, go beyond the academic system to support the integration and settlement of immigrant and refugee students, it is critical that their holistic needs are met.

The clearest and most important student outcomes in this study were improved self-worth and sense of belonging. For refugee students, I believe that having a solid sense of self-worth not only helps prevent mental health issues, but it also has numerous other positive effects. If a refugee student values himself/herself and has access to many resources and opportunities, he/she can excel and thrive, even in difficult circumstances. Fostering a sense of belonging for immigrant and refugee students created a more receptive environment that contributed to their learning and other intended outcomes. Students felt more comfortable sharing ideas and more confident in applying their knowledge or skills, while knowing they will be supported if their efforts are not successful. I am a firm believer that immigrant and refugee students have strong academic resilience, which allows them to deal effectively with pressure, stress, and setbacks that may have resulted from settlement challenges, but only if opportunities to unearth such academic resilience are created. Improving one's self-worth and sense of belonging allows immigrant and refugee students to develop self-confidence, a risk-taking spirit, and a sense of optimism about future opportunities, which eventually leads to higher academic achievement.

For parents, what was perhaps most important was their satisfaction of knowing that their children are in a safe space after school and receiving all of the necessary academic, social, and financial support through the scholarships. Many immigrant and refugee students are particularly vulnerable to gang activities, drug dealing and other unhealthy activities after school. These risks can be greater when parents, who often work longer hours, are not at home when their children come home after school. As a result, having their children in a safe environment like PVP, where they can count on receiving various supports that would be difficult to provide at home, is a massive relief for many parents.

For the staff, the importance of holistic, needs-based support for students and families demonstrates that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to after-school programming like PVP. Rather, it must be adaptable and tailored to the needs of the participants.

Finally, while many after-school programs are likely to benefit many of the students who participate in those programs, evaluations such as this are helpful as they can identify how students benefit from the program and provide additional information to guide the program improvements.

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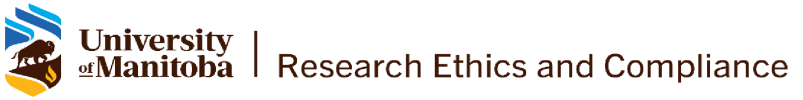
Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form

PROTOCOL APPROVAL



Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

To: Daniel Swaka (Advisor: Robert Renaud)
Principal Investigator

From: Andrea Szwajcer, Chair
Research Ethics Board 2 (REB 2)

Re: Protocol # R2-2021:047 (HS24892)
THEY SURVIVED WAR AND CONFLICT; CAN THEY NOW SURVIVE SCHOOL? A STUDY OF NEWCOMER AND REFUGEE YOUTH PARTICIPANTS IN AN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Effective: June 4, 2021 Expiry: June 4, 2022
Research Ethics Board 2 (REB 2) has reviewed and approved the above research.
REB 2 is constituted and operates in accordance with the current Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018).
This approval is subject to the following conditions:

- Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in this application only.
- Any changes to this research must be approved by the Human Ethics Office (HEO) before implementation.
- Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be reported to the HEO immediately.
- This approval is valid for one year only. A Renewal Request Form must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.
- A Study Closure Form must be submitted to the HEO when the research is complete prior to the above expiry date, or if the research is terminated. The University of Manitoba (UM) may request to audit your research documentation to confirm compliance with this approved protocol, and with the UM Ethics of Research Involving Humans policies and procedures.

Funded Protocols: Email a copy of this Protocol Approval, with the corresponding UM Project Number, to ResearchGrants@umanitoba.ca

Appendix B: Invitation (Students/Parents)

University of Manitoba | Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology

Education Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

LETTER OF INVITATION (STUDENTS/PARENTS) TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PEACEFUL VILLAGE PROGRAM

Thesis Title: They Survived War and Conflict; Can They Survived School? A Study of Newcomer and Refugee Youth Participants in an After School Program in Winnipeg

My name is Daniel Swaka and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am also the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village Program.

My role is managing the day to day running of the program. To assure you, my role as the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village has nothing to do with my study. Hence, you should feel comfortable to share your answers freely to help provide a more accurate understanding of everyone's experience within the PVP. A Research Assistant who doesn't have any relation with Peaceful Village will be conducting the focus group.

I am conducting this study, which is my M.Ed. thesis, to explore how students and parents who participate in the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) benefit from the program and I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in this study.

Participation in this study will involve attending a focus group discussion arranged at a time and place of your convenience. The focus group discussion is expected to last up to 90 minutes. During this discussion, I will ask for your perceptions of the program (e.g., interactions with PVP staff) what you feel you have gained from participation in the program (e.g., academic achievement). There are no right or wrong answers, and you can choose to either answer or not answer any of the questions. What is important are your honest views regarding the program, which will help me to get a clearer sense of how well the Peaceful Village Program helps newcomer and refugee youth in their educational aspirations.

The goal is to have 5 students and up to 10 parents from each site participate in a focus group. Within each site, if more than 5 students are willing to participate, then 5 students will be selected at random, preferably from different grades. It can be any parent who has a student participating in the program.

Due to COVID-19 restriction and provincial health measures, the focus groups will be via Zoom. The Zoom login information will be provided to you prior to the focus group. You will need to have access to Internet, as well a computer or a phone. During the focus group discussion in Zoom, you can decide whether or not to display your picture and/or your name.

You will not be asked for any personal information, but only your experiences from participating in the Peaceful Village Program. Your responses will be kept private and confidential. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. As a small token of appreciation, each participant will receive a $10 Tim Horton's gift card.

The participant consent form has been attached for your information. If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact either myself via email at swakadl@myumanitoba.ca or on my cellphone at 999-999-9999, or my graduate advisor Dr. Robert Renaud at robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca or 999-999-9999.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (REB 2).

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist in finding ways to better serve newcomer and refugee youth in schools.

Thank you,

Daniel Swaka

Appendix C: Invitation (Staff)

University of Manitoba | Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology

Education Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

LETTER OF INVITATION (STAFF/VOLUNTEERS) TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT ON EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PEACEFUL VILLAGE PROGRAM

Thesis Title: They Survived War and Conflict; Can They Survived School? A Study of Newcomer and Refugee Youth Participants in an After School Program in Winnipeg

My name is Daniel Swaka and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am also the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village Program. My role is managing the day to day running of the program. To assure you, my role as the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village has nothing to do with my study. Hence, you should feel comfortable to share your answers freely to help provide a more accurate understanding of everyone's experience within the PVP. A Research Assistant who doesn't have any relation with Peaceful Village will be conducting the focus group. I am conducting this study, which is my M.Ed. thesis, to explore the perceptions of staff and volunteers in the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) and I would like to extend an invitation to you to participate in this study.

Participation in this study will involve attending a focus group discussion arranged at a time and place of your convenience. The focus group discussion is expected to last up to 90 minutes. During this discussion, I will ask for your perceptions of how the PVP connects with both the students and parents who participate in the program (e.g., reflecting the cultures of students/parents). There are no right or wrong answers, and you can choose to either answer or not answer any of the questions. What is important are your honest views regarding the program, which will help me to get a clearer sense of how well the Peaceful Village Program helps newcomer and refugee youth in their educational aspirations.

The goal is to have 5 students and up to 10 parents from each site participate in a focus group. Within each site, if more than 5 students are willing to participate, then 5 students will be selected at random, preferably from different grades. It can be any parent who has a student participating in the program.

Due to COVID-19 restriction and provincial health measures, the focus groups will be via Zoom. The Zoom login information will be provided to you prior to the focus group. You will need to have access to Internet, as well a computer or a phone. During the focus group discussion in Zoom, you can decide whether or not to display your picture and/or your name. The focus group will take place out of work hours between 6-9 pm on weeknights.

You will not be asked for any personal information, but only your experiences from participating in the Peaceful Village Program. Your responses will be kept private and confidential.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. As a small token of appreciation, each participant will receive a $10 Tim Horton's gift card.

The participant consent form has been attached for your information. If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact either myself via email at swakadl@myumanitoba.ca or on my cellphone at 999-999-9999, or my graduate advisor Dr. Robert Renaud at robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca or 999-999-9999.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board (REB).

Your participation in the research will be of great importance to assist in finding ways to better serve newcomer and refugee youth in schools.

Thank you,

Daniel Swaka

Appendix D: Student/Parent Consent

University of Manitoba | Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology

Education Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

STUDENT/PARENT CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: They survived War and Conflict; Can They Survived School? A Study of Newcomer and Refugee Youth Participants in an After School Program

Principal Investigator and contact information: Daniel Swaka – swakadl@myumanitoba.ca – 999-999-9999

Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Robert Renaud – robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca – 999-999-9999

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 idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the research study

My name is Daniel Swaka and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. I am also the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village Program. My role is managing the day to day running of the program. To assure you, my role as the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village has nothing to do with my study. Hence, you should feel comfortable to share your answers freely to help provide a more accurate understanding of everyone's experience within the PVP. A Research Assistant who doesn't have any relation with Peaceful Village will be conducting the focus group. The purpose of this qualitative research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Who can take part in the research study?

The goal is to have 5 students and up to 10 parents from each site participate in a focus group. Within each site, if more than 5 students are willing to participate, then 5 students will be selected at random, preferably from different grades. It can be any parent who has a student participating in the program.

What you will be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in a focus group discussion with people like you who have knowledge about the Peaceful Village Program. Participation in the study will be for 1 focus group session, which is estimated to take up to 90 minutes. The group will be asked some questions relating to their experience or being part of the Peaceful Village Program. Responses from the focus group discussions will help me to better understand effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program in helping newcomer and refugee you achieve their full potential. The sessions will be audio-taped and transcribed by my research assistant to ensure accurate reporting of the information provided.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you also agree to be audio recorded during the focus group discussion.

Due to COVID-19 restriction and provincial health measures, the focus groups will be via Zoom. The Zoom login information will be provided to you prior to the focus group. You will need to have access to Internet, as well a computer or a phone. During the focus group discussion in Zoom, you can decide whether or not to display your picture and/or your name.

Possible benefits

While being a focus group member may not help you directly, the information obtained in this study will help the PVP understand more clearly how students benefit from participating in the program, and ways to improve the PVP to better support newcomer and refugee youth to achieve their full potential.

Possible risks

There are no anticipated risks to participants.

Compensation

As a token of appreciation, a $10 Tim Horton’s e-gift card will be emailed to you once you have confirmed that you will be attending the scheduled focus group discussion.

Withdrawing from the study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you or your child’s participation in the Peaceful Village Program. You can withdraw anytime by letting the Research Assistant know any time before, during or after the focus group discussion.

Privacy and confidentiality

The RA will identify students, parents and staff with letters such as "Student A" or "Parent D". You will not be identified by name in either the recording or the focus group transcript. Audio

recordings and transcripts will be stored on the RAs password-protected computer and backed up on a USB drive that will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the RA.

Reporting of results

The results will consist only of summaries of comments from the anonymized transcript and will not be attributed to a specific individual. Given this research is for my M.Ed. thesis, the completed thesis will be available in the U of M Library. Subsequently, I plan to present a summary of the research at a national conference (e.g., CSSE) and possibly publish the study in an academic journal. Participants can request a short 1–2-page summary of the results of the study within one month after the study has been completed (approximately Oct 2021). If you would like this, please provide your contact information here:

Name:
Email address:

My entire thesis will also be publicly available at https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact either myself via email at swakadl@myumanitoba.ca or on my cellphone at 999-999-9999, or my graduate advisor Dr. Robert Renaud at robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca or 999-999-9999.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this 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 any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or 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.
The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.
This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Officer at 204-474-7122 or HumanEthics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Student's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Child Assent

University of Manitoba | Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology

Education Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

ADOLESCENT INFORMATION AND ASSENT FORM
PEACEFUL VILLAGE PROGRAM STUDY

Purpose of study

I am Daniel Swaka from the University of Manitoba. I am doing a study to explore how well the Peaceful Village Program supports newcomer and refugee youth with their schoolwork. I am also the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village Program. My role is managing the day to day running of the program. To assure you, my role as the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village has nothing to do with my study. Hence, you should feel comfortable to share your answers freely to help provide a more accurate understanding of everyone's experience within the PVP. A Research Assistant who doesn't have any relation with Peaceful Village will be conducting the focus group.

Invitation to participate

You are invited to take part in this study because you participate in the Peaceful Village Program. Participating in this study will consist of joining a small focus group with other students who participate in this program. The group will be asked some questions relating to your experience or being part of the Peaceful Village Program. The focus group discussion is expected to take up to 90 minutes. The responses from each group will help me to better understand effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program in helping newcomer and refugee students to achieve their full potential. The sessions will be audio-taped and the audio-tapes will be transcribed by myself to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide.

Who can take part in the research study?

The goal is to have 5 students and up to 10 parents from each site participate in a focus group. Within each site, if more than 5 students are willing to participate, then 5 students will be selected at random, preferably from different grades. It can be any parent who has a student participating in the program.

What you will be asked to do?

Due to COVID-19 restriction and provincial health measures, the focus groups will be via Zoom. The Zoom login information will be provided to you prior to the focus group. You will need to have access to Internet, as well a computer or a phone. During the focus group discussion in Zoom, you can decide whether or not to display your picture and/or your name.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you also agree to be audio recorded during the focus group discussion.

It is up to you if you want to be in this study. You do not have to participate in this study if you don't want to, and there are no punishments or consequences if you choose to not participate. Whether you participate in this study or not, your involvement in the program will not change. You will always be welcome in the PVP. If you choose to participate, you can stop any time, and leave the focus group discussion.
If you want to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this form. Your parent/guardian will also need to sign a consent form before you participate in the study; but you do not have to participate even if they sign the consent form. The researchers will not enroll you into the study unless you agree to do so.

You should take time to read this information carefully and to talk it over with your family, and if you wish, anyone within the PVP, before you decide. Please feel free to talk to the director (Daniel Swaka) or PVP staff if anything below is not clear. You can choose to be in the study, not be in the study, or take more time to decide. Even if you agree now to be part of the study, you can change your mind later. You can ask the director or PVP staff any questions you may have at any time during your study participation.

Possible benefits

There is no anticipated risk of harm by participating in this study.

Benefits of the study

While there may not be any direct benefit to you for participating in this study, it will likely benefit future students participating in the PVP that has been improved in some ways to help provide better supports for students.

Compensation

As a token of appreciation, a $10 Tim Horton's e-gift card will be emailed to you once you have confirmed that you will be attending the scheduled focus group discussion

Withdrawing from the study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you or your child's participation in the Peaceful Village Program. You can withdraw anytime by letting the Principal Investigator know any time before the focus groups or after.

Privacy and confidentiality

The RA will identify students, parents and staff with letters such as "Student A" or "Parent D". You will not be identified by name in either the recording or the focus group transcript. Audio recordings and transcripts will be stored on the RAs password-protected computer and backed up on a USB drive that will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of the RA.

Reporting of results

The results will consist only of summaries of comments from the anonymized transcript and will not be attributed to a specific individual. Given this research is for my M.Ed. thesis, the completed thesis will be available in the U of M Library. Subsequently, I plan to present a summary of the research at a national conference (e.g., CSSE) and possibly publish the study in an academic journal.
Participants can request a short 1-2 page summary of the results of the study within one month after the study has been completed (approximately Oct 2021). If you would like this, please provide your contact information here:

Name:
Email address:

My entire thesis will also be publicly available at https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/

Withdrawing from the study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to participate or to withdraw from the study will not affect you or your child's participation in the Peaceful Village Program. You can withdraw anytime by letting the Research Assistant know any time before, during or after the focus group discussion.

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact either myself via email at swakadl@myumanitoba.ca or on my cellphone at 999-999-9999, or my graduate advisor Dr. Robert Renaud at robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca or 999-999-9999.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus.

Sign this form only if you:

- have understood what you will be doing for this study,
- have had all your questions answered,
- have talked to your parent(s)/legal guardian about this project, and
- agree to take part in this research.

Student Signature	Printed Name	Date
Parent or Legal Guardian Signature	Printed Name	Date
Researcher Signature	Printed Name	Date

Appendix F: Staff Consent

University of Manitoba | Faculty of Education

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations, and Psychology

Education Building
71 Curry Place
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3T 2N2

STAFF CONSENT FORM

Research Project Title: They survived War and Conflict; Can They Survived School? A Study of Newcomer and Refugee Youth Participants in an After School Program
Principal Investigator and contact information:
Daniel Swaka – swakadl@myumanitoba.ca – 999-999-9999

Research Supervisor and contact information:
Dr. Robert Renaud – robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca - 999-999-9999

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 idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose of the research study

My name is Daniel Swaka and I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the Universality of Manitoba. I am also the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village Program, my role is managing the day to day running of the program. To assure you, my role as the Executive Director of the Peaceful Village has nothing to do with my study. Hence, I want you to be free in sharing your answers freely for better outcome of this study.
The purpose of this qualitative research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program (PVP) in terms of selected intended outcomes for new immigrant and refugee students enrolled in middle-years and high schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Who can take part?

Approximately 5 staff will be invited to participate from each site to take part in the study. The goal is to have 2-3 staff from each site participate in the focus group. Within each site, if more than 2-3 staff are willing to participate, then 2-3 staff will be selected at random.

What you will be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will participate in a focus group discussion with other staff members who work in the Peaceful Village Program. Participation in the study will be for 1 focus group session, which is estimated to take up to 90 minutes. The group will be asked

some questions relating to their experience or being part of the Peaceful Village Program. Responses from the focus group discussions will help me to better understand effectiveness of the Peaceful Village Program in helping newcomer and refugee you achieve their full potential. The sessions will be audio-taped and transcribed by a research assistant to ensure accurate reporting of the information provided.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you also agree to be audio recorded during the focus group discussion.

Due to COVID-19 restriction and provincial health measures, the focus groups will be via Zoom. The Zoom login information will be provided to you prior to the focus group. You will need to have access to Internet, as well a computer or a phone. During the focus group discussion in Zoom, you can decide whether or not to display your picture and/or your name.

Possible benefits

While being a focus group member may not help you directly, the information obtained in this study will help the PVP understand more clearly how students benefit from participating in the program, and ways to improve the PVP to better support newcomer and refugee youth to achieve their full potential. There are no anticipated risks to participants.

Compensation

As a token of appreciation, a $10 Tim Horton’s e-gift card will be emailed to you once you have confirmed that you will be attending the scheduled focus group discussion.

Withdrawing from the study

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Whether you decide to participate or not, will have no bearing on your job performance or evaluation nor will it be part of your personnel record.

Privacy and confidentiality

Within a particular focus group, some participants may know others within the group. All participants will be advised that the focus group discussion is to remain confidential, which includes not sharing anyone's identity with anyone else outside of the focus group. These focus group discussions with PVP staff will be conducted by a research assistant who has no connection with the PVP. The RA will identify students, parents and staff with letters such as "Staff A", "Staff D". The audio recording will be stored on the RAs password-protected computer in a password-protected folder and backed up on a password-protected USB. Only the RA will have the USB, which will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

I will receive only anonymized transcript of each focus group discussion after all focus group discussions have been completed. When I receive these transcripts, I will not know which staff members participated in the study, or who said any of the statements in the transcript. Once the

research assistant has provided me with all transcripts, they will be stored in a password-protected computer file and backed up on a password-protected USB drive.

By agreeing to participate in this study, you also agree to be audio recorded during the focus group discussion.

Reporting of results

Although the study outcomes will be determined by the research findings, possible research products will include be shared in: education articles or journals, University of Manitoba faculty of education etc. I will only report group results, therefore, you will not be identified in any way in our reports. Any quotes will be anonymized and will not be attributed to a specific individual. A summary of the results may be presented at a national conference. Participants can request a short 1-2 page summary of the results of the study within one month after the study has been completed (approximately Oct 2021). If you would like this, please provide your contact information here:
Name:
Email address:

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact either myself via email at swakadl@myumanitoba.ca or on my cellphone at 999-999-9999, or my graduate advisor Dr. Robert Renaud at robert.renaud@umanitoba.ca or 999-999-9999.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this 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 any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or 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.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Officer at 204-474-7122 or HumanEthics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Staff Member's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____Date: _____

Appendix G: Focus Group Questions (Students & Parents)

1. Student involvement
- 1.1. How did you learn about the PVP?
- 1.2. How often do you attend?
- 1.3. Do you enjoy attending this program?
- 1.4. What does the program offer to keep you coming back?

2. Parent involvement
- 2.1. How would you describe your relationship with the PVP staff?
- 2.2. How involved are you in the activities within the PVP?

3. Student outcomes
- **3.1.** Academic engagement
  - 3.1.1. In what ways does the PVP help you to meet your academic needs and challenges?
  - 3.1.2. What would you consider to be the most important improvement in your education achieved by participating in this program?
- **3.2.** Academic achievement
  - 3.2.1. How much do you feel that attending the PVP contributed to your improved performance and success in English? How much do you feel that attending the PVP contributed to your improved performance and success in Math?
  - 3.2.2. If it has, can you provide an example of how the program has helped you academically?
  - 3.2.3. If it has not, please explain why.
- **3.3.** Social engagement
  - 3.3.1. How much would you say that participating in the PVP helped you to develop relationships and a sense of belonging with other program participants and with other youth in the school (not in the PVP)?
- **3.4.** Educational aspirations
  - 3.4.1. What were your education or career goals before you entered the program?
  - 3.4.2. What are they now? Have they changed?

4. Parent outcomes

- **4.1.** Enhanced relations between parents/guardians, students, PVP staff and school staff
  - 4.1.1. How would you describe your relationship with the PVP staff and school staff?
  - 4.1.2. In what ways is the PVP meeting the needs and expectations of your families?
- **4.2.** More knowledge about their children(s) education
  - 4.2.1. Does the program create a safe and welcoming place for you (parents or guardians)?
  - 4.2.2. What opportunities did you have to learn more about your children's education (e.g., orientation sessions, other information)?
  - 4.2.3. How helpful were these learning opportunities?
- **4.3.** Opportunities to advocate for their children
  - 4.3.1. What opportunities did you have to advocate for your children's education?
  - 4.3.2. To what degree did you feel that you had a safe space to advocate for your children's education?

Appendix H: Focus Group Questions (PVP Staff/Volunteers)

1. How much does the program staff and volunteers reflect the cultures of the program participants?
2. How much are program staff and volunteers knowledgeable of diversity and are culturally competent?
3. How do the staff and volunteers support the youth and their families in the program?
4. How does the program staff maintain Communication with the participations and their families?