School Climate and Acculturation: The

Academic Impact for Newcomer Adolescents

By

KRISTEN HUFFMAN-GOTTSCHLING
B.A. St Olaf College, 1993
M.S.W. University of Michigan, 1997

THESIS

Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016

Chicago, IL

Defense Committee:

    Mark A. Mattaini, Chair & Advisor
    Cassandra McKay-Jackson
    James Gleeson
    Dina Birman, University of Miami
    Olga Acosta-Price, George Washington University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am incredibly thankful to the faculty members, colleagues, friends, and family who have supported and mentored me throughout this entire study. Dr. Mark Mattaini has been essential in helping me develop this work. Thank you, Dr. Mattaini, for the support, the guidance, and the way in which you helped me take this project from thought to completion. Much of what I have learned from you and from your own work has left an indelible mark on this study.

Thank you to the other members of my committee: Dr. McKay-Jackson, Dr. Gleeson, Dr. Olga Acosta Price, and Dr. Dina Birman. Dr. McKay-Jackson, thanks you for pushing me to understand the work with young people in schools, and particularly to look for the positive experiences those students are having which let these student voices emerge. Dr. Gleeson, thank you for your critical support and the support you give to students like me to help us all not just finish, but finish with a dissertation that is much better because of your contributions. Dr. Birman, I am not sure how to thank you or properly attribute the growth in my thinking to conversations started over a decade ago and much shared experience thereafter. Your support throughout this project has been invaluable in helping me move from practice to research. Thank you. Dr. Acosta Price, thank you for the opportunity to make this project stronger through both the work on the study and the shared work in our project together many years ago that helped build the foundation of this work.

To the youth who were part of this study, their families, and Refugee One, thank you for giving me the time to hear your stories, for your patience when I wasn't always understanding, and for allowing me to do this study in your agency. Your powerful words and stories are the

ii

sum total of this study and create a strong understanding of what refugee youth experience when they first come to the United States.

To my colleagues in the field, Niclette Kibbi, Kehena Shiraz, Amy Hill, Radhika Sharma Gordon, and Shana Wills thank you for advising me and inviting me to be with you at Refugee One. Niclette and Kehena, this work would not have been possible without your expert translation and the conversations that took place before and after the interviews. You both have greatly contributed to this project and have helped let the voice of refugee youth emerge. Amy, Shana, and Radhika, thank you all for the work you do with refugee youth and your commitment to creating more opportunities for these youth to find belonging. Your advice and consultation were immeasurably helpful.

Finally, to my family, Jim, David, Grace, and Simon, there is no way to tell you thank you for patiently and lovingly giving me the time to finish this project. There would be no completion if it weren't for your editing, your cajoling, and your deeply felt love. You all mean the world to me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRYCS   Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services

CDC   Centers for Disease Control

CILS   Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study

CMSA   Chicago Math and Science Academy

CYD   Community Youth Development

LGBTQ   Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning

ODRS   Office Discipline Referrals

SUMMARY

Research shows that school climate can affect a student's well-being, academic success, and connectedness to a school. This research is largely understood from the experience of students who have either been born in the United States or who are part of an immigration group that has been in school for many years. Refugee youth's experiences of school climate have not been part of this large body of research. This study aims to address this gap in the literature. Using a grounded theory approach, this study examines the impact school climate has on the academic experience of refugee youth. More specifically, the study explores the critical components of school climate for refugee youth and any role acculturative press may play in that experience. Using a semi-structured interview process, fifteen youth who arrived in the United States as high school students were interviewed about their experience of school climate. Interviews were conducted both in English and through a translator who spoke a participant's first language. Demographic questionnaires were used to collect information about age, country of origin, described home country, length in school prior to arrival in the United States, date of arrival, and current year in school.

Students identified teaching and learning, safety and conflict, and interpersonal relationships as all being critical components of their experience of a school's climate as they built a pathway to belonging to the school and its members. Experiences of acculturative press that were more multiculturalist in nature were articulated as supportive experiences that created a stronger connection to the school. Experiences that were more assimilationist in nature were articulated as barriers to belonging and as leading to a decreased sense of safety and an increased disconnection to the school community. Learning English, understanding the rules and

expectations of the school, and building relationships, including friendships, were connected to

greater participation in school life and a greater sense of belonging.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Brief Description

Refugee adolescents who enroll in high school upon arrival begin a process of acculturation that includes navigating pressures exerted to adapt their language, behavior, and identity to the host culture (Birman, et al, 2005; Suarez-Orozco et al, 2009). School is one environment in which newcomer youth spend a great of deal of their time and is therefore the location where they may experience this pressure to adapt most intensely. Upon arrival, newcomers, who may or may not have had prior access to education, are faced with the task of learning in a new language. Additionally, they are expected to begin understanding the "explicit and implicit curriculum their native-born peers have been exposed to over the course of their entire educational experience" (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009, p. 328). The reality for newcomer youth is that, when their new learning needs are coupled with the school's expectations of relatively rapid adaptation and understanding, they face looming academic and social struggles. What is possible but not known is that a school's climate may mitigate or exacerbate the struggles that are often faced by refugee youth. School climate does not have a singular definition and may be partially represented by the idea expressed by Connant (2008) as: "reflecting the subjective experience in a school" (p. 1). School climate however is not simply an experience but represents a series of relationships and transactions that occur daily and that build over time, creating an atmosphere that can support students' learning needs or place those needs at risk for developing problematic behaviors. The most commonly cited definition of school climate therefore is: " the quality and character of school life…based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals,

values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational

structures." (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182). Given the amount of time

spent there, school becomes one of the most important environments where youth develop and

grow, making the quality of its climate critical to positive development (Brookmeyer, 2006;

Moos & Trickett, 1974).   Schools and the corresponding school climate play a central role in

this cultural exchange between the newly arrived student and the culture embedded in the

school's rules and norms, implicit and explicit curriculum, and daily social interactions among

peers and between students and teachers (Trickett & Birman, 1989). Little is known about newly

arrived refugee students' experiences of school climate, the pressure this climate may exert on

their acculturation process, or the implications for their academic success.

The overall question of this grounded theory study is: What role does school climate play in

the academic experience of newly arrived refugee youth?

Specifically, the study will explore:

1.   What are the important components of school climate for refugee teens?
2.   What is the role of acculturative press in how refugee teens experience the school
     climate?

B. <u>Background and Significance</u>

According to the most recent census information, 40 million people in the United States,

or roughly 13% of the population, are foreign born, defined as born outside of the U.S. without

U.S. citizenship (Pew Research Center, 2015; Price et al., 2012; US Census Bureau, 2014). Over

24% of school-age children are either foreign-born themselves or children of immigrants, and

over 21% of U.S. school children speak a language other than English in their home (Annie E

Casey, 2016). Since 1980, over 2 million refugees have arrived in the United States and account

for roughly 10 percent of the United States annual migration statistics (Singer & Wilson, 2006).

In 2015, nearly 70,000 refugees resettled in the United States. As of 2013, over 25,000 asylees

were resettled in the United States (Zong & Batalova, 2015). The current administration has

lifted the refugee arrival numbers, anticipating admitting 100,000 refugees into the United States

in FY17 (Zong & Batalova, 2015). These figures reflect changing demographics not just in a

few urban centers, but broadly across the United States: 47 of 50 states have more than 5% of

children under 18 who live in families with at least one foreign-born parent (Annie E. Casey,

2016). Half a million children are considered newly arrived, having been in the country for less

than five years; roughly 32,000 refugee children, a subset of this larger community of immigrant

children, enter public schools each year (Annie E Casey, 2016; Refugee Council USA, 2009).

Newcomer children are an increasing part of the education landscape in the United States,

and the newly arrived are pressured to take on the tasks involved in the acculturation process

while also simply attempting to learn what is being taught within the classroom. For newcomer

children, the landscape often includes experiences of discrimination, isolation and

misunderstanding that can lead to academic failure (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Koth,

Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2008; Mattison & Aber, 2007; Portes & Zhou 1994), with far-reaching

implications for their wellbeing, financial and otherwise, into adulthood. Findings from the

1991-2006 Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) suggest that academic failure

could result in what Portes and Rumbaut have asserted is a trajectory toward downward

assimilation into poverty that not only impacts individual youth but also extends into the second

and third generations of their families (Portes and MacLeod 1996; Portes and Hao 2002; Portes

and Rumbaut, 2001).

School climate as it is perceived by students is defined as the "quality and character of school life" (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182). Student characteristics (such as gender, academic orientation and English language skills) and school characteristics (such as school policies, SES, the physical environment, and staff and student turnover) provide the framework around which relationships and relational transactions serve to capture the essence of school climate (Brown, Corrigan & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2012; Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Zullig, et al, 2010). This climate becomes a shaping environment for youth and has been shown to have an effect on their academic outcomes (Brenner & Graham, 2011; Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Shermblom, Marshall, & Shermblom, 2006). However, school climate as it is currently understood has not been applied to refugee youth and so it is unknown what relevance the school climate construct has, if any, for refugee youth. Understanding the different aspects of school climate, their relevance to refugee youth, and the impact they have on a youth's academic successes or failures becomes critical in supporting the fastest growing segment of the U.S. education system. Using a qualitative approach this study will explore the manner in which refugee youth experience a school's climate and its components, the pressure this climate may exert on their acculturation process, and their perspective on the climate's impact on their academic experience.

C.   <u>**Theoretical Framework**</u>

The overarching conceptual understanding of a school system will be guided by the ecological perspective developed for schools by Trickett and Birman (1989), which reflects the manner in which students are influenced by multiple factors and that behaviors and outcomes are shaped by the transactions that take place within the system. The following key constructs taken

from their approach will frame the understanding of the conceptual framework used for this study:

> *Adaptation* – Attending to the adaptive requirements or demand characteristics of various settings in the school as experienced by various groups (structures, norms, attitudes and policies).
>
> *Cycling of Resources*- Conceptualizing aspects of the school in terms of the strengths and possible contributions to problem solving. Resources include people, setting, and events.
>
> *Interdependence*- Viewing the school as a social system of interconnected parts. Assessing which parts of the system are relevant to problem solving around a particular issue and how these parts are themselves connected.
>
> *Succession*- Inquiring about how the history of the setting—its norms, tradition, and organizational structure—developed (Trickett & Birman, 1989, p.364).

These principles help conceptualize the many separate parts of a school system as interconnected through their interactions forming the structure into which a school's climate emerges.

D.   Conceptual Definitions and Conceptual Framework

Acculturation- Acculturation is a process of adaptation that involves many areas of a youth's learning, including language acquisition, behavioral adaptation and identity development (Costigan, & Su 2004; Suinn, 2010; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Costigan and Su (2004) defined the acculturation process for individuals as a process where newcomers: "…adopt features of the host culture while simultaneously retaining important behaviors, feelings of belonging, and values related to one's ethnic group" (Costigan & Su, 2004, p. 518). While acculturation is used

to explore both group and individual changes, this study will be focused on change or adaptation at the individual level.

Conceptualization of the Process of Acculturation- The process of cultural exchange has been articulated differently in the literature primarily around the ideas of assimilation and adjustment. These different theoretical models include unidimensional models where refugee youth move from their own ethnic heritage to a full adoption of the host culture (assimilation), bi-dimensional models where there is maintenance of some of one's cultural identity and an adoption of some features of the host culture, and finally bilinear models that move away from the idea that acculturation involves the loss of some or all of one's cultural identity (Berry, 1997; Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Graves, 1967). This study will be guided by the model proposed by Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan (2005), who posit that the acculturation process is not a singular process of adaptation that moves in a linear (unidimensional) manner from a relative newcomer stance to an acculturated youth, but is rather a bilinear process where youth are acculturating in multiple areas that intersect with school life, including *language acculturation*—acquiring English language proficiency; *behavioral acculturation*—adapting to behavioral expectations and norms of the school; and *identity acculturation*—"[referring] to the extent to which individuals embrace membership in either of the two cultures" (p. 88). This bilinear process allows for adaptation and maintenance of one's culture of origin simultaneously.

School climate is described as: "the quality and character of school life…based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures." (Brown, et. al, 2010, p.1). It is a multi-dimensional construct involving a series of relational transactions between students, staff, and administration of a school. School policies,

community level demographics, and other more macro level characteristics also contribute to this complicated construct that is embedded in individual perceptions, group perceptions, and community level perceptions about a school.

Student perception of school climate: The National School Climate Center (2012) has developed four dimensions of school climate related to student perception. These are: safety, teaching and learning style, interpersonal relationships, and institutional environment and form the dimensions that measure of how students experience the climate of a given school. The dimensions are defined by the National School Climate Center (2012) as follows:

Safety- defined as a sense of physical and social-emotional safety where students feel safe from verbal, physical, or emotional harm within the school environment. Also expressed through rules and norms communicated and implanted in the school.

Teaching and learning- defined as a support for learning and the support for social and civic engagement in the school. Teaching practices, opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills, support for the development of social and civic knowledge skills including effective listening conflict resolution, self-reflection and emotional regulation.

Interpersonal relationships- defined by a respect for diversity on the part of students, faculty and staff and social support from staff and students.

Institutional environment – defined by a sense of school connectedness and engagement and the orderliness of the physical surroundings. (National School Climate Center, 2012, p. 1)

Acculturative Press- is the pressure that is exerted on the acculturation processes by the environment that creates a pressure to adapt to the environment (Birman & Tran, 2015). Teacher expectations for classroom behavior are an example of this type of press. The press can be assimilationist or multiculturalist in nature.

Assimilationist Press - Assimilationist press is an extension of a school's climate whereby staff: "express strong views about the need for newcomer students to adopt American culture with respect to (a) language assimilation; (b) behavioral assimilation; (c) assimilation to school rules and norms; and (d) the belief that the school should not make adjustments in its structure and rules to accommodate newly arrived students" (Birman & Tran, 2015, p. 10).

Multiculturalist Press is also an extension of school climate where staff hold: "beliefs in the importance of (a) learning about the culture of the new immigrants and refugees, (b) accommodating native cultural practices of the immigrant students at the school through negotiating and creative problem solving when conflicts arose, (c) bending or relaxing the rules, at least temporarily, and (d) an educational imperative to provide an education to new arrivals regardless of the resources required" (Birman & Tran, 2015 p. 14).

Little is known about refugee youth's perception of school climate or even the manner in which refugee students define school climate. The missing piece involves a key aspect of refugee and immigrant experience – acculturation. Acculturation is simply not considered in the school climate literature or the resulting conceptualization of school climate dimensions. In the school context, newly arrived refugee students struggle with pre-migration academic expectations that may differ from current experience, adaptation to the new school structure, pre-migration educational experiences that often include breaks or lack of access to formalized education, and pre-migration experiences of trauma that may affect current learning (BRYCS,

2008). School staff also have pre-existing expectations of how students should adjust or acculturate to their new environment that affects the interaction between students and teachers and may contribute to the perception of a school's climate for newcomer youth.

Using a grounded theory approach, this study will explore how school climate is experienced by newly arrived refugee students. The refugee youth voice in the school climate literature is notably absent. Using a grounded theory approach will allow this study to understand how refugee youth experience a school's climate, what its impact is on their academic experience, and whether they experience a school's climate in a way that is either similar to or different from the manner in which a school's climate is experienced by existing student communities.

E.   **Research Questions**

The overall question of this grounded theory study is: What role does school climate play in the academic experience of newly arrived refugee youth?

Specifically, the study will explore:

1.   What are the important components of school climate for refugee teens?
2.   What is the role of acculturative press in how refugee teens experience school climate?

II. REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

A. <u>**Introduction**</u>

The literature reviewed includes an overview of the refugee experience both prior to migration and post migration to better understand the history and current conditions into which refugee youth resettle. This will be followed by a review of the school climate literature. The review will continue with the acculturation literature in order to build an understanding of the acculturative process that refugee youth experience upon resettlement ending with the small body of literature that explores acculturation and school climate for newcomer youth.

B. <u>**The Refugee Experience**</u>

Refugees have a distinct history in the United States that stands somewhat apart from the longstanding, complex relationship the country has had with its immigrant populations. The U.S. established a formal program via the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, which established the official program into which refugees fleeing their country of origin are resettled (Refugee Council USA, 2009). Responding to the overwhelming refugee crisis created by the Second World War, the United States sought to formalize care for the 400,000 displaced Europeans who were permitted entry as refugees (Refugee Council USA, 2009). The Act, with the subsequent Refugee Act of 1980, defines who may be given refugee status by federal law:

> Any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-

founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a

particular social group, or political opinion (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2008).

Currently, the United States resettles roughly 70,000 individuals each year from over two dozen

countries (Cultural Orientation Resource Center, 2010; Zong & Balatova, 2015). The primary

countries of resettlement for 2012 were Iraq, Burma, Bhutan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic

of Congo, Syria, Iran and Afghanistan (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016). During any given

year roughly 40 percent of those resettled are children (BRYCS, 2010). Resettled children and

their families can expect to receive case management services to help enroll them in school, find

housing, enroll parents in English language classes, and assist with job searches (Office of

Refugee Resettlement, 2016). The nine federal agencies[1] established to serve refugees by federal

law are legally required to provide services for 90 days, although most agencies are able to

provide assistance for six to nine months (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016). Like many

other social service programs, the refugee program is under threat of funding cutbacks; for

example in 2014 Illinois services were reduced by 10% after years of systematic defunding that

has reduced the time available to serve families from three years to 90 days (Office of Refugee

Resettlement, 2014). The increasingly limited nature of services available to refugee youth

through the federally established system means that schools become an essential resource not

just educationally but as part of refugee youth's overall adjustment to their new host culture.

Birman (2007) suggests that school becomes a critical component in the overall adjustment of a

---

[1] Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs) permitted to resettle refugees via the Refugee Act include:
Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration
Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran
Immigration and Refugee Service, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, United States
Conference of Catholic Bishops/Migration and Refugee Services, and World Relief(Refugee
Council USA,, 2015).

refugee child as one of the important settings not only where learning can take place, but where barriers to learning and adjustment can be identified.

1. **Barriers to learning**

Refugees come from a variety of pre-migration conditions that range from a situation of war that suddenly erupted, interrupting a previously stable and consistent schooling experience, as in the Bosnian or Iraq wars, to lives always lived in relatively dire circumstances in a refugee camp, where access to basic needs was not always available and students may or may not have had access to formal or even informal education, as in the experiences of the Somali Bantu or the Burmese children (Ellis, et al, 2010). A formal study of the Burmese in refugee camps in Thailand showed that many of the camps had access to elementary school, but there was little access to middle school and no mention of high schools (Baron et. al, 2007, p. 45). This becomes important when examining the experiences of refugee high school aged youth. Refugee youth resettled in the Chicago Public Schools while placed into bilingual programs are often placed at grade level for their age upon arrival (Chicago Public Schools, 2016). Students who have had limited or even no access to school may be placed in classes that extend far beyond what they have learned in their first language, forcing those students to take on the task of learning advanced content in a second and often foreign language. Therefore, one set of barriers to learning involves this gap between the environmental expectations based on school policy and the needs and abilities of refugee youth.

Also important to consider are the pre-migration experiences of trauma and stress that refugee youth have experienced. Refugee youth arrive often having experienced deeply traumatic events, including the loss of family or community members, having witnessed or experienced violent acts, lack of access to basic needs, and separation from their home country,

in addition to other pre-migration experiences (Davies, 2007; Ellis, et al 2005; Fazel, Reed, Punter-Brick & Stein, 2012). This exposure to pre-migration traumatic events simply adds to the acculturative stress felt upon entering the U.S. and more specifically upon entering school in the United States. Pre-migration stressors, particularly those unaddressed via mental health and other support services, create a barrier to learning for refugee youth that has been well documented in the literature and that may contribute to an overall perception of a school's climate. (Betancourt et al., 2012; Birman et al., 2007; Davies, 2007; Ellis et al., 2010)**.**

C.   **Acculturation**

Acculturation or a process of cultural exchange has historically been part of the large body of U.S. literature that grapples with the ethnocentric fallacy of a single or supra culture, when the historical reality of the formation of the United States has involved the mass and sometimes forced migration of immigrants to an already occupied land that was rich with cultures and communities who faced genocide as a result. Individual or group acculturation often involves adaptation to structures and systems of what may be perceived or discussed as "majority or dominant culture" but in reality represents oppressive structures aimed at disenfranchising different groups of people in the United States (Ngo, 2008; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Integration into this dominant culture has economic, psychological, and social implications for newcomers, but the receptiveness of the host or dominant culture to newcomers has been and continues to be differentially experienced by newcomer communities based on the host culture's pre-existing oppressive and often racialized assumptions regarding a particular community (Abraido-Lanza, Armbrister, Florez, & Aguirre, 2006). For refugee youth, however, the process of adaptation to a school environment, adaptation to a new peer group, adaptation to a new language, and navigating the process of identity development in a new country constitutes a process of

acculturation whereby they must decide what pieces of the new culture (cultures) may join with their own cultural expectations of their development.   Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services (BRYCS) describes the developmental dilemma faced by refugee youth as managing tasks:

> …such as balancing the expectations of two cultures, handling simultaneous work and educational responsibilities, dealing with interrupted schooling, survivor guilt, or separation from family members—are dealt with against a backdrop of beneficial strengths and protective factors that typically accompany the migration experience—family attachment, community resources and supportive relationships, ethnic and religious identity, perseverance through adversity, educational appreciation, bicultural social skills and multilingual ability. (BRYCS, 2012)

It is the interaction between the process of acculturation and school climate that is relatively unknown and of interest to this study. What follows is a brief history of the construct of acculturation, the acculturation model that will be selected to help guide this study, and the little that is understood about the pressure a school may apply on the acculturation process for refugee youth.

Historically, acculturation research and inquiry began concurrently with what is known as the "third great wave" of immigration to the United States occurring between 1880 and 1920 (Jimenez, 2011, p. 2). In 1914, Robert Park explored the group process of adjustment to another culture in his three stage model that included: "contact, accommodation, and assimilation" (Padilla& Perez, 2003, p. 36). Redfield, Linton, and Herskovitz (1936), who are often cited in acculturation literature as the first to mention acculturation as a construct, defined acculturation as: "…those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come

into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 139). This definition marks a conceptual move from Park in that the process of group change was thought of as mutual and did not necessarily include assimilation as a final stage of the acculturative process (Padilla & Perez, 2003). In 1954 the Social Science Research Council changed the manner in which acculturation was conceptualized once again by adding a psychological dimension to the construct, thereby allowing acculturation to be measured as an individual level change rather than a group level change (Social Science Research Council, 1954). While the definition of acculturation was evolving during this period (i.e. consideration of the individual in addition to group acculturation), what was not evolving was the underpinning philosophy that acculturation was unidimensional, defining the acculturation trajectory as an adoption of the host culture at the expense or loss of one's own ethnic heritage (Cabassas, 2003; Cuéllar, Harris, & Jaso, 1980; Gordon, 1995).

In 1980, Berry and colleagues explored the task of acculturation through two dimensions—a dimension in which one maintains one's culture, and another where there is adoption of the host culture (Berry, 1997). In contrast to the uni-dimensional models, this bi-dimensional model of acculturation postulated that newcomers were able to maintain their own cultural heritage while adopting aspects of the host culture. Berry (1997) put forth the four-fold model of acculturation that included the acculturation strategies of integration (participation in both cultures), assimilation (total adoption), separation (avoidance of host culture), and marginalization (separation from both cultures), stating that these strategies are: "worked out by groups and individuals in their daily encounters with each other" (Berry, 1997, p. 9). The four-fold model of acculturation continues to be a pervasive conceptualization of a newcomer's

process of adjustment and potential change. Yet what is limited about the model is that it continues to assert that there is a choosing of cultural adaptations at the loss of one's own culture or one's ability to participate in the host culture (Ryder, Alden, & Palhaus, 2000; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000). In reality the bi-dimensional model still maintains the strategy of assimilation that assumes one is not fully able to add on cultural traits to existing cultural infrastructure.

Finally, a bilinear model of acculturation has been developed to assert that, while acculturation serves to explain a process of change or adaptation to a "host" culture, it does not suggest that this process involves assimilation into the new culture or the sorting of people into categories of adjustment. People maintain an orientation to a "heritage" culture as well. There is no end phase that requires a person to be absorbed into the new culture. The bilinear model of acculturation explains that acculturation allows an individual: "to adopt features of the host culture while simultaneously retaining important behaviors, feelings of belonging, and values related to one's ethnic group" (Costigan & Su, 2004, p. 518). This removes the element of loss that is represented by other models which may assume that the process of adaptation and cultural change can persist while one maintains one's own ethnic heritage. For example, a student can maintain behavioral practices in the home while acculturating to the behavioral expectations of the school (Costigan & Su, 2004). In a 2013 meta-analysis of biculturalism and adjustment, Nguyen and Benet-Martinez found that studies that used bilinear scales to measure acculturation were better able to understand factors associated with biculturalism. In their study an orientation to biculturalism showed a significant and positive association in a person's psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Birman et al. (2005), in their explanation of the bilinear model, view acculturation as taking place within the language, behavior, and identity of the individual. All three of these areas are subject to their own

acculturation trajectory, and none requires the adoption of features of the host culture at the expense of features of the culture of origin (Zane & Mak, 2003). For example, youth in schools may adjust to the language, behavior, and even aspects of peer culture within their school without losing their first language or an understanding of how to behave within their culture of origin. Costigan & Su (2004), in a study of 96 Chinese immigrant families living in Canada, found support for the bilinear model. In their analyses, Costigan & Su (2004) performed linear correlations between Chinese and Canadian orientation, identity and values finding that more behavioral participation in Canadian culture was not correlated with lesser Chinese identity and that a bilinear model of acculturation was supported both for parents and children regardless of length of residency in Canada or country of birth (Costigan & Su, 2004). While supportive of the bilinear model of acculturation, the study is limited in that it represents a group of participants who were living in a larger, well-supported and established Chinese immigrant community where first language and culture were much more simply preserved (Costigan & Su, 2004). It is harder to extrapolate these findings to the set of circumstances often present for refugee youth in that they often find themselves in multicultural settings where there is not necessarily a large, established supportive network (International Rescue Committee, 2006).

In an analysis of a multicultural group of U.S. public university students (First generation Asian American students ($n = 36$), U.S. born Asian American students ($n = 55$) and African American students (n = 115)), Gong (2007) also found support for the bilinear model of acculturation. Analyzing "identification with the majority group" measured by the extent of "feeling you have in common with White Americans" and the extent of "identification with White American Culture," Gong found "no correlation between ethnic identity and identification with White Americans for Asian Americans and a small negative correlation [between ethnic

identity and identification with White Americans] for African Americans" (p. 515). Further stepwise regression analysis found that identification with White Americans positively predicted national identity but not ethnic identity finding no relationship between ethnic and national identity for the foreign born Asian American participants and African American participants (Gong, 2007). The researcher suggests that participants maintain a bicultural orientation to national and ethnic identity. Further stepwise analysis found that self-esteem had a significant and positive relationship with ethnic identity for all participants (Gong, 2007). While the results support a bilinear process of acculturation, the two-question measure of association with majority culture seems insufficient in trying to define what "majority culture" might be. Furthermore, this is a study about identity with university students who developmentally may be more capable of articulating their own sense of identity than high school students.

While acculturation is largely considered as change made on the part of the newcomer, it is also important to consider the domains (e.g. school) in which acculturation takes place and the influence the domain may exert on the acculturation process (Salo & Birman, 2015). A school holds expectations of its students that will influence a youth's acculturation process. Padilla and Perez (2003) have suggested that the more different from the host culture a person may be (i.e. more areas of adjustment), the more likely that person is to experience discrimination. This captures the intersection between expectations of the acculturation process on the part of the host institution and its impact on youth.

1. **Acculturative press**

The acculturation literature gives some clues as to the experiences newcomer students may have in the school environment. According to Trickett and Birman (2005) acculturative press within the school context represents: "the way in which schools reward or punish varied

acculturative styles" (Trickett & Birman, 2005, p. 36). Acculturation is an internal process of adaptation that intersects with any expectations embedded in the host culture including, in the case of schools, expectations for a student's behaviors. The school's systems and teachers' expectations can exert pressure on a youth to conform to the school or can invite openness and accommodation for a youth to enter and interact supportively with the school environment while moving through the acculturative process. Birman and Tran (2015)) in a qualitative study defined assimilationist press, where pressure to change is exerted on the youth; and multicultural press, in which the youth is invited into a system while the system changes in small ways to accommodate a new cultural group. They explain assimilationist press as a process whereby:

> [staff] express strong views about the need for refugee students to adopt American culture, and learning and using English... with respect to (a) language assimilation; (b) behavioral assimilation; (c) assimilation to school rules and norms; and (d) the belief that the school should not make adjustments in its structure and rules to accommodate newly arrived students. (Birman & Tran, 2015, p. 10)

Multicultural press, on the other hand, was defined as teacher:

> beliefs in the importance of (a) learning about the culture of the new immigrants and refugees; and (b) accommodating native cultural practices of the immigrant students at the school through negotiating and creative problem solving when conflicts arose, and (c) bending or relaxing the rules, at least temporarily, and (d) an educational imperative to provide an education to new arrivals regardless of the resources required. (Birman & Tran, 2015, p. 14)

The press exerted and the expectations derived from the press impact how a student and teacher perceive the school environment and how newcomer youth may or may not adapt to their environment while in the process of acculturation. What emerges is that the less supported a youth feels, the more negative the school environment and the less the potential for academic success (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Danielson et.al, 2010). If a teacher expects that all students will conform to the school's policies, norms and expectations, including newcomer youth who are early on in their acculturative process, that rigidity on the part of the staff may result in newcomer youth who feel unsupported by school staff or in negative student-teacher relationships (Suarez-Orozco, Rhodes & Milburne, 2009). As will be shown in the school climate literature, feeling unsupported by a teacher is directly related to a negative perception of school climate which is in turn related to student academic success (Elias & Haynes, 2008). If newcomer youth arrive at a school with a more assimilationist system or teachers, there may be pressure exerted on their acculturation process that forces adaptation that would not otherwise occur, at least within the school setting (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2001).

Horenczyk and Tatar (2001) explored teacher attitudes toward multiculturalism or assimilationism for 442 teachers in 34 schools. Their findings suggested that the teachers held assimilationist attitudes toward their students within the school context even if their attitudes were of a more multiculturalist orientation around integration into society (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2001). The researchers performed a hierarchical regression finding that assimilationist attitudes were predicted by valuing assimilation into broader Israeli culture, assumption of rapid assimilation, and teacher help measured through a five point Likert scale response to: "teachers in my school are aware of the particular problem among immigrant students" (Horenczyk & Tatar 2001, p. 441). Conversely, they found that an orientation toward pluralism positively

predicted an assumption of cultural retention, recognition of immigrants as a unique group, and negatively related to teacher support (Horczyk & Tatar, 2001, p. 441). The limitation in this study's relevance to the proposed study is largely contextual in that drawing comparisons from a study designed in a different county's school system is difficult at best. Yet, the influx of newcomers experienced by Israeli school system strengthens the relevance given the period of increased migration experienced by the U.S. school system. The study provides evidence that a school's orientation to multiculturalism or assimilationism may become part of the school climate experience for refugee youth and may intersect with their acculturation process. It becomes pertinent then to understand how refugee youth experience a school's climate, the type of pressure exerted by a school's climate on the acculturation process, and how that climate impacts academic performance.

In 2016, Schachner. Van de Vijver, Noack, and Eckstein, explored the relationship between acculturation orientation, school adjustment and diversity policies that focused on equality and inclusion as well as cultural pluralism for 386 early adolescents in German schools. Using longitudinal, multi-level analysis which modeled the relationship at both an individual and classroom level researchers measured change over the first three months of a student's first year at school (time one) and then one year after the original measures were given (time two). Findings were that these types of policies supported better psychological school adjustment however equality and inclusion policies seemed to promote assimilation acculturation strategies at the classroom level. Interestingly, students' ethnic orientation to heritage culture increased between time one and time two. When cultural pluralism was not promoted well-being was compromised and pressure to assimilate was perceived and connected with experiences of discrimination (Schachner et al., 2016). Classroom practices and school policies that promote

equality and inclusion without focusing on cultural pluralism may in fact negatively affect the well-being of a student and interfere with acculturation strategies that provide opportunities to maintain orientations to host and heritage cultures. The study was limited by the fact that it did not use measures of acculturation that would have been able to fully understand what domains of acculturation and the acculturative process were negatively affected by a lack of focus on culturally pluralistic policies. Yet, this study gives a glimpse at the way in which pressure exerted to adapt can create a negative perception of a school's climate.

Despite the connection between students' perception of school climate and their academic success or failure, few studies have focused on the connection between the acculturation process for newcomer youth and the manner in which the acculturative process exerts influence on a student's perception of school climate. Suarez-Orozco et al. (2010) in their five-year longitudinal study of 407 newcomer immigrant students (ages 9-14 at the beginning of the study) found that different academic trajectories are associated with school climate where high-achieving students perceived school climate more positively, had a better command of English, were more connected to school staff and peers, and felt safe within the school environment. By contrast, low-achieving students were more likely to have poor pre-migration educational experience, have lesser command of English, feel unsafe in school and disconnected from the school environment, and experience varying levels of discrimination during the school day (Suarez-Orozco, 2010). The study used several analytic strategies including latent class analysis to determine the number of developmental groups, multinomial logistic regression to determine factors that predict group membership, and finally a case study of each trajectory was performed to further illustrate the developmental pathways (Suarez-Orozco, 2010, pp. 607-608). A limitation of this study for the proposed study is the fact that the mean age of participants was

12 and reflects a later elementary school sample. Findings are therefore not generalizable to the age group proposed in this study. These findings do suggest however, that there is the potential for refugee youth to find themselves in the low-achieving trajectory given that upon arrival many refugee youth may have had little access to education, have yet to learn English, and may feel unsafe and disconnected in the school (BRYCS, 2008). Interestingly, their study also found that school staff and school connectedness had a moderating effect on these barriers, leading to a better perception of school climate (Suarez-Orozco, 2010). This finding is important to the proposed study in that it provides evidence around which questions about school climate and perception of support from staff can be developed.

As we find in the literature that follows, the school into which a refugee enrolls becomes one of the central environments in which a youth may begin a process of acculturation, begins to explore the meaning behind any pre-migration experiences, and also continues a process of academic learning necessary to successfully live in the United States. Refugee youth may arrive with experiences and learning issues that make succeeding in school incredibly difficult. Little is understood about refugee youth's experience of school climate and the pressure it exerts on their acculturation process.

D. <u>**School Climate**</u>

School climate and its related dimensions are the constructs that aim to capture a school's learning environment. This environment is created by an intricate set of relationships between leadership and staff, staff and students, students and their peers, as well as less relational but also important forces like school policy, the physical setting of the school, and community characteristics (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). School climate therefore represents the on-going patterns created through the daily transactions taking place inside the

building. A school's climate is of critical importance for youth, as it represents the environment where a vast majority of their own development will take place (Anderson, 1982; Trickett & Moos, 1974). School climate has been shown to contribute to the academic success or failure of students which is important given the potential life-time economic effect on a student when they fail to graduate from school (Brenner & Graham, 2011; Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Shermblom, Marshall, & Shermblom, 2006). Understanding who is vulnerable to the pressures of a school's climate and how to affect a school's climate becomes critical for social work.

Researchers in education and the social sciences have spent over a century attempting both to define school climate and to construct frameworks that capture the phenomena related to a school's climate and its connection to academic outcomes for students. In 1908, Arthur Perry first noted the manner in which school climate affected its students, exploring the idea of a school's "esprit de corps" or school spirit that should be actively considered and influenced by the school's staff, suggesting that: "This esprit de corps is the teacher's strongest lever in promoting efficiency and good government among the boys and girls" (Perry, 1908, p. 304). Perry's work outlining the management needs of city schools highlights many of the core areas under study in school climate research, including an intense focus on the relationships (principal/teacher, teacher/student, school/public), pedagogy, safety, discipline, and the school in relationship to its community. Perry's work provided an early roadmap to understanding the intricately woven constructs that form a school's climate.

Since this first mention, a body of literature has emerged examining the relationship between a school's climate and student learning. Halpin and Croft (1963) pushed school climate beyond an opaque idea, suggesting that a school's climate was a composite of group and leader

characteristics that led to a continuum of openness in a school that included six types: open, autonomous, controlled, familiar, paternal, and closed, where a positive climate was defined by an engaged and invested staff who were supporting students and their learning needs and was found in schools described by the first three types (Anderson, 1982). Taiguri (1968) further sharpened the framework, organizing school climate into dimensions that included "ecology (physical and material aspects), its milieu (dimension of persons in groups), the social system (the relationships between persons in groups) and its culture (belief systems, values, cognitive structures, and meanings)" (Anderson, 1982, p 377). Taiguri laid the groundwork for school climate to be analyzed ecologically, and Moos and Trickett built on the work of Taiguiri, explaining the phenomena through the language of ecology. Anderson (1982), in her seminal review of the school climate literature, explained this ecological lens utilized by Moos and Trickett (1973), suggesting that their work was the: "delineation of human environments, called social ecology, [involving] human interactions with physical and social dimensions of the environment" (Anderson, 1982, 369). School climate was and continues to be thought of as a multi-dimensional construct involving a series of relational transactions between a school's students, staff, and administration. School policies, community-level demographics, and other, more macro-level characteristics also contribute to this complicated construct that is embedded in individual perceptions, group perceptions, and community level perceptions about a school. Table 1 displays the multi-dimensional construct of school climate presented in the literature.

Table 1. School climate factors: Current literature

School	Teachers	Students
School SES	Autonomy	Peer relationships
School policies	Social relationships	Teacher support
Support for staff	Academic emphasis	Academic orientation
Support for students	Support	School belonging
Staff/Student turnover	Job satisfaction	Discrimination
	Cultural pluralism	Feeling safe
	Educational experience	Connected to teacher
	Length of employment	Academic self-efficacy
		Sense of respect

The National School Climate Center (2015) describes school climate as: "the quality and character of school life. School Climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (National School Climate Council, 2015). The current understanding continues to consider climate via dimensions including safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, and the institutional environment (Cohen, 2010). These broad dimensions of school climate and their components create a school environment that may help or hinder students' capacity to learn (Zullig, et. al, 2010). Zullig et al. (2010) analyzed the historical manner in which school climate was conceptualized in their attempt to create a scale that would capture the different dimensions of school climate. Collecting data from sixth through 12th grade students ($n = 2,049$) Zullig and colleagues randomly split their sample into confirmatory and exploratory samples and performed both factor analysis and structural equation modeling to evaluate what to measure in a study of

school climate. What was found was that school climate factors included: "student-teacher relationships, school connectedness, academic support, order and discipline, the physical and social environment, perceived exclusion/privilege, and academic satisfaction with factor loadings ranging from .42 to .87" (Zullig et al., 2010, p. 147). There are limitations to this study in that the domains measured were still grounded in the historical domains that were not empirically determined and therefore it was not determined what else may contribute to school climate that has heretofore not been studied. Furthermore, the researchers used a convenience sample that comprised of mostly Caucasian students who went to school in one of three school districts in a Midwestern state. Hence, this sample does not represent the diversity of schools and school children in the United States, limiting the generalizability of the findings (Zullig, 2010).

Following is an introduction to the student experience of school climate, a review of the current literature regarding school climate, its dimensions, and then a discussion of the limited body of research that involves newcomer youth and school climate. After the review of the literature a definition of school climate to be used as this study's guiding definition is proposed.

1. **Student perceptions of school climate**

Students' perception of school climate is formed by their views and feelings regarding an intricately woven set of relationships with teachers, peers, administrators, family, and community, as well as their perception of and compliance with school policies and expectations (National School Climate Center, 2012). Students' perception of the quality of these relationships may have an impact on their relative success or failure within a school setting. School-related dimensions of climate include safety, teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships (teachers and fellow students), the institutional environment (including the physical environment), and a student's connection to the school (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral,

2009)**.** Each dimension has important features that contribute to the manner in which students perceive the school climate ultimately affecting their performance in school (Birman & Trickett, 2005; Brand, et al., 2008; Johnson & Stevens, 2006; Mattinson & Abner, 2007; Zullig, 2010).

> ## 2.   School climate dimensions - Safety

Safety has been the focus of a great deal of the school climate literature. Three broad areas of the safety dimension of school climate have emerged: rules and norms, a sense of physical security, and a sense of social-emotional security (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). In order for a student to feel safe from physical, emotional, or verbal abuse or teasing, rules and norms must exist and be universally implemented. Simply stated, if students are to perceive a positive school climate, they must perceive that they are safe within a school. This safety is created through universally applied rules that promote both individual and community safety and are enforced by all members of the school community.

In addressing both physical safety and school policy, Astor et al. (2002) studied 3,518 Israeli adolescents and found that students' perceptions of school climate, including teacher support, school policies addressing violence, student participation in school decision making and rule enforcing, and the school physical environment, were significantly and directly correlated with an overall perception that the school had a problem with violence (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira, & Vinokur, 2002). If the perception of school climate was poor, the school was viewed as unsafe. Furthermore, their study found that a student experience of personal victimization (either by student or staff) was significantly associated with non-attendance problems (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira, & Vinokur, 2002). Their findings were consistent across gender and ethnicity (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira & Vinokur, 2002). This was a large national study that was able to use a representative sample to model the relationship between school climate variables

and multi-ethnic students' experiences of violence and provides empirical evidence to support safety as a domain of school climate. This is an important finding in that experiences of violence or perception of school violence are common in urban high school settings in which newcomer youth are enrolling (BRYCS, 2008). In fact, Lleras (2008), in his study of 10,061 urban high school students, found that students in larger public high schools were more likely to feel unsafe.

In 2016, Gage et al., explored through a latent class analysis of 8200 elementary, middle, and high schools whether there was a predictive relationship between student office discipline referrals (ODRS) and a perception of a school's climate (Gage, Larson, Sugai, & Chafouleas, 2016). Creating classes based on number of discipline referrals, the three class regression model was chosen as the best model accounting for 94% of the variance and lowest error of the six calculated models. Classes created included a Primary group accounting for 74% of the sample and a mean ODR of 0.11, a Secondary group accounting for 22% of the sample and a mean ODR of 2.92, and a Tertiary group accounting for 4% of the sample and a mean ODR of 9.66. Gage et al, found across all four classes that ODRS were reduced when students felt safe at school, had a caring adult at school who could address behaviors and had parents involved (Gage et al., 2016). Not only do these findings support the need for students to identify a school as safe, but also support research that indicates that a strong relationship with a trusted adult is critical to perceiving a positive school climate.

Student behavior can contribute to a feeling of safety or lack thereof in a school, and rules are one way in which this behavior can be managed. It is important to note, however, that in order to be effective and followed, the rules must be perceived by students as fair. In 2005, Gottfredson et al. looked at the connection between rules and behavior, analyzing 254 secondary schools and finding that when students believed rules were fair the schools experienced less

delinquent behavior and less student victimization (Gottfredson et al., 2005). This finding was consistent with an analysis of data culled from a large-scale survey of the Philadelphia public middle schools by Welsh and colleagues during the 1994-1995 academic year. Looking at the manner in which a school's climate could affect school disorder defined through student self-report measures of misconduct, offending, victimization, perceived safety, and avoidance, Welsh, Green & Jenkins (1999) found a significant relationship between all of their individual level variables and student misconduct (Welsh, Green & Jenkins, 1999). Using hierarchical linear models to control for the dependency in responses that arise when students are nested in schools, student perception of school climate was associated with school effort, school rewards, positive peer association, student involvement, and belief in rules in addition to age, race and gender (Welsh, 1999). In further discussion of their data Welsh (2000) found that school climate, particularly student perception of respect and a perception of fairness of rules, explained student misconduct and that a personal experience of violence explained students' lack of attendance and perception of personal safety (Welsh, 2000). The study was limited in that while showing a correlation between school climate and student outcomes it does not provide for causation which would strengthen the assertion that rules and behavior are directly linked to a perception of school climate. It appears though, that perception of safety, including rules and policies that fairly support student safety, affects the overall perception students have of a school's climate contributing to barriers to learning such as truancy, experience of psychological distress, and lesser academic success (Astor , Benbenishty, Zeira, & Vinokur, 2002; Gottfredson et al., 2005).

Experiences of discrimination based on identity constitute a risk not just to the individual but to a school's climate as well. While the literature pertaining to newcomer youth will be

discussed elsewhere, it is important to look at the second and third generation immigrant and non-immigrant literature that focuses on school climate and experiences of discrimination in high school. Benner and Graham (2011) found in their study of 668 Latino students that experiences of discrimination were higher for boys than for girls, more frequent for youth in schools with a multi-ethnic student body but non multi-ethnic staff, and for youth who were the family's primary interpreter. These experiences of discrimination had an indirect effect on grades and absences mediated through their view of school climate. In other words, experiences of discrimination appeared to create an unsafe learning environment that resulted in poor attendance and poor grades.

Experiences of discrimination can permeate a system, creating an environment that not only feels unsafe, but where the rules do not safely manage behavior and the discipline becomes representative of the discrimination experienced at the individual level. In a study by Gregory, Cornell, and Fan (2011) of 199 schools (5,035 9th graders), schools characterized as "low on support and low on structure" had the highest suspension rates and the greatest disproportionality between disciplinary outcomes for African American and Caucasian students. In other words, the schools were not supportive and did not maintain a safe environment via the rules, resulting in higher suspensions and oppressive structures that unjustly doled out consequences to youth differently depending on ethnicity.

The discussion on discrimination and safety also must consider the literature that focuses on sexual minority students and the school's climate. For lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students, safety is particularly important as they attempt to find acceptance within the system in which much of their development is taking place—the school. An inclusive school climate, represented by open and affirming rules, zero tolerance of

heterosexist based discrimination, and supportive staff and peers, can have a markedly positive influence on LGBTQ youth who are at greater risk for depression, suicidal ideation, and isolation (Elliot & Killpatrick, 1994). When studying 13,921 Midwestern high school students, Esppelage, Aragon, Birkett, and Koenig (2008) found that a positive school environment moderated the effect of homophobic teasing, protecting LGBTQ youth from depression and drug use. In 2011, Poteat et al., found that experiences of homophobic victimization indirectly and significantly affected grades, truancy, and the importance of graduation through school belonging (another aspect of school climate) and suicidality (Poteat et al., 2011). This study in particular is an excellent example of the manner in which the various aspects of school climate are interconnected and may be bidirectional. Experiences of discrimination can and do threaten safety, which in turn can threaten a sense of belonging or connectedness to the school. Currently these two dimensions are conceptualized as separate dimensions, but they, like many other areas of the school climate literature, are inter-connected. If safety is threatened a sense of connection to the school may be threatened, which creates a negative perception of school climate linked to poor academic and mental health outcomes.

The bullying literature deserves special attention within the construct of safety, as bullying is also an experience of violence that may begin as a violation of safety that then seeps into other dimensions of a student's perception of a school's climate (i.e. interpersonal relationships). Nationally, bullying is a school based problem affecting 30% of all school children at some point (Jenson. et.al, 2010). On an individual level, bullying behavior can negatively affect students' self-esteem, their peer relationships, classroom behavior, and ultimately their academic outcomes. Those who bully also may suffer from the effects of being bullied and have been shown to have higher rates of antisocial behavior, including a higher rate

of substance use, truancy, theft, and violence, all of which also impact their academic

performance (Jenson & Dieterich, 2007). On a school level, bullying behavior negatively affects

both student and staff perception of school climate, which again leads to lesser academic success

for students and higher teacher dissatisfaction (Zullig et. al, 2010). Bullying, defined as:

"aggressive behavior that involves unwanted negative action [and can] involve a pattern of

repeated behavior overtime…involving an imbalance of power" (Olweus, 2001, p. 1) carries the

potential to damage the learning environment, creating a climate that does not support positive

academic, social and emotional development. Barboza et al. (2009) found in fact that the school

environment contributed to bullying behaviors in adolescents ages 11-14, suggesting that the acts

of bullying create an environment that is perceived as unsafe and that this environment in turn is

conducive to more acts of bullying (Barboza, et al., 2009). The effects of bullying for these

youth were mitigated by peer and staff support (Barboza, et al., 2009).

Creating safety within the school becomes critically important, and for large urban high

schools that are situated in communities where violence is common, creating safety may be a

herculean task. Astor and colleagues (2009), however, may offer schools some clues, as well as

some hope. In a three-year study of "atypical" schools that had low rates of violence within the

school even though the neighborhood experienced high levels of violence, Astor and his

colleagues studied nine schools both qualitatively and quantitatively to understand what if any

common elements could be attributed to their lower levels of school violence. The common

elements included strong leadership, a "school-wide awareness of mission, ideology, and

procedures…warm physical and emotional displays of care…and care of school grounds" (Astor,

Benbenishty, & Estrada, , 2009, pp. 453 - 455). All three elements point to the dimensions of

safety as conceptualized by Cohen et al. (2009). These low violence schools were able to reduce

instances of violence by addressing safety holistically, including adoption of rules and norms, creating a sense of physical security and a sense of social-emotional security directed by a strong leader, the principal.

Safety is a critical dimension in school climate. Experiencing violence (emotional or physical), witnessing violence, or experiencing the school's rule structures as unjust leads to poor attendance, poor academic performance, alienation from the school community, and poor mental health outcomes.

3.   School climate dimensions - Teaching and learning

Cohen and colleagues (2009) have defined this dimension as teaching practices that support, empower and challenge student learners while also supporting and developing student social and civic learning (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). This includes developing relationships with students that help build social and emotional competency, providing opportunity for participation for all students in a class, creating opportunities for students to work collaboratively and build trust with their peers, providing instruction that encourages autonomy in student learners, and providing civic instruction that has the capacity for classrooms to develop as a cohesive group (Cohen & Geier, 2010; Finnan, et al., 2003; Gaith, 2003; Homana, Barber, Torney-Purta, 2006; Kerr, 2004). Teaching and learning has been connected with academic achievement and behavioral outcomes (Brand, et al., 2003; McEvoy & Welker, 2000), and the development of trusting relationships and autonomous learners (Connell et al., 1995; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, A.H., 2004).

Before turning to teaching and learning as it affects students, we will look at school climate as it affects teachers and their ability to create a learning environment that builds trust and creates active and engaged student learners.

   a.   <u>**Teacher perception**</u>

Before exploring the relationship of teachers to their students, it is important to briefly focus on the literature pertaining to teachers' perception of a school's climate and its impact on the quality of their work. While students move through school, with new cohorts moving in while others matriculate, the faculty, as systemic actors, remain more constant in the school, and while they contribute to the overall climate, they also experience the climate as members of the system (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009; Ingersoll, 2006). They are an excellent example of the bidirectional interactions and influences involved in a school system. Teachers both make contributions to and are also affected by a school's climate. It is therefore important to consider the teachers' experiences of a school's climate, as they directly relate to the effect on the quality of instruction in the classroom. A ten-year longitudinal study of school climate in Canada focusing on predictors of teacher assessments of school climate found that teachers' own sense of autonomy, their overall job satisfaction, the working conditions in their schools, and the schools' academic focus were predictors of teachers' perceptions of student behavior and the overall school environment (Leblanc, et al, 2007). Johnson & Stevens (2006) found that assessing teacher affiliation, innovation, participatory decision-making, resource adequacy and student support (defined by statements such as: "There are many disruptive students in the school") were measures that would closely correlate with overall student achievement (Johnson & Stevens, 2006, p.120). Teachers' feelings about their school are deeply connected to the

academic experience they provide to their students. Teacher perception is important because it directly influences teachers' interactions with students.

Teacher retention is one way to measure teacher perception of their school's climate and how they feel about the school. Boyd et al. (2011) found in their study on factors contributing to teacher decision to leave or stay in a school in the New York City public schools that "perceptions of administration, staff relations, students, and facilities [were significantly] related to their decisions to transfer and leave teaching" with a negative perception influencing the decision to leave (Boyd, et al.,2011, p.323). They also found that the perception of teacher influence significantly predicted the teachers' decisions to transfer to another school but not leave the school system entirely (Boyd, et al., 2011). Perception of safety was the only variable not significantly predictive of a teacher's decision to leave or stay in a school (Boyd, et al., 2011). Finally, when analyzing the full model of data and controlling for school and teacher characteristics, Boyd and colleagues found that: "a teacher's assessment of the administration decreases his or her likelihood of transferring by approximately 44% relative to staying in the same school and decreases his or her likelihood of leaving teaching in New York City by approximately 28% relative to staying in the same school" (Boyd, et al., 2011, p. 323). A teacher's perception of a school's climate is linked to the decision to stay in that school, and teacher turnover is one factor that affects how a student perceives the school climate. Once again the studies analyzing school climate from the perspective of the teacher allow us to understand that a school's climate is formed by participant/observers who through their interactions and observations affect the environment while simultaneously being affected by the environment.

Another example of this complexity is found in the study of Beets and colleagues (2008) who examined teacher fidelity to implementation of a prevention program targeted at developing student characters who positively contribute to their school's climate, including a focus on promoting peace, addressing social and emotional development, enhancing civic and community participation, and embracing diversity (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Through a structural equation model, Beets and colleagues found that teacher perception of school climate (measured through perception of administrative support and teacher school connectedness) showed a significant direct effect related to their beliefs (responsibility to teach) and attitudes (personal benefit) about the social character and development program and that the perception of the overall school climate showed a significant indirect effect for school-wide implementation (Beets, et al., 2008) Interestingly, findings suggest that in order to successfully implement programs aimed to improve school climate—in other words, to encourage teacher commitment to a program—a teacher needs to perceive support from the administration and feel connected to the school.

What impact, then, does a teacher's perception of school climate have on their commitment to the school and its programs? Coolie, Shapka, and Perry (2011) found that a positive perception of student relationships (perception of student behavior and motivation) significantly and positively: "predicted three forms of teacher commitment: general professional commitment, future professional commitment and organizational commitment" (Coolie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011, p. 1034). Commitment was measured through a five-point scale with a score of zero representing low-commitment and five representing high commitment. A person scoring their commitment as a five was 35.33 times more likely to report general commitment and "21.09 times more likely to report [future commitment], and 5.77 times more likely to report

[organizational commitment]" (Coolie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011, p. 1041). School climate was measured not just through student relationships but also through school resources, collaboration (referring to teachers-teachers), decision–making, and instructional innovation. Only student relationships were a significant finding in this study, indicating that a teacher's commitment to their class may be derived from their perception of how a student is behaving and of how motivated their students are.

Finally, in a study of 263 New York City high schools, Davis and Warner (2015) found multiple school climate variables that were correlated with a student's academic success including finding that a teacher's perception of a school's climate was: "most predictive of academic growth" for students in these high schools (Davis & Warner, 2015, p. 16). This study also found school size measured through enrollment (discussed elsewhere) was predictive of academic growth, which was correlated with perception of a school's climate (Davis & Warner, 2015).

Very little is known about teachers' perceptions of school climate as it pertains to newcomer youth in their classrooms. Existing studies focus on a teacher's cultural consciousness and bias, on the multicultural or assimilationist pressure exerted by the teacher or school, and on the resulting pressure that these attitudes and behaviors exert on school climate, but these factors are examined from the point of view of the youth, not the teacher. This small body of literature is however connected to the broader school-climate literature on bias and discrimination, which indicates that experiences of discrimination, a teacher's cultural consciousness (or relative lack thereof), and bias or stigma are directly related to student achievement, and therefore understanding this from the perceptive of the teacher is important (Horenczyk & Tatar, 2003). Understanding the teacher perspective is critical, because the

newcomer student may represent a community totally unknown to a teacher (BRYCS, 2008). The teacher may or may not understand the youth's cultural background and may handle cultural differences in a biased or unfair manner, contributing to teachers' negative perceptions of a student's cultural group and the student's negative perception of the school (Birman, Weinstein & Chan, 2007). Tatar and Horenczyk (2003) studied Israeli teacher burnout and its relationship to the diversity of the student population within their schools, finding that teachers categorized as assimilationists who worked in schools with assimilationist expectations of their students experienced higher levels of burnout that negatively affected their teaching (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). The experience of teacher burnout as it pertains to diversity is important to consider, given that burnout directly impacts teacher level variables measuring school climate and that the demographic of the American public school system is becoming increasingly more diverse. Understanding whether or not a school and its staff operate from an assimilationist or multiculturalist perspective will help schools identify areas in which they may be able to create a better school climate for newcomer youth.

b. **Student perception**

A fair amount of the school climate literature focuses on the classroom interaction described above. Danielson et al. (2010) studied thirteen-year-old Norwegian students, finding that students' academic initiative was related to the perceptions of teacher support ("treat us fairly" and "are friendly") and feelings of autonomy ("students have a say in activities" and "students have a say in their use of class time") in the classroom (Danielson, Wiium, Wilhelmesen, & Wold, 2010). This is important because a student's academic orientation (measured by initiative in this study) has been correlated with a student's overall perception of school climate; autonomous and active learners typically perceive their school's climate as better

(Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). This mirrors the findings around safety where a perception of fair school rules and an autonomous but supportive environment create a positive perception of the overall school climate.

It is important not only that teachers be perceived as fair and friendly, but also that they value social and emotional development. The literature makes a connection between promotion of social and emotional development in the classroom and both academic performance and the perception of teacher support. Elias and Haynes (2008), in their study of 282 elementary school students in an urban school district, found that teacher support of student social and emotional development significantly affected academic performance and that the perception of supportive teacher-student relationships was associated with better academic performance (Elias & Haynes, 2008).

Teacher support is also linked to rule-following, which in turn is linked to an overall perception of safety in a school climate. In looking at self-reported misbehavior of 227 6th to 9th grade classrooms in Norwegian schools, Bru et al. (2002) found that when students perceived emotional support and proper classroom monitoring from their teachers, there was a strong positive association with students meeting classroom behavioral expectations, creating a classroom environment more conducive to learning (Bru, Stephens, & Torsheim, 2002). This finding is another example of how school climate and its various components are inter-related in the same way in which any system is related. Positive relationships between two dimensions (in this case teacher relationships and rules) seem to have an overall effect on teaching and learning and safety for students.

Gregory and Weinstein (2004), found in their analysis of adolescents' academic growth in math that perception of support from the teacher and an authoritative classroom instruction

style predicted academic growth in math scores for adolescents who were identified as coming from a lower SES background. Gregory et al. (2010) similarly found that structure (discipline) and support (support from teachers) were associated with reduced victimization for 7,300 ninth grade students in 290 high schools, again suggesting that the perceived support from a teacher extends beyond the school climate dimension of teaching and learning and extends into the dimension of safety as well (Gregory, et al., 2010).

Teaching and learning involves far more than simply communicating the particulars of subject matter such that students may amass academic skills. In fact, public schools have been tasked with teaching student learners in areas of development that extend well beyond the core class content and into the arena of public participation. Public schools, in keeping with their historical roots, need to attend to their students' social, emotional, and civic learning needs for those students to be successful learners. While social learning involves the development of interpersonal skills that allow a student to participate fully in a classroom setting, civic learning helps develop the skills needed to participate in community and public life beyond the years spent in school. Gould et al. (2003), consider schools' role in civic education a critical component in contributing to a positive school climate:

> High-quality civic learning teaches the importance of community (both within the school and more broadly), respectful dialogue about controversial issues, creative problem solving, collaboration, teamwork, and the importance of diversity. All of these values are, in addition to being civic virtues, foundational to a positive school climate. (The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center , 2003, p. 23)

Civic education and providing students with opportunities to participate and collaborate on projects like service learning that take place outside of the classroom have been shown to

promote student learning and build community through problem solving, group and individual participation, the development of trust through the group process, and the development of respect generated through collaborative work (Cohen & Geier, 2010; Finnan, et al., 2003; Gaith, 2003; Homana, Barber, Torney-Purta, 2006; Kerr, 2004). Civics instruction and activities have been found to increase adolescents' sense of social trust, "a belief that people are generally fair and trustworthy," including an increase of trust in the school community (Flanagan & Stout, 2010). In their study of 1,535 adolescents, Flanagan and Stout found that activities that permitted students to exchange perspectives with fellow students not only increased solidarity between students but also increased overall trust in the school measured through willingness to inform a teacher or principal of a student's intent to implement a dangerous plan (Flanagan & Stout, 2010). While civics education provides schools with the opportunity to educate youth in the important skills of democratic participation, it also appears that civics education creates and supports the development of a positive school climate.

Civic education is important not only to promoting positive school climate, but it also allows youth the opportunity to practice the skills needed to move through adolescence and enter adulthood prepared to participate actively in their communities. Community youth development (CYD) is one response to the need to integrate civic learning into the school environment. CYD developed in response to the "epidemic of risk" facing youth in schools in the United States, incorporating the goals of civic education into a philosophical approach to addressing the needs of youth development and community development (Perkins, Border & Villarruel, 2001). The aim of CYD is straightforward in that it is focused on: "creating opportunities for young people to connect to others, develop skills, and utilize those skills to contribute to their communities" (Perkins, Border & Villarruel, 2001, pp. 46-47). In doing so, youth are able to affect the climate

of their school community through positive action and meaningful community collaboration. Given the benefits of youth participating in their school community, the CYD approach appears tailor-made to improve a school's climate through its philosophical approach. CYD is not only a philosophical approach to understanding adolescent youth and their developmental needs, but also action-oriented, inviting youth to become leaders in their communities and providing opportunities to develop the social and civic skills needed to actively contribute to their communities. The goals of CYD within the school are to create an environment where: "(1) students learn more and are connected to the adults in the schools; (2) adults in the school collaborate and create a sense of belonging through shared responsibility; and (3) inclusiveness is both a vision and practice to ensure everyone is engaged" (Hughes & Pickeral, 2013, p. 23). The Illinois State Board of Education addressed the need for CYD through a grant project Illinois' Learn and Serve Program which funded service learning projects created to: "promote student academic engagement as a means to increase student attendance, improve academic performance, and reduce school dropout rates" in Illinois schools (Northup & Brown, 2010, p. i). Northup and Brown (2010) found significance across all outcomes for the high school participants (N = 1,340), including: "academic engagement, academic competence, school attachment, aspirations, 21st century skills, civic disposition, social-emotional learning" (Northrup & Brown, 2010). Findings were moderated by reported strength of student-teacher relationship, teacher ratings of program quality, and teacher experience (Northup & Brown, 2010). Although limited by its retrospective post-test-only design, it suggests that focus on CYD through civic and service learning projects may enhance a school's climate.

4. **School climate dimensions - Interpersonal relationships**

While teaching and learning involve the transactions that take place in the classroom related to instruction and the development of social emotional skills, Cohen et al. (2009) conceptualized interpersonal relationships as the nature and quality of the relationships among the actors in a school setting, focusing on respect for diversity and the social support provided to students by adults and other students (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). According to Cohen et al. (2009), the exchanges between the adults in a school building and the students are important at an individual, classroom, and school level and become the substance from which a student's perception of school climate is created. Mitchell, Bradshaw, and Leaf (2010) found in their analysis of 1,881 fifth grade students and 90 homeroom teachers that perception of school climate for students was influenced by the student-teacher relationship in addition to principal turnover and student mobility (Mitchell, Bradshaw, C.P., & Leaf, P.J., 2010). Ding and Hall (2007) found in their study of 10,000 6th to 10th graders that perception of achievement (ranging from below average to very good) was significantly associated with a liking of school and their perception of teacher caring. Higher achievement was a product of both liking school and believing that the teacher cared for the student suggesting that how students feel about the relationships they have with their teachers matters to the overall experience of the school climate.

The evidence demonstrating the importance of support provided by adults within the learning community is compelling. When analyzing data gathered from a group of 11,000 high school students in 10th and 12th grades for the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Croninger and Lee (2001) found that perception of teacher support (defined through a composite

social capital variable that included valuing what students say, the perception of the quality of

teacher instruction, perception of teacher investment in the student, and the frequency of being

"put down" in the classroom) significantly reduced the probability of dropping out of high

school, with an additional finding that students with greater academic need or identified as

academically at risk found teacher support particularly beneficial (Croninger & Lee, E.V. ,

2001). For these students, teacher support reduced the log odds of dropping out by .21, and

"informal interactions with teachers" reduced the log odds of dropping out by .41 (Croninger &

Lee, 2001). This is an important finding for newcomer students, who often come to high school

with a number of qualities that are considered academic risk factors, making them more

susceptible to academic failure. These include limited English proficiency, living in poverty, a

lack of access to formal education, pre-migration (for some groups), adult responsibilities such

as care-taking of siblings or working to help the family overall income, mental health struggles

that may include depression, trauma, adjustment difficulties, and an acculturation process that

accompanies all of their other developmental processes associated with adolescence (BRYCS,

2008). In fact, Marsh, McGee and William (2014) found that the quality of the teacher-student

relationship which was measured through questions such as: "Our teachers treat us fairly" and

"My teachers are interested in me as a person" was the strongest predictor of the way a student

perceived a school's climate for 1,370 eleventh grade students in New Zealand. The manner in

which a student perceived a school's climate was found to have predicted aggressive behaviors

and attitudes (Marsh, McGee & William, 2014).

The student-teacher relationship has an impact on student mental health, which in turn

affects academic outcomes. Kuperminic, Leadbeater, and Blatt (2001) looked at school climate

and psychological vulnerabilities when addressing emotional and behavioral problems of 460

middle school students, finding that youth who perceived the school climate positively did not show increases in behavioral or emotional problems, even when vulnerable to these problems (i.e. highly self-critical or externalizing). Of the seven dimensions of school climate analyzed, the student-teacher relationship and perception of fairness showed the strongest effect at mitigating emotional and behavioral problems (Kuperminic, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001). Fraser (1996) draws this connection between student-teacher relationships, the management of the classroom and the effect on youth development and youth violence stating:

> Classroom practices that limit opportunities and constrain recognition to a small number of students do little to promote commitment to conventional activities of those who are not rewarded and may be as potentially damaging to social development as coercive parenting. Research increasingly shows that school climate and teaching practice are strongly related to academic achievement and in a larger sense to their behaviors in the community. (pp. 351-352)

In Terzian and Fraser's (2005) analysis of six school based prevention programs aimed at reducing aggressive behavior and drug use of six prevention programs that utilized either an experimental or quasi experimental designs were selected for further review of these programs. In exploring the success of these programs, Terzian and Fraser found that all six programs had a component that included supporting and training teachers on teaching strategies to improve classroom management and classroom behaviors (Terzian & Fraser, 2005). It appears that there is support to the idea that a teacher's management of a classroom contributes to the students' perception of a school's climate as well as their behaviors in the school.

Peer support and its association to a student's positive perception of school climate has already been explored. Students who experience peer support and same ethnic peer support view

the school's climate much more positively. Benner and Graham (2011) found that same ethnic

peer support eased the transition to high school for 1,979 adolescents attending an urban high

school (Benner & Graham, 2011). The easing of the transition for youth is important because

research has shown that strongest predictor of high school dropout is the academic success or

failure in the 9th grade year (Silver, Sanders & Zarate, 2008).

5.   School climate dimensions - Institutional environment

According to Cohen et al. (2009), the institutional environment is defined through school

size, the physical school space, and the connectedness a student feels to a school as measured

through participation and perception of overall school environment, as opposed to individual

relationships with peers or teachers (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). It represents

two different constructs: the physical space and its contents and the manner in which students

feel connected to this structure. While the literature clearly defines the physical space and school

size, the literature on the construct of connectedness is more opaque and somewhat problematic.

School size (small versus large) is the subject of some debate within the school climate

literature; some studies support the idea that school size directly affects school climate and other

literature does not. First what constitutes a small school does not appear to be agreed upon with

enrollment parameters ranging from 125-700 students in a number of studies (Goldkind &

Farmer, 2013; Hartmann et al., 2009; Nguyen, 2004). What is important to note about this range

is that all of the high schools that serve refugee students in Chicago are larger than the range

suggested that would meet the definition of a small school.

 The importance of school size on school climate has different findings. McNeely et al.

(2002), in an analysis of 75,115 students at 127 high schools, found that school connectedness

was associated with small school size in addition to participation in outside activities, classroom

management style, and tolerant disciplinary policies (McNeely et al., 2002). Using secondary

data analysis from responses found in the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health,

McNeely and colleagues constructed an outcome variable that defined connectedness through

responses to five questions posed in the survey: closeness to people at school, feeling part of the

school environment, treatment by teachers, safety in school, and an overall feeling of happiness

in school (McNeely et al., 2002, pp. 139-140). The outcome variable lists several different

components of school climate to define one perceived concept, "connectedness," when an

argument could be made that their findings suggest that school size is another variable in the

school climate constellation. In this study, school size, teacher relationships, overall feelings of

the general environment, and perception of rule fairness led to a feeling of connectedness to

school which, the authors asserted, led to better academic outcomes. However, in contrast to the

findings cited about school size for McNeely et al. (2002), where small school size was

significantly linked to connectedness to school, Greeney and Slate (2012) found that there was

no connection between school size and school dropout rate for Hispanic students in Texas Public

High Schools over a five-year period. The authors only found a significant but small effect size

(F(2, 854) = 7.67, p = .001, $n2$ = .02.; F(2, 843) = 11.60, p = .001, ($n2$) = .03.) for two years of

high school completion rates for Hispanic students, suggesting that school size may not be linked

to the academic outcomes associated with connectedness, dropout, and school completion

(Greeney & Slate, 2012). Hartman et al. (2009) found in their study of Philadelphia's small

school initiative (where 25 small schools were piloted to address achievement issues in the

Philadelphia Public High School system) that small size did not address academic achievement

or school climate and that small schools performed worse in attendance and tardiness than their

large school counterparts (Hartman et al., 2009). Slate and Jones (2005) in their review of the

school size literature suggest that the conflicting findings relating to school size reflect the fact that studies do not account for the complex list of variables often interfering with a study on school size. They go on to suggest that the relationship between school size and educational outcomes (including climate) are curvilinear in nature where small and large schools are at greater risk, and schools of a certain (and somewhat undeterminable) size are at lesser risk Importantly, this risk is strongly affected by the socio-economic status of the school (Slate & Jones, 2005). While those in the school climate literature have asserted that school size is important for creating an overall positive school environment, the findings in the literature are not clear. It may be that other aspects of school climate, such as safety, instruction, and relationships, are able to compensate for the size of the school itself.

School connectedness is important because it seems to be an overall measure of how a student perceives the school climate. Blum and Libbey (2004) defined school connectedness as: "the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals" (Blum & Libbey, 2004, p. 231). School connectedness has been associated with lower incidences of delinquent behavior, lower drug use, more prosocial behavior, lower dropout rates, better attendance, and better high school completion (Battistich & Hom , 1997; Battisstich, Schaps, Battistich, & Wilson, 2004; Brookmeyer, Fanti, K.A. , & Herich, C.C., 2006; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, P.C., & Paris, A.H. , 2004; CDC, 2009). The CDC (2009), in its review of the connectedness literature, conceptualized school connectedness as a set of risk and protective factors that contribute to the development of a student's feeling of connection to the school (CDC, 2009). Stewart (2008) found that school connectedness was a correlate to academic achievement for tenth grade African American high school students in addition to parent and peer support (Stewart, 2008). O'Donnell, Roberts, and Schwab-Stone explored school climate's

effect on 654 Gambian high school students who had been exposed to violence, finding that school connectedness was correlated with lower levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for youth experiencing or wittnessing violence (O'Donnell, Roberts, & Schwab-Stone, 2011). Connectedness in this study seemed to moderate the effect of PTSD, which has been linked to poor school outcomes (Jaycox et al., 2002; Stein et al., 2002).

School connectedness seems less a discrete variable in the school climate construct and more a proxy) for a student's perception of school climate itself. Here the problems in defining school climate emerge again, yet without undermining the evidence that there is an experience of school climate that affects students on multiple dimensions that make up their daily experience. If a student is connected to school as measured through overall feelings about school, has positive relationships within the school community, feels safe in the environment, and participates in school activities, the student has been shown to perform better, have an overall more positive perception of the school's climate, and a reduction in mental health problems, behavioral problems, as well as a lower propensity to be truant or even drop out (CDC, 2009).

Understanding, as many of these studies have, how a student feels about the school and then finding ways to target the areas of a school where students do not feel good improves the climate. It is important to get back to the concepts as they can be understood through an ecosystemic lens. If a part of the system (relationships, rules, academic rigor, or safety) is viewed aversively, the research suggests that this may permeate a student's perception about the school itself, and that this new feeling will in turn affect the student academically, emotionally, and or behaviorally, which in turn will affect how the school feels about the student.

The CDC (2009) in its synthesis makes suggestions to improve the school climate that reflect this systemic understanding:

1. Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family, and community engagement; academic achievement; and staff empowerment.

2. Provide education and opportunities to enable families to be actively involved in their children's academic and school life.

3. Provide students with the academic, emotional, and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.

4. Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.

5. Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to enable them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional, and social needs of children and adolescents.

6. Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families, and communities. (CDC, 2009, p. 9)

The CDC's recommendations to educators clearly outline the constructs of school climate discussed above. The current literature connects students' experience of school climate and their academic and non-academic outcomes.

What is not understood is the experience of school climate from newly arrived refugee or immigrant high school students. Their voices are notably absent from the literature, and without this understanding it is impossible to understand the relevance of the school climate literature for this community of youth. Acculturation, for example, is an important experience of newly arrived refugee teens, yet the literature does not address how a school's climate may or may not

exert pressure on this part of the refugee experience. How school climate intersects with acculturation and the resulting academic implications are unexplored in the school climate literature. Can school climate exert undue pressure on the process of acculturation, thereby forcing a transition that may unintentionally have consequences on a youth's academic success? Understanding the newcomer experience may lead to a more nuanced understanding of school climate as it pertains to newcomer youth and may in fact lead to an understanding of specific programs that would help youth as they adapt to life in their new countries and their new schools.

E.   School Climate and the Refugee Experience

Little is known from the perspective of the newcomer student about how they perceive a school's climate and any experience of acculturative press they may have. What is known comes largely from the immigrant literature, which provides some framework for understanding the experience of school climate from the newcomer perspective.

Table 2 adds the other contextual factors involved in assessing school climate for
immigrant and refugee children.

Table 2. School climate factors including newcomer student factors

School	Teachers	Students	Newcomer student
School SES	Autonomy	Peer relationships	Pre-migration
School policies	Social relationships	Teacher support	Same ethnic peer representation
Support for staff	Academic emphasis	Academic orientation	Same ethnic peer support
Support for students	Support	School belonging	ELL skills
Staff/Student turnover	Job satisfaction	Discrimination	School policies supporting multiculturalist orientation
	Cultural pluralism	Feeling safe	School and teacher overall multiculturalist or assimilationist orientation
	Educational experience	Connected to teacher	
	Length of employment	Academic self-efficacy	
		Sense of respect	

The contextual factors pertaining more specifically to immigrant and refugee children
include a school's orientation to cross cultural education (for example, multiculturalist or
assimilationist) and the resulting acculturative press placed on the student by the environment,
same ethnic peers, level of English language literacy, and experiences of discrimination (Birman

et. al, 2005; Horenczyk & Tatar, 2003; Suarez Orozco, Rhodes, & Milburne, 2009). All of these climatic spheres involve dynamic relationships between students and teachers, students and peers, and students and school staff, and the literature suggests that the nature of these relational interactions can impact academic success.

A number of studies, however, have explored discrimination and its impact on student perception of school climate. Portes and Zhou (1994) explore discrimination as one factor that leads to their construct of "downward assimilation" whereby youth are placed on a path where they encounter harmful experiences of discrimination that leads them toward lower socioeconomic strata (Portes & Zhou, 1994). For example, Peguro (2009) found that first generation immigrants were afraid of their schools and were: "often subjected to negative treatment such as ridicule and harassment from other students, teachers and school administrators" (Peguro, 2009, p 189). Why be interested in the experiences of discrimination faced by newcomer youth? A variety of studies focusing both on African American and immigrant youth have shown a negative correlation between positive perception of school environment and psychological health, increase in substance use, and school performance (Battistich & Hon, 1997; Brenner & Graham, 2011; Eccles, Wong & Peck, 2006; Thompson et al., 2006). In their study of 578 Mexican-American adolescents, Stone and Han (2005) found a correlation between perception of school climate, and perceptions both of discrimination and perception of academic performance. Mattinson et al. (2007), in their study of 1833 high school students, found that a positive perception of a school's racial climate was correlated with higher academic self-report and behavioral self-report, whereas a lower perception of racial climate resulted in lower self-report of both behavior and academic standing. Newcomer youth arrive in a school without a historical understanding of the racial dynamics found in the United States and

the U.S. public school system but have noted experiences of discrimination as part of their overall educational experience (Birman & Trickett, 2005; Portes, 1999; Suarez-Orozco, 2009). Without knowing how refugee students articulate their perception of a school's climate upon arrival, it becomes impossible to build any strategies to help remove barriers to learning that may exist.

Two studies were identified that give a glimpse about how a newcomer might perceive a school's climate. Davies (2007) qualitatively explored characteristics of Sierra Leone students in the New York Public Schools. Of the five participants in the study, all highlighted the importance of teachers in helping to make the transition and improve their overall sense of belonging within the school system, but the study did not explore the dimensions of school climate for the students (Davies, 2007). In 2016 Scully explored the experiences of seven graduates from the High School for New Americans which is designed exclusively for newcomer students focusing on English language acquisition, acculturation, and core subjects. While older arriving students may graduate from this program, students who arrive in the early grades move after one year to a mainstream high school (Scully 2016). Results of this ethnographic study also confirm the importance of the teacher-student relationship and the need to belong, and give a glimpse of the ways in which experiences of discrimination may affect both the acculturation process and a perception of a school's climate (Scully, 2016).

F.   Definition for the Study

Given that school climate is co-constructed through transactional relationships and their effects, this study will be guided by a heuristic understanding of school climate where school climate represents the quality of a school's environment as perceived by members of that school. It is an ecosystem that is created by the meso level (between groups) transactions between the

microsystems within the school. These transactions occur between staff, between staff and administration, between students, and between students and all school staff. While concentrated in the context of relationships, school policies and school board policies have an impact on the overall school climate and constitute a macro level system that affects the overall climate. School climate at its core is defined by the perceived quality of these relationships where a (positive or negative) perception is tied to academic success and overall wellbeing (i.e. mental health). This study will attempt to gain an understanding of refugee youth's experiences of a school's climate and acculturative press and the association of these perceptions on students' academic experience.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A.   Research Design and Method of Investigation

This study utilized a grounded approach, implementing a multiple case sampling strategy exploring the role school climate plays in the academic experience of newly arrived refugee youth.   Specifically, the study explored:

1. What were the important components of school climate for refugee teens?

2. What was the role of acculturative press in how refugee teens experience the school climate?

This approach was recommended in the literature when, as is the case with refugee newcomer adolescents, little was understood about the phenomena of school climate from their vantage point (Creswell, 2007). For refugee youth it was not known whether or not school climate, as it is currently conceptualized, holds any meaning or even a similar meaning.   A grounded theory of school climate for refugee youth provides the practice and research worlds with a starting point to understand the experiences of high school refugee youth and whether or not these experiences affect their academics. The study adds the "voice of the student" to a small body of literature that, when it looks at the academic experience of refugee youth, does not often include their voice.

B.   Sampling Plan

Research participants were all refugee students who were enrolled in Chicago public high school upon arrival and had not yet graduated. Research for the study occurred at Refugee One or PACTT Learning Center (whichever space was identified as being more convenient by participants). Consent and assent took place in participants' homes as requested.

1.   **Description of the high schools**

As this was a study of refugee youth in high school, the high schools represented

included: Sullivan High School, Senn High School, Roosevelt High School, Chicago Math and

Science Academy (CMSA) and Mather High School. The school sample was not accidental, but

purposeful in that refugee youth are primarily resettled in the neighborhoods surrounding these

high schools. This is connected to the fact that the refugee agencies themselves (for this study

Refugee One) are also located in the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago which is within four

miles of the high schools. For families and students to be able to access resettlement services

more easily they are typically resettled close to the agency. The high schools below are

currently the primary high schools for newcomer refugee adolescent youth in Chicago. Table

three provides details of the demographics of the five high schools where participants attend.

Table 3. Demographics of High Schools Serving Refugee Students

	Sullivan	Mather	Roosevelt	Senn	CMSA
Enrollment	659	1716	1445	1403	606
% English language learner	28.0	21.0	24.0	15.0	15.0
% Graduation	67.0	78.0	75..0	71.0	90.0
% Students with IEP	29.0	15.0	19.0	18.0	11.0
%Low Income	95.0	90.0	97.0	89.0	94.0
% Caucasian	4.7	20.9	5.3	10.7	4.0
% African American	44.0	13.1	12.3	29.1	29.9
% Hispanic	35.7	37.2	74.9	43.2	53.8
%Asian	13.1	26.0	6.0	13.3	10.4
% American Indian	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.7
% Pacific Islander	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.2
% Multi Racial/Ethic	1.7	1.9	0.7	2.6	1.2
(Illinois State Report Card, 2016, Table 3)					

Sullivan High School: Sullivan High School is located in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago. The school reports an 11% dropout rate and an average class size of 20 (Illinois Report Card, 2015). During the latest Five Essentials Survey, which ranks a school's leadership, teacher collaboration, involvement of families, supportive environment, and quality of instruction, Sullivan was rated as "Well Organized for Improvement," suggesting that the school was able to implement changes needed to improve the school in the areas listed above. Teacher influence, safety, resources in the community, and parental involvement received the lowest implementation scores, showing a lower likelihood of successfully implementing changes in these areas of the school (University of Chicago, 2016). While this survey is not a school climate survey but a survey that measured preparedness for improvement, there are survey items that are directly linked to the components of school climate found in the literature (University of Chicago, 2016). Although statistics are not gathered on refugee status in Chicago Public Schools, Sullivan has a large community of refugee youth, particularly for its small size according to (N. Kibbi, personal communication, June 15, 2016).

Mather High School: Mather High School is located in the West Ridge neighborhood of Chicago and has a reported dropout rate of 2% and an average class size of 25 (Illinois Report Card, 2016). During the latest Five Essentials Survey Mather was reported as "Well Organized for Improvement." Teacher influence, safety, and importance of high school for the future were all ranked with the lowest implementation scores ("less implementation"), showing the lack of improvement in these areas of the school (University of Chicago, 2016). Mather has a history of serving refugees from countries all over the world and currently has a large community of students for whom Arabic is their first language (K. Shiraz, personal communication, May 1,

2016). Mather reports that over 75% of its students speak another language and that over 60

languages are spoken.

Roosevelt High School: Roosevelt High School is located, in the Albany Park

neighborhood of Chicago. Roosevelt has a reported dropout rate of 2% with an average class

size of 25 (Illinois Report Card, 2016). During the Five Essentials Survey Roosevelt was found

to be "Organized for Improvement." Resources in the community, parent supportiveness,

emotional health, and importance of high school for the future were ranked the lowest for

successful implementation of change (University of Chicago, 2016). Roosevelt has had a history

of different programs that have come and gone to support refugees, including school based

mental health services, case management, and a newcomer center. At this time only mental

health services through the school based health clinic are specifically able to address some

refugee students' needs both technically and linguistically (R. Sharma-Gordon, personal

communication, June 10, 2016). Roosevelt reports that there are thirty-three languages spoken by

students within their school (Roosevelt High School, 2016).

Senn High School: Senn High School is located in the Edgewater neighborhood of

Chicago. Senn reports a dropout rate of 3% with an average class size of 24. Senn was reported

as "Well-Organized for Improvement" with its lowest levels of implementation reported as

teacher influence, safety, and the importance of high school for the future (University of

Chicago). Senn had one of the city's first newcomer centers designed to specifically address the

needs of newcomer youth which was closed in the middle of the 2000s. Senn reports that over

40 languages are spoken by the students in the school and that 38% of the students were born

outside of the US (Senn, 2016). Currently there are no programs reported as specifically

addressing the needs of refugee youth, and the community of refugee youth is reported as being "very small" (A. Hill, personal communication, June 15, 2016).

Chicago Math and Science Academy: Chicago Math and Science Academy (CMSA) is located in Rogers Park. CMSA had a reported dropout rate of zero and an average class size of 24 (Illinois Report Card, 2016). In the Five Essentials Survey CMSA was reported as "well organized for improvement" with its lowest levels of implementation reported as teacher influence and safety. CMSA does not have a history of working with refugee students, and the student who participated in this study reported being the only refugee student he knew of who was attending this school. The school itself does not report any data on the languages spoken by its student body. In a conversation with the supporting agency, it was confirmed that the school has very few if any refugee students currently enrolled (A. Hill, personal communication, June 21, 2015).

All schools (with the exception of CMSA) reported that students spoke anywhere from 20 to 43 different languages in the schools as their first language. They represent a range of experience with refugee youth both historically and currently. Ancillary programs such as those that might be provided by the refugee resettlement agencies within the school were limited to services available through school health clinics, along with a program called Girls Forward that helps refugee students who identify as female with homework support and programs in the summer. Refugee agencies themselves were able to provide some support to students during the school year for report card pick up day and enrollment. Refugee agency programs were largely agency located and not school located. Students did report participating in some other city-wide programs for support including City Year, which supplies school based tutoring, and After School Matters, which provides after school programming and job linkage.

Why these schools are the primary enrollment sites for newcomer youth rests largely in the resettlement structure itself. Refugee resettlement agencies are physically in the neighborhoods represented by these schools and place their clients in the apartments that are close to the agencies. By default, these schools then become the primary resettlement sites. These high schools represent the environments of interest in that school climate, while not a function of the physical structure itself, is created and experienced by the students within the school as well as those who have influence over the school (i.e. school board, central office administrators, and local school councils). The sample was obtained from refugee students enrolled in these schools.

2. **Selection and sampling**

The concept of school climate is richly described in the literature for U.S. born populations but not explicated for refugee populations, indicating a need for a grounded theory methodology (Creswell, 2013). The sampling strategy followed the strategy recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008), in which the theoretical sample is obtained in stages as coding progresses (open coding, intermediate or axial coding, selective coding), and coding begins after the first interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Current refugee students from Chicago Public high schools were interviewed to explore their perceptions of school climate and experiences of acculturative press.

The sample was made up of 15 refugee students enrolled in Chicago Public high schools. All students had arrived in Chicago at the age of high school and subsequently were enrolled in the high school. Table 4 provides details about students interviewed. During the course of recruitment two groups of students indicated an interest in participating in the study that did not meet the inclusion criteria. Six students who attended school in the suburbs initially showed an

interest and were not eligible. Four students who had dropped out of high school also indicated

an interest and were not eligible both because they were not part of a current school and because

they arrived in the States well before middle school. The discussion of sample size in grounded

theory readily acknowledges that it is not known how much data will be needed to reach a point

where no new themes or categories are emerging. Sampling was guided by the principles in

Corbin and Strauss (2008) that state:

> "A researcher knows when sufficient sampling has occurred when the major categories show
> depth and variation in terms of their development. Though total saturation (complete
> development) is probably never achieved, if a researcher determines that a category offers
> considerable depth and breadth of understanding about a phenomenon, and relationships to
> other categories have been made clear, then he or she can say sufficient sampling has
> occurred at least for the purposes of this study" (p.149).

Recruitment was done via Refugee One's youth program recruitment flyers and the

researcher present during afterschool times to explain the study to interested students.

Recruitment materials were available at the organization that had been translated into the

appropriate languages. Two staff members were trained in the protocol and able to provide

students with the researcher's contact information via a passive recruitment script. When put

into contact with students, I used a recruitment script to further explain the study and see if

students were interested. Interested students 18 and over consented into the study on their own,

and students under 18 were invited to meet with the researcher and the parents to consent/assent

to the project.

Students were given the option of interviewing in their language of choice. Most students indicated a wish to be interviewed in English. Translators were provided for nine of the interviews. Only four of those interviews were exclusively in a language other than English. The other students chose to use the interpreter as needed and I was able to use the interpreter to clarify meaning of words and questions. Students were also given the option of choosing a pseudonym. All participants asked that a pseudonym be chosen for them.

A typical example of the way in which a participant was entered into the study can be found with Mark. Mark initially notified Refugee One staff of his interest in the study. Staff then read the passive recruitment script to him seeking permission to provide me with his phone number. After verbal permission was given, I then called Mark, read the recruitment script to him, answered any questions he might have about the study, and set up an appointment for assent/permission (Mark was a minor and parental permission was needed). I met with Mark and his parents in their home and was once again able to explain the study, answer their questions, and clarify their concerns if there were any. A translator was available to clarify any meaning linguistically. At each phase of my interaction with Mark and his parents, I made certain that they were able to withdraw permission at any time. Mark and his parents assented and gave permission, and a date and time was set to meet Mark at Refugee One with a translator present during the interview. At the beginning of the interview I once again explained the study to Mark, answered his questions, and proceeded to seek answers to the questions on the demographic questionnaire. The interview itself was conducted primarily in English with the translator available to explain questions in Mark's first language, to explain the meaning of words to both Mark and myself, and to translate when the content exceeded his current English language knowledge.

Table 4. Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Birth Country	Home Country	Identified Ethnicity	Prior School Years	Age at Arrival	High School	Current Grade
Sara	F	19	Tanzania	Congo	Congolese	11	16	RHS	12
Alex	M	21	Malaysia	Malaysia	Rohingya	18	18	Sullivan	12
Abigail	F	19	Congo	Congo	Congolese	6	16	RHS	12
Samuel	M	19	Iraq	Iraq	Iraqi	12	18	Senn	10
Mark	M	16	Congo	Burundi	Congolese	8	15	RHS	9
Julie	F	20	Congo	Congo	Congolese	7	17	Senn	11
Kevin	M	19	Congo	Congo	Congolese	8	17	Sullivan	10
Kimberly	F	17	Tanzania	Congo	Congolese	9	17	Mather	9
Caitlyn	F	16	Tanzania	Congo	Congolese	7	15	Mather	9
Mary	F	20	Congo	Congo	Congolese	10	18	Mather	11
Paul	M	19	Congo	Congo	Congolese	5	17	CMSA	11
Alicia	F	17	Syria	Syria	Syrian	8	17	Senn	10
Thomas	M	18	Rwanda	Mozambique	Rwandan	5	16	Sullivan	10
James	M	16	Syria	Syria	Syrian	9	15	Senn	10
Max	M	17	Iraq	Iraq	Iraqi	9	15	Mather	11

C.   **Theoretical Sensitivity**

Birks and Mills (2011) state the theoretical sensitivity comprises three elements:

1. It reflects the sum of [one's] personal, professional and experiential history.

2. It can be enhanced by various techniques, tools and strategies.

3. It increases as [one's] research progresses (p. 59).

My work with refugee youth in schools began in 1999 and continued through the summer

of 2012. During this period I served as a clinical social worker and then director of programs

that directly addressed the needs of newly arriving refugee youth in schools. This work involved

direct services, advocacy, education, and collaboration with schools, including the high schools

listed in the sampling plan. My goal was to help address the needs facing refugee youth and help

address the manner in which Chicago Public Schools could better serve the needs of the refugee

population. The work was meant to focus on mental health, particularly trauma, but what I

quickly found was that mental health issues, existing or not, were not the primary presenting

concern of families and youth. What was a concern were the experiences students were having

in schools. Some of these experiences were educational and some social, but they all were

affecting the process of adjustment and often causing overwhelming concern and pain to families

and youth. Once I established a relationship with the schools to address this need, dealing with

the school system was often frustrating in that I found the school unable and at times unwilling

to understand the particular needs of their newcomer students. The schools often seemed

overburdened and overwhelmed by the needs they perceived our participants had (whether or not

they had these needs), and this feeling left them incapable of coming up with ideas to help or

ways in which classrooms and schools could subtly change to become more inclusive. I also

found that there were often champions within the school who were in fact finding ways to create

a greater sense of safety and more opportunities for learning for refugee youth. My experience

was that forming deep collaborations with these adults often led to an opportunity for families

and my agency to have a larger presence in the school and a stronger voice in advocating for the

rights of refugee youth in schools.

While my work with refugee youth is extensive, my research with refugee communities is

limited. During the last part of my time working with youth, I collaborated with Dr. Dina

Birman on a school based mental health project that addressed the mental health needs of refugee

youth in schools. I represented the practitioner agency in this collaboration and not the

researcher. This research was exciting and helped articulate the model of care that surfaced both

intentionally and unintentionally in the school. This model included prevention and intervention

methods and, while important, could not account for the fact that there still was not a presence of refugee youth voice in the literature about their early experiences in a school. We had created a model of practice that we were all very proud of, but which was arguably biased in some ways toward the opinions of my staff and myself as to what a refugee youth might need. It was this realization that has formed the impetus for this study from the beginning of my doctoral studies.

D.   Data Collection

1. Data collection

In order to fully understand the research questions, in-depth, semi-structured individual interviews took place with all participants. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a transcription service. As stated, interviews were conducted either in English or in the language of the participants via interpreters who were part of the interview. The structure followed the grounded theory approach with the broad questions (listed above) and then prompts to further explicate the phenomena (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

The interview guide was translated into the language of the interview for participants and then back translated into English to uncover conceptual and semantic differences between the original guide and the translated version (Ozolins, 2009). A final English/Language guide was then generated for all interviews. The same process was used for the consent, assent, and recruitment documents.

Two interpreters (who spoke a total of four languages) were an active part of this research project, translating consent and assent documents and providing interpretation during

the interviews. Both were trained by the Cross Cultural Interpreting Service,[2] which provides

forty hours of training to interpreters who are then able to interpret in a variety of professional

settings (schools, health care facilities, agencies, etc.) and to translate documents within those

settings. Both interpreters actively interpreted in hospitals, schools, and agencies, and both had

come to the United States through either the refugee or asylee process. Both interpreters had

participated in ethics training as part of their work. Credentials of the interpreters were approved

by the Human Subjects Office at UIC.

2.   Interviews and memos

Interviews - Fifteen semi-structured interviews took place with youth ages 16 to 21 both

at Refugee One and the offices of PACTT Learning Center. All students were interviewed in a

private office at one of the locations. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a

transcription service. All participants were invited to review their transcripts, and six returned to

do so. At the second meeting corrections and additional information was gathered as needed.

Member checks themselves were simply done to check accuracy, answer questions, and clarify

meaning. For example, Paul returned to check his transcript with me following his interview.

We reviewed the transcript together, and I asked questions about the meaning of certain passages

to ensure I understood what was being said. In this meeting, Paul asked about how his passages

would be portrayed in the dissertation given that English was a second language and he

sometimes would struggle to make the English sound "smooth." During this exchange I again

reminded him of his ability to withdraw consent at any time, but also let him know that I would

consult with a member of my committee to clarify if editing for language could be done in the

---

[2] http://www.heartlandalliance.org/ccis/

study. I sought permission to give him a call with an answer and he affirmed that regardless of

that answer he wanted to continue to participate in the study. After consulting with a

methodologist I was able to reassure Paul that I would be able to edit for language (noted in the

results chapter) such that his passages were understood and retained their meaning.

Because analysis is on-going with data collection, questions were added to the interview

guide as categories and themes emerged in early data analysis to understand the dimensions of

core themes and help articulate the processes involved with the emerging core category. For

example, very early in the data friends emerged as a clear pathway to belonging to a school

community, and participants were asked to articulate the different types of friends, qualities of

those friends, and the ways in which those friends serve to help a student in the school

environment itself. Once interviews were transcribed, each interview was read multiple times to

get an overall feel of the interview (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). Interviews were loaded into

AtlasTi 7, and the analysis began.

Memos- Before and after each interview a memo was written reflecting my experience

prior to and following the interviews. Memos consisted of thoughts about the topic and the

theory as it was developing, paying attention to my thinking before a student was interviewed

and then observations of my own experience of the interviews immediately afterward. During

data collection and at all levels of analysis memos were used to further understand the

phenomena of school climate as experienced by refugee youth. Memoing is: "a process in which

the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of open, axial,

and selective coding" and is an essential part of the development of a grounded theory (Creswell,

2007, p. 67). As stated, memos were recorded throughout each interview and during coding.

The content of memos was guided by Birks and Mills (2011), who suggest that memos be recorded around the following:

1. Feelings and assumptions about the research

2. Philosophical position in relation to [the] research

3. Musings about books and papers read

4. Potential issues, problems and concerns related to the study

5. Reflections on the research process including factors that influence the quality of the study

6. Procedural and analytical decision making

7. Codes and categories (p. 42).

A sample of memos taken throughout the study can be found in Appendix K.

3. <u>Trustworthiness and authenticity</u>

This study used the methods suggested by Devers (1999) that establish trustworthiness and authenticity through assessment of the following methods:

Credibility- was assessed through participants' review of their transcripts as well as interpreter review of transcripts to address accuracy. Of the fifteen participants six students returned to review their transcripts for member checks, and interpreters reviewed transcripts for accuracy for the interviews. A field note was written before and immediately after each interview to also assure credibility. Negative case analysis was used to search for a pattern that did not fit the findings. In addition, during the data collection phase I reached out to practitioners in the field (not connected with the youth) to explore early findings and assess whether or not these resonated with their perception of refugee student experiences in the school.

Finally, at the end of the analysis members of the youth team at Refugee One were sought out to clarify questions about school and agency programs and about their experiences with the school.

Transferability- was assessed through clear articulation of the study context, research role, and the "ability of the context to answer the original research question" (Devers, 1999, p. 1168). This process allows the research to reflect: "how far can the findings/conclusions be transferred to other contexts and how do they help to derive useful theories" (Gasson, 2004, p. 90). Transferability and the limitations of this study were assessed and are part of the Discussion chapter found within this study. One of the most significant limitations is the participants' newness to the country. While this will be expanded upon within the Discussion section, further study would be needed to understand if these students' experiences of a school's climate hold true for students who have arrived at an earlier point in their schooling.

Dependability- is partially assessed via skeptical peer review (the dissertation committee chair, qualitative methods committee member, and interpreter review), as well as the coding schemes that are found within this chapter in the analysis section. Theoretical sampling of the literature, speaking with experts in the field of refugee youth, memoing, and member and interpreter checks all were active parts of the design of this study and maximize the likelihood that the researcher interpretation of the data, while still subjective, is "dependable and authentic" (Gasson, 2004, p. 91).

Confirmability- was assessed through the use of triangulation, skeptical review, and the search for negative cases, as well as memoing and the use of observation notes. This process of reflection allowed researcher bias and experiences of interviews and schools to be understood and helped in the development of the theory for this study (Devers, 1999).

E. **<u>Data Analysis Plan</u>**

While the analysis followed the coding structure put forth by Corbin and Strauss (2008) where one moves from open coding to theoretical integration, the development of the theory itself was a co-constructed process where: "…the researcher and researched coconstruct the data—data are a product of other research process not simply objects of it. Researchers are part of the research situation, and their positions, privileges, perspectives and interactions affect it" (Charmaz, 2008, p.402). What follows is a description of the analysis process.

Open and Axial Coding - As indicated by Corbin and Strauss (2008), initial analysis began after the first interview. Open coding took place after each interview was transcribed. Open coding serves to "fracture the data," allowing categories, subcategories, or dimensions to emerge (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 12). *In vivo* codes were used when possible, forming categories that use the words of the participants (albeit translated into English) (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During this phase I used the *constant comparison* methods, comparing code to code and incident to incident to uncover emerging patterns and themes in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Under this coding paradigm, set forth by Corbin and Strauss (2008): "the paradigm is a perspective, a set of questions that can be applied to data to help the analyst draw out the contextual factors and identify relationships between context and process" (p. 89). The open coding phase used the following question to guide this part of the analysis.

1. There are conditions- why, where, how, and what happens?

2. There are inter/actions and emotions.

3. There are consequences of inter/actions and emotions (Birks & Mills 2011, p. 96).

Table 5 shows an example of the open coding phase of this analysis, giving examples from an early open code "English as a barrier." Because a dissertation requires an in-depth review of the literature in advance of the study, which strays somewhat from some ideas of the timing of a literature review in a grounded theory study (McCallin, 2006), and because of my experience with refugee youth in schools, early categories developed quickly and were easily mapped to the school climate literature.

Table 5. Example of open coding process.

Open Code	Properties	Examples of Words
English as a barrier	Wanting to do well	I want to do well
	Wanting to be part of the school	Cause we don't know English by ourselves we don't know how to do anything
	Wanting to understand what is going on	The school didn't know what I could do before I arrived
	Wanting to be safe	I don't know nothing, so I don't talk too much.
	Wanting to meet your goals	It's hard to make friends like when I don't speak English before, so it's hard for me to making friends. Then I was shy.
	Feeling isolated	
	Feeling misunderstood	

In 2008, Corbin shifted away from the idea that axial coding was a separate and second analytic phase distinct from open coding to the idea that intermediate or axial coding was a concurrent process of analysis that served to relate concepts and categories emerging in the data, allowing patterns to emerge and categories to be further elaborated about the central phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After the initial open coding of data of early interviews, a second level of coding took place, allowing the properties of categories and their sub-categories to be understood and the categories linked. Table 6 shows an example of the second level of coding as it pertains to "the primacy of relationships," which developed as a major category out of the open codes that included "peer relationships," "refugee peer relationships," "friendships," and "teacher relationships." While each of these categories had their own properties and dimensions, the issue of relationships and their different functions for the refugee student became part of the second phase of coding. Birks and Mills (2011) explained this intermediate phase as one in which: "the familiar principles of constant comparison of data, categories, and their sub-categories are compared with each other while the researcher questions the relationships between these medium-level concepts" (p. 98). This coding process helped move the analysis from the open phase to the identification of core categories (understanding which had reached conceptual saturation) and helped see gaps that existed in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Table 6. Examples of Axial Coding

Open Codes	Examples of Properties	Axial Code	Major Category
Teachers	Giving academic support	Needing teacher support	
	Asking you to participate in the class		
	Encouraging you to participate in the life of the school		
	Explaining the school rules		
	Interested in your background		
	Shared experience with students		
	Serving as cultural broker		
	Showing an interest in you		
Peers	Physical Fighting	Peers – Isolation	
	Bullying		
	Taking advantage of your newness		
	Treating the teachers poorly		
	Disrespectful		
Refugee Peers	Shared experiences	Needing Refugee Peer Support	Primacy of relationships
	Academic support		
	Understanding the language barrier		
	Helping when parent cannot		
	Helping new refugee students on the first day		
	Speaking my language		
	Explaining other students		
	Explaining the rules		
Friends	Finding a special friend who has been here longer	Needing Friends	
	Explaining how to make friends		
	Advocating for friends		
	Mentorship from friends		
	Caring about you		
	Easing the transition		
	Helping you understand conflict		
	Building a friend network		

Theoretical sampling - In grounded theory the sample moves from purposeful to theoretical in large part through the constant comparative method of data analysis that begins with the first interview (Birks & Mills, 2011). Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that theoretical sampling: "…enables researchers to discover the concepts that are relevant to this problem and population and allows researchers to explore the concepts in depth" (p. 145). After open coding began and concepts, categories, and theory began to emerge from the data, theoretical sampling strategies were used to explore emerging categories. During this phase the interview guide was adjusted, agency practitioners separate from Refugee One but familiar with the schools were informally interviewed, and further literature on the idea of belonging in particular was reviewed (Draucker, Martsolf, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). This sampling allowed me to clarify categories and confirm early thinking about the emerging theory (Birks & Mills, 2011).

Selective coding- theoretical integration- Corbin and Strauss (2008) define integration as: "the process of linking categories around a core category and refining and trimming the resulting theoretical construction" (p. 263). During this final phase of data analysis, the core category of "building a path to belonging" emerged, and data were organized under this central phenomena. Data were analyzed to try to understand how groups of major categories related to this core category. Memos were also organized under the core category and further analyzed to help integrate the theory. During this phase memo writing was an active part of articulating the theory, the processes involved in the core category, the influence of acculturation, and the ways in which students were and were not successful in building a path to belonging. This process took place until theoretical saturation was reached, when new data does not conceptually add to the core category (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Core components of a school's climate were all organized under the core category.

Finally, a *Conditional Matrix* was created after the final phase of coding depicting the relationships that affect the school climate for refugee youth as they build a path to belonging (Creswell, 2013). Given the complexity that exists in the current school climate and the complexity that is added when a student is in an acculturation process, the matrix seeks to explain a working model of school climate for refugee youth. The conditional matrix for this study is found in Appendix L.

F.   Protection of Human Subjects

The study was reviewed and approved by The Institutional Review Board at UIC (See Appendix M). Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. All informed consent procedures were followed. Students 18 years or older received an explanation of the study and its purpose and were informed about what they were being asked to do to participate in the study, about its benefits and risks, and about both their rights and their ability to withdraw consent at any time. Assent and parental consent was obtained for students less than 18. All documents were translated in the first language of the participant to avoid confusion and ensure that students understood the purpose of the study. A list of referral sources was maintained in case a participant had a need for extra support as a result of the interview.

All documents and recordings were kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the myself in order to maintain confidentiality. Electronic documents were stored only on a non-portable, single computer system only accessible to me. Participants were given a code, and identifying information (age, ethnicity, school) was indirectly linked via this code. A separate participant identification list (Appendix, I) was kept with participant phone numbers, names and a unique number assigned to participants that will link to participants pseudonym. This list was kept locked separately from other secured data.   Only the I have the information that links response

to participant, and that information is secured and encrypted. Every effort was made to maintain the confidentiality both during and after participation in the study. Participants were not interviewed at their schools to maintain confidentiality.

IV. RESULTS

A.   <u>**Introduction**</u>

This study explored the important components of school climate for refugee youth, also exploring what role, if any, acculturation press may play in the perception of a school's climate. What follows are the findings from the grounded theory analysis that moved through open, axial, and selective coding to create a grounded theory of school climate for refugee youth.

Refugee youth interviewed for this study articulated a number of ways in which they experience a school's climate that are also found in the broader school climate literature that has studied primarily US born youth. There were also differences in the experiences of a school's climate that through the analysis led to the conclusion that the core category under which all aspects of a school's climate are experienced was an overall hope and quest to establish a sense of belonging to the school. It was this drive to belong to a community and the success or failure at attempts to join with the school community that affected the perception of a school's climate. When acculturative press (either multiculturalist or assimilationist) was articulated it was always with the perspective of what was or was not helping a student be part of this school community.

What follows are the findings from this grounded theory study. The results will begin with a description of school in student's home countries. I will then explore the important components of school climate that were identified by these students including building relationships, teaching and learning, safety and conflict that build a pathway to belonging that is discussed as the core category. Before exploring the core category, barriers to belonging and the issues of acculturation and acculturative press that emerged in the interviews will be explored.

Finally, I will describe the drive to belong to the school community and the way in which school climate and the acculturation process are affected by the need to belong.

The guiding question for this study was:

What role does school climate play in the academic experience of newly arrived refugee youth?

Specifically exploring:

1. What are the important components of school climate for refugee teens?
2. What is the role of acculturative press in how refugee teens experience the school climate?

B.   **Description of School in the Home Country**

All the students who participated in the study had attended school in their home country or in the country where they were living in either a refugee camp or as a displaced person. With the exception of one student who only attended religious school where he was taught the principles of the Qu'ran only, students were taught the basic subjects that one would expect to find in a school (i.e. math, language, history, etc.). Differences between the home country schools and the new schools in the US were found both within the school environment and the relationships between students and teachers.

Within the home country schools most of the students experienced classes that were much larger in size (50 students or more). Students did not change classes throughout the day; either a single teacher would spend the entire day with the students, or teachers would come in and out of the classroom. Alex talked about differences with prior school as follows:

> Because in our school we don't talk much, we don't do stuff we're doing here. Like, in my school we don't change classes, so we'll stay still in the same place, so here we're not – in

my country we study from 7:00 to 4:00.[3]

During the course of the school day, students typically had an opportunity to return home for lunch or to be outside for part of the day, which was noted as an important difference for students when they arrived in the States. Mark talked about this difference citing an experience he had when he first arrived in Chicago:

> Yeah, that's weird because how the school is so closed. When I came, it was, like, a break time, and I went to go outside, and the security closed the door. I was, like, "Wait. What? What?" He closed the door. I told him: "We're going to play outside." He said, "You cannot go outside. It's too cold." I said, "Okay." And I said, "I'm just going to buy something there, lunch, and come back." He said, "No, no, no. You cannot go there."

The relationship with teachers in the home country schools was characterized as one of deep respect and some distance. Students noted being expected to complete all homework, to answer a question when asked one, and to do work such as math problems at the board when asked, even if they failed. Refusing a teacher's request was not considered a choice within the student's description of the teacher-student relationship and was talked about as being exceptionally disrespectful. Caitlin explained the differences with teachers and students:

> For example, like here the teacher may tell a student please answer this question on the board. The students here, sometimes may say, "I don't want to. No, I don't want to." But like back in Africa, you have to try and fail, but you can't say, "I don't want to," or, "I don't know the question."

---

[3] When working with students through member checks, the question about how their quotes would be presented and would they be considered "ignorant" for the English that sounded "rough" in the words of one participant. I sought consultation about this issue that surfaced and edited the English for grammar when necessary reflecting the fact that my lack of knowledge about the different languages is the source of the issue.

Students reported far more stringent rules and discipline within their home school experience. Uniforms were mandated, phones (if available) were not allowed in the school, schools dictated the types of haircuts students were permitted, and a general orientation to doing what was asked in an unfailing manner was expected. Every student talked about discipline, including the potential for corporal punishment. Students used words like "beating," "hitting," or "caning" when explaining the ramifications for not following the rules. Parents were also an integral part of the school community, with one parent responsible for making sure that the student was behaving appropriately within the school, academically succeeding, and supporting the school's decisions when discipline was applied:

> The difference is the teachers hit the kids. You know, if you're tardy, you get hit or you get punished or you get sent home. If you don't – you fail in the class, you get hit or punished. Also, there's a prefect and things like that, people – classroom monitors who help make sure that everybody is behaving. (Caitlyn)

Students talked about schools having far fewer resources than the schools where they are currently enrolled. Lunches were not free and usually not available. There often were not extra activities for students such as clubs or sports. When these did exist they were separated by gender. Classes like gym, art, or music were not part of the educational experience for most of the students. Mark expressed both utter delight and some confusion at the ability to earn credits via gym class in the U.S.:

> I never seen, like, in class playing – in class time. Gym is, like, a class, and they count a class, a period. So when they say I have gym, I say, "Gym?" People go to gym, like, in the Sundays and Saturdays on the weekend. I say gym in class, and they say you have to come here every fifth period. Okay. And we buy the uniform, and in the gym we a play – I say, "We play soccer in the gym?" They say, "Yes." So "Okay."

All of these experiences influenced the expectations of students when they entered their new school. They created a framework from which students attempted to engage other peers, teachers, and staff as they sought a way to belong to their new school community. The acculturation process is captured by the interplay between what was known and what is new. Early experiences in the new school created adjustments to the framework for building relationships and building a sense of belonging within the school. The school's structure, the learning environment, the approach to teaching, the availability of resources, and most importantly supportive relationships all are reported as being essential to building a sense of belonging with the school and comprise the important components of school climate for refugee youth. What follows is a description of the important components of school climate and the manner in which the acculturation process and acculturative press is experienced through the experience of the school's climate.

C. School Climate – The Primacy of Relationships, Teaching and Learning, Safety and Conflict

1. The Primacy of relationships – Cultivating a sense of belonging through teachers, friends and peers.

What follows are the articulations of the important elements and dimensions of relationships with teachers, other staff, non-refugee peers, refugee peers, and finally friends.

Teachers are my parents – "Teachers are my parents" was uttered in many of the interviews. Teachers were perceived as one of the two essential bridges into the school that could help a student belong. Teachers were needed for cultural and system explanation, social and emotional support, academic support, and support for issues experienced outside of the school day. Teachers were also revered and respected across the sample. Even when a negative

experience took place, the basic sense that teachers, good or bad, were to be respected was found

throughout the interviews. When asked about any conflicts with teachers Mary stated:

> I have no problem with any teacher because I view them as my parents. I try to do
> whatever they tell me to do. If I don't understand a question or something, I go to them
> and ask for help. If they can help me, that's fine. If not, then I'll just come another time if
> they tell me to come after school, then I show up.

When students found a teacher with whom they could build a trusting relationship, they

more often than not articulated an overwhelmingly positive experience within their school

system. Certain teachers in particular, largely the staff found in a school's bilingual program,

were clearly sought out and adept at connecting with refugee students. Teachers advised on the

ways in which behavior should be adapted to be more successful in the classroom, gave hope

when a student was struggling, helped connect students to different aspects of the school like

sports or dancing so they could participate more fully, and helped with academics, often after

school, and often not the subjects they were teaching themselves.

A bilingual teacher who spoke one of the languages that Thomas spoke provided this type

of counsel to her refugee students:

> She was helping me to understand stuff, and then she would translate for me. . She was
> helping me a lot. She always helped me with the class (*the teacher's class*), and with
> some different classes. I always go to the after school and she always would help the
> homework.

When asked about the other types of help this teacher would provide Thomas also talked about

advice given on how to get along with others in the building saying:

> She was telling me you need to speak and you need to be laughing and be smiling all the
> time. Don't be mad because you don't speak English. It's nice to learn English, but you
> need to understand some stuff and you know, to listen to people, and you know, to
> respect other students and teachers You're gonna meet people by doing that. You've got
> to talk together with students and teachers.

It was this availability of the faculty that was in many ways unique for refugee students and a departure from the experiences in their home country. Teachers who were positively thought of provided opportunities for students to work in groups not just where others helped the student but where their talents were also engaged. Teachers that were noted as good learned about the student's personal story, not necessarily any traumas experienced in their past, but more specifically who they were, what parts of being from their country were important to them, and what their academic talents and aspirations were.

When Paul talked about a teacher who did ask him about his story and then another teacher who did not, his reflection was as follows:

> Okay, on my behalf, like as I told you my math teacher, she's good because once she asked me where I came from, where I was starting. She is good. But I will never have anybody even ask me like where you come from, how is your country like. Yeah.

When asked if he would like them to ask he said:

> I think so, yeah. Okay, well, if somebody asked you maybe about your family, how you come from, how'd you come here, sometimes like he feels you and he knows you well, how you are. And sometimes like if you have some troubles, he may even help you because he'll be knowing exactly who you are. If a teacher feels like you are like other students or like someone born from here, when like you do an accidental mistake, he may think like he's just like the other student.

When asked if he meant that a teacher might misjudge him or not know who he really was his response was: "Yeah."

In thinking through this idea of supportive teachers, certain names came up in interviews again and again. Two memos were written about the importance of this relationship. The first about Mr. M at one high school who has a long history with the school and has educated many cohorts of refugee youth:

Mr. M was at this school when I worked there and was well regarded by refugee students. His name has come up a few times either during or after the interviews. I am interested in the fact that his role for students seems to be on helping their academic needs while also explaining the system and giving advice about how to handle problematic situations. I know that he is viewed as very caring and interested in hearing about the student's stories. It is interesting that in the interviews I have done trouble with school work hasn't been an unsolvable problem. Students seem to know how to get academic help. It is dealing with the absence of friends, the social environment, the rules, and peers that seems really hard. Teachers like M seem to build a bridge to relationships and build some skill at handling the school.

I wrote the following in a later memo after talking with agency staff about the teachers like Mr. M who had left these schools and whether there were more teachers like him whom I had not heard of:

At nearly every school there are teachers who were there, were good, and left. I wonder if it means that when a school doesn't have an intentional program set up to help students feel included, and good teachers leave, they fall through the cracks. There is too much that isn't structured around the kind of support needed. Students are articulating the need for teachers who show they care. Teachers who will listen who will give them help. If they find a teacher who can help with language and the culture of the school and then lose that support they have to start all over again.

Absence of support may equal absence of belonging.

Experiences and exchanges with teachers were complicated and not universally good. Indeed, most students described at least one negative experience with a teacher. Negative experiences shared also helped clarify what students are seeking from teachers with respect to not only teaching and learning but also the teacher relationship.

Students talked of experiences of not having their talents recognized and being placed in levels that were not appropriate for their skill and knowledge. They also experienced times where they felt misjudged as a "bad student" and thereby not treated fairly. When not treated fairly by a teacher the magnitude of the interaction was deeply felt, and the disconnectedness from the school was expressed through words like "sadness," "loneliness," and "anger." When

Sara was working with a teacher she had previously felt connected to, she shared the following

experience:

> So, 'you know the teacher that I told you, she was helping me the first two months, then I get a little bit of trouble with her, so I just – I like her but as too much than before. You know, I was taking summer school last year, so I do my homework but she thought I did it in the classroom and copied the homework for another student. I told her I didn't copy my homework from any student because I just go home and do my homework. I don't have anything to do, so I do my homework and come back to school when it's done. "No, you copied another student's." "No, I didn't copy." She took my paper and (student makes a ripping gesture). She ripped it up. So, I just get mad and I cannot talk to that teacher anymore. But I remember, oh my gosh, she was good for me, she helped me like two months ago so I she said oh my goodness. She's good. She's nice, but you know sometime this happens.

When asked what she did to remedy the situation the student talked about seeking advice from

another teacher and successfully getting a chance to do her homework again. Sara had this

experience after already successfully making connections to teachers, but other students

interviewed would have these experiences without a network of support that could help remedy

the situation.

My own memo about this experience began to raise some questions about what this

experience meant for a student's sense of the school and her relationship with the teacher:

> *When a student says: "I don't do anything I just go home do my homework and then come back when it is done." I think the student is attempting to explain several things to a teacher. First, I am not the kind of student who cheats. When this student was talking about this story she had more heat and outrage than in most of her stories. I wonder about the new world they have entered and how having to explain "I don' t cheat" feels like an injustice. I also think the student is trying to say my life is just go home. do homework. go to school. Developmentally life should be more dimensional than this. Is the student communicating some sort of frustration or sadness that if a teacher were listening in a different way they might hear or understand her experience in life? Perhaps know her better. In essence explaining their current life situation.*
>
> *Students seem to be trying to be known...to belong.*

Alicia, who has been here for nearly a year, has spent the year trying to advocate to get her academic needs met, increase her level in ESL classes, and remedy some conflicts in gym. In all of these cases, she has not been able to successfully advocate for herself to get her needs met.

> And then there was a driver classes to get permit and something like that. It was very hard for me, very, very hard the classes. Like most of them missed – most of the word I didn't understand it. But I know all of the rules. My father taught how to drive in Syria, and now he got the permit here. So in the final exam I passed it, but she didn't give me the permit. She said because my English, like it's not very good. And she said, "I don't want to you to get into accidents."

The repeated experiences of not having the school recognize her work and her abilities left this student feeling isolated and without a real connection to the school. Teaching and learning and the experiences in the classroom seemed to be simply an extension of the teacher-student relationship. When supported by the teacher socially, emotionally, and academically, students reported strong connections to the teachers and felt a larger sense of support by the school. When the student felt unsupported the focus was more often than not on the manner in which they were isolated from the school community and, in fact, that the school was interested in them.

Other Staff - Other staff had an impact on the overall sense of school climate and feeling of belonging for a student around safety and, more substantially, around their overall perception of the climate. Four categories of "other adults" emerged in the data. Principals, office secretaries, counselors, and security were all listed as adults who affected a student's sense of the school's climate.

Here the story of one of the high schools may be helpful in articulating what this category of adults can do for a student's sense of belonging to the school and overall perception of a school's climate. One of the high schools where three students were enrolled, has been

explained elsewhere in terms of its small size and high refugee student population. It also has a

principal who was reported to be highly connected to the students and has a strong reputation in

Rogers Park as a talented principal with strong leadership skills (B. Venderkolk, personal

communication, June 15, 2016). Other people in the Rogers Park community who know this

school principal confirmed that his approach to working with students was highly relational and

very involved. Refugee students in the sample not only knew the name of their principal (not

true for any of the other high schools) but reported that he was very "kind," "supportive," and

"helpful to others." Kevin told the following story of one of his early experiences with the

principal:

> So it was last year, I went to summer school, but there was something wrong with my teacher so I didn't have the teacher from (*my school*). So when I get there, I ask her to go to the bathroom and she said no, and I was like, "Can I just I can't wait just so I can go? She said "No, you can't go to the bathroom because I don't like student who come from (*my school*)." Yeah, she said (*your* school) has a bad story. I told her, "Right now, (*my school*) is really nice school." Yeah, and I told her that was past and then you don't have to tell me that because I just want to learn. She was kind of mad, and I asked her, "Can I go to the bathroom?" She said, "No, you can't go to the bathroom," and I was feeling so bad and I was kind of mad and I went to the bathroom. When I came back, she was like, "Okay, I don't want you here. You get suspended and go home." So I went home. So one of my teacher came to my house and talked to me and asked me why did I get suspended, and I explained to her everything, and she said, "Okay, just don't worry. I'll talk to your teacher." So in the morning, when I went to school again, she was still mad at me and she say she don't want me no more. So I just didn't go to summer school last year. She kicked me out. The principal was there with me so he gave me a lift to go home and –he told me he said, "Don't worry. You will make up your grades. There is a other way to make up your grade." And I was like, "Yeah, that's fine."

It is an interesting example of a student who had an opportunity to experience unfair

treatment by one school (he was at another school's summer school), but then was treated very

well in his words by his own principal and a teacher from his school. School climate literature

has found that strong leadership by a principal has an overall positive effect on a school's climate

and the manner in which the system relates to its students and teachers (Hughes and Pickerall,

2013). For this student, academics were much more difficult, but even in the face of the

academic challenges he could list a number of adults including the principal who would support

him in his struggles.

Counselors and secretaries are known to some of the students and are other adults who

were viewed positively for some and neutrally by others. The role of the counselor is understood

as being to help with classes and sometimes with advocacy for issues with teachers or peers if

conflict arises. In one instance a counselor was the person who went through the classes with a

new student on her first day and drew her a map, which the student reported as feeling like this

counselor "cared." Secretaries were thought of as the gatekeepers of the school and able to

connect you to teachers and other supports. Secretaries are typically the very first person

students meet when they are registered for schools by refugee agencies. Mary talked about her

early experiences with different staff, including the secretary, showing that school staff are very

important to how a student perceives a school's climate and can build relationships that help

students feel connected:

> So, if I have things, questions specifically about school, school related and stuff, Miss B,
> I can talk to her anytime for a longer period of time. But other things, if I'm sick and I
> cannot focus on school or I have doctor's appointment and things like that, I always talk
> to the secretary who will help me because she knows that Mom cannot come pick me up
> at school because she stays by herself. So she will always you know, give me excuses and
> things like that to let me go to the appointment or leave school early should I need to.

Did you meet them in the very beginning?

> Yes, the secretary, the first day when M (refugee agency person) registered me and my
> brother, I met the secretary and the following day she called me and introduced me to a
> counselor to talk about the things I needed such as the shirts and things like that. So since
> then I've always talked to her. There's other teachers, Miss B. again, I met her there and I
> kept that relationship. Miss J., the math teacher, you know, she brought me, she wanted
> me to dance and you know, even when I didn't want to dance I said I don't want this. She
> said, "No, I love you. Don't leave. Don't drop off this class," and stuff. So I kept it, she
> held on to me.

Security were also discussed, but in both positive and negative ways. Again, at one high school security was thought of as an important part of the school structure. Security were called "friends" by at least two of the students and seemed to serve the role of explaining negative interactions with non-refugee peers, helping students understand the rules, and mediating conflicts with other students, particularly in the lunchroom. Students at other schools talked about the role of security more neutrally or even negatively. One student, when attempting to get a conflict mediated by a security member, was left feeling that the staff member and system did not care about fairness and justice when conflicts arose between students:

> The security for (*high school*), they don't even do nothing, but when you tell on the students who was like this, and they say, "Oh, it's happened like this," they don't care. They say, "Oh, just forget about it." They don't help anything because they just help to separate the fights, and they don't even try to know who is wrong.

Her impression when reaching out to security was that they were ambivalent at best, forming an early overall sense of the school for her that the adults were not interested in student's well-being and there was not support for solving problems.

The adults in the school were very important to the students and created the likelihood that a student would feel like they were a part of the school, or could create a sense of separateness and isolation. When strong relationships existed students more often than not talked about the ways in which they were part of the life of the school, knew how to remedy problems, and felt comfortable with the ways in which they were adjusting and adapting to their new school environment. When reflecting on this Paul said:

> I think here, if you talk to a teacher here, you may ask her or him what's good way to behave or the good way to do the work in the class, a good way to pass, and she will give you more ideas because you feel free to be open with him or her. You feel comfortable about sharing bad things.

If I don't understand I talk to teachers, if I need help. Then they help me. Like that. I felt really confident about my future. I was really happy because it gave me confidence that I can achieve my dreams and have a good future and become a mother someday, because I want to be a doctor. So it gave me confidence that I can achieve those things.

Peers - For the purposes of this study and to understand the experiences of this group of students, peers have been separated into the two groups they talked about during interviews. Students talked about refugee peers who came through the refugee program. This group of peers could have been here longer or just arrived and were typically encountered in ESL classes. Other students were identified with terms like "other students," "students who have been here a long time," "students who were born here," and "American students." This group constituted a group of students who seemed largely separate from the students interviewed for this study and who were intensely watched by participants. It was not always clear if these students represented newcomer immigrant groups who were not part of the refugee program, but they seemed largely outside the social orbit of students interviewed and not part of the ESL program. Participants reported closely observing the behaviors of this group of students to understand how one behaved and joined with the school itself. Yet the highest level of conflict and the greatest separation was with this group within the school system. Even more of note, the areas where acculturative press that felt assimilationist in nature was experienced the most clearly fell within the context of the interactions between this group of students and students interviewed. A repeated theme was discomfort students felt with the way long-term students treated their teachers. Typical perspectives shared about this group of peers are as follows:

When Alex was asked to describe what he meant by the phrase "school's culture" to describe the school environment in the interview:

It's pretty – in some points it's pretty good and in some points it's pretty bad because some students have really bad etiquette with the teachers, I mean, I don't really like that

because my teacher, they always taught me to respect elders.

So, here they don't really respect elders, especially kids, and I know a few people always taking drugs and come to school. I mean, then they start doing problems.

Another student in response to a question about his peers said the following:

Here they are different, like they break laws. For example, cussing at teachers. You know, teachers you have to respect. Yeah. You find they don't want to put on a uniform.

When Sara was asked about what she did not like about the system she stated:

I don't like when the teacher is talking and the students are talking. That is the first one. And I don't like to use phone in the classroom when the teacher is teaching. And the other rule I can say, like, you should do the homework, some students, they don't even do the homework. They just come into the classroom and they tell the teacher, "Repeat the question." Homework is for home. They give you, you go home and – because when you're coming home you can ask somebody to help you. It is homework.

Students reported a general discomfort with the exchanges between this peer group and the teachers and staff. All participants captured the exchanges between this peer cohort and the teachers as "disrespectful," citing the system itself as ineffectively supporting teachers to handle conflict with disrespectful students. A disrespectful incident could involve not doing your homework, using your phone in class, yelling at the teacher, storming out of class, speaking when not called upon, and not showing an interest in listening to the teacher when the teacher was talking. If teachers are parents as was stated in multiple interviews, the peer cohort that was perceived as being "from here" and part of the system was providing refugee peers with an example of the lack of respect their counterparts had for the school and teachers. All students talked about being "shocked" or "surprised" by the lack of respect given to teachers. Students said things like:

But there are many times with the teacher where the students who were born here, like you know, get into fights, disrespecting the teachers.

When Paul was reflecting on peer behavior he said:

I was surprised because to us, my first time to see a student behaving like that, I was like what? How does this student behave like that? But I felt like it's how they grow up here. It's how they treat them.

Kimberly said:

Yeah, you know, it kind of made – I mean, it made us (*referring to her sister who is also in her class*) a little scared, just seeing the teacher's reaction, and also, how the students are just so bluntly being disrespectful.

When asked about the difference between school in their home country and here students reported that teaching was a profession that was highly respected back home and teachers were thought of as highly valued. Here you would find students refusing to change their own sense of the profession and the rules by which their own country of origin governed their behavior in spite of the perceived pressure to do so by their peers.

In memoing about this very early in the interviews after talking with Sara my reflection was:

This student seemed shocked at the way in which students behaved in the classroom. Not only was it different it felt disrespectful. Here she draws a line between the way in which she will adapt her behaviors and the way she won't. She won't do anything that in her mind devalues the teacher and treats that teacher without respect. The discipline structure won't maintain her behavior it is her own articulation of her student identity, the pride in that and the value placed on educators and education.

Feeling disrespected or targeted by other students was another theme that students explored during the interview with peers perceived as US born or long-term. This experience of being mistreated by this peer group can be captured by Kevin's story about one of his early experiences upon arrival:

I had a fight with someone at the lunchroom. So he from here. So I was eating my lunch and he came up on my table and took my food. Yeah, and then I told him, "Hey, can I have my food back?" He was like, "Nah, I can't give you nothing." I was like – so, really, he just wants to take my food by force because I just – I tell him, "Do you think I can just

let you take my stuff?" He was just talking to me, but I didn't know, I was kind of mad. I was mad. Something bad happened.

He's 18 and I'm 19. I'm stronger than him. I punched him twice, and then security came. So we went to the peace room and I had a conversation. So they look up in the camera and they see he was wrong. Yeah and so they called his parents.

When asked about how he felt with the results Kevin said:

I was pretty good. Because at the security saw everything, and I was not in trouble. He (*security*) told me, "Don't worry." He told "This is how this guy acts. He always bothering other students." And I was like, "Okay."

This interaction is complex in that the student felt fairly treated by the system and that the results were what he wanted, but later he went on in the interview to talk about how he did not have any conflicts with students now because: "all the students we have are refugees" referring to the fact that all his classes and his friend groups were refugee students. Conflict became a large enough theme throughout the interviews that it will be more fully explored in the context of safety, but the experiences of mocking, threatening both physically and verbally, and some fighting were commonly explored within the interviews.

Non-refugee peers thus seemed to be a confounding group for this group of students in many ways. While there was a stated desire to build relationships with this group of students, there was an intense dislike of the observed behaviors. When talking about his desire to have friends from this group but at the same time being reluctant because of the behaviors, Kevin explained:

Because, you know, you can't do anything but – if you don't know English, and if you – like, I can just – yeah, but yeah. And Americans student, like Americans, some of them – a lot of them are nice, yeah, like some of them, yeah. It's just – I can – student are born here, they really – they don't have respect. Yeah, that's what – yeah, some of them. I didn't say all of them, but some of them.

Participants who had initially thought that this group would be helpful in learning the rules and expectations of the school and the classroom found themselves not being able to use this group as a point of entry into the system.

> Because at (*high school*) some students, they want to make you to follow them. Like, if they say, "Let's do this." And they want you to do that thing that they force you to do. But, for me, I don't like that. You can tell me to do this, and if I don't like it, I can say no. I don't have to do it. But, for some students, everyone is different. For me I cannot do it, but for other students, like other Congolese, they might do it because they don't understand anything.

The group also isolated themselves from refugee students and did not include them in their social or academic groups. Alicia talked about wanting American friends saying: "I look for from the beginning of the year of like American friend." But went on to say: "The American students they didn't talk with us so much because they know that we don't speak English very well. So their conversation with us, it's very quick."

This was particularly hard for students who had been here long enough that they in fact were ready to have US born friends who could help extend their knowledge both of the system and help them with language. It is with this group that students felt there were opportunities for building a path to belonging in the school, but in fact it was the group that created some of the greatest barriers to finding a place in the new school community. Thomas, who has been here for three years, said:

> I still want now to get friends from America. But if somebody is from here, from America, some people are lying and yeah. That's how it is.

Only Kimberly talked about making American friends at her high school showing the potential that his type of friendship could yield:

> Three girls, three white girls called me during lunch break and say, "Come over here." And there was a black girl that was born here and they started asking me where I was

from, what classes I was in, what school I'm coming from. And they said, "We like you. We want to be your friend." So I was really happy and I was like, "OK that's fine. I want to be your friend too. If you want to ask me any questions I'm here to answer them.

Refugee Peers - Refugee peers were defined by participants as fellow students who had come through the refugee program but were not always called "friends". These students could be older or younger and may have been here for shorter or longer length of time than the student interviewed. The longest period of time noted in the data was a student from Bosnia who had been here for what was guessed as seven years. They are a group that students would talk about in terms of shared experiences and who students felt understood what they were experiencing as total newcomers to the school because of the shared experiences. Sometimes students referenced in this group spoke the language of the participant or came from that participant's country but often they were a fellow student in the ESL program or another class who seemed to be part of generation 1.5, which is often understood as arriving here during childhood before high school age (Rumbaut, 2005).

Students often found these students on the first day and at times were connected to them by teachers or even office staff. Sometimes they discovered this group of students in the cafeteria. It was often the beginning of what would be defined as friendship for students interviewed. Refugee peers who have been here longer build the second significant pathway to belonging and support a student in ways that it did not seem to be known to the many of the school or refugee agencies who are tasked to help these students when they first arrive and beyond. These students would serve as translators, explain the rules of the school and class, build knowledge for students about which students were safe versus unsafe in the school, explain how, when, and if one should handle conflict, and share any resources or knowledge they had that would help a student adjust to the school. Often, they would communicate which teachers

were caring and supportive and which administrators, counselors, or other staff to seek out when something was not going well. Finally, these students would serve as advisors to students about how they should adapt their behaviors to be able to more fully participate in the life of the school. Mark described this community of peers in his ESL class in the following manner:

> I have students that's from different countries, and they try to speak English. Some don't speak English – But they try. Of course, they're from different countries, and they understand each other. And it's good because, like, in class, we sit with our groups, and we see, like, different people. Like, me and someone's from Thailand, Mexico, and, like, China, the different countries. It's good because they say stories about their country, and I like to listen to the stories. And I asked them questions and they ask me how is your country. I say it was, like, this.

When he was asked how does it help to hear about other countries from his students he replied:

> It helps me because maybe in the future other students from the same country will go to your school.

Here we see Mark talking about the capacity found with refugee peers to learn about the diversity of the school and build community through shared experience, but then also find ways to support each other, particularly around practicing English, difficulties with which keep this group of students very isolated from the school community.

If schools had the ability to find a same language student, at times students would meet them on the first day. Alex had a common refugee peer experience:

> The first day of school they called in the office they called two boys from Burma, and they came to ask because my English was British English, so I had some words that they couldn't understand. So they brought down those refuges kids from Burma to help. But after that I was able to work independently and slowly I just started doing things on the other days I didn't really need any help.

This connection to Alex's peers meant that he was able to find same language support on the first day and in time these peers became supportive friends.

He also talked about his peers that he found in the early days as follows:

> I really like Nepali kids because we're like a family. They speak Hindi, I speak Hindi too. So, because they're from Asia, and I'm from Asia too, so we have some connected, and they're really good. I talk with them a lot. I sit with them.

The closer the connection—linguistically, ethnically, regionally—the better the experience for students with their peers. And, as in the case of Alex, many of these peers became friends. Shared experiences, finding a cohort that had been through the transition to US schools, and finding peers who could help you understand the system was an important way in which the students interviewed built a support network for themselves as they started the path to belonging.

Finally, the students who had been mentored by others often became mentors themselves during the transition. Students talked about shifting their perspective to make sure that newcomers who had just arrived had the opportunities that they had to be supported by the school based refugee community.

One student interviewed was actively mentoring two other students (although all three did not know about their participating in the study). Mary, who had been mentored by another refugee student, was called to the office to help translate for two other students and talked about the things she did to help these newly arriving sisters who had questions about how to handle the classroom:

> The question they asked me was about seating arrangement. They're like, "Well, if I sit in front of the class, does that mean that the teacher will be calling up on me to answer the question every time?" And she's like, "Well, the teachers here usually just ask questions and if you're front, they'll ask you, but it's not just like that."

> And if you know the answer you can just say yes, you respond. If you don't know the answer or you know it in your language, you understand but you can't speak, you can just say, I understand it but I can't communicate in English, so I know it in my language. So you have the option of coming after school, the teacher may tell you to come after school, so then you can talk, maybe find a translator and so you can talk one on one and make sure you know, like if you don't understand it then they'll repeat it and tell you in English.

> Another thing we talked about was math and how it's very important to pay attention during math because the teachers will give an example and if you're not paying attention you might miss the example and not get the whole concept.

She went on to explain that she could provide translation if they needed for these types of situations.

It was very early on in the interviews where refugee peers and then friendships with refugee students became a substantial topic and category. The support network when present helped ease the transition and helped build pathways into the school. Students mentoring newly arrived students was commonplace. My first memo on friendship and refugee peers is as follows:

> *I am deeply interested in this issue of friendship and other refugee students who seem to help each other navigate the school system, rules, other students, and in fact do a great deal of cultural brokering for one another and the school itself. This young woman (Sara) is 19 and ready to graduate and feels like an advocate for other students in the school. She translates, provides help when conflict arises and explains what is going on.*

> *When I left the interview, I felt this somewhat palpable loneliness from the interview. I think it was this idea that students are really having to figure out a great deal on their own without support. Teachers in this interview seem to be there for academic help with the exception of one teacher, but I don't hear in this interview any adults stepping in to help students adjust. It is merely refugee peers who are filling in the gap in structure.*

When Refugee Peers Become Friends **-** Friends were defined as people who you shared your stories with, often went to and from school with, could share your difficulties with, and who you would participate in activities not just within the school but outside the school as well. When students were being interviewed they talked about the fact that making friends made things less lonely, made you feel safe and made you feel part of a community. Making friends seemed to mark the beginning of becoming a part of the life of the school. Students who talked about their school in positive ways often spoke of having many friends. Students said things like: "I am good now I have many friends" and use expressive language like: "I love them. We hang

out. We play together. I really love them. I think they're good kids" when describing their

friends and the way they made them feel.

Friends typically were refugee peers but not necessarily someone from their own

community. The term "special friend" was used most commonly when it referred to someone

who spoke your language and with whom you had a great deal of shared experience, but friends

were not limited to a language group. Alex in explaining his friends told the following story:

> Actually, my friend came from Tanzania too, like a couple months before me. Like, we were new together. So, it's like his first day and my first day – I have another friend, M, he's from Iraq. So, we've become really close because three all of us like new students and we don't know anybody there, so he doesn't have friends, I don't have friends, so we become like – the teachers, she put us into a group, so we talk to each other and we find out we were all new.

> So, me and M, we're kind of stupid in math. So, he helped both of us. I mean, I passed that class because of him. I'm serious. I have to tell that because otherwise I'm not going to pass anyway, because he explained me a lot because teachers can explain you because this big class, like 40 students so she can't come to you, "Alex, you have to do it this way."

In the interviews, friends were confidantes, helped connect students to other micro

communities in the school, provided academic support and system explanation, and helped

students feel a sense of place with the school. Statements about friends included:

> I should be friendly with teachers and just try to know English. If you know English then everything can be easier for you. (Samuel)

> I love them. We hang out. We play together. I really love them. I think they're good kids. (Mary)

> My friends told me to stay a lot (*after school*), and I stayed, and the teachers came and give us papers where they say after school to do an interview. And then we went there with my friends, and they got us into After School Matters. (Mark)

> First they helped me to learn the language because they were talking in English and the second one helped me to learn a lot of things about the school.(Thomas)

Friends would often live close to the students, easing the burden and any concerns of the commute to school. On his walk home, Mark made a friend who turned out to live near his apartment building, helping him to feel safer:

> The other friends who came here like two months after we start school. And then he came close to my house, and he was to same school. So when we were going home, I saw him, like, taking the same way I was going. And I say, you know, and "You go this way" because we're in same class. And I say, "I didn't know you live close to me." He said, "Where do you live?" He said, "I live just right there." I say, "There?" And he said, "We can go to school together." And his dad said we'll go home together every time.

Friends played a significant role in addressing any barriers you were experiencing. For Alicia, wearing hijab in gym class as well as swimming for the required quarter were major issues that surfaced within the first few months of her arrival. In her case, her friends helped her understand how to address the issue of swimming knowing that she could swim early in the morning when no one was there and then actively advocated on her behalf to keep her from having to dress for gym class in a uniform that was not suitable for the requirements of Islam:

> Yeah (the uniform is). A shirt and T-shirt also. My friends tell me that if you wore just the T-shirt it will be fine. But like I also can't wear the T-shirt, so I didn't wear it. Now I have a *B*, but some friends say I have *F* because they didn't wear. Maybe because the teacher, because I have to – like maybe she knows about the Islam.

What Alicia when on to say was that her friend had talked to the teacher on her behalf and that the teacher was going to let her continue to wear hijab in gym.

Friends helped attend to the overwhelming acculturation process that is part of the school day's ether for a newcomer student. While refugee peers might give you advice, friends would advocate, help you strategize when there was a problem, give you the understood rationale for the experience, and provide you with a buffer when the school became overwhelming. When talking about confronting disrespectful students Alex was given this advice by a friend:

It was pretty tough. I didn't know what to do. In the beginning they messed with me, so I argue with them, so I wanted my friend to help me out, he said: "Just ignore these people. You're just going to get in trouble." Because if you have a bad record at school, in everything you can have a bad record. It's hard to find a job, it's hard to find everything. So, you have to just ignore, calm down or talk to teachers, talk to security, or talk to the counselor and change class.

In the analysis relationships were a major category, with friends organized under the category. Friends were met in the cafeteria, class, and sometimes in afterschool academic programs. Moving through the analysis and coding for the different dimensions of friends and the types of support given, students articulated the following kinds of support:

1. Helping build relationships – Other friends, teachers, staff and sometimes peers

2. Support with the school system

    a. Advocacy

    b. Rule Explanation

    c. Academic support

3. Mentorship

4. Linguistic support

5. Helping to maintain a sense of safety

6. Emotional and social well-being support.

When mapping this list to the important components of school climate found in the broader literature the scope of importance of friends for these students can be seen. Friends, it seems, are filling in the gaps where the school is not. When asked if the school was aware of the ways in which students supported each other the answer was always no. Furthermore, when talking with other agencies that support newcomer youth within and outside of these schools they were largely unaware of the intricate way in which refugee friends and even peers help build these

pathways of belonging for each other. The potential to more fully understand this network of support will be discussed in the next chapter.

It is clear that relationships form the pathways to belonging. Positive relationships with teachers were reported as tremendously helpful to students who needed support adjusting to the life of the school and understanding the transactions in the classroom. Peers perceived as US born were a barrier in this search to belong in a school. Yet, some students did discuss their wish to extend their friendship network to US born friends after they had been here for a certain period of time.

Thomas explained this in this manner when talking about current friends and then the wish for US born friends:

> You help each other in all you can do, but I need, like, white friends. Now I need white friends because if you're from right here in America, you are part of everything. You know everything about America. Yeah, so if you're from a different country, maybe too you don't understand some stuff from America.

When I asked if you need friends that were born in the States he replied:
> Yeah, the states. Yeah, to show me some things. Maybe things I don't know. She needs to help me learn everything. To do like they do. To do it like their way.

As seen, refugee peers or friends created a network of support that served to ease concerns with safety, explain what the rules and expectations were, encourage participation in the life of the school, and keep the students informed about the environment in which they found themselves. The different layers of support, which appeared relatively unknown to the school staff, seemed to create the likelihood that if you had the right peers you would view a school's climate more positively and be able to work through the barriers experienced in the environment that were interfering with joining with the community.

Through the analysis the important components of school climate for refugee youth emerged, showing an importance placed on relationships, teaching and learning, safety, and developing a connectedness to the school community. What is more, there was a clear link between what is currently understood in the school climate literature and these students' experiences of a school's climate.

What emerged was that all the important aspects of a school's climate identified by students were crucial to building a sense of belonging for the student within the school. Relationships and experiences with the people in the building were the most significant part of each interview. Students were able to articulate what they needed from relationships to find this sense of belonging, what they experienced from relationships both currently and in the past, and the ways in which these relationships informed their overall sense of the school and the manner in which they were part of or separate from the school community. All other aspects of school climate that were explored were done so in the context of the relationship to the other.

2.   <u>Barriers to belonging</u>

It is important to understand what might prevent a student from finding a pathway to belonging. What follow are the ways in which students articulated the negative experiences that they have had in the school that seemed to make finding a place within the school community more difficult and created a negative perception of the school's climate.

a.   <u>English as the primary barrier</u>

Learning English was a primary motivator, barrier, and thrust of a student's academic expectations. English competency would allow a student to form relationships, learn in subjects like history that required vast amounts of English knowledge, and successfully join with the school. Not knowing English had a high cost for students:

Now it's good for me because I started speaking a little bit of English, and I make a lot of friends now from different country, like, it's different. I don't know how I can say because it's different before and now. Before I wasn't speaking English, but now I speak a little bit of English, so I make a lot of friends, but before I wasn't making a lot of friends because I was scared. I don't know how to speak English, so how I can make friends?

Another student said:

The English was really challenging, like communicating, and a lot of people would talk to them using gestures like they're deaf – they can't talk.

Paul, who was the only refugee student in the school, talked about his biggest challenge upon arrival:

It was language. I knew British English, and because if you're a new student and maybe the language is not good, it's like a problem to find friends and to ask friends what going on in school. It's actually hard, so that's the worst one.

The acquisition of language meant that you could be known to the school, your talents could be discovered, you were able to perceive safe and unsafe behaviors, and you could navigate the school and classroom experiences as well as make friends. It was hard to understand where in the development of this theory to place this topic. It is a pathway to belonging and an aspect of acculturation that is omnipresent in the life of a student. If relationships are the conduit to belonging, English language acquisition is the first step in building those relationships with all but same language peers. This means that for refugee students the quality of the English language program, the ability to safely practice English skills, and the access to supports that enhance your English language ability were critical to building a connected relationship with your new community.

It is important to note that for many refugee youth, having a same language staff member or teacher is not a possibility. There simply are no Swahili speaking teachers in the schools represented nor Burmese, Lingala, or many of the other languages that represent the languages of the students. Arabic was the one exception, but only one high school seemed to have an Arabic

speaking staff member. Why is this important, and what are the barriers to this perception of

inclusion? First, language as a point of entry to belonging cannot fully be realized without adult

support. One might, and in this sample most students did, have a refugee peer who could

become a friend who can help translate, but they do not have the same ability to advocate for you

within the system. Alex when talking about the importance of having a staff who spoke Hindi (a

language also spoken by the participant although not his first language) said:

> Miss F. She was really nice. Me and my sister used to go in her fifth and sixth period together in freshman year, so she helped us a lot. So, we don't speak English well. I mean, we just speak basic English, only like hi, how are you? That's it. So, we speak both – we both speak same language, like she speaks Hindi, I speak Hindi too, so it's helped a lot.

He went on to talk about the fact that he could use this teacher to explain homework, explain the

rules and give him advice in other classes.

The value placed on having this type of support was expressed by Alicia who talked

about the level of support she perceived students who spoke Spanish as a first language had:

> And the Spanish students, they are most lucky because they everywhere speak Spanish. Every tutor who comes – like I felt – I surprised when they talk Spanish. all the teachers are bilingual in Spanish.

Exploring the way in which this supported other students, Alicia talked about students getting

help in language intensive classes like history whereas she as an Arabic speaker would have to

go home and use Google Translate, spending hours to complete a single assignment:

Like it was very hard in the beginning, especially in the history.

> She (*the history teacher*) would give us paper like this one, and there's full in the English words. So when I come in the first day, I was cries. I start to cry and I told me father, "I can't solve this. It's a lot." In the next day, she is also give us same, like other paper. Like I start to translate each word, and it's take a lot of time like hours.

This highlights not only a linguistic barrier perceived by the students but also a perception that school is not fair in the same way for all students, keeping them disconnected from the system.

When students were asked about how they solved problems and whether the school ever provided translation, the answer was often no, saying things like: "Just on the phone in the beginning of the year, to translate and explain for me what will happen." Or "No, the school doesn't ask for help with language." While peers may have intervened, access to an interpreter was typically not provided. Veronica had access on the first day to language through a student:

> So the first time we (the sisters) walked in class, and found someone who speaks Swahili and show us about where our classes are, and for that one day, was with us, and then teacher said, "Well, just for today, she'll be with you, but after that then you can go on your own because you know where your class is"

> While this brief translation was helpful, there was an urgency to know English that was

deeply felt. Paul said:

> I focused, focused hard in class because, you know, when you're with people you speak the same language, it's like you're home. When you don't speak English, like you don't learn a lot. You have to focus, because anything they speak, I want to understand. So I focused on like paying more attention, asking questions where I don't understand for more improvement.

For one Swahili speaking student, the school provided her with a French translator over the phone in one instance, but she said her French was not sufficient to understand the translator and the problem remained unsolved. It would not be possible for a system to keep pace with the language needs of a group as diverse as those coming through the U.S. refugee program. Yet, students consistently reported the need to have some type of language support that would help understand the system. In its absence they turn to friends for this type of support. When Samuel was talking about this kind of support he said of his friend: "He was helping me with a lot of things like homework, translate for me, yeah."

The quality of the English language instruction or access to a comprehensive bilingual program (more than one ESL class) and the access to some level of interpretation were all experiences for students that either provided opportunities or created a barrier to learning and belonging. When speaking of the value of a strong Bilingual program Caitlyn said:

> So the ESL class was helpful – the ESL teacher was helpful because she followed up, like said, "Write four sentences," and then she'll come and – she will come and check in and to make sure that I actually wrote the full sentences and give me feedback whether or not they're right, and it was the same thing with the algebra teacher. He would give an example on the board and say, "Go complete a problem on the board," and if it's correct, they give feedback. The feedback is helpful.

When talking more about the value of these classes Caitlyn went on to say:

> So, like in every class, we – in all the classes, we have made friends, and most of the friends, we have all the classes together, so we're able to see each other in almost all the classes, so we can develop our friendships.

Alicia, who throughout her interview talked about her frustrations with the school and the quality of instruction, said: "My friends told me that in other schools they give care more for the ESL student." The bilingual and ESL programs that students may find themselves in have historically been an entry point to joining with a school and seem to be so with this group of students.

Language is currency, and currency is needed to participate in a system. It allows students to understand the expectations and the rules (both implicit and explicit), to begin to understand the culture and climate of the school, to navigate social experiences safely, and to succeed academically. When asked about how things were going for him now Kevin said things were going well and when asked why said:

> Because right now, I can speak. Like, when someone says something to me, I can understand even. Even if I don't really know English, I can understand when I talk to someone, yeah.

For students in this sample it was both the classes and the presence of an adult who spoke their language that made the perception of a school much more positive. If a student spoke some level of English, their overall early experiences were better, and they experienced successes within a system to build on. If English was not known, it was the primary stated barrier to accessing a sense of belonging within the school and kept students largely separate from many of the ways in which they could find opportunities to join with the system itself. When talking about not knowing English in the beginning Sara, speaking on behalf of new refugee students, said: "Yeah. For new students from different countries even especially if you don't know the language, oh my goodness. It's hard."

b.   <u>Safety and conflict</u>

Conflict was a significant theme that emerged in the course of the interviews that negatively affected a perception of safety and deprived students of an overall sense of belonging to the school itself. Conflicts cited were more often between peers but at times with teachers. Peer conflict ranged from bullying, to being physically threatened or even hurt, to experiencing acts of discrimination and xenophobia.

As part of a large memo on the emerging coding categories I described the issue of conflict that kept surfacing as follows:

> *How you handle conflict in a new system and new culture is a substantial topic emerging. You see it join with advocacy albeit often not successfully. Again there is this element of time here (early experiences informing later actions). At first a student is watching or observing. Then a student tries to self-advocate when things have gone wrong. For this student her attempts did not meet the outcome she wanted and she seemed disappointed in the system. It is almost as if was forced to reconcile with her idea that the schools are great in the States through the lack of support she received. Her perception that there was a basic unfairness present in the school and that she was going to have to simply put up with being misunderstood and not represented seems a significant barrier to feeling like you are part of the school.*

The lunchroom could be particularly intimidating for students and was an area where students often expressed feeling unsafe. In describing the lunchroom Caitlyn said:

> There's loud music everywhere that is interrupting. Sometimes you just – you're sitting down and you just feel someone just hit you, punches you, and – *[laughs]* – and then talking and cussing at you. Yeah, and then you – sometimes there's really nothing you can do. I didn't come here to fight; I came to study, so I just forget it.

This was an interesting example of the experiences of physical violence and a genuine lack of sense of how one was supposed to defend themselves in a school. Caitlyn had been told during her refugee orientation that fighting would lead to being jailed which would lead to a removal of all financial benefits the family was receiving at home. It was this framework around which she and her parents made the decision not to talk to the school about what was going on for fear of creating a vulnerability for their family. When asked if there were any people at school she could speak with she seemed unclear about who that could be and unwilling to seek out a resource for support. When I asked her what she would have done in her own country to remedy the situation she talked about the following:

> The only reason she didn't even react is because we are in America and she knows if she fights, then she can get in trouble, but if she was in Tanzania, she would have just beat him and actually beat him well. *[Laughs]* Because the law in Tanzania allows if someone provokes you, you are entitled to retaliate that way.

> There's a lot at stake here in America, you know, Social Security and getting arrested, having things you can lose or stand to lose by fighting. So that's the reason why I can't just defend myself because I don't want to ruin my future; I don't want anything to negatively affect me and affect my future. But if it was in Tanzania, I could fight. I could retaliate in that way and the police sometimes will even watch it while you're fighting. As long as the other person's the one who started – provoked you, then you're entitled, but here, I always remind myself that there's so much I stand to lose acting a certain way.

It should be noted that when I asked if the school had given her a sense of who to reach out to in the event of conflict she did give me a response that was clear someone had given her

information about who to talk to, but the perception she held was that the school would be largely ineffectual at solving this conflict between peers. This conclusion seemed to be drawn from her observations of the student-teacher exchanges that took place within the context of the classroom.

Bullying was part of the school experience for many of the students. Samuel talked about being called a terrorist many times by different students and associated with ISIS by peers in the school. He also talked about a conflict between students who were Shia and students who were Sunni in which Shia students were actively being bullied by Sunni students who have been born in the US:

> So as you know, Iraq has Shia, and Sunni. And he said there is a lot of Indian, Muslim students and that they're Sunni, so they start this kind of talk in the conflict about ISIS and things like that. And they don't want just to walk away they always blame Shia about being ISIS but they're not. They have no ethnicity.

When asked if the school was aware of the conflict the student said no and thought that the school wouldn't be able to understand the nature of the conflict nor be able to handle the matter.

Racial undertones were present in the daily experience that students had with other peers and sometimes with staff. Yet while students of color, as relative newcomers to the United States, did not explicitly talk about the racial undertones in their interviews, there were nonetheless stories that I think suggested that they were experiencing racism within their schools. For example, Mary talked about an experience where she was seated with the only other two African (from Burundi) or African American students on her first day of class. These two students were seated in the back of the class. She talked about noticing this, but then simply went on to say that the students were unhelpful and that she found a way to get her academic needs met:

The first day of school the first class I took was math. They placed me in the math class and then they told me, the teacher told me to sit with the only black students there. So one was from Burundi the other was African American, not Swahili, not Burundi, none of the language shared. They just told me to sit there because they were the only black people. The kid from Burundi was making fun of me, saying, "Would you be able to do this work?" So I was like, you know, the only thing I don't know is English. I know math. So the girl who was supposed to help, the other black girl who was supposed to be helping just showed me like the example, just didn't say anything, just showed it to me. So she (Mary) told the boy from Burundi, like why isn't she talking? Doesn't she talk? "Oh, she doesn't speak any other language. She just speaks English." So the first day after that experience with those kids I knew they didn't want to help me, so the following day when I came back there was a student who was absent in the front. So I sat in the front row at that student's seat. Then I just started paying attention because I realized that the other kids won't help me. So, the teacher wouldn't notice that I'm working on it. So if there's something like I'm stuck with, I will do a gesture like this (*makes a hand gesture*) and so the teacher would come stand over me and help me and then he noticed and commented, "Well, you know math." He would say it in front of the class. So everybody just started coming to me for help in math because the teacher kept saying, "Oh, you know how to do it. You're doing so great."

This is an example of an experience that could be perceived as a microagression that that the students didn't articulate in this manner, but which captures the racial undertones that often permeate a school's structure. In these instances, if the acts were noticed at all, it was as an injustice around the rules (as in the case of Sara whose homework was torn up because of an assumption of cheating). Students experienced racist or xenophobic comments like being associated with ISIS or being told "you're too dark," but it seemed that being new to the country left them without the understanding of the ways in which the US has defined the construct of race and institutionalized racism.

It was this issue of conflict and how it was handled, and the perception that the school could not address matters arising, that was deeply threatening to a student's sense of belonging in the school. Students reported that schools did not seem to give any kind of orientation to how to handle conflicts as they arise, leaving the students without a voice or the ability to credibly

advocate for their own safety. Students largely handled conflicts that arose through avoidance

and walking away from situations. These experiences seemed to have a negative impact on the

overall perception of the school's climate and a sense of belonging to the school. Sara talked

about her sense of safety:

> I don't feel safe, you know, (*my*)High School, sometimes the fight and I don't like to see
> people fighting, so I just feel maybe they will fight me too.

Asked what she did when that happens, Sara said:

> When they're fighting I just feel like going home, and you cannot go home if you have
> class, so I just run in the class and stay in the classroom.

The high school with the restorative justice program seemed to be the one place where

students had a better sense of how to handle conflict as it emerged, when to choose different

strategies for handling that conflict (i.e. participate in the confrontation, walk away, or engage

support), and when and more importantly to whom to reach out for support from staff. This

program included a peace room, and students talked about their experiences in mediating a

conflict with another peer as satisfactory when this was used. Alex talked about his early

experience:

> I do have, in my freshman year this Mexican guy who was always making me mad,
> because I'm kind of a mad person. So, once somebody bothers me I just hit that person.
> So, yeah, at the beginning I have conflicts, like two or three times, and the teacher's like,
> "Why are you doing that?" After that we became best friends.

When asked what helped make that change:

> We have a peace room. So, the teachers send both of us to peace room, so they'll talk and
> basically, I am from different country and he's from different country. We came here to
> study not to fight or something. We are here for an education. Why would you fight for
> no reason? It's because he took my eraser and then threw it. Like, stupid stuff like that.
> So, they helped explain in a good way. They helped us figure it out.

Part of handling conflict is understanding the rules and expectations of the school. Students were not entirely clear about the rules and expectations of the school and often defaulted to the rules of school in their home country until they understood what was being asked of them. When asked if someone explained the rules to him Mark said: "No. The teachers all have different rules." When asked about how he solved not knowing the rules his response was: "I just follow like my rules from my country because I didn't know anything here." Students reported that it was difficult to understand what the rules were because each classroom had a different set of rules and expectations. Trying to sleuth out what the system expected of the students became a part of the early observation period with students. Paul in response to the question posed above stated: "Nope. I don't – even now, I don't even know any rules, but I have gotten to know some rules through my friends."

One school had created a school video to help students in the ESL program understand the expectations of the school and the resources available when they need support. When students who were part of this school were asked who they could reach out to for support in conflict they mentioned security, teachers, fellow students, and even the principal all as allies for support in managing conflict with others.

c.   **Parent marginalization**

School climate literature supports the idea that parental involvement can positively affect a student's perception of a school's climate. In the original interview guide parents and parent involvement was not part of the questions asked. However, during the course of the interviews students started to talk about parents and the ways in which they could not participate in the life of the school as an important barrier. When asked what parents' role would have been in their home country students talked about academic support and support when there were problems at

the school and gave a picture of a collaboration between teachers and parents that was

supportive. In their home country the parents and teacher formed a group if needed that would

help a student if they were having discipline problems or academic problems. When talking

about parents not being able to be part of the school (and in this case deal with a struggling

student) and what school had been like Mark said:

> I say maybe – the parents work, and they don't know what he's doing. Because, in Africa, maybe one parent works. Usually only the father. The father is the only one who works and mom stays home like watching the children and getting kids to go to school – back home, they go to school.

Parents, it was reported, were not able to participate in the life of the school and students

noted this as a loss of support. Reasons included work schedules where parents were having to

do the type of shift work that made it difficult to come to school at certain time, a lack of clarity

about what type of relationship the school would invite, a sense of ineffectiveness when parents

did try to reach out to the school, language barriers—both that prevented assistance with

homework and prevented communicating with teachers—and the fact that both parents (when

there were two parents) were required to work, so that one parent, typically the mother, could no

longer participate in the assumed role of caretaker of the children which extended to their school

life. The loss of parents as a support for school was portrayed as being difficult at best and left

the student feeling as if there was little support that could help them both academically and from

an advocacy perspective when problems emerged. When asked about the absence of his mom as

a school support because of her work Thomas said: "It's very hard". This made the relationships

with friends and teachers all the more critical, for often they would fill a portion of those

responsibilities and a portion of that role when a student needed support. When Mark was

reflecting on parents being largely absent from the school he said: "they (meaning friends) help each other because the parents are gone."

D.   Acculturation: The Impact of School Climate

1.   Experiencing multiculturalist press

As part of understanding the important components of a school's climate this study also looked at what if any role acculturative press played in the experience of a school's climate. Given that the school is one of, if not the most critical of the factors shaping environment for refugee youth, the acculturation process is also largely shaped by the broader interactions and experiences within the school.

Learning about the student's culture was an area where teachers could be seen as applying a more multiculturalist perspective when working with these students. Acculturative press that is multiculturalist in nature seems to invite stronger relationships with teachers in particular that begins to build an understanding of the system. When asked if it was important for a school to ask about the where students come from Kevin said:

> Yeah, it's important for them to understand. Yeah, so they can know how they can begin to help them.

When asked if his school staff did he went on to say:

> Some of the teachers know, yeah, and it helps.

When talking about his school's international festival Mark said:

> There is a day they say, like, you have to wear clothes from your country. There you are going to see different cultures. Like, everybody going to wear clothes from his country, and they're going to say, like, "This is famous for my country." I like, that day, I see people wearing different, and I have to wear clothes from my country.

When asked does it help students to be able to talk about their country?

> Yeah. Of course, the teachers ask – they always ask. They always ask, like, "How is your country?" Like, why how did you get here? How was your trip? How was food?"

Mark talked about feeling welcomed in the beginning in the following way:

> Yeah, when I first arrived to school, I was – so it's different because I came to school, and I didn't know anybody. So just looking – and first it is a big school *[inaudible]* it's big. And it's, like, floors, first and second, third. So, yes, watching, I didn't know everybody, so I sit down. We went to class, and the teacher said, like, to introduce ourselves. And we stand up, you say your name, where you're from, and you say the languages that you speak. Everybody, and then I start making friends.

Staff too can have a positive effect on the acculturative pressure exerted by a system that is reported as being open and welcoming by the students. From the first day of school Max was able to develop a relationship with the school counselor at his school who connected him with an Arabic speaking teacher as well as other Arabic speaking students on his first day. Max talked about feeling "very welcomed" and that the school "cared a lot about me". This experience built a relationship between the student and the counselor has grown overtime and now that Max is looking at colleges, he is relying once again on the person who initially welcomed him into the school.

2. Experiencing assimilationist press

One of the most significant barriers to developing a sense of belonging was the assimilationist orientation of some schools, the tendency simply to expect conformity to established rules instead of treating differences from a multicultural—and thus empathetic—perspective. Acculturative pressure that was more assimilationist in nature was difficult, particularly when peers were pressuring youth to adapt their behaviors in ways that felt disrespectful to teachers and the school, if not unsafe. The lack of welcoming by peers perceived as US born, the experiences of bullying, and the manner in which those peers were viewed were

perhaps the most significant examples of the interaction between acculturative press, the refusal to change one's behavior and a sense of separateness from the school itself.

Experiences of conflict became a property sorted under the different relationships that had been noted as positive or negative. Conflict, also in the coding process could be associated with the category of acculturative press showing an intersection between a negative experience with a person in the school (or the system itself) and the experience of a pressure to change one's behavior. An early experience of this type of pressure through conflict left a student feeling confused, alone, and not a member of the school. What is more, without the support of a system that would aid in problem solving, the isolation of a student increased further:

> There was a refugee from (refugee agency), we met at school, but he's from Burma. He doesn't know English, I think he is 18.

> The guy who was talking to another guy like a friend, and the girl thought maybe we were talking about her age. I mean, she's calling bad names at the guy, but the guy, he doesn't know to speak English very well because he's a refugee. He was maybe here six months. So, when we go to the security they just said don't fight in school. That is not good, you can't get in a fight, and they told the guy. The refugee kid doesn't know how to explain himself to just make his rights known.

When Sara accompanied the student to the discipline office she was not allowed to go and help explain what had happened. Sara explained:

> But the security didn't understand, they just understand the girl, because of the English barrier.

When asked if students who speak English get different treatment her response was:

> Yeah because we don't know English by ourselves we don't know how to, just like our right.

Sometimes the school's lack of awareness of the cultural and language issues that lay behind peer to peer conflict (i.e., its reliance on simple assimilationist answers) created an even stronger sense that a student did not belong to the school and an overall sense of a pressure to

adapt to a school or the stark choice of not adapting to the school's expectations and therefore distancing yourself from the school itself. Samuel, a student from Iraq, had an experience in gym class where the pushing and shoving of a soccer match led to a student trying to fight him. His first attempt in apologizing was not successful and the situation escalated: "Yeah. I didn't mean that (the pushing). I just told him sorry and he just kept pushing me." When asked if the teacher helped he said: "The teacher actually no, because he told me like if you want to fight, just go to a locker room and fight". When asked how he handled that situation he said: "I just ignored him, both of them (*teacher and student*)." I then asked if his friends helped in the situation and he went on to say:

> Actually, my friends like they told me go in the bathroom and fight with him. I just ignore them. Knowing that this is the future I have trouble with fighting. A lot of students show they are stronger than you, but I just have confident and ignore them, yeah.

This student talked about feeling like the school was not able to support his needs with other students and that the students and teachers: "should be more friendly and share ideas about themselves with students".

Students would talk about experiences of discrimination, the ways in which they didn't understand the rules, and the fact that often peers and some teachers did not seem interested in knowing who they were as individuals. Mark in talking about the richness of being in a school with so many international students started to reflect on how he would have to change his behavior in a school of students if they were largely US born:

> I would have to change, how I say or how I talk to people. 'Because some people who are born here, most of them don't listen to me. 'Because they think that, "I'm American. We're the best country in the world. Why are you going to tell me what to do?" And that's why I think I would have to change that.

Samuel talked about his experience of feeling very misunderstood by the US born peers in

his school, saying: "Actually like we have a lot of students that don't like Arab, because they think like they think we are ISIS, but we're not. Yeah." Kimberly talked about students in the lunch room saying: "Well, you're too dark. You need to go back to your country."

All of these experiences can be understood through an unwillingness of a system to be flexible in its understanding of "the student" such that there is room for students from many different parts of the world to belong. Mary when asked if the school asked about where she was from said: "I think that's not important– like most of teachers don't even want to know."

Assimilationist press was an experience that would create a substantial barrier to belonging, leaving a student confused, unaccepted, and feeling like they did not belong.

Acculturation and its experiences were as stated a filter through which students viewed a school's climates. Whether it was openness to the student's story—getting to know the student as the person they were—experiences of conflict, bullying or othering, pushing to change behaviors in ways that were perceived as positive or negative, it would be hard if not impossible to separate the important components of a school's climate and the acculturation experiences a student was having. When asked about what advice she would give new students so they could be a part of their new school Mary talked about the ways students should approach the school through the translator:

> So the first thing that I would advise new refugees coming in is not be shy. Just take away the shyness. Also make friends, find friends in various classes who can help you. If they understand English more than you, you have friends you can always go back and they can help you. The third thing is always ask teachers questions, knowing that the teachers, they're not mean. They're helpful. They're willing to help you. So having just like that understanding about the teachers are very helpful.

For Mark playing "football" (in the US soccer) was an early entry into the school, giving Him an opportunity to participate in something he loved, felt familiar and that he was actually very good at. It was also an experience with a teacher and his love of the sport that gives a clear

example of an assimilationist orientations to acculturation. When asked if he had had negative experiences with any teachers this was one of the stories he told:

> The other teacher was old, and he likes hockey, and nobody in class likes hockey. It was, even if he's talking about hockey, some people – everybody, like, are from different countries, so they never seen hockey. So they're, like, "What is hockey? How do people play hockey?" And he said, "They play with a stick." "How can people play with stick?" And the same thing, like, baseball. When I came, I didn't know what is baseball. When I came here – I was, like, I went to the park. I saw, like, some kids playing, and I said, "Is that a game, or they're just playing?" They said – one guy said, "That's a famous game in Chicago." I said, "What? That's a game, how they hit and they run around." They say, "That's a game." And he (*the teacher*) didn't say soccer. I said, "Oh, they," they say soccer. He play soccer? I said, "What is soccer?" Because we say a football. But it was soccer. He said it was, "Soccer." And he has to show me the picture of, like, the ball. I said, "Oh, football." And he said, "Foot – that's not football. Football is the one they play, they kick." And we're arguing, like, "This is football. It is soccer, football, soccer."

When asked how he solved the argument he said:

> Of course the other guys who were at lunch, say: "We say football, too, in my country. But all Americans say soccer." And they were, like, Europe and every continent says football, but only Americans say soccer. And that teacher said, "Okay. Well, we're in America. We play soccer."

It's important to note that even subtle exchanges between a teacher and a student can constitute an act that is perceived as a pressure to adopt the host cultures orientation even when it is about something that may seem as insignificant to a teacher like the word soccer. These are acts that may force a change or adoption of a behavior or a word and may also create a sense of exclusion in a community where you are a member. Experiences of acculturative press led either to a sense of belonging or to a sense of disconnectedness, with students in schools that were more open to students and their backgrounds finding a deeper sense of belonging to that school.

When interviewing students, it became clear that while the acculturation process could be seen in every interaction, the framework of school climate also had a profound impact on the student's interactions and experiences. Developing a perception of a school's climate, seeking to

belong to a school, and experiencing acculturation are dynamic processes that a refugee student

is involved in from the start of their school career. A memo on acculturation that reflects the

struggle to understand acculturation's place in the greater construct of school climate:

> *In looking at interviews and talking to students my perception is that acculturation is a process that youth are trying to have facilitated through the school. If the school is one of the more significant environments that they experience, acculturation will naturally take place in that location. If you are acculturating linguistically and behaviorally what youth are looking for are trusted adults and students who can help guide them through this process.*

> *Who can get their linguistic needs met? Who can guide them on the ways in which the rules and expectations require an adaptation in their behavior? Or the choice to remain separate by following a set of expectations that feel more true to their sense of self?*

> *If you can't look to your U.S. born peers who seem to be universally untrusted you must be left with teachers and refugee students. US born peers' exchanges with teachers are perceived neutrally at best but in the beginning it is the disrespect in the exchange that is formidable and significant. Disrespect is what I hear/see more than anything. In the perception of youth and while there may be an assimilationist orientation in the exchanges these interviewees are unwilling to adopt those behaviors.*

In many ways, the data found in the interviews suggest that youth are actively engaging

the school environment to help facilitate the acculturation process. Youth need to begin a

process of adjustment and are seeking to do so via the school. The fact that youth are looking to

acculturate linguistically and behaviorally has already been seen in the school climate data.

Youth seem to be seeking trusted and open adults and students who can help guide them through

this process of discernment that will allow them the ability to make choices about how and if

they adapt to the new host culture or maintain an orientation to the heritage culture.

E.   **The Core Category – Building a Path to Belonging**

"When you're with people who speak the same language, it's like you're home." Paul

As students were articulating the important components of a school's climate and the

manner in which acculturation may affect their perception of a school's climate, every

experience within the school could be organized under the core category of belonging. From the very first interview where Alex stated: "teachers are like your parents" and went on to explore friends who were like family it seemed that students were working to build a pathway to belonging for themselves through friends, refugee peers, teachers and staff and that the experiences they were having (both positive and negative) in the classroom and in other areas of the school helped them solidify a sense of belonging to the school or created a barrier. Mary herself said about teachers: "Teachers here are very friendly. They're all treating me like family and I treat them like my parents." Students used the language of home (parents, families, being known) when exploring strong bonds found with people in the school giving the sense that they were trying to build relationships and seeking experiences that helped them belong. It seemed that students were seeking relationships and experiences that would help them belong, that went beyond the functional transactions that allow you to pass from class to class successfully and safely. There was a desire to be known and understood like Paul who talked about his math teacher very positively saying: "She is good because once she asked me where I came from". So, how do students build a sense of belonging, what and who are important, and what is the role of the school itself in the development of this sense of belonging to the school?

What seems clear is that the path to understanding the school does begin before a student arrives. Students arrive with different school experiences that may or may not translate in the new school setting. Students talked about knowing some English, experience with diversity, and even some experience with US high school through watching films or the internet as helping to prepare the student to come to school in the United States.

All students had an academic identity that included a deep respect for educators, an unwillingness to break rules, and a perception of a "good student" as hardworking and willing to

work through problems to be academically successful. As mentioned students came to school with a sense that the school itself was an extension of the family and the student a member of this family. They conceptualized schools as a place where the student role was understood, there was an opportunity to not just survive but thrive, and one was connected to a community of people with similar hopes and dreams for their own success.

This was the pre-migration stance that began the process of building a sense of belonging to the school and constitutes the expectations that a student may have coming to their new school in the United States.

### 1.	**Early experiences**

Once a student arrived early experiences were compared to pre-existing ideas of what school should be like and began to set the path to belonging that students were seeking. All participants experienced a dark time that they reported lasting anywhere from a month to several months. It was a period where there was no or little working knowledge of English, no knowledge of the system, very little access to resources that would help explain the school, and more often than not tremendous fear. Even students who had arrived from a country where English was one of many languages spoken experienced the isolation and fear expressed by their counterparts who did not speak any English. Every participant interviewed used phrases like "it was scary," "I was lonely," and "I was shy" to express their early experiences in school.

English as a barrier was an early code in the open coding phase of the data, and students would talk about the effect of not knowing English with little understanding of how the school was supposed to work:

> The first month school was difficult for me because of the language, I spoke a different language, the second language (English) is more difficult for me. To make new friends

was difficult too. I was just all to myself in the class and spoke a different language. The other (students) they spoke English. I was taking regular classes. It was difficult. (Sara)

This experience was noted over and over again. Most students in the early experience were not with same language peers (or with very few). The orientation to the school was at best done with a same language peer (in the case of one high school) and typically limited to a teacher or a counselor handing you your schedule and a map. Rules were explained (if at all) in fairly stark ways, and, as one student pointed out later in the interview, rules really vary by classroom so a set of rules was not that useful.

Sara talked about the fact that she had not changed classes in her home country and (as already explained) expected the teachers to come to the class. As a result, she missed her second class on her first day while she sat in her first period room waiting for the teacher to arrive:

During the early part of a student's time at the high school, there was a period of intense observation. Without language at their disposal, observing the transactions that took place on a daily basis between students, between students and teachers, and between students and staff became the foundation from which an early assessment of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment was made.

The acculturation process was omnipresent during this period of time, and students were able to articulate the way in which this period of observation informed their understanding of the language and behavioral changes that would need to take place to join with this school community. Students talked about encountering refugee peers (many of whom would become friends later) and sympathetic teachers who would give them advice on how they needed to adapt their behavior from the expectations that were created by their school of origin to the expectations of the school now.

These early experiences mark the starting point of a journey through a school with a stated hope of belonging to this new community. The hopes and dreams of the students who participated in this study all linked to the central theme of belonging where students hoped to learn from and become part of the first significant community they would be a part of in their new lives in Chicago.

After settling into the school, a period of time noted by participants as lasting anywhere from one month to eight months, students began to understand what was needed to support themselves in the school. Success was defined by meeting your academic expectations, building relationships, being known to the school and its students, and finding your place within the school community itself.

During this period of time students talked about the qualities that made them more likely to be successful within the school community. Some of these qualities were adaptations of behaviors for the students themselves. Students talked about the need to be friendly, to be more open, to adapt their sense of gender in particular to be more open to a multi-gender environment, and to be more willing to participate in the classroom. Students also talked about the different qualities other students and staff should have to make them feel more like they belong, including being understood as a complex person, seeking out the ideas of the student, respecting a student's background, and being interested in their story.

Here building relationships became critical, and students articulated the already stated need of building supportive relationships with teachers and other adults in the building, finding refugee peers and friends, and eventually finding friends that were US born who these students perceived would complete a sense of belonging to the school. Max talked about this, reflecting on the large number of Arabic speakers in his school and saying that in some ways the larger

numbers of same language speakers kept him from making US born friends stating: "there are so many of us who speak Arabic you don't have to find friends from this country."

Students were seeking support, both emotional and academic, from friends and teachers. They were seeking the ability to share their stories and be known in the school. The sooner a connection was made to a teacher and a friend the more likely it was for a student to feel connected to the school and report an overwhelmingly positive understanding of the school and their role in the school. Students were seeking an understanding from the school about the complicated nature of their lives at home. All students reported responsibilities at home that left them unable to fully participate in the life of the school at times. These roles included taking care of parents who were sick, being one of the primary sources of income, taking care of siblings while parents are working second and third shift jobs, and in the case of one student bearing the burden of being the primary applicant, which meant that his family's financial survival was solely reliant on his ability to balance work and going to school. As first generation youth, these students felt that their lives were very different than those of their counterparts in school. Students talked about feeling more connected to the school when someone knew the realities that their family faced during this early resettlement process.

Students reported that ways in which they were more likely to feel that they both understood and were part of the school included academic support, both inside and outside of classroom time, clear understanding of the rules and expectations in a manner that would help them understand how to handle conflict in particular, an environment that is safe, an ability to self-advocate, support to help them meet their future dreams, and an openness on the part of the system itself to create a space for a student coming from their country to be able to share in the

life of the school through participation in activities and through the school noticing and acknowledging the uniqueness they bring to the school.

Negative experiences seemed daunting to students who did not have the support of teachers and friends. For students who were more isolated a conflict with a teacher, a problem with another peer, or the perception that the school did not have any interest in their worldview created a deep sense of isolation. The more disconnected they felt, the harder these experiences were. When one student was trying to figure out how to handle the fact that her family's phone had been stolen and unsuccessfully tried to work with the school system to get its return, she spoke of feeling as if nobody cared about her stating: "they don't care".

Yet when a negative experience happened and a student was successful at using their networks and supports available, then the student felt as if they were connected to the school and more importantly the school was connected to them. Early successes at attempts to advocate often led students to feel more connected. It was at this point, through these successes, that students would talk about becoming a mentor to other newly arriving students giving information about how you can successfully navigate the school and conflict in the early days to get your needs met. This mentorship left the student who had been here longer feeling useful, connected, and successful in their new school, which now felt like the extension of their family that they expected. For new students the mentorship provided often opened up a path to friendship that would help them settle into the new school and begin to build an understanding of how to successfully navigate their new school to meet their needs.

Positive experiences, warm relationships with teachers, and academic success created a future orientation and thankfulness to the school and its staff for helping a student begin their life here in the United States. The final step in belonging that many students talked about but none

had accomplished was to be connected to peers they perceived as US born. This was articulated as the opportunity to fully be part of the school, to have enough English to truly belong, and to really feel like they had a place in their home community. Unfortunately, none of the students were able to understand how to build a pathway to this deeper level of connectedness and the schools appeared to have no mechanisms to help accomplish this goal.

The story of Alex will help explain the path from newly arrived student to a student who belongs. Alex's story is important in that it gives a clear picture of what the different phases and steps are to becoming part of a school community:

Alex is a 21-year-old student from Burma who identifies his ethnicity as Rohingya and grew up in Malaysia, where he was educated in a religious school that did not include more traditional academic subjects. He arrived in the States with some English and was enrolled in high school at the age of 17. He has been here three years. Upon arrival Alex talked about meeting a bilingual teacher early on who helped ease his adjustment. That, coupled with finding a few Hindi speaking peers, began to build inroads into the school community.

His early experiences were mixed. He talked about being angry and having some early problems with peers that were successfully mediated, helping him build a relationship with the security guards and the restorative justice team. He also talked about being shy, a word many participants used when talking about their early classroom experiences. His bilingual teacher gave him constant support during his early transition.

When asked more specifically about this teacher his response was:

> Miss N., she's really friendly, just like a mom to me. Like, whenever I have problems, whenever I'm sad she kind of comes to me, she'll say, "What happened? What's wrong with you? Is there anything I can help you with?" So, she always encouraged me, she always told me to go to college to study hard. If there's someone in your life to better –
>
> I mean, there's nothing impossible that a human can do, anything is possible, so she helped me a lot.

Alex encountered three peers who were all relatively new together building an early support network where each friend's strengths and talents helped the other two friends. Alex was able to help with English while his other friends helped with math. Together they played soccer for the school because he talked about it feeling somewhat less daunting to try to participate in the life of the school as a cohort. They also encountered a few refugee students who had been here longer and helped give advice about how to navigate the school system, but not as many refugee peer mentors as many other participants experienced.

The school itself felt warm and welcoming to Alex, and he partially attributed this to the substantial cohort of international students. He felt his experience in a large city in Malaysia helped him be prepared to handle a diverse multi-national school in the States. He was also simply thrilled to have access to education and the ability to have a place where he felt his future goals and dreams would be accomplished:

> It was amazing because I never go to school before in Malaysian. I went to a religious school only. So, religion's totally different than regular school. I really hoped that one day I could go to school but that hope has come true. It's a lot of struggles, but it was really awesome.

Early on Alex had multiple layers of academic support, from tutors in the school to in-home tutors that were provided by the refugee resettlement agency. His grades were A's and B's until his junior year, when he began to struggle academically. At this point, Alex reached out to

teachers and found the academic support he needed to improve his grades again. Alex had a keen sense of whom to reach out to. He had a relationship with the principal, knew to work with the counselor around college, and knew where to find academic support. He attributed this knowledge to early work with his bilingual teachers, support from his friends, and a school that felt welcoming to him. In his response to the first question: "Can you tell me what school has been like for you?" Alex had this to say:

> I have a lot of new friends who help me, teachers are amazing, they never give up on me, and they always help me with homework, especially math. Math is really hard because I never see letters with the numbers together. It is like, am I from another planet or something? So, it is really awesome.

At the time of the interview, Alex was working informally with a newly arriving group of refugee students, connecting them with teachers and staff who are important and whom he found supportive. In response to a question about ways in which he changed his behavior he explored both his unwillingness to have peers change his behavior, the fact that teachers are looked to for support, and the way in which he is now supporting newly arriving refugee youth:

> I don't get influenced by people, but I get influence from my teachers, they're really helpful, so I saw them, they really help people, so I try to become like that. So, I help a lot of – like, this year I have a lot of Burmese refugees as a freshman, so I help them a lot too. I told them – I'm kind of busy too because I have to do my college application and scholarship and I have to work, like, but never feel shy of something, if you need help, just ask me, I will help you as much as you can. So, I pretty much help them too, the way my teachers used to help me.

The process of moving from new student to a senior for Alex was layered with a considerable amount of support and openness on the part of the school itself to new students. US born peers were the only micro community with whom Alex had problems and largely navigated around. His story helps not only understand the important components of a school's climate but the way in which the process can unfold successfully when an environment and its members are paying attention to the needs of the student. More importantly Alex knew how to handle conflict

and what to do when a problem arose, and he felt like he would be treated fairly in any conflict with peers or teachers. Alex loved his school, talked about being sad that he was going on to college, and felt ready to handle his future. He felt he belonged to his school.

For many students interviewed, this was not the experience. Some were in the midst of an early part of their transition, and it was unclear if they were finding the supportive relationships that would help facilitate an overall sense of belonging to the school. Others were about to graduate and move to college (a clear measure of academic success), but the experience had been difficult, and they did not feel part of the school community. If the school is the first US shaping environment that a refugee student encounters, success goes beyond the ability to graduate. All of these students were on a path to graduation. But understanding how to successfully build relationships, advocate for yourself, and handle conflict is essential to thriving in new environmental contexts like college where these youth will next be.

The critical components of school climate for youth in this study included access to academic support including English language education, supportive relationships with teachers and peers, friendships and strong peer relationships in the school, and a sense of safety within the school that included both knowing the rules and expectations while also being able to understand how to self-advocate and handle conflict. Acculturation and acculturative press can be understood as bringing additional pressure to bear on the student's experience of a school's climate. The host community (the school and its US born peers) seem to have an expectation that, in addition to speaking English well and with little support, students should simply be the ones to adjust their behavior to adapt to both written and unwritten expectations of how a student behaves in this environment. Peers were a significant source of assimilationist press in this expectation, which at times forces refugee students to make decisions about the ways in which

they would and would not alter their sense of self as a student. When a multiculturalist orientation to acculturation was present, students felt welcome and acknowledged. It is in the intersection between acculturation and school climate that we see these students struggling with a need to belong and working to find pathways to that belonging within their new school context.

V. DISCUSSION

A. <u>Introduction</u>

This grounded theory study attempted to understand the impact of school climate on the academic experience of refugee youth who had just arrived in the United States and were experiencing high school as their first significant shaping environment as they adjusted to living in their new home country. Through semi-structured interviews with fifteen refugee youth from six different countries, a grounded theory of school climate for refugee youth emerged.

What follows is a discussion of the findings, exploring the implications for practice and policy for the field and discussing the limitations and next steps for future study of refugee youth.

1. <u>Discussion research question 1: What are the important components of school climate for refugee teens?</u>

There was clear mapping between the way the school climate literature has articulated the important components of school climate and the manner in which this group of students articulated the important components of school climate. Teaching and learning, interpersonal relationships, safety (social and emotional rules and norms as well as physical safety), and a connectedness or need to belong to the environment were all present within the data of the study. In many ways this study suggests that even for a group of students who had a very different set of expectations for what "a school" means—what the transactions should be, what the templates are for forming and maintaining relationships, what the rules are, and what the role of the student is—students develop an overall sense of the school once they are here through the components that are well explicated in the current literature.

One way in which this group of students articulated the components of school climate differently from the literature was that they focused heavily on the importance of relationships: on how the relationships they were attempting to develop built a sense of connectedness (or disconnectedness) to the school for them. Careful observation of all the actors within the school system built early ideas about what transactions in a US school may look like. This was a period of deep anxiety and fear, in part because of the lack of access to language, but also because of the critically felt need to find supportive adults and peers who would provide many different types of assistance to help them find a place within their new school.

Teachers were critical in this early phase, and the help that was articulated went far beyond the academic support that was sought. Understanding how to get their academic needs met was only part of what youth were seeking. If the refugee social service sector was discussed in the interviews, it pertained to the additional layer of academic support they might be able to provide. This may be because the current funding for refugee social service youth programs has become almost entirely focused on academic outcomes, where success -- linked to dollars for the programs --is measured through the quarterly ESL tests that the programs must administer to participating refugee students. Outcomes required to meet the goals of the Refugee Impact Grant are entirely focused on academics and parental engagement of the school system (A. Hill, personal communication, June 15, 2016).

When it came to developing a sense of belonging or connectedness to the school, the students' academic needs seemed secondary to the need for system translation and social/emotional support. Students articulated in interviews the need for supportive teachers who would address their social and emotional needs within the new school. Their early focus was on identifying a teacher or teachers who would provide them a sense of safety within the

classrooms, who would ask them about who they were, and who would show an interest in their well-being. When those teachers were identified it seemed that one of the pathways to connection was built and a sense of connectedness to the school was established.

Relationships with students were also critically important, and students actively sought out refugee peers, supportive teachers, and supportive staff to help build an initial network of people who could help them learn about the school and learn how to be successful within the new context. Students also sought out this group of people to help allay the anxiety that seemed to be a byproduct of the culture shock experienced as a newcomer in a totally foreign system.

Refugee peers played a particularly critical role in helping ease through the transition, serving initially as cultural broker, translator, and advisor on how youth could adapt their behavior for a more successful classroom experience to be viewed as friendly and to become more a part of the school community. What was interesting about the peer network was that these peers were often mentored by other refugee youth upon arrival and seemed to take it upon themselves to provide this layer of support to newer refugee students. Some of these student mentors shared a language with the refugees they were helping, but not always. Often these peer advisors turned into friends.

Youth interviewed identified the need for friends and the relief that came when friendships emerged. Friends helped with the transition, helped build language skills, and gave the youth a sense of place within the school. Friends were helpful in maintaining safety, insulating youth from experiences of bullies, and building a sense that the school was a community that they identified as their community as well. Three interviewees, after having spent two to three years in the school, talked about the need for American-born friends to further their connectedness to the school and their understanding of US culture and language. This issue

of the importance of friendship and the evolution of types or categories of friends in the transition may be an area of future study that could help us understand how social relationships are used by very newly arriving youth to ease into a school community as they begin to understand the school climate and experience their own acculturation process.

Safety was another category that was clearly important to these youth. The relationships discussed above were key to the ways in which youth managed an environment safely and handled situations that were unsafe. The primacy of interpersonal relationships as a variable of importance for school climate for refugee youth was highlighted again and again through their stories of safety, their experiences of discrimination and bullying, and their attempts to have their needs met justly. Youth were navigating environments that did not seem aware of either the unique contributions they were making to the school itself or the ways in which a person so new to the country would need to be supported. This left youth often facing threats to their safety on their own. The high school with the restorative justice program stood out in its ability to watch what was taking place in the student body, respond to it in a manner that felt just to these youth, and build some understanding for youth on how to continue to self-advocate, keep themselves safe, and seek support when needed.

Building a sense of belonging or connectedness to the school will be explored after a discussion of the acculturation findings, but according to the CDC factors that increase a sense of connectedness and increase belonging to a school include: "adult support, belonging to a positive peer group, commitment to education, and a positive school environment" (CDC, 2009). Students in this study confirm this research, showing that for newcomer youth interpersonal relationships, access to academic support (particularly English language support in the beginning), and feeling that the environment is safe are key components of a school's climate.

2.   **Discussion research question 2: What is the role of acculturative press in how refugee teens experience school climate?**

The findings on acculturation and acculturative press were difficult to untangle from the experiences of a school's climate. It was clear that there was an ongoing acculturation process that involved their language and behavior. Students were actively seeking information and education to help adapt to their host environment, but often they encountered an assimilationist rigidity that made adaptation more difficult than it should have been. They were also clearly struggling at times with the ways in which they were not known to the system or in which their sense of student identity was misunderstood by a teacher who made assumptions about them based on other peers without knowing the individual student. Some felt that the system, as exemplified by US born peers, was putting pressure on them to change to a type of behavior that they felt threatened their sense of self as a student and their own integrity. Students interviewed were not willing to change the way in which they viewed their teachers from their own cultural context, which in every interview revealed respect for education and teachers themselves. Because of the students' newness to the country, every exchange could be seen as exerting some sort of pressure to adapt or change. When the exchange was more multiculturalist in orientation, when teachers and US born peers showed an openness to getting to know the newcomer, to understand and be influenced by the newcomer student, acculturation occurred much more easily. It was during these times when a student felt that the system, teachers, and other students were interested in their story, in knowing who they were, and in understanding what they valued, that it was possible to see what role a multiculturalist orientation on the part of the school could play in helping students form a positive sense of the school's climate and in reinforcing the actions that a student was taking to build a connectedness to the school. Unfortunately, students

more commonly talked about the assimilationist experiences they had with the school and the ways in which those affected their sense of safety, their ability to have strong relationships with others, and their connection to the school itself.

Taken as a whole, acculturation for these students and acculturative press—whether multicultural or assimilationist—were the actions taken on the part of the school and its members that built the overall perception of a school's climate. The perception seemed to change over time, and as students built more relationships, understood the system better, participated in the life of the school more, and made more decisions about the ways in which they would and would not adapt to the host culture, they usually began to have a sense of connectedness to the school that helped mitigate issues of safety and lessen the feeling that the school did not have a place for them. Though this process occurred for most students, it occurred more successfully and more quickly for those experiencing a more multiculturalist orientation.

3.   **The core category – Building a sense of belonging to the school.**

The core category of belonging seemed to be the arrival point that students were attempting to reach through developing relationships with trusted teachers and students, building a knowledge base of the expectations, rules, and norms of the school, and seeking to learn English quickly. They were thwarted largely by a lack of English, negative interactions with peers, and an overall threat to safety. In the school climate literature, the construct of connectedness or belonging is found within the major category of the Institutional Environment and defined as: "positive identification with the school and norms for broad participation in school life for students, staff, and families" (National School Climate Center, 2012). Goodenow in 1993 defined belonging: "as students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teachers and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an

important part of life and activity of the class" (Goodenow, 1993, p. 25). Maslow, in articulating

the hierarchy of needs. placed belonging just above safety and physiological needs, stating that:

"a person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or

children" (Maslow, 1943 p. 9). What is interesting about the articulation of belonging is its

assertion as fundamental to the well-being of students in a school. In her study of 799 Turkish

7th and 8th graders, Cemalcilar found that satisfaction with social relationships (teachers, peers,

and administrators) was more strongly related to a sense of belonging in the school than

structural aspects of the school (environment, resources, and violence) (Cemalcilar, 2010).

Montero, Ibrahim, Loomis, and Newmaster (2012) found in their ethnographic study of refugee

students in Ontario that a sense of belonging can be improved by acknowledging their first-

language skills, creating a fair disciplinary climate, and creating leadership opportunities

amongst peers for refugee youth.

The present study supports other findings in the literature. Students in this study seemed

to be attempting through the development of relationships to belong to the school. They were

eager to build the resources needed to join with the school community. Furthermore, they were

mentoring other newcomer students to help them as they built a path to belonging. The students

in this study who seemed further down the path to belonging knew how to get their needs met

within the school. They were participating in activities. They were known for their strengths

and talents and were sought out by the school itself to assist with new students who were

beginning their school career. This required understanding the rules and what was expected of

them.

It is not surprising that youth are building a path to belong or connect within the school

context Refugees have lost the basic human rights to home and security. While the study did not

directly seek disclosure of these experiences, many of the students talked about having been displaced by war or being born into a refugee camp. Displacement, war, and disconnection are common experiences of refugee youth. As the key environment where their first experiences of the US are located, and as a system that has the capacity to help a youth succeed in the future through building a set of skills and relationships that will help them in both work and further school, the school in every case left newcomer students with a strong sense of how important it was to be a part of the community if they were going to take advantage of the resources.

Being connected, however, seemed to go beyond the simple daily transaction of learning alongside others. It also included a wish to be known to the system, a wish to fully understand the system, and a wish to build friends that were part of the system. These hopes were not surprising. Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) found that a sense of belonging to a school was associated with reduced depression and a higher self-efficacy for Somali youth in high school (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). While the current study did not focus on the mental health experiences of the students, the interviewees' own descriptions give a glimpse at how important the sense of belonging was to the students' mental well-being. In the beginning of their schooling, students described their experiences as "dark and lonely," in contrast to those who had established a greater sense of connectivity and found school to be an "amazing" experience.

The fact that the path from isolation to belonging has had to be constructed largely by the students themselves tells us a great deal about what the role of a school's climate should be in the academic experience of refugee youth. If the aim is for the student to belong to a school, a school's climate can serve to assist or interfere with this process. Returning to the conceptual framework posed by Birman and Trickett (1989) in which adaptation, cycling of resources, interdependence, and succession articulate the school as a system where new members are in a

process of adaption or change and are leveraging the strengths of the school system and its

resources to help themselves become more connected to the system, schools have a responsibility

to make the process as easy for newcomers as possible. Birman and Trickett view "the school as

a social system of interconnected parts," maintaining that it is crucial to assess "which parts of

the system are relevant to problem solving around a particular issue and how these parts are

themselves connected" (Birman & Trickett, 1989, p. 364). The interviews in this study make it

clear that it is incumbent on schools to address their own roles in facilitating the student's path to

belonging. The National School Climate Center has called for schools to increase the likelihood

that newcomer students join with the school suggesting that responsive schools will build

environments that:

1. Encourage reflective practice and build cultural awareness in students and
   adults.
2. Increase understanding of diverse cultures.
3. Keep diverse schools physically and emotionally safe.
4. Make high expectations culturally responsive.
5. Design multiple pathways to meaningful participation.
6. Demonstrate caring by knowing students' unique emotional needs. (Ciccone
   & Frieberg, 2013, p.6)

Students in this study were seeking relationships and experiences like those captured above to

join with the first significant environment they have encountered in their new country. This need

to belong was not driven by a need to academically succeed which they already were doing, but

to find a new home community that supported them and helped them build both skills and

relationships.   What is new in regard to these findings is the manner in which students were

creating their own networks of support. They were intentionally seeking out teachers to have meaningful relationships on their own and were finding ways to make their own inroads into the school without a great deal of support from anyone other than refugee peers. It was outside the realm of this study to explore what the schools or agencies thought the other was doing to help build a path to belonging, but it was clear both were unaware that students, with little support, were attempting to belong to the school. In my own work with refugee youth in high schools, the orientation of professionals was not to recognize the school as a place where students might want to belong, but to understand the school from the perspective that American high school was to be endured and that one should simply try to get through the experience, not that we should find ways as professionals to build greater connectedness to a system that was not held in high regard by American professionals.

Parental marginalization was also a finding that, while needing further study, was unique to this study. Parents being distanced from the school created a barrier to student belonging. In their home country parents would have helped navigate the school system itself. Here, because both parents were often working, language support was not available, and the cultural expectations of the parental role in schools were not understood, parents could not participate. This deeply bothered the students, who both were seeking parent support and seemed to want the opportunity for their parents to maintain this role.

B. Limitations

There were a number of limitations of this study that should be explored. First, the sample itself created some limitations to the reach of the findings. This was not a balanced sample across ethnicities (i.e. only one student identified as Rohyingya, and one identified as Rwandan), and therefore to fully reach saturation there would need to be a larger sample.

Students who participated in this study also do not fully represent the experience of newly arriving refugee youth. This group of students comprises a unique subset of the refugee student community, having arrived as few as nine months ago and as many as three years. In order to fully understand how refugee youth experience a school's climate it would be important to include youth who arrived earlier and had been here longer. How this view of school climate changes over time may give a clearer picture on what happens as youth try to connect to their school system.

The youth who chose to participate in this study all had seemed to have a strong academic orientation, a factor in the development of a positive sense of a school's climate (Cohen, McCabbe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). Furthermore, youth electing to participate in the study did not seem to be struggling with academics in a substantial way, did not seem to be involved in mental health services (although this is not entirely known), and were all on a path to graduation with a great degree of certainty. Not all refugee youth are this academically successful, and it would be important in future studies to understand the experiences of youth who were failing in classes or struggling with some of the issues of mental health often seen in this community of youth, such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Finally, this study is limited by the issues of language that surface even when an interpreter is present. Drawing meaning from language requires a depth of knowledge of the use or uses of a word within the culture of origin. For example, "*kokoro*" in Japanese is generally translated as heart (the organ) but actually means spirit, one's whole inner-being, or one's true spiritual self, and is used in multiple ways to explain one's core essence. One might even say that a person has *kokoro* in recommending them for employment. Such nuances of meaning enrich every language, but they also make the art of translation treacherous (Temple & Young,

2004). They make full understanding across cultures difficult. While every attempt was made to understand the student's meaning when using a particular word or concept-- how they defined things like friends, for example--the difference in cultural contexts create a limitation within the findings themselves.

C.   <u>Implications for Practice</u>

There is a role for social work practice in helping assist refugee youth as they join a new school system. What is more, there is a great need for school-based social workers to develop practice skills that are effective when they work in schools with large numbers of newcomer students. Currently the refugee resettlement system, which has been systematically defunded since the early 90s, is forced to work with families under a funding structure that focuses on job acquisition for adults and the attainment of English language skills for youth (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016). There is little funding at the moment that allows for schools to be linked with other types of supportive services through resettlement programs, let alone school-based partnerships that would provide ancillary resources outside of the school system to support refugee youth. In the absence of this support, school social workers need to develop skills that will help them successfully work with refugee students, learning how to help such students build connections to other students and to staff, as well as how effectively to explain the rules and expectations. They also need training in how to provide an additional layer of social and emotional support that will make for a school climate that feels open and welcoming to newcomer youth. While specialized mental health services or specialized education services may be needed, this group of students make a compelling case that simply forming relationships in the early part of the transition with trusted adults who can help them navigate the system and all its members is significantly helpful. While funding has been limited for refugee social

services, record levels of refugees are arriving and will enter the schools needing support (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016).

Social workers will also need to develop training programs for teachers and their school environment, building an infrastructure that can support refugee youth beyond a single ESL teacher or an understanding security guard. Social work practitioners in the schools need to work with the administration in their schools to build opportunities for learning about refugee communities, working with refugees in the classroom, understanding refugee families, and understanding the types of services refugee youth are likely to need. Youth in this study talked about wanting to be known to the school. A school with a multiculturalist orientation to its student body should be capable of building that sense of knowing about the student. It seems clear that, from the perspective of this group of youth, this type of training is necessary. Working with refugee resettlement agencies to build the resource network for school social workers would be a practical first step to help structure a school to be more open, welcoming, and supportive of refugee youth.

Finally, one of the interesting findings of this study was that schools are largely unaware of the important network of refugee peers and friends who have been providing many different types of support to newly arrived youth. School social workers should work to develop these networks, building mentorship programs, activities, and roles for refugee youth identified as leaders and candidates to support newcomers throughout the year. When exploring this with a youth who was talking about what he had done for newly arriving students, he himself identified this as a potential service learning activity that would allow more seasoned refugee students to fully participate in the requirements and life of the school while supporting peers with whom they have a great deal of shared experience. This resonates with the findings of Montero,

Ibrahim, Loomis and Newmaster (2012) discussed above where creating opportunities for leadership for refugee youth in schools increased their overall sense of belonging. There is substantial opportunity for social work to develop a peer-based leadership group that will serve to meet the psychosocial needs of both newly arriving youth and more established youth, helping both to build deep connections to the school.

D.   **Implication for Policy**

At the school level, it is hard to understate the need for schools and the social workers in the schools to address bullying and safety through both the policies and the procedures of the school. Without a sense of safety and with many experiences of bullying, xenophobia, and discrimination, youth in the study were left feeling not only outside or excluded from the school community but unsafe and unclear about how to address their needs. Policies that are comprehensive, build a deep level of understanding, respect, and inclusion for all students and that provide a meaningful remedy when a student feels bullied (like the restorative justice program at one high school) are critical for youth who are working to join with the school community. BRYCS, in its discussion about bullying and refugee students, makes a number of suggestions for adaptation of evidence-based bullying policies to meet the needs of refugee youth, including:

1. Analyzing the school and community attitudes toward refugees and immigrants
2. Recognizing the impact of anti-immigrant sentiment, racism, and religious/political tensions
3. Identifying barriers to participation when trying to involve staff and parents
4. Assuring leadership is involved as well as ESL staff and community representatives and agencies

5. Including cultural competence

6. Giving refugee youth the opportunity for leadership

7. Inviting newcomer students to share but never forcing sharing about their community.

   (BRYCS, 2010, p.6)

It is difficult to understand what areas of policy at a state or federal level could target the needs of refugee youth in schools in the current political climate, either in Illinois or at the national level. There is a clear commitment on the part of the current administration to bringing in refugee communities to the United States at an increasing rate as evidenced by the increase of numbers of refugees gaining access to the US program. Refugee social service, the system itself, needs federal funding changes that can accommodate the needs of the newest arriving communities. Core services that historically were provided for a period of three years and are now provided for sometimes as little as 90 days need to be available for a longer period of time to fully help families and their children resettle and be supported (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016). The needs of the newly arriving communities of youth that will surface in schools need to have funding attached that would fully support a youth through the resettlement process. For example, 10,000 Syrians have arrived this year (Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2016). What is known about this community is that they are reporting "extreme levels" of PTSD not seen in communities for many years (Cultural Orientation Resource Center, 2014). While mental health funding and school based mental health services and funding were present at one time (i.e. during the Bosnian Refugee Program), those programs have been severely reduced. If students are to be successful in schools there will need to be a more robust refugee social service policy that reinstates core services and adds enhancement services that will

prevent issues like mental health concerns from becoming a barrier to the success of newly

arriving students.

E.   Implications for Research

While this study confirms the importance of relationships, safety, teaching, learning, and

a sense of fairness within the school as contributing to a perception of school climate, there are

several findings that warrant further research attention. First, parents and their ability to be part

of the school community merits further research. The school climate literature notes parent

involvement as important in forming a perception of school climate (Cohen, 2009). Typically the

articulation of involvement places the onus of relationship development on the parent and does

not explore the ideas that the youth in this study articulated about parents' marginalization as a

result of their work schedules and the loss of cultural context around the teacher-parent

exchange. This finding needs further study to understand the ways in which schools should

reach out to newcomer parents such that newcomer students do not lose this expected support.

Understanding the construct of acculturative press explored in this study, including how

one measures it, also merits further study. This project approached acculturative press as a

product of the exchange between different members of the school community and any pressure

to adapt that was exerted. Students told both positive and negative stories about how the

school's climate placed pressure on the acculturation process. In order to fully measure this

construct it would be important to isolate this experience and exclusively measure the experience

that newcomer students have with acculturation as they enter a school.

Finally, these youth begin to articulate the way in which they are experiencing the racial

undertones of a school, albeit not explicitly. The students in this study were clearly experiencing

discrimination and had had experiences of xenophobia and racism, but they were not articulating

these in the way in which one would expect to hear in a US school. This may have had to do with their newness to the country. Students did begin to articulate their experience of the racial undertones of the school through the acculturation process. Students were acculturating linguistically and adapting behaviors to be successful in the new environment. In terms of their identity, however, they were very clear that they were not about to change their senses of self in response to pressure to change, either from other individuals or the institution itself.. This could be their identity as a student, their identity as an 18 year old, and their identity as Congolese, for example. When accused of being unethical, they would advocate tenaciously, and in at least one interview there was discussion of not wanting to be associated with the bad students. At the same time, a number of students talked about wanting to be "known," stating that they were interested in teachers and peers knowing that they were from Rwanda, for example, and what that meant to them. Most, when asked whether teachers ever asked them about where they were from, said no. Given that talking about where you are from is critically valued for refugee youth and refugees in general, and given that racial categories as conceptualized in the US likely classify students in ways that do not describe where they are from, it will be important to further study the way newcomer students experience this system of racial categorization in the US.

F.   Conclusion

Refugee students arriving in the United States and enrolling in high school enter the school and begin a process of building relationships and knowledge about the school such that they can feel connected to this significant shaping environment. Their perception of a school's climate is largely created through the interactions they have with teachers, students, and other members of the school and the ways in which they are included or excluded by these systems. If

they feel a part, their learning and adaptation is facilitated. When they do not feel as if they belong, every aspect of their settling in is thwarted; success becomes difficult. This study adds to the small body of literature that looks at refugee youth and school climate, building a case for further study of both the important components of school climate for refugee youth and the ways in which schools can create a school climate that helps newcomer youth feel like members of the school community. What was striking in listening to the stories of youth experiences in high school was a general sense of optimism that, with the right academic, social, and emotional supports in place, their experience would be positive, and they would be able to meet the goals they have for their own education. Refugee youth voices are notably absent in the literature, and these students have created opportunities for social work to further study the importance of school climate to newcomer youth at a time when arrivals of newcomer youth are increasing.

APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographic Questionnaire   CONFIDENTIAL

1. Unique Number: _____
2. Pseudonym:_____
3. How would you identify your gender?_____
4. How old are you?_____
5. Can you tell me what country you were born in?_____
6. What country do you consider your home country?_____
7. Where did you live prior to coming to the United States?_____
8. Can you tell me how you would characterize your ethnicity?_____
9. Were you able to attend school before you came to the United States?   Yes or No
     a. If so, how many years? _____
10. When you moved to the United States, how old were you? _____
11. How old were you when you started school in the United States?_____
12. What grade did you start in when you first arrived? _____
13. Was your first school in Chicago? Yes or No
     a. If it wasn't where was your first school? _____
14. Can you tell me the name of the high school you currently go to? _____
15. What grade are you in now?_____

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Research Questions

    3. What are the important components of school climate for refugee teens?

        a. What is the role of acculturative press in how refugee teens experience the

          school climate?

Script for introducing the interview

My name is Kristen Huffman-Gottschling and I am a doctoral student in the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I am interested in the experiences refugee youth have in their high schools when they move to the United States. This interview is being conducted for research purposes seeking understanding of the research questions posed above. This study may lead to information that might be helpful to social workers and educators who are working with refugee youth in schools. Information gathered for this study may provide topics for future studies that are aimed at working with youth in schools.

Probes that may be used to explain experiences[4]:

- o Can you tell me more about the experience?
- o What happened?
- o What was good?
- o What was difficult or hard?
- o Is there a person or people who were part of the experience you have just talked about?
- o Tell me more about that person or those people?

Experiences in school

1. Can you tell me what has school been like for you since you arrived?

2. What is different now than when you first started?

3. Tell me about how you are doing in school (Grades, credits, activities, discipline)?

---

[4] Probes taken from Melton, 2013, p. 195

4. What is your relationship like with the (teachers, friends, other students, other staff) in school?

    a. How do they treat you?

    b. Is there someone or a group of people you particularly like (describe)?

    c. Is there someone or a group of people you particularly don't like (describe)?

5. What challenges did you face when you first came to school?

    a. What did you do?

    b. Are they still present?

6. What things did you enjoy when you first came to school?

    a. Is this still true?

7. How is this school different than your other school or schools?

8. What do you wish you knew about school in the States before you came?

9. Did anyone help you adjust to your new school (who, how)?

10. What other things could have helped you adjust to your school?

11. What has it been like for students who identify as (ethnicity here) to attend your school?

    a. Did you feel welcome?

    b. Were there ways in which you changed your behavior in the school because of others (students, teachers, and staff)?

12. What do you think it has been like for students from other refugee groups in the school?

    a. Do other students feel welcome?

    b. Were there ways in which you noticed these students were forced to change their behavior in school?

13. What would you like to do after you finish school?

14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I haven't asked?

Appendix C: Interview Recruitment Script

Interview Recruitment Script
University of Illinois at Chicago
School Climate and Acculturation: The Academic Impact For Newcomer Adolescents

My name is Kristen Huffman-Gottschling, and I am a doctoral student in the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I am interested in the experiences you have had in high school since moving to the United States. You have been identified as a potential candidate for this study because you came to the United States through the refugee program, and when you arrived you were enrolled in a local high school. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. You may not be eligible for this study if you did not come to the States as a refugee and/or if arrived and did not enroll in high school (for example you started in elementary school).

If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask to you allow me to interview you once for 60 -90 minutes and then will ask you to meet me one more time to look at your interview with me for another 60 -90 minutes to review the transcript of your interview and make sure you feel it is accurate. Examples of types of questions I may ask include tell me what school was has been like since you arrived or what challenges did you face when you first came to school. Interviews will be recorded digitally using an audio recorder. You must agree to be audio taped to participate in the study. The interviews can be done in the language you prefer. If you choose a language other than English, an interpreter will be part of the interview to translate my questions and your answers.

The interviews involve minimal risks. You may skip any questions or topics you choose. Your participation in the interviews will be confidential. If you are younger than 18 your parent will need to consent for you to participate in the study. There are no costs to participation and participation will have no effect on your services at your agency.

If you would like to participate in my study you may tell me now or call me later at 773.412.9210. You may also email me at khuffm2@uic.edu. We will set up a time to discuss the study interviews and go over the informed consent process at this time. Do you have any questions now? If you have questions later please contact me by phone at 773.412.9210 or at khuffm2@uic.edu. You may also contact my advisor Dr. Mark Mattaini at mattaini@earthlink.net.

Appendix D: Recruitment Flyer

Would you like to participate in a study exploring refugee youth experiences of high school in the States?

I am a doctoral student conducting a research study at the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

I am talking to teens about their experiences in their current high school. You can participate in this study if you:

- Are enrolled in a Chicago Public High School
- Came to the U.S. as refugee
- Were enrolled in high school when you arrived and are still in high school
- Have been in the country for at least six months
- Have your parent's permission to participate in the study if you are younger than 18

If you choose to participate in this study you will be asked to attend two meetings at Refugee One.

- The first meeting will be an audio taped interview asking you to describe your high school experiences.
- The second meeting we will review your interview and answer any questions you may have.

Both meetings will take 60-90 minutes. Interviews will be audio taped. You must agree to be audio taped to participate in the study. If you would prefer to be interviewed in a language other than English an interpreter will be provided.

If you are interested in participating in the study or want more information, please contact Kristen Huffman-Gottschling at 773-412-9210 or via email at khuffm2@uic.edu.

Appendix E: Referral Resources

Alternatives Inc.

4730 N Sheridan Rd

Chicago, IL 60640
(773) 506-7474

Heartland Health Outreach International FACES Program:

4750 North Sheridan Road. Suite 500

Chicago, IL 60640

773.751.4188

Refugee One Wellness Program

47533 N. Broadway, Suite 401

Chicago, IL 60640

773.989.5647

Mather High School Counseling Center

5835 North Lincoln Ave.

Chicago, IL 60659

773.534.2424

Roosevelt High School Counseling Center

3436 West Wilson Avenue,
Chicago, IL 60625
773.866.0818

Senn High School Counseling Center

5900 N Glenwood Ave

Chicago, IL 60660

Phone: 773.751.1860

Sullivan High School Counseling Center

6631 N Bosworth Ave

Chicago, IL 60626
773.534.2000

Appendix F: Informed Consent

University of Illinois at Chicago
Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research
School Climate And Acculturation: The Academic Impact For Newcomer Adolescents

We are asking you to let your child take part in a research study. Researchers have to give you a permission form like this one to tell you about the research. This form will also tell you that it is your choice to let your child join this study. This form will tell you about the benefits and risks of joining this study. This will help you decide if you do or do not want your child to join the study. If you have any questions please ask the researchers.

Principal Investigator Name and Title:

Kristen Huffman Gottschling, LCSW, Doctoral Candidate

Department and Institution: Jane Addams College of Social Work, UIC

Address and Contact Information:

1040 W. Harrison St.

Chicago, IL 60607

773-142-9210

Why am I being asked?

Your child is being asked to join this study because they are a refugee high school student.

In this study we will ask your child to answer questions in one interview. The interview will take about 60-90 minutes. The questions will ask them about their experiences in high school. We will interview them in their language of choice. They can have an interpreter help with the interview. We will tape record the interview. After the interview, their answers will be written down. We will ask them to come to a second meeting. In this meeting we will ask them to look over the written answers of their interview to make sure it is right.

They do not have to be in this study. It will not hurt your relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago now or in the future if they are not in the study. If you decide not to let your child join this study it will not hurt your relationship with your agency. **You can agree to let**

your child be in this study now and change your mind later. Your decision will not change your services at your agency.

About 30 students may take part in this study at UIC.

What is this study about?

Researchers are trying to learn more about what high school is like for refugee students. Researchers want to know what about a school is important for refugee students. Researchers also want to know how pressure to adjust to a new high school might change how a refugee student feels about their school.

What does my child have to do to be in this study?

We will do this research at Refugee One or at the office of PACTT Learning Center (1542 W. Morse Ave). Your child will need to come to Refugee One or PACTT Learning Center twice for two meetings. Both meetings will take about 60-90 minutes. The interview will be tape recorded.

If you do not want your child to be recorded, they can't take part in the research study.

The study steps are:

- One 60 to 90 minute tape recorded interview asking your child questions about their experiences in high school.
- A second meeting for your child to look over the written copy of their interview. They will be able to fix any mistakes or add any information they think is missing.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

We do not believe that the interview will cause your child harm or hurt your child. It's possible that your child might lose their privacy if they are part of this study. This means telling another person that they are part of this study.

It's also possible that your child might lose their confidentiality if they are part of this study. This means telling information about them to another person that you have not told us we can tell.

We will try to protect against both by interviewing them at the agency in a private office.

Your child may feel uncomfortable thinking about or answering some questions. They can stop the interview at any time. The researcher can also stop the interview if they are uncomfortable.

The researcher will have a list of agencies to help your child if they get upset. We don't think this will happen, but it is possible.

Will it help my child to be part of this study?

It will not help your child to be part of this study. Being in the study may help refugee students in the future.

What other choices does my child have?

Your child does not have to be in this research study. **If you choose to let your child join but change your mind later, you can stop at any time without anything bad happening.**

What about my child's privacy and confidentiality?

Some people will know that your child is part of this study. Those people are the researchers, the interpreter and Refugee One staff. We will only give information about your child to other people if you tell that we can. You can tell us this in writing. It is possible that we might have to give information about your child to other people to protect their rights, to keep them safe or if the law requires it.

It is possible that the UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects may look at or copy this form you signed. They may also look at other information from the study that tells who your child is.

It is possible that people outside the study could learn that your child took part or could learn information about your child. To protect against this, we will give your child's name a code. We will keep the list of names and codes in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher can open this cabinet. We will destroy the list with your child's name as soon as they finish their second interview. Their name will not be on the written copy of their interview. <u>The interview tapes will also be destroyed after the second meeting.</u>

If we write about this study in a journal or any other document, we will not use your child's name. We will also not use the name of their school.   It is possible that your child is from a country that is unique in the United States (for example they might be a female student from Burundi). This may make it easier for someone to figure out that your child was in the study.

  The results of this study may be published or talked about at conferences. When this happens, no one will share information about your child that tells who they are.

The researcher and the chair of her committee will see the interviews. The interviews will be used only for research. We will use a different name and may delete or change any details that might describe your child. This will help hide who they are. We may quote them from the interviews. Your child's name will not be used in these quotes.

If your child tells us about someone who may be hurting any child the researcher or any member of the research team must and will tell Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement.

If your child tells us about an older adult or someone with a disability who is being hurt, the researcher team must and will tell Adult Protective Services and/or law enforcement.

<u>Does it cost to be part of this research study?</u>

No, it does not cost to be part of this research.

<u>Will my child be paid to be in this research study or will their expenses be paid?</u>

No, my child will not be paid to be in this study.

Can my child leave this study or be asked to leave this study?

If you decide to let your child take part in this study, you can change your mind at any time. Just tell the researcher that you want them to leave the study. Nothing bad will happen to you or your child if you decide to have them leave.

The Researchers can take your child out of the study if they think staying is hurting them.

Who should I talk to if I have questions?

If you have questions you can talk to the researchers.

You should talk to these researchers:

- if you have any questions about this study
- if you have questions about your child's part in the study
- if you have questions, worries or complaints about the study

The numbers to contact the researchers are:

Kristen Huffman-Gottschling

773-412-9210

Khuffm2@uic.edu

Or

Dr. Mark Mattaini

Mattaini@uic.edu

What are my child's rights as a person in this research study? ?

 If you feel you have not been treated like you should you may call the Office of the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

If you have any questions about your rights in this study you should also call this office.

 If you have questions, worries, complaints, or just want to share your thoughts please also call this office.

The number to call is:

Office of Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)

312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free)

You can also send OPRS an email at:

 uicirb@uic.edu.

Remember:

Your child does not have to join this study. You can agree to let your child be in the study now and change your mind later. If you choose not to let your child join the study it will not change your relationship with the University or your agency. You can agree to let your child be part of the study and then stop them from being in the study at any time.

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have been given a chance to ask questions. I understand the answers to my questions. I agree to let my child take part in this study.

I will be given a copy of this form that is signed and dated.

_____   _____

Signature   Date

_____   _____

Printed Name   Child's Printed Name

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date (must be same as subject's)

_____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix G: Assent to Participate In Research

University of Illinois at Chicago

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

School Climate And Acculturation: The Academic Impact For Newcomer Adolescents

1. My name is Kristen Huffman-Gottschling.

2. You are being asked to join this study because you are a refugee high school student. In this study you will be asked questions about your experience in you high school. I will be speaking with about 30 refugee students for this study.

3. If you agree to be in this study I will interview you for 60 to 90 minutes about your experiences in high school. The interview will be in your language of choice. You can have an interpreter help with the interview. This interpreter will be in the room with us for the interview and will know you are in the study. The interview will be audio tape recorded. After the interview, your answers will be written down. You will be asked to come to a second meeting. In this meeting you will be asked to look over the written answers of your interview to make sure it is right. The second meeting will take about 60-90 minutes. The tape recording will be destroyed after the second meeting.

4. If you should become upset about the questions I will stop the interview. I will give you with a list of people or agencies that can help you.

5. Joining this study should not cause you any harm or hurt you. I will give your name a code so that the information you tell us will be confidential. The list of names and codes will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher can open this cabinet. The list containing your name will be destroyed as soon as you finish the second meeting. You will be interviewed at your agency so that your information is confidential. Your school will not know that you are part of this study. Any articles that may be written about the study will not mention you by name. I will also not mention the name of your school or your agency. I may use direct quotes from your tapes in presentations and/or publications, but I will not use your name. It is possible that you are from a country that is unique in the United States (for example you might be a female student from Burundi). This may mean that you have a higher chance of being identified indirectly.

6. It will not help you to be in this study. The information you share may help other refugee youth in the future.

7. Please talk with your parents to help you to decide if you want to join the study or if you do not want to join the study. I will ask your parents to give their permission for you to join this study. If your parents say you can be in the study you can still decide not to be in this study.

8. You do not have to join this study. Being in this study is your choice. No one will be upset if you do not want to join the study. If you join the study and change your mind later it is ok to leave the study. No one will be upset with you if you change your mind.

9. You can ask any questions that you have about the study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can call me at 773-412-9210. You can also email me at khuffm2@uic.edu. You can also ask me when you see me again.

10. Signing your name at the bottom means that you agree to be in this study. After you sign this form I will give you a copy and I will give your parents a copy of this form.

_____   _____

Name of Subject   Date

_____   _____   _____

Signature   Age   Grade in School

Appendix H: Consent for Participation Adult Students

University of Illinois at Chicago

Research Information and Consent for Participation in Social Behavioral Research

School Climate And Acculturation: The Academic Impact For Newcomer Adolescents

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Researchers have to give you a permission form like this one to tell you about the research. This form will also tell you that it is your choice to join this study. This form will tell you about the benefits and risks of joining the study. This will help you decide if you want to join the study or if you do not want to join the study. If you have any questions please ask the researchers.
Principal Investigator Name and Title:

Kristen Huffman Gottschling, LCSW, Doctoral Candidate
Department and Institution: Jane Addams College of Social Work, UIC
Address and Contact Information:
1040 W. Harrison St.
Chicago, IL 60607
773-142-9210

Why am I being asked to join this study?

You are a refugee high school student.

In this study you will be asked to answer questions in one interview. The interview will take about 60-90 minutes. The questions will ask you about your experiences in your high school. This interview will be in your language of choice. You can have an interpreter help with the interview. The interview will be tape recorded. After the interview, your answers will be written down. You will be asked to come to a second meeting. In this meeting you will be asked to look over the written answers of your interview to make sure it is right.

You do not have to be in this study. It will not hurt your relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago now or in the future if you are not in the study. If you decide not to join this study it will not hurt your relationship with your agency. **You can agree to be in this study now and change your mind later. Your decision will not change your services at your agency.**

About 30 students may take part in this study at UIC.

What is this study about?

Researchers are trying to learn more about what high school is like for refugee students. Researchers want to know what about a school is important for refugee students. Researchers also want to know how pressure to adjust to a new high school might change how a refugee student feels about their school.

What do I have to do to be in this study?

This research will be done at Refugee One or at the offices of PACTT Learning Center (1542 W. Morse Ave.). You will need to come to Refugee One or PACTT Learning Center two times for two meetings. Both meetings will take about 60-90 minutes. The interview will be tape-recorded.

If you do not want to be recorded, you can't take part in the research study.

The study steps are:

- One 60 to 90 minute tape recorded interview asking you questions about your experiences in high school.
- A second meeting for you to look over the written copy of your interview. You will be able to fix any mistakes or add any information you think is missing.

What are the possible risks and discomforts?

We do not believe that the interview will cause you harm or hurt you. There is a possibility that you might lose your privacy if you are part of this study. Losing your privacy means telling another person that you are part of this study.

There is also a possibility that you might lose your confidentiality if you are part of this study. Losing confidentiality means telling information about you to another person that you have not told us we can tell.

We will try to protect your privacy and your confidentiality by interviewing you at the agency in a private office.
You
You may feel uncomfortable thinking about or answering some questions. You can stop the interview at any time. The researcher can also stop the interview if you become uncomfortable.

 will have a list of agencies to help you if you become upset. We don't think this will happen, but it is possible.

Will it help me to be part of this study?

 Being in the study may help refugee students in the future.

What other choices do I have?

You do not have to be in this research study. **If you choose to join but change your mind later, you can stop at any time without anything bad happening.**

What about my privacy and confidentiality?

The There are some people who will know that you are part of this study. Those people are the researchers, the interpreter and Refugee One staff. We will only give information about you to other people if you tell that we can. You can tell us this in writing. It is possible that we might have to give information about you to other people to protect your rights, to keep you safe or if the law requires it.

 UIC Office for the Protection of Research Subjects may look at or copy this permission form you signed. They may also look at other information from the study that tells who you are.

It is possible that people outside the study could learn that you were part of the study or could learn information about you. To keep your information confidential, we will give your name a code. The list of names and codes will be kept in a locked cabinet. Only the researcher can open this cabinet. The list containing your name will be destroyed as soon as you finish your second interview. Your name will not be on the written copy of your interview. The interview tapes will also be destroyed after the second meeting.

write about this study in a journal or any other document, we will not use your name. We will also not use the name of your school. It is possible that you are from a country that is unique in the United States (for example you might be a female student from Burundi). This may mean that you have a higher chance of being indirectly identified.

When this happens, no information about you will be shared that tells who you are.

The researcher and the chair of her committee will see the interviews. The interviews will be used only for research. We will use a different name and may delete or change any details that might describe you to hide who you are. We may quote you from the interviews. Your name will not be used in these quotes.

If you tell us about someone who may be hurting a child the researcher or any member of the research team must and will tell this to Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement.

If you tell us about an older adult who is being hurt or a person who has a disability who is being hurt, the researcher team must and will tell this to Adult Protective Services and/or law enforcement.

There are no costs for joining in this study.

Will I be paid to be in this research study or will my expenses be paid?

You will not be paid for being in this study.

Can I leave this study or be asked to leave this study?

take part in this study, you can change your mind at any time. Just tell the researcher that you want to leave the study. Nothing bad will happen to you if you decide to leave the study.

The Researchers can take you out of the study if they believe staying is hurting you.

Who should I talk to if I have questions?

If you have questions you can talk to the researchers.

You should talk to these researchers:

- if you have any questions about this study
- or if you have questions about your part in the study
- if you have questions, worries or complaints about the study

The numbers to contact the researchers are:

Kristen Huffman-Gottschling
773-412-9210
Khuffm2@uic.edu

Or

      Dr. Mark Mattaini
      Mattaini@uic.edu

What are my rights as a person who is part of this study?

If you feel you have not been treated like you should you may call the Office of the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

, or If you have any questions about your rights in this study you should also call this office.

If you have questions, worries, complaints, or just want to share your thoughts please also call this office.

The number to call is:

Office of Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
at 312-996-1711 or 1-866-789-6215 (toll-free)

You can also send OPRS an email at:

or uicirb@uic.edu.

<u>Remember</u>:

You don't have to take part in this study. You can agree to be in the study now and change your mind later. If you choose not to join the study it will not change your relationship with the University or your agency. You can agree to be part of the study and then stop at any time.

<u>Signature</u>
I have read (or someone has read to me) this form. I have been given a chance to ask questions. I understand the answers to my questions. I agree to take part in this study.

I will be given a copy of this form that is signed and dated.

Signature	Date

Printed Name

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date (must be same as subject's)

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix I: Participant Identification List

Participant names and phone numbers will be kept separately from other data using Appendix I. The unique identification number will be created linking participant name to pseudonym. Participant information (name and phone) will be destroyed immediately after the second interview.

	Participant Name	Participant Phone	Unique Identification Number
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			

Appendix J: Staff Passive Recruitment Script

Currently Kristen Huffman-Gottschling is conducting a research study about refugee youth experiences in Chicago high schools as a doctoral student with the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago. To be eligible in the study you must:

- Be enrolled in a Chicago Public High School
- Have come to the U.S. as a refugee
- Have enrolled in high school when you arrived in the United States
- Have lived in the country for at least six months
- Have your parent's permission to participate in the study if you are younger than 18

If you are eligible and interested in this study you will be asked to attend two meetings at Refugee One.

- The first meeting will be an audio taped interview asking you to describe your high school experiences.
- The second meeting we will review your interview and answer any questions you may have.

Both meetings will take 60-90 minutes. Interviews will be audio taped. You must agree to be audio taped to participate in the study. If you would prefer to be interviewed in a language other than English an interpreter will be provided.

If you are interested in getting more information about participation in this study we can direct you to Ms. Huffman-Gottschling who will be here at Refugee One or you may contact her at 773.412.9210 or email at khuffm2@uic.edu. Would you give me permission to give Ms. Huffman-Gottschling your contact information so she can contact you directly by phone to set up a time for the meeting?

Appendix K: Sample of Memos

Memo: Making Friends

This is the first time that I see this theme emerge. Friends seem to be giving advice about how to adjust to the system. These are friends who have been through the transition already and are giving concrete instructions about how to adjust your behavior. In many ways how to not be yourself in the new school context. The friend outlines the danger of isolation: you won't learn, you won't be happy, you will fail everything. It is the cautionary tale that then helps build some understanding of the system and give some encouragement early on for ways to be successful. My post interview field note from this visit included a palpable sense of loneliness that I was left with after the interview. After reviewing this passage and the interview I am still left with a sense that there are not many adults helping explain and support her while she went through her early transition to school.

Field Note: Alex

We wrapped up our interview and then this student started talking about how his high school had been bad but was now better. I was interested in his perspective. Because I also work in this neighborhood I am aware of some of the changes in High School in the last decade. The school is at less than half of its enrollment capacity at the moment. Students who are labeled as chronic discipline problems are being transferred and moved to a credit recovery program. There is a great deal of argument at the service level about what is happening to this school. I also know that refugee youth may comprise as much as a third of the student body, the principal is well regarded by many across the city and he has implemented some programs like restorative justice that have dramatically changed the feel of the school. Alex was extraordinarily positive about his school, seemed incredibly connected and involved and frankly I was surprised by what a stellar experience he talked about having at. I do wonder what the perspective is on school climate for less academically oriented students or students who have been here for a long time.

Memo: Grouping students

Yeah. Especially, like, if a new student come, they look which student has, like, the highest grade in class, and they say, "Well, you have the highest grade in class." No. They take, like, five grades who have highest grade in class, and they put them in different groups.

This was in response to a question asked about whether or not teachers encourage students to support each other. In this case at his school this student felt that they were particularly supportive to new students. If teachers are developing these micro-communities or small groups where students can help each other are they able to build a support network of peers that become friends through these groups? It seems like this type of grouping might be less intimidating to

new students giving them an opportunity to get academic support from peers, and build friends. I wonder if teachers are identifying students from these groups who might fit well together and then help each other support struggling students. It wasn't true in this case. This student went on to talk about a student who was really struggling with mental health issues and spoke out often in class. Instead of connecting this student with other who spoke his language the teacher put the student in a group of Spanish speakers so no one would understand him.

Memo: Parent exclusion from the school

Parents seem totally disenfranchised and I am wondering what has happened. One student talks about work as being a barrier for parents to join in. Language and culture seem to be a barrier. Other students seem to lament the lack of support that their parents used to be able to provide. I suspect that there is no teacher/parent alignment or collaboration. I wonder if the absolute change in disciplinary structure may if anything, make it harder for parents to understand their role and what is expected. In SC literature parental involvement is considered from the perspective that parents can make the choice to participate with the implication being that parents make the choice not to. What some students seem to suggest is that parents cannot and students and their parents are sad about this.

Memo: Early conceptualization of emerging categories

As I work through the codes comparing situation to situation I am struck with the following. It seems there is a system that if you place the student at the center you may have the following:

There seems to be a process of learning that is mapped to a student's dreams and expectations for the future. "I will graduate" How does the school affect the process? There are all of these intervening variables that affect whether or not a student can meet their goal of academic success.

Acculturative press and the acculturation process are experienced through all three circles. The perception of school climate seems highly informed by this acculturation process in many ways. I am not sure there is a way to tease apart the acculturation experience from the perception of school climate in that acculturation is an active and dynamic part of the new student's experience. They will only view the school's climate through this lens. It may be that there is a different filter through which they perceive the climate that is not present for US. born and even generation 1.5 kids.

They are new. Everything is different. There is no familiar. So they form a perception of school climate through this deeply attentive but often silent process of observation. What are the important things that they are coding into an understanding about how to act within the system? They watch their peers and they watch their teachers. They test new theories of how to behave in an environment through their early experiences. If they don't work, they pause again. It's incredibly complicated.

It seems that they are identifying all sorts of important aspects of school climate but there is a process of time and observation and transaction that may be really important to pay attention to (for example Sara):

> So when a student arrives, there is a period that one student called the dark period. No language, no friends, little understanding of what they are supposed to do (even from the perspective that they should leave the room). This student missed class because in her school of origin the teachers changed classes not the students. From the moment they walk in the door they are singled mindedly preparing for success.

Barriers slow this process.

Not knowing English....language is currency. Nothing can be done until enough language is available to you. Everything is terrifying and I assume a perception of school climate is not great.

Not knowing what peers are safe and trying to assess any engagement for its safety seems to be the early way in which the relationships are framed.

What is clear is that their identity as a student. Their sense of self is (at least in several interviews) an immovable object. When there is a transaction that compromised their sense of self, advocacy strategies or avoidance strategies are engaged.

How does this apply to the ecological framework set forth by Birman and Trickett that looks at resources, adaptation, connections and succession?

Memo: The student academic identity

As a Rwandan student this student seemed to be concerned with being thought of as the other bad students. The students I have interviewed don't seem to question the school's perspective on other students as good or bad. Teachers' views of students are absolutely accepted and there is deep concern about being thought of as a "bad" student. These students are building a reputation that will gain access to the school, access to resources, access to support and I think may make them feel like they are accepted by the school. Perhaps, students who are bad are not accepted students who are good are accepted.

Memo: Diagramming Alex's support network

This kid has a staggering amount of support. Why? He is struggling with something and so the agency helps. He is struggling at school so the school helps. What is it about this kid? Alex is the only kid that I interviewed who was from Asia. He was also incredibly warm and expressive,

joyful even. Is there a "model minority" dynamic that his helping him get his needs met so quickly. If you look at his interview the only negative relationships are with US born peers. Those he seeks the support of teachers and friends to navigate.
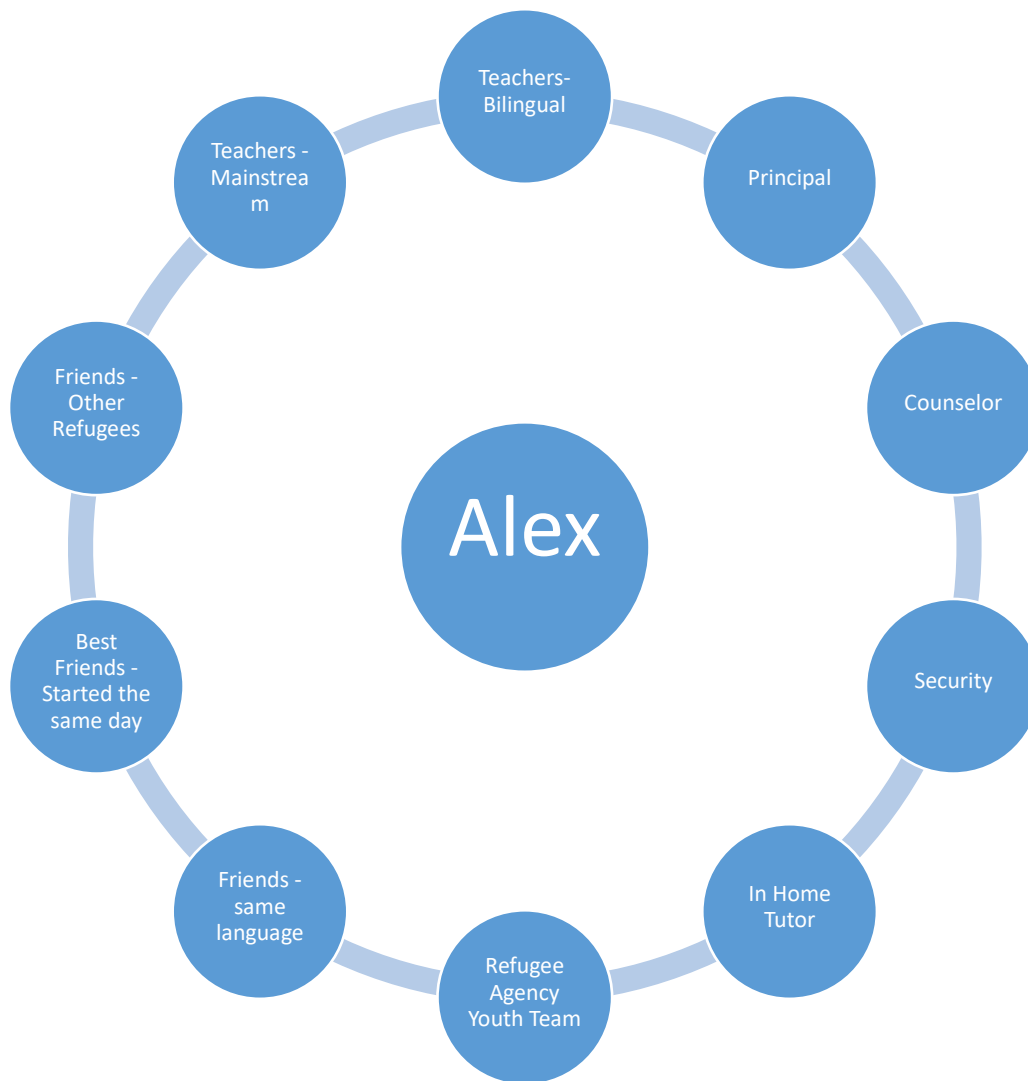
Here is his support network:

1. Teachers - Mainstream
2. Teachers - Bilingual
3. Counselor
4. Security
5. In home tutor
6. Friends - same language
7. Friends - start the same day and new
8. Friends - others
9. Refugee agency - youth worker

Memo: Characteristics of a best friend:

So he came here. He speaks English, and he was, like, the best student who was speaking English in our class. So everybody who knows him, and he's my neighbor. So, after school, I go to his house, and we go out to the soccer field to play.

Here we see BI identifying the characteristics of a best friend. They are:
1. He came before you and was the best English speaker in the class.
2. Plays soccer with you after school
3. Lives near you

This is the type of friendship that would be replicated around the world but a number of the students have talked about special friends that included common interests, proximity to your house, and some academic skill that shows that there was a supportive helping relationship.

Memo: Explanation of college process

A common event in the life of a refugee student is to start at the community college level and then move to a four-year college after the two-year degree. What I know from my work is that there is a large network of refugees who will talk about this option with each other. Again we hear the theme that networks of refugees pass on information to help other refugees become successful. It seems to happen in the school and it happens within community.

Memo Navigating conflict with being falsely accused

So here we have this super powerful story where she is attempting to right a wrong, trying to advocate because she speaks better English and the adults are limited by their roles. They don't know what she knows which is she is trustworthy. She doesn't know how to build a reputation that reflects her true identity as a good student such that her advocacy is effective. She also doesn't know where to turn. The student in this case was really upset. In her explanation she seemed to be saying this isn't who I am. This idea of identity or I am not one of those students seems to permeate this story for her. She does not want to be thought of as one of "those students".

Field note: Conversation with RSG – Agency Member

So it is my understanding that (*high school*) is pulling students with great frequency to help other students with translation and has become such a problem that the agencies are advocating against

this practice. This may be an example. It is also possible that this is E. the bilingual teacher who does pair students together and this is absolutely her style.

When talking about RSG about the absence of supportive services in schools she said that things have gotten very limited in terms of any ancillary service for students. When I talked about this idea of students having to navigate the system through a network of friends she said it resonated with what she was hearing and seeing in the schools. She talked about a lack of intentional programming for newcomer students outside of any bilingual program.

Memo: Category development

I have created different categories that have much to do with my last memo. And in response to this interview and others coded:

Relationships/expectations/experiences seem to drive most of the coding.

What are the relationships that affect a perception of school climate and how do they affect this?

Teachers- teachers are in some ways noticeably absent. There are good experiences with 1-2 teachers but mostly I hear some adaptation of behavior to deal with the classroom level changes but not a significant relationship development. There are people, like Mr. M at (*high school*) and Ms. N at (*high school*) who are deeply important in feeling safe, accepted and getting the help you need whether that support is academic, emotional or system explanation.

Students - other- who are these "American" kids? It seems that they have been here longer or may have been born here. Knowing the demographics of this school, they are likely to be generation 1.5 or 2. Students seem to bring a significant energy to the way a student feels about the school. Safe/unsafe, included not included. They are not seen as safe in the beginning (nobody is---note the element of time here) and they are seen as untrustworthy communicators of the system's expectations. This has to be terrifying. When I separated the codes in to negative and positive experiences there was one instance of positive experience with the other peers. All were mainly negative. Of note was the disgust at the ways teachers are treated. This idea that educators are valued worldwide isn't true here. This student was horrified and mystified.

Friends- here we find that the element of time is important. You start with no friends, you find a good friend and life changes. Someone who is trustworthy and can help you understand the expectations of the system. Someone who meets your need to feel included. Someone who can explain events that are anomalous to your experience heretofore as a student. Friends seem to track the overall adjustment to the school. More friends, more involved. Fewer friends, scared, alone and not sure what to do. There is more here.

Other staff (Security) - security came up here in this interview in a way that was negative. A student attempted to self-advocate over and over again and the security were not helpful at best.

Conflict - how to you handle conflict in a new system and new culture is a substantial topic here. You see it join with advocacy albeit not successfully. Again there is this element of time here. At first a student is watching or observing. Then a student tries to self-advocate when things have gone wrong. For this student her attempts did not meet the outcome she wanted and she seemed disappointed in the system. It is almost as if she had an experience of reconfiguring her idea about how great the schools are in the States and was let down.

Acculturation - I know it is here but I am not sure what or where it is. It is noted in the codes but right now I feel like it is an additional filter through which a student views the climate. We know in SC there are demographic factors that affect the perception of a SC. Gender, academic orientation, etc. Perhaps the acculturation process is another factor that ways on your perception. You are in this process of self-discovery and adaptation......it certainly is affected by a school's climate, but impossible to untangle the two.

Appendix L: Conditional Matrix

Conditions   **Central Phenomena**   **Consequences**

Learning English

- Period of isolation
- Intense longing to learn quickly
- Barrier to belonging

Teaching and Learning

- Intense observation of peers to understand expected behaviors
- Learning rules and expectations
- Experiencing unfairness and discrimination
- Lack of respect displayed by others

Primacy of Relationships

- Looking for trusted individuals
- Wanting to be known
- Needing friends
- Needing emotional and social support
- Needing systems explanation

Safety

- Experiences of bullying
- Experiences of conflict with peers and teachers
- Experiences of violence
- Experiences of xenophobia and discrimination

Building a Sense of Belonging

Building supportive relationships with teachers/staff

- Finding academic support
- Building system knowledge
- Social and emotional support
- Safety

Making friends

- Finding emotional and social support
- Becoming more active in the life of the school
- Continuing to build system knowledge
- Network of resources

Participating in the life of the school

- Becoming a mentor
- Participating in activities
- Meeting your academic goals
- Defining your future goals

APPENDIX M: APPROVAL FROM INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT CHICAGO

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS)
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research (MC 672)
203 Administrative Office Building
1737 West Polk Street
Chicago, Illinois 60612-7227

Approval Notice

Initial Review (Response To Deferred)

February 11, 2016

Kristen Huffman-Gottschling, MSW

Jane Addams School of Social Work

1040 W Harrison St

M/C 309

Chicago, IL 60612

Phone: (773) 412-9210 / Fax: (312) 996-2772

RE: Protocol # 2015-0507

"School Climate and Acculturation: The Academic Impact for Newcomer Adolescents"

Dear Ms. Huffman-Gottschling:

Please remember to submit translations of all relevant instruments and recruitment/consent documents, as well as a statement regarding the qualifications of the translator and accuracy of the translations, prior to using these documents in the field. Translated documents must be accompanied by an Amendment form when submitted to the UIC IRB.

Please remember to submit a signed confidentiality agreement with the interpreter prior to utilizing the interpreter in the field. The signed confidentiality agreement must be accompanied by an Amendment form when submitted to the UIC IRB.

Please note that this research has been determined to be greater than minimal risk and will require full, convened review for all future continuing reviews and substantive amendments (20 copies required) due to the vulnerability of the subjects.

Your Initial Review (Response To Deferred) was reviewed and approved by the Convened review process on February 4, 2016. You may now begin your research

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: February 4, 2016 - February 3, 2017

Approved Subject Enrollment #:   30

Additional Determinations for Research Involving Minors: The Board determined that this research satisfies 45CFR46.404 ', research not involving greater than minimal risk. Therefore, in accordance with 45CFR46.408 ', the IRB determined that only one parent's/legal guardian's permission/signature is needed. Wards of the State may not be enrolled unless the IRB grants specific approval and assures inclusion of additional protections in the research required under 45CFR46.409 '. If you wish to enroll Wards of the State contact OPRS and refer to the tip sheet.

Performance Sites: UIC, RefugeeOne

Sponsor: None

PAF#:   Not applicable

Research Protocol(s):

    a) Refugee School Climate, Protocol; Version 4; 01/10/2016

Recruitment Material(s):

a) Recruitment Script; Version 4; 01/10/2016
b) Recruitment Staff; Version 3; 01/10/2016
c) Recruitment Flyer; Version 4; 01/10/2016

Informed Consent(s):

a) Consent 18; Version 5; 01/10/2016
b) A waiver of documentation of consent/assent/permission has been granted under 45 CFR 46.117 for the verbal release of subject contact information to the investigator during the recruitment phase of research; minimal risk; written consent/assent/permission will be obtained at enrollment.

Assent(s):

a) Assent; Version 4; 01/10/2016

Parental Permission(s):

a) Permission; Version 5; 01/10/2016
b) Waiver of parental permission granted [45 CFR 46.116(d)] for the recruitment of potential subjects; minimal risk; minors will be approached and then parents will be contacted; written assent/permission will be obtained at enrollment.

Your research meets the criteria for expedited review as defined in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1) under the following specific category(ies):

(FCR) Research has been determined to be no greater than minimal risk by the convened IRB and requires convened Continuing Review.

Please note the Review History of this submission:

Receipt Date	Submission Type	Review Process	Review Date	Review Action
05/06/2015	Initial Review	Expedited	05/13/2015	Returned To PI
08/10/2015	Response From PI	Convened	09/03/2015	Deferred
10/19/2015	Response To Deferred	Convened	11/05/2015	Deferred

12/02/2015	Response To Deferred	Convened	12/17/2015	Deferred
01/20/2016	Response To Deferred	Convened	02/04/2016	Approved

Please remember to:

→ Use your **research protocol number** (2015-0507) on any documents or correspondence with the IRB concerning your research protocol.

→ Review and comply with all requirements on the enclosure,

"**UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects**"
(http://tiger.uic.edu/depts/ovcr/research/protocolreview/irb/policies/0924.pdf)

Please note that the UIC IRB has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

Please be aware that if the scope of work in the grant/project changes, the protocol must be amended and approved by the UIC IRB before the initiation of the change.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research. If you have any questions or need further help, please contact OPRS at (312) 996-1711 or me at (312) 355-0816. Please send any correspondence about this protocol to OPRS at 203 AOB, M/C 672.

Sincerely,

Alison Santiago, MSW, MJ

Assistant Director, IRB # 2

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

Enclosure(s): **PLEASE NOTE:** *ALL STAMPED DOCUMENTS WILL BE FOWARDED IN A SEPARATE EMAIL.*
   1. UIC Investigator Responsibilities, Protection of Human Research Subjects
   2.   Informed Consent Document(s):
      a) Consent 18; Version 5; 01/10/2016
   3.   Assent Document(s):
      a) Assent; Version 4; 01/10/2016
   4.   Parental Permission(s):
      a) Permission; Version 5; 01/10/2016
   5.   Recruiting Material(s):
      a) Recruitment Script; Version 4; 01/10/2016
      b) Recruitment Staff; Version 3; 01/10/2016
      c) Recruitment Flyer; Version 4; 01/10/2016

cc: Creasie Hairston, Jane Addams School of Social Work, M/C 309
                              Mark

CITED LITERATURE

Abraído-Lanza, A.F., Armbrister, A.N., Flórez, K.R., & Aguirre, A.N. (2006). Toward a theory-driven model of acculturation in public health research. *American Journal of Public Health*, *96,* 1342-1346.

Acosta Price, O., Ellis, B.H., Escudero, P.V., Huffman-Gottschling, K., Sanders, M.A., & Birman, D. (2012). Implementing trauma interventions in schools: Addressing the immigrant and refugee experience. In S.R. Notaro (Ed). *Health disparities among under-served populations: Implications for research, policy and praxis* (95-119). Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald Group.

Anderson, C. (1982). The search for school climate: A review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, *52*(3), 368–420.

Anderson, E.H., Spencer, M.H. (2002). Cognitive representations of AIDS: A phenomenological study. *Qualitative Health Research, 12*(10), 1338-1352. DOI: 10.1177/1049732302238747

Astor, R., Benbenishty, R. , & Estrada, J.N. . (2009). School violence and theoretically atypical schools: The principals centrality in orchestrating safe schools. *American Educational research Journal, 46*(2), 423-461. doi:10.3102/0002831208329

Astor, R., Benbenishty, R., Zeira, A. , & Vinokur, A. . (2002). School climate, ovserved risky behaviors, and victiimization as predictors of high school students' fear and judgements of school violence as a problem. *Health Education and Behavior, 29*(6), 716-735. doi:10.1177/10901/9802237940

Barron, S. Okell, J., Yin, S.M., VanBik, K., Swain, A., Larkin, E., Allot, A.J., & Ewers, K., (2007). Refugees from Burma: Their backgrounds and refugee experiences. *Cultural Orientation Resource Center. 21*, 1-88.

Barboza, G. E., Schiamberg, L. B., Oehmke, J., Korzeniewski, S. J., Post, L. A., & Heraux, C. G. (2009). Individual Characteristics and the Multiple Contexts of Adolescent Bullying: An Ecological Perspective. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38*(1), 101-121. DOI: 10.1007/s10964-008-9271-1

Battistich, V., & Hom, A. (1997). The relationship between students' sense of their school as a community and their involvement in problem behaviors. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87(12), 1997–2001.

Benner, A.D.., & Graham, S. (2011). Latino adolescents' experiences of discrimination across the first 2 years of high school: Correlates and influences on educational outcomes. *Child Development, 82*(2), 508-519.

Berry, J.W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46(1).* 5-68.

Berry, J.W. *(*2003*).* Conceptual approaches to acculturation. *In* K. M. Chun*,* P. B. Organista*, &* G. Marín *(Eds.),* Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research *(pp.* 17-37*).* Washington, DC*:* American Psychological Association

Beets, M., Flay, B.R., Vuchinich, S., Acicjm A,C,, Li, K., & Allred, C. . (2008). School climate and teachers' beliefs and attitudes associated with implementatino of the positive action program: A diffusion of innovations model. *Prevention Science, 9*(4), 264-275. doi:10.1007/s11121-008-0100-2

Betancourt, T.S., Newnham, E.A., Layne, C.M., Kim, S. Steinberg, A.M., Ellis, H., & Birman, D. (2012). Trauma history and psychopathology in war affected refugee children referred for trauma-related mental health services in the United States. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 25,* 682-690.

Birks, M. & Mills, J. (2011). Grounded Theory: A practical guide. London: Sage Publications.

Birman, D. (2007). Sins of omission and commission: To proceed, decline, or alter. American Journal of Evaluation, *28* (1), 1-7.

Birman, D., & Tran, N. (under review). Acculturative press: exploring teacher attitudes toward acculturation and accomodation for immigrant students. *Manuscript submitted for publication*, 1-22.

Birman, D. and Tran, N. (2015). *The academic engagement of newly arriving Somali Bantu students in a U.S. elementary school.* Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/academic-engagement-newly-arriving-somali-bantu-students-us-elementary-school

Birman, D., & Trickette, E. (2001). Cultural transitions in first-generation immigrants: Acculturation of Soviet Jewish refugee adolescents adn parents. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 32*(4), 456-477.

Birman, D., Trickett, E., & Buchanan, R. M. (2005). A tale of two cities: Replication of a study on the acculturation and adaptation of immigrant adolescents from the former Soviet Union in a different community ccontext. . *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35*(1/2), 83-101.

Birman, D., Weinstein, T., Chan, W. Y., & Beehler, S. (2007). Immigrant youth in U.S. schools: Opportunities for prevention. *The Prevention Researcher*, 4-15.

Blum, R. W. & Libbey, H. P. (2004). Executive summary. Journal of School Health, 74(7), 231.

Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Ing, M. , Lankford, H. , Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2011poteat). The influence of school administrators on teacher retention decisions. *American Educational Research Journal, 48*(2), 303-333. doi:10.3102/0002831210380788

Brand, S., Flener, R., Shim, M., Setsinger, A., & Dumas, T.(2003). Middle school improvement and reform: Development and validation of a school-level assessment of climate, cultural pluralism, and school safety. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 95*(3), 570-588.

Brand S., Flener, R., Setsinger, A., Burns, A., & Bolton, N., (2008). A large scale assessment of the social enviornment of middle and secondary schools: The validity and utility of teachers' ratings of school climate, cultural pluralism, and safety problems for understanding school effects and school improvement. *Journal of School Psychology. 46*, 507-535.

Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services. (2012, October 1). *Youth Development.* Retrieved from Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services: http://www.brycs.org/youth_development.cfm

Brookmeyer, K.A., Fanti, K.A., & Henrich, C.C. (2006). Schools, parents, and youth violence: A multilevel, ecological analysis. *Journal os Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 34*(4), 504-514.

Brown, P. M., Corrigan, M. W., & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2012). Handbook of prosocial education. Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing Group

Bru, E., Stephens, P. , & Torsheim, T.(2002). Students' perceptions of class management and reports of their own misbehavior. *Journal of School Psychology, 40*(4), 287-307.

BRYCS (2008). *Refugee children in U.S. schools: A toolkit for teachers and school personnel.* Washington DC: Office of Refugee Resettlement. Retrieved from http://www.brycs.org/publications/schools-tookit.cfm

BRYCS (2012). *Youth development.* Washington DC: Office of Refugee Resettlement. Retrived from http://www.brycs.org/youth_development.cfm

Cabassas, L. (2003). Measuring acculturation: Where we are and where we need to go. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences.* 25(2), 127-146. DOI: 10.1177/0739986303025002001

Cardillo, R. (2013). School climate and youth development. In Dary, T. & Pickeral, T. (ed.) (2013). School Climate Practices for Implementation and Sustainability. A School Climate Practice Brief, Number 1, New York, NY: National School Climate Center.

Cemalcilar, Z. (2010). Schools as socialization contexts: Understanding school factors' impact on students' sense of school belonging. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 59 (2), 243-272

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2009. 1-22.

Charmaz, K (2008). Constructionism and the grounded theory. In J.A. Holstein & J.F. Grubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (pp. 397-412). New York: The Guilford Press.

Chicago Public Schools. (2012, June 23). Enrollment and transfer of students in the Chicago Public Schools. *Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual*. Chicago, IL, U.S.A.: Chicago Public Schools.

Chicago Public Schools (2016, March 23). Bilingual education policy. *Chicago Public Schools Policy Manual.* Chicago, IL, U.S.A.: Chicago Public Schools.

Ciccone, P.A. & Frieberg, J.A. (2013). School climate and the national school climate standards. In Dary, T. & Pickeral, T. (ed) (2013). *School Climate Practices for Implementation and Sustainability* A School Climate Practice Brief, Number 1, New York NY: National School Climate Center.

Connell, J. P., Kubisch, A. C., Schorr, L. B., & Weiss, C. H. (Eds.). (1995). New approaches to evaluating community initiatives: Concepts, methods and contexts. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.

Cohen, J. (2012). School climate and culture improvement: A prosocial strategy that recognizes, educations, and supports the whole child and the whold school community. In P.M. Brown, M.W., Corrican & A. Higgins-D'Alessandro (Eds.), *Handbook of prosocial education* (Volume 1, 227-270). New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.

Cohen, J. & Geier V.K. (2010). School Climate Research Summary: January 2010. New York, NY.

Cohen, J., McCabbe, E., Michelli, N., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy practice and teacher education. *Teachers College Record, 111*(1), 180-213.

Connant, T. (2008, 10 14). *School climate research summary.* Retrieved from Center for Social and Emotional Education: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/documents/schoolClimate-researchSummary.pdf

Coolie, R., Shapka, J.D., & Perry, N.E. (2011). Predicting teacher commitment: The impact of school climate and social-emotional learning. *Psychology in Schools, 48*(10), 1034-1048. DOI:10:1002/pits.20611

Costigan, C & Su, T. (2004). Orthogonal versus linear models of acculturation among immigrant Chinese Canadians: A comparison of mothers, fathers, and children. *International Journal of Behavioral Development.* 28(6). 518-527. DOI 10.1080/01650250444000234

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches (3rd* ed.). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Croninger, R. G., & Lee, E.V. . (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teachers College Record, 103*(4), 548-581.

Cuellar, I., Harris, L.C. & Jaso, R. (1980. An acculturaiton scale ofr Mexican Americans normal and clinical populations. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 2,* 199-217.

Cultural Orientation Resource Center (2010). U.S. Refugee Program. Retrieved from: http://www.cal.org/co/refugee/

Danielsen, A., Wiium, N., Wilhelmesen, B. U., & Wold, B. (2010). Perceived support provided by teachers and classmates and students' self-reported academic initiative. *Journal of School Psychology, 48*, 247-267.

Davies, A.Z. (2007). Characteristics of adolescent Sierra Leonean refugees in public schools in New York City. *Education and Urban Society. 40*(3), 361-376 DOI: 10.1177/0013124507304453

Davis, J.R., & Warner, N. (2015). Schools matter: The positive relationship between NYC high schools' learning enviorments and student academic progress. *Urban Education,* 1-22. DOI: 10.1177/0042085915613544.

Devers, K. J. (1999). How will we know "good" qualitative research when we see it? Beginning the dialogue in health services research. Health Services Research *34*(5), 1153-1188.

Draucker, C.B., Martsolf, D.S., Ross, R., Rusk, T.B. (2007). Theoretical sampling and category development in grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research.* 17(8), 1137-1148.

Eccles, J.S., Wong, C.A., Peck, S.C. (2006). Ethnicity as a social context for the development of African-American adolescents. *Journal of School Psychology. 44*, 407-426.

Elias, M., & Haynes, N. M. (2008). Social competence, social support, and academic schievement in minority, low-income, urban elementary school children. *School Psychogy Quarterly, 21*(4), 474-495. doi:10.1037/1045-383023.4.474

Elliot M. & Kilpatrick J. (1994). How to stop bullying: A Kidscape guide to training. Kindscape, London.

Ellis, H., Lincoln, A., MacDonald, H.Z., Klunk-Gillis, J., Struin, L., & Cabral, H. (2010). Discrimination and mental health among Somali adolescents: The role of acculturation and gender. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry. 80*(4), 564-575.

Ellis, H., Birman, D., Ho, J., Pulley, E., Batia, K., Everson, M.L., Stichick, T., & Gonzalez, A. (2005). Mental health interventions for refugee children in resettlement. *National Child Traumatic Stress Network.* Retrieved from: http://nctsnet.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/MH_Interventions_for_Refugee_Children.pdf

Esppelage, D.L., Aragon, S.R., Birkett, M. & Koenig, B.M. (2008). Homophobic teasing, psychological outcomes, and sexual orientation among high school students: What influence do parents and schools have? *School Psychology Review, 37*(2)*,* 202-216.

Fazel, M., Reed, R. V., Panter-Brick, C., & Stein, A. (2012). Mental health of displaced and refugee children resettled in high-income countries: Risk and protective factors. *The Lancet, 379*, 266–282. doi:10.1016/S0140- 6736(11)60051-2

Finnan, C. Schnepel, K. & Anderson, L. (2003). Powerful learning environments: The critical link between school and classroom cultures. *Journal of Education for Students Places at Risk, 8*(4)*.* 391-418.

Flanagan, C.A., & Stout, M. (2011). Developmental patterns of social trust between early and late adolescence: Age and school climate effects. *Journal of Research on Adolescents. 20*(3), 748-773. DOI: 10.111/i1532-7795.2010.00658.x

Fraser, M. W. (1996). Aggressive behavior in childhood and early adolescence: An ecological-developmental perspective on youth violence. *Social Work, 41*(4)*, 347-361.

Fredricks, J., Blumenfeld, P., & Paris, A.H. (2004). Scholl engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1), 59-109.

Gage, N.A., Larson, A., Sugai, G., & Chafouleas, S.M., (2016). Student perceptions of school climate as predictors of office disicpline referrals. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(3)*, 492-515.

Gaith, G. (2003). The relationship between forms of instruction, achievement and perceptions of classroom climate. *Educational Research, 45*, 83-93.

Gasson, S. (2004). Rigor in grounded theory research: An interpretive perspective on generating theory from qualitative field studies. In M. E. Whitman & A. B. Woszczynski (Eds.), *The handbook of information systems research* (pp. 79–102). Hershey, PA: Idea Group.

Goldkind, L. & Farmer, G.L. (2013). The enduring influence of school size and school climate on parents' engagement in the school community. *School Community Journal,* 23(1), 233-244.

Gong, L. (2007). Ethnic identity and indentification with the majority group: Relations with national identity and self-esteem. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 503-523.

Goodenow, C. (1993a). Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: Relationships to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 13*, 21-43.

Gordon, M. (1995). Assimilation in America: Theory and reality. In A. Aguirre & E. Baker (Eds.), *Notable selections in race and ethnicity (91-101).* Guilford, CT: Dushkin.

Gottfredson, G., Gottfredson, D.C. , Payne, A.A., & Gottfredson, N.C. (2005). School climate predictors of school disorder: Results from a naitonal study of delinquency preventions in schools. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 42*(4), 412-444. DOI:10.1177/0022427804271931

Graves, T.D. (1967). Psychological acculturation in a tri-ethnic community. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology,23,* 338-350.

Greeney, B., & Slate, J. R. (2012). School climate and high school size: A multi-year analysis of Hispanic students. American Clearinghouse on Educational Facilities Journal, *2*(2), 27-46.

Gregory, A., & Weinstein, R. S. (2004). Connection and regulation at home and in school: Predicting growth in achievement for adolescents. Journal of Adolescent Research, 19, 405–427.

Gregory, A., Cornell, D., Fan, X. , Sheras, P. , Shih, T. , & Huang, F. . (2010). Authoritative school discipline: High shool practices associated with lower bullying and victimization. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(2), 483-496. doi:10.1037/a0018562

Guest, G., Bunce, A. & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods, 18*, 59-82.

Halpin, A., & Croft, D. (1963). The organizational climate of schools. Chicago: The University of Chicago.

Hartmann, T., Reumann-Moore, R., Evans, S. A., Haxton, C., Maluk, H., & Neild, R. C. (2009). Going small: Progress and challenges of Philadelphia's small high schools. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Action.

Horenczyk G. & Tatar, M. (2001). Teacher attitudes toward multibulturalism and their perceptions of the school organizational culture. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 18,* 435-445.

Homana, G., Barber, C., & Torney-Purta, J. (2006). Background on the school citizenship education climate assessment. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights (2010). Immigrant and refugee services face 74% cuts.   *Fact Sheets.* Retrieved from: http://icirr.org/sites/default/files/FactSheetBudgetCuts.pdf

Illinois Department of Human Services (2016). *Refugee and immigrant services program manual.* Retrieved from http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=75386

Illinois Report Card. (2014). *Interactive Illinois report card.* Retrieved April 10, 2014, from http://www.illinoisreportcard.com/

Illinois Report Card (2016). *Interactive Illinois report card.* Retrieved June 27, 2016, from https://illinoisreportcard.com/School.aspx?source=EducatorInformation&source2=TeacherDemographics&Schoolid=150162990250042

Ingersoll, R. M. (2006). Who controls teachers' work? Power and accountability in America's schools. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

International Rescue Committee. (2006). *Refugee children and youth backgrounders.* New York: International Rescue Committee.

Jenson, J.M. & Dieterich, W.A. (2007). Effects of a skills-based prevention program on bullying and bully victimization among elementary school students. *Prevention Science,* 8, 285-296.

Jenson, J.M., Dieterich, W.A., Brisson, D., Bender, K.A., & Powell, A. (2010). Preventing childhood bullying: Findings and lessons from the Denver Public Schools trial. *Research on Social Work Practice*, *20*(1) 509-517 DOI: 10.1177/1049731509359186

Jimenez, T.R.(2011). Immigrants in the United States: How well are they integrating into society? Washington DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Johnson, B., & Stevens, J. (2006). Student achievement and elementary teachers' perceptions of school climate. *Learning Environment Research, 9*, 111-122.

Kia-Keating, M., Ellis, H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12*(1), 29-43.

Kerr, D., Ireland, E., Lopes, J., Craig, R., & Cleaver, E. (2004). Citizenship education longitudinal study: Second annual report: First longitudinal study. National Foundation for Educational Research, 1-154. Retrieved June 12, 2007 from http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR531.pdf.

Koth, C., Bradshaw, C., & Leaf, P. (2008). A multilevel study of predictors of student perceptions of school climate: The effect of classroom-level factors. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100* (1), 96-104.

Kuperminc, G. P., Leadbeater, B. J., & Blatt, S. J. (2001). School social climate and individual differences in vulnerability to psychopathology among middle school students. Journal of School Psychology, *39,* 141– 159.

LeBlanc, L., Swisher, R., Vitaro, F., & Tremblay, R. E. (2007). School social climate and teachers' perceptions of classroom behavior problems: A 10 year longitudinal and multilevel study. *Social Psychology of Education, 10*, 429-442.

Lleras, C. (2008). Hostile school climates: Explaining differential risk of student exposure to disruptive learning environments in high school. Journal of School Violence, *7*(3), 105-135.

Marsh, L., McGee, R., Williams, S. (2014). School climate and aggression among New Zealand high school students. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology, 43*(1), 28-37.

Maslow, A. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review, 50*, 370-396.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. *Qualitative Social Research, 11*, 1-13.

Mattison, E., & Aber, M. (2007). Closing the achievement gap: The association of racial climate with achievement and behavioral outcomes. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40*, 1-12.

McCallin, A. (2006). Grappling with the literature in a grounded theory study. *Grounded Theory Review, 5*(2/3). Retrieved from http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2006/06/30/1425/

McNeely, C. A., Nonnemaker, J. M., & Blum, R. W. (2002). Promoting school connectedness: Evidence from the national longitudinal study of adolescent health. *Journal of School Health, 72*, 138– 146.

Mitchell, M., Bradshaw, C.P., & Leaf, P.J. (2010). Student and teacher perceptions of school climate: A multilevel exploration of patterns of discrepancy. *Journal of School Health, 80*(6), 271-279.

McEvoy, A., & Welker, R. (2000). Antisocial behavior, academic failure and school climate: A critical review. Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorder, *8*(3), 137.

Montero, M. K., Ibrahim, H., Loomis, C., Newmaster, S. (2012). Teachers, flip your practices on their heads! Refugee students' insights into how school practices and culture must change to increase their sense of school belonging. *The Journal of Multiculturalism in Education*, *8*(3), 1-28.

Moos, R. H. & Trickett, E. J. (1974).*Classroom Environment Scale Manual*. California: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Nadal, K. (2008). A culturally competent classroom for Filipino Americans. *Multicultural Perspectives, 10* (3), 155-161.

National School Climate Center. (2012). *Dimensions of school climate.* Retrieved from National School Climate Center: http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/

National School Climate Center. (2015). *School Climate.* Retrieved on April 20,2015 from http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/

Ngo, V.H. (2008). A critical examination of acculturation theories. *Critical Social Work, 9(1),* retrieved from http://www1.uwindsor.ca/criticalsocialwork/a-critical-examination-of-acculturation-theories

Nguyen, A.T.D. & Benet-Martinez, V. (2013). Biculturalism and adjustment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology. 44*(1), 122-159. DOI: 10.1177/0022022111435097

Nguyen, T.S.T. (2004). Study of high school restructuring. *High School Size Does Matter. 1*(1), 1-7.

Northup, J & Brown, S. (2010). Illinois learn and serve 2009-2010 school year. *Cluster Evaluation Report*. RMC Research Corporation. Denver, CO.

O'Donnell, D.A., Roberts, W.C. and Schwab-Stone, M.E. (2011) Community Violence Exposure and Posttraumatic Stress Reactions among Gambian Youth: The Moderating Role of Positive School Climate. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, *46*, 59-67.

Office of Refugee Resettlement (2008). Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/about/whoweserve.htm

Office of Refugee Resettlement (2012). Refugee arrival data. Washington DC: Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/refugee-arrival-data

Office of Refugee Resettlement (2016). Refugee arrival data. Washington DC: Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: http://www.wrapsnet.org/Portals/1/arrivals/Arrivals%20by%20Nationality%20-%20Map(7.11.16).pdf?ver=2016-07-11-101359-193

Olweus, D. (2001*). Olweus bullying prevention programme.* Retrieved from http://www.clemson.edu/olweus/

Olweus, D. (2004). The Olweus bullying prevention programme: Design and implementation issues and a new national initiative in Norway. In P.K. Smith, D.Pepler & K. Rigby (Eds.), *Bullying in schools. How successful can interventions be?* (pp 13-36). UK: Cambridge University Press

Ozolins, U. (2009). Back translation as a means of giving translators a voice. *Translation & Interpreting, 1*(1), 1-13.

Padilla A.M. & Perez W. (2003). Acculturation, social identity and social cognition: A new perspective. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 25*(1)*,* 35-55. DOI: 10.1177/0739986303251694

Peguero, A. (2009). Victimizing the Children of Immigrants: Latino and Asian American Student Victimization. *Youth and Society. 41*(186), 186-208.

Perkins, D., Border, L.M., & Villarruel, F.A. (2001). Community youth development: A partnership for action. *The School Community Journal, 11*(2), 7-26.

Perry, A. (1908). The management of a city school. New York: Macmillan.

Pew Charitable Trust. (1994). *National Standards for Civics and Government.* Retrieved from Center for Civic Education: http://www.civiced.org/index.php?page=stds_toc_intro

Pew Research Center (2015). *Modern immigration wave brings 59 million to US, driving population growth and change through 2065. Views of immigration's impact on U.S. society mixed.* Washington, DC.: September.

Poteat, V.P., Mereish, E.H., Digiovanni, C.D. & Koenig, B.W. (2011). The effects of general and homophobic victimization on adolescents' psychosocial and educational concerns: The importance of intersecting identities and parent support. *Journal of Counseling Psychology. 58*(4), 597-609.

Portes, P.R. (1999). Social and psychological factors in the academic achievement of children of immigrants: A cultural history puzzle. *American Educational research Journal. 36*(3), 489-507.

Portes, A. & Zhou, M. (1994). "Should immigrants assimilate?" *The Public Interest 116* (summer): 1-17.

Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2002). The price of uniformity: Language, family and personality adjustment in the immigrant second generation. Ethnic and Racial Studies, *25*(6), 889–912.

Portes, A., & Hao, L. (2004). The schooling of children of immigrants: Contextual effects on the educational attainment of the second generation. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, *101*(33), 11920–11927.

Portes, A. & MacLeod. (1996). Educational progress of children of immigrants: The roles of class, ethnicity, and school context. *Sociology of Education 69* (October). 255-275.

Portes A. & Rumbaut R.G. (2001). Legacies: The Story of the immigrant second generation. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press and Russell Sage Foundation.

Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M.J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. American Anthropologist, *38*, 149-152.

Refugee Council USA (2009). Introduction to refugees. Retrieved from: http://www.rcusa.org/index.php?page=introduction-to-refugees

Refugee Council USA (2015). *History of the U.S. refugee program.* Retrieved on April 20, 2015, from http://www.rcusa.org/history

Reyer, R. (2008). "Cheating" as good pedagogy: Bilingual teachers defying English-only to foster student achievement. *Multicultural Perspectives, 10* (4), 209-213.

Rumbaut, R.G. (2005). Turning points in the transition to adulthood: Determinants of educational attainment, incarceration, and early childbearing among children of immigrants. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, *28*(6), pp.1041-1086.

Ryder, A.G., Alden, L.E., & Paulhus, D.L. (2000). Is acculturation unidimensional or dimensional? A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79* (1), 49-65.

Salo, C.D., & Birman, D. (2015). Acculturation and psychological adjustment of Vietnamese refugees: An ecological acculturation framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology. 56*, 395-407.

Schachner, M.K., Van de Vijver, F.J.R., Noack, P. &Eckstein, K. (2016). Cultural diversity climate and psychological adjustment at school--Equality and inclusion versus cultural pluralism. *Child Development*, *87*(4), 1175-1191.

Schaps, E., Battistich, V. & Solomon, D. (2004). Community in school as key to student growth: Findings from the Child Development Project. In J. Zins, R. Weissberg, M. Wang, & H. Walberg (Eds.), *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Scully, J. (2016). Going to school in the United States: Voices of adolescent newcomers. *TESOL Journal* 1-30.

Senn High School (2016). *Ethnic diversity.* Chicago, IL: Senn High School. retrieved from http://www.sennhs.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=167284&type=d&pREC_ID=343573

Shermblom, S., Marshall, J., & Shermblom, J. (2006). The relationship between school climate and math and reading achievement. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 4*(1&2), 19-31.

Silver, D., Sanders, M., & Zarate, E. (2008). What factors predict high school graduation in the Los Angeles Unified School District? Retrieved from the California Dropout Research Project website: http://cdrp.ucsb.edu//pubs_reports.htm

Singer, A. & Wilson, J.H. (2006). From there to 'here': Refugee resettlment in metropolitain America. *Brookings Institute.* Retrieved from: http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2006/09/demographics-singer.

Slate, J. R., & Jones, C. H. (2005). Effects of school size: A review of the literature with recommendations. Essays in Education. Retrieved from www.usca.edu/essays/vol132005/slate.pdf

Social Science Research Council Summer Seminar on Acculturation (1954) Acculturation: Exploratory formulation. American Anthropologist, *56*, 973-1002.

Stewart, E.B. (2008). School structural characteristics, student effort, peer associations, and parental involvement: The influence of school- and individual-level factors on academic achievement. Education & Urban Society, *40*(2), 179-204.

Stone S & Han M. (2005). Perceived school environments, perceived discrimination, and school performance among children of Mexican immigrants. *Children and Youth Services Review, 27*, 51–66. DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2004.08.011.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Bang, H. J., & Onaga, M. (2010). Contributions to variations in academic trajectories amongst recent immigrant youth. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 34*(6), 500-510.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Bang, H. J., O'Connor, E., Gaytan, F. X., Pakes, J., & Rhodes, J. (2010). Academic trajectories of newcomer immigrant youth. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(3), 602-618.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Rhodes, J., & Mlburn, M. (2009). Unrabelling the immigrant paradox: Academic engagement and disengagment among recently arrived immigrant youth. *Youth & Society, 14*(2), 151-185.

Suinn, R. M. (2010). Reviewing acculturation and Asian Americans: How acculturation affects health, adjustment, school achievement and counseling. *Asian American Journal of Psychology.* 1(1), 5-17. DOI 10.1037/a0018797.

Temple, B. & Young, A. (2004). Qualitative research and translation dilemmas. *Qualitative Research, 4*(2), 161-178.

Tagiuri, R., & Litwin, G. H. (Eds.). (1968). Organizational climate: Explorations of a concept. Boston, MA: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, Harvard University.

Tatar, M. & Horenczyk G. (2003). Diversity related burnout among teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19,* 397-408.

Terzian, M. A., & Fraser, M. W. (2005). Preventing aggressive behavior and drug use in elementary school: Six family-oriented programs. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *10*, 407–435.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2016). *Children in immigrant families*. Baltimore, MD: Kids Count Data Center. Retrieved from www.aecf.org.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2015). *Children in immigrant families whose resident parents have been in the country for five years or less.* Baltimore, MD: Kids Count Data Center. Retrieved April, 20, 2015 from http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/135-children-in-immigrant-families-whose-resident-parents-have-been-in-the-country-five-years-or-less?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/1/any/false/36,868,867,133,38/any/484,485

Thompson, D. R., Iachan, R., Overpeck, M., Ross, J. G., & Gross, L. A. (2006). School connectedness in the health behavior in school-aged children study: the role of student, school, and school neighborhood characteristics. Journal of School Health, *76*, 379–386.

Trickett, E., & Birman, D. (2005). Acculturation, school context, and school outcomes: Adaptation of refugee adolescents from the former Soviet Union. *Psychology in the Schools*, *42* (1), 27-38.

Trickett, E., & Birman, D. (1989). Taking ecology seriously: A community development approach to individually based preventive interventions in schools. In L. &. Bond, *Primary Prevention and Promotion in Schools.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Tsai, J.L., Ying, Y. & Lee, P.A. (2000). The meaning of "being Chinese" and "being American": Variation among Chinese American young adults. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology, 31,* 301-322.

The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center (2003). *Guardian of democracy: The civic mission of schools.* Philadelphia: University of Pennesylvannia. Retrieved March 20, 2012, from http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/News/Guardian_of_Democracy_report_final.pdf

Tsai, J.L., Ying, Y.-W., & Lee, P.A. (2000). The meaning of "being Chinese" and "being American": Variation among Chinese American young adults. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 31,* 302-331.

University of Chicago (2016). *5 essentials survey.* Chicago, IL: U Chicago Impact. Retrieved from https://uchicagoimpact.org/5essentials

U.S Census Bureau, American Community Survey Reports (2012). *The foreign-born population in the United States: 2010.* Washington DC: U.S. Census Bureau.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). *Efficacy of Schoolwide Programs to Promote Social and Character Development and Reduce Problem Behavior in .* Washington DC: Institute of the National Center for Education Research.

Way, N., Reddy, R., & Rhodes, J. (2007). Students' perceptions of school climate during the middle school years: Associations with trajectories of psychological and behavioral adjustment. *American Journal of Community Psychology. 40*, 194-213. DOI: 10.1007/s10464-007-9143-y

Welsh, W. (2000). The effects of school climate on school disorder. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 88-107. doi:10.1177/000271620056700107

Welsh, W. N. (2001). Effects of student and school factors on five measures of school disorder. *Justice Quarterly, 18(4),* 911-947.

Welsh, W. N., Greene, J. R., & Jenkins, P. H. (1999). School disorder: The influence of individual, institutional, and community factors. *Criminology*, *37*(1), 73-116.

Witherspoon, D., Schotland, M., Way, N., & Hughes, D. (2009). Connecting the dots: How connectedness to multiple contexts influences the psychological and academic adjustment of urban youth. *Applied developmental Science. 13*(4), 199-216. DOI: 10.1080/10888690903288755.

Woolley, M., Kol, K., & Bowen, G. (2009). The social context of school success for Latino middle school students: Direct and indirect influences of teachers, family, and friends. *The Journal of Early Adolescence, 29* (1), 43-70.

Yueming, J. e. (2009). The influence of student perceptions of school climate on socioemotional and academic adjustment: A comparison of Chinese and American adolescents. *Child Development*, *80* (5), 1514-1530.

Zane N. & Mak, W. (2003). Major approaches to the measurement of acculturation among ethnic minority populations: A content analysis and an alternate empirical strategy. *In Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, and applied research.* 39-60. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

Zong, J. & Batalova, J. (2015). Refugees and asylees in the United States. *Migration Information Source.* Retrieved from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-and-asylees-united-states

Zullig, K., Koopman, T. M., Patton, J. M., & Ubbes, V. A. (2010). School climate: Historical review, instrument development, and school assessment. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 28* (2), 139-152.

VITA

NAME: Kristen S. Huffman-Gottschling

EDUCATION: Bachelor of Arts, St. Olaf College, 1993
                       Master of Social Work, University of Michigan, 1997
                       Ph.D., Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, 2016

TEACHING: Teaching Assistant, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Generalist Practice with Individuals and Organizations, Fall 2010

                       Instructor, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Human Behavior and Social Environments, Fall 2011

                       Instructor, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Human Behavior and Social Environments, Fall 2012

                       Instructor, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Crisis Intervention, Spring 2013

                       Instructor. Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Generalist Practice with Individuals and Organizations, Fall 2014

                       Instructor, Jane Addams College of Social Work, University of Illinois at Chicago, Crisis Intervention, Spring 2017

PEER REVIEWED   Mattaini, M. & Huffman-Gottschling, K. (2012). Ecosystems
PUBLICATIONS: theory. In Thyer, B. Dulmus, C., & Sowers, K (Eds.). *Human behavior in the social environment: A foundation for social work.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

                       Acosta Price, A., Ellis, H., Sanders, M., Huffman-Gottschling, K., & Birman, D. (2011). Implementing trauma interventions in schools: Addressing the immigrant and refugee experience. In Notaro S. (Ed). *Health Disparities Among Under-served Populations: Implications for Research, Policy, and Praxis.* London: Emerald Group Publishing.

PRESENTATIONS: Society for Social Work Research: "Multi-Morbidity, Poverty, and Community Context: An Analysis of Factors Related to Medical Complexity At Midlife." January 2013

Council on Social Work Education: "Ecological Approaches and Social Work Education: Pushing the Boundaries Beyond HBSE." November 2012.

Society for Social Work and Research: "Multi-Morbidity, Serious Mental Illness, and Substance Use Disorders: An Analysis of Factors Related to Medical Complexity." January, 2011.

National Refugee Children's Conference: "Yin and Yang: The Fine Balance of Refugee Acculturation." November 2011

National School Based Health Conference: "Assessing, Developing & Maintaining Quality School Mental Health Services for Immigrant & Refugee Students." June, 2011

National School Based Health Conference: "Evidence Based Practice with Refugee Youth in Schools." November, 2009

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, National Meeting: "Building Sustainable Programming." October 2009

National Refugee Children's Conference: "Health Concerns for Immigrant and Refugee Youth." September 2008

National Refugee Children's Conference: "Building Effective Collaborations." September 2007

National Refuge Children's Conference: "Early Interventions Programs for Refugee Children Ages 0-5." September 2006

National Refugee Children's Conference: "Clinical Considerations When Working with Refugee Children in the Classroom." October 2005

Refugee Family Resiliency Conference: "Clinical Considerations for Western Trained Practitioners in Working with International Communities." September 2005

PROFESSIONAL: National Association of Social Work
MEMBERSHIPS   Council on Social Work Education
                 Society for Social Work Research

CERTIFICATIONS: Licensed Clinical Social Worker, State of Illinois