A NARRATOLOGICAL INQUIRY INTO U.S. AFRICAN REFUGEE YOUTHS' EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

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by
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University of Missouri – Kansas City, 2023

ABSTRACT

The arrival of refugees over the past two decades changed the face of classrooms in Kansas City, Missouri, resulting in refugee youth being unprepared for post-secondary opportunities. This critical narrative study aimed to explore the lived experiences of African refugee youth (aged 18 and above) attending public high school in the Midwest United States. Based on current and recently arriving African refugee populations, 10 participants originally hailed from Somalia, Congo, Liberia, Sudan, and Burundi. A crystalized theoretical framework of socio-cultural, migratory, and critical race theory guided qualitative narratological data analysis collected via interviews focusing on the participants' educational experiences. Data analysis followed descriptive and interpretive coding to analyze and identify themes, trends, and patterns providing insight into participants' experiences and how they affected their academic and social endeavors. Findings revealed that participants' escape, cultural experience, U.S. resettlement, academic shock, intolerance, toil/exertion, challenges, recurrence, defensive mechanism, beneficial encounter, academic effect, and social illumination all influenced their educational experiences. In addition, in-depth theoretical analysis exposed systemic societal racism among every theme, thereby illuminating deep-rooted racism as the primary factor negatively affecting African refugee youths' U.S.

educational experiences. These findings help identify strategies and interventions supporting African refugee youth preparing for post-secondary opportunities.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled "A Narratological Inquiry into U.S. African Refugee Youths' Educational Experiences," presented by Abdulkadir Bakar, candidate for the Interdisciplinary Doctor of Philosophy Degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADL	Anti-defamation League Education
AKA	Also Known As
BCME	British Columbia Ministry of Education
BPRM	U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
BRYCS	Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services
BSBM	Bachelor of Science in Business Management
CCS	Catholic Community Services
CDCHU	Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University
CIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
CNA	Certified Nursing Assistant
CRT	Critical Race Theory
DFS	Division of Family Services
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DOE	U.S. Department of Education
DOS	U.S. Department of State
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
EBSCO	Elton B. Stephens Company Information Services
ELL	English Language Learner
ELT	English Language Training

ERIC	Education Research Information Center Institute of Education Sciences
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
ESL	English as a Second Language
GCIR	Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees
GED	General Education Diploma
GSE	Great Soviet Encyclopedia
HSR	Human Subject Research
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965
INMED	Institute for Internal Medicine
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IRB	Institutional Review Board
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MAGA	Make America Great Again
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MT	Migratory Theory
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NASP	National Association of School Psychologists
NCELA	National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition
NCLBA	No Child Left Behind Act

NCTSN	National Child Traumatic Stress Network
NIH	National Institute of Mental Health
NZME	New Zealand Ministry of Education
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OB-GYN	Obstetrics and Gynecology
OHCHR	UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights
OHRP	U.S. Office for Human Research Protections
OIS	U.S. Office of Immigration Statistics
ORR	U.S. Department of Health Office of Refugee Resettlement
PTFED	U.S. Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
QoL	Quality of Life
RHTAC	Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center
RPC	U.S. Refugee Processing Center
RQ	Research Question
SAMHSA	U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SBE	Social-behavioral-educational
SCT	Socio-cultural Theory
SDPIS	UN Status Determination and Protection Information Section
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TB	Tuberculosis

TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UMKC	University of Missouri Kansas City
UN	United Nations
UNA	United Nations Association
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America
USCRI	U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
USRAP	U.S. Refugee Admissions Program
VABE	Value, Attitude, Belief, and Expectation
WIDA	World-class Instructional Design and Assessment
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

GLOSSARY

African: Per the Collins English Dictionary (n.d.), an African is "a native, inhabitant, or citizen of any of the countries of Africa" (p. 4).

Displacement: The *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (Egeland, 2004) states that displaced people are

> persons or groups of persons who have been forced to flee, or leave, their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, and habitual violations of human rights, as well as natural or man-made disasters involving one or more of these elements, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. (p. 1, para. 2)

Green Card holder: According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS, 2022a), "a Green Card holder is a permanent resident that has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis."

Immigrants: Per DHS (2022b), Reporting Terminology and Definitions broadly defined an immigrant as "Any person lawfully in the United States who is not a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or person admitted under a nonimmigrant category as defined by the INA Section 101(a)(15)."

Integration: Per the Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR, 2007), integration is a "dynamic, two-way process in which newcomers and the receiving society work together to build secure, vibrant, and cohesive communities" (p. 5).

Non-refoulment: Per UN's Status Determination and Protection Information Section (SDPIS, 2006), non-refoulment is "a core principle of international refugee law

that prohibits States from returning refugees in any manner whatsoever to countries or territories in which their lives or freedom may be threatened. The principle of non-refoulment is a part of customary international law and is therefore binding on all States, whether or not they are parties to the 1951 Convention" (p. 15).

Refugee: Per the SDPIS (2006), a refugee is "a person who meets the eligibility criteria under the applicable refugee definition, as provided for in international or regional refugee instruments, under UNHCR's mandate, and/or in national legislation" (p. 17). The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1965) defined refugees as "those fleeing from external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of the country of origin" (Article 2). These two definitions combined represent African refugees in this study.

Refugee Camp: Per SDPIS (2006),

> a plot of land temporarily made available to host refugees fleeing from an armed conflict in temporary homes. UN Agencies, particularly UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations, provide essential services in refugee camps, including food, sanitation, health, medicine, and education. These camps are ideally located at least 50 km away from the nearest international border to deter camp raids and other attacks on its civilian occupants. (p. 16)

Refugee Economic self-sufficiency: Per Cornell Law School (2000), "refugee economic self-sufficiency means earning a total family income at a level that

enables a family unit to support itself without receipt of a cash assistance grant" (para. 9).

Republic of Zaire: In the Encyclopedia Britannica, Payanzo et al. (2023) documented that Zaire is a former name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Resettlement: Per the SDPIS (2006), resettlement is,

> the transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought refuge to another State that has agreed to admit them. The refugees will usually be granted asylum or some other form of long-term resident rights and, in many cases, will have the opportunity to become naturalized citizens. For this reason, resettlement is a durable solution as well as a tool for the protection of refugees. It is also a practical example of international burden- and responsibility-sharing. (p. 19)

Trauma: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration SAMHSA (2012) stipulated that trauma encompasses physical, emotional, or life-threatening harm and (SAMHSA, 2020) dictated that

> individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. (para. 1)

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"The angel is free because of his knowledge, the beast because of his ignorance.
Between the two remains the son of man to struggle." Rumi

Praise and thanks be to Allah the lord of knowledge, exalted is You, I could never praise You enough (as You deserve), and salutations on the Chief of Apostles and Seal of Prophets, Muhammad (P.B.U.H), his family, and companions. O God, shower me with bearable knowledge and let me see through the eyes of the heart.

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> I seek refuge in Allah from trials, overt and covert O Allah, benefit me with what you have already taught me, teach me that which will help me, and offer me wisdom that will benefit both myself and humanity. Peace be on you and the mercy and blessings of Allah. Ameen.

PREFACE

As an integral part of the refugee resettlement program with constant refugee community contact, I saw many refugee youths graduate from high school unable to construct grammatically correct sentences. When I asked those refugee youth about the gaps in their education, their answers saddened me. Often, I cried over the refugees' neglected education, tears streaming down my face. In addition, my memories and experiences often surfaced, causing compounded mental anguish as I revisited refugee childhood horrors. As these thoughts and feelings lingered, I wondered how young African refugees characterized their schooling and if their educators understood.

I remember visiting a school while working with the refugees, wherein a Somali girl attending class seemed bored and was drawing a picture during the teacher's instruction. The image she was creating depicted a little girl reading a book, eyes wide and smiling joyfully. A woman was hovering above the girl, her body forming from a smokey yellow-orange emerging from the book. The woman had solid muscles and appeared to be protecting the little girl in the drawing. As the classroom teacher walked toward the young artist, another student told her to hide her picture, but as the Somali girl was doing so, the teacher tapped the girl's shoulder, startling her. Then, with a heartwarming smile, the instructor told the Somali girl that "it was okay" and she "was not in trouble." The girl nodded her understanding, and I imagined that the Somali girl viewed the teacher as the protector in her drawing.

My observation about the drawing was about literacy, help, protection, spiritual power descending from above, women's power, longing, the road to happiness, knowledge, and the dead helping the living. Like in *The Lion King* (Minkoff & Allers,

1994), my insight sang, “remember who you are!” I understood that pondering the past while facing the future with a smile is about resilience. The protective lady suggested the Somali proverb, “*a person stands next to a shade, not next to words*,” thus, showing the powerlessness of the girl. The yellow and orange echoed the dominant room colors mimicking the chameleon’s survival mode with the situation and the protection the Somali girl expected from the teacher.

Like many refugees, I carry my experiences; they inform my decisions, the relationships I create, and my driving goals. Throughout the years, I learned that culture is not only about observable traditions such as foods, music, clothing, and holidays people share. Culture is also about the combination of thoughts, attitudes, values, feelings, beliefs, and behavior patterns shared by diverse groups of people ethnically, religiously, and socially. So while pondering the Somali girl’s creative drawings, I wholeheartedly knew that one needs to be a human to carry the story.

My father often told me to open the eyes of my heart, which meant that I should feel with my soul. No matter how or where we live, we can make vital contributions because our souls directly connect to the souls of the sacred world within creation. When I volunteered with my father cooking rice for the needy, he would say, “whenever you cook the rice with affection and love, you fortify that relationship as much as you are nourishing those who eat that rice.” My father taught me to welcome strangers, offer a hand to troubled souls, and inspire a love for human beings, so we always filled our home with a feast for the poor and strangers. I undertook this study through this spirit to enhance a community of learners.

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this dissertation to the patience of my wife, Dahabo Mohamed, and our five children, Hana, Maryam, Muhammad, Hassan, and Aishah.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

African refugee youths' perspectives on their educational experiences in U.S. public schools remain unknown, resulting in maladaptive behaviors, academic failure, and an inability to achieve self-sufficiency for millions of forcibly displaced victims (Fransen et al., 2018). Therefore, I examined the educational experiences of 10 African refugee youth (age 18 and above) who resettled in the Midwest region of the United States and attended U.S. public high school after their relocation. Findings inform interventions to assist educational programmers in developing practical tools supporting refugee youth toward self-sufficiency, sustainability, and positive societal contribution.

Background: What is a Refugee?

A refugee is any person who,

> owing to [a] well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [or her] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him [or her]self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his [or her] former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it… Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2019a, p. 10

Thus, refugees escaped harsh conditions, sociopolitical injustices, traumas, or violence and encountered immediate and unanticipated hardships in their search for a safe home. According to the Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI, 2022), by the end of 2021, 89.3 million people worldwide "were forced to flee their homes due to conflicts, violence, fear of persecution and human rights violations" (para. 1), thus, rendering them refugees.

A distinct and crucial difference exists between immigrants and refugees (Eldridge, n.d.). Major region-wide traumas force refugees to flee their origin country, seek protection (asylum), and find a safe home (Eldridge, n.d.). In contrast, an immigrant faces none of these life-threatening conditions (Eldridge, n.d.). Sadly, some countries, such as the United States, do not differentiate between refugees and immigrants regarding educational resources (Capps et al., 2005). Title III of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) classified all foreign-born children as immigrants; there were no refugee designations. The United States also ranks children adopted by U.S. citizens and children born in U.S. territories other than Puerto Rico within the same category: immigrants (Ashwill et al., 1999; U.S. Department of Education [DOE], n.d.a). According to the DOE, Section 3301(6) of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) describes immigrant students as:

> Individuals who are aged 3 through 21; were not born in any state (defined as each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico); and have not been attending one or more schools in any one or more states for more than 3 full academic years. The months need not be consecutive (p. 2).

Thus, an immigrant migrated voluntarily, and a refugee suffered forced displacement. The patterns of intentional and forced migrations reflect patterns of the past (Crépeau & Nakache, 2006). Zolberg (2000) exposed worldwide changes in the last decades of the 20th century distinctly linked with globalized capitalism, encouraging a massive increase in the number of people traveling worldwide. However, Loescher (1999) tied the refugee problem to declining human rights. Loescher emphasized that "today's human rights abuses are tomorrow's refugee problems" (p. 84). The Center for Human Rights (2019) reiterated this data with their acknowledgment that masses of people take flight when human rights violations become common.

War, violence, persecution, and many other significant traumas frequently and forcibly displace individuals, whereby they become refugees (UNESCO, n.d.; UNHCR, 2019b). Additionally, refugees face difficulties during their unplanned journey that last for days, weeks, or months without adequate food and water (UNHCR, 2019c). Exasperating matters, the UN member state where the refugee receives asylum often refuses to protect the refugee and neglects the refugee's fundamental human rights (USCRI, 2008). Some causes include a country's lack of resources and security (Crisp, 2003), as well as issues recognizing refugee non-refoulment laws due to international terrorism concerns (Boswell, 1985; Catholic Community Services [CCS], n.d.; Kelly, 2007; UNHCR, 2002, 2007; USCRI, 2008). When this happens, refugees desperately seek protection in another country. Once granted asylum, refugees must formally seek shelter by registering with the UNHCR

(n.d., 2021a). The UNHCR (2019b, 2019c, 2021a) reported that this process consists of many factors, but the first is a temporary place within an internment camp.

Refugees and Camp Life

The world refugee population was more than 25.4 million at the end of 2017, with 31% (≈ 7.9 million) originating from Sub-Saharan Africa (UNHCR, 2019b). The UNHCR reported that 52% of those refugees were under 18, with 59% (≈ 4.7 million) African refugees being children. Reasons for forced displacement were numerous and complex; however, the UNHCR (2012) explained that each case was critical and urgent. Of those 25.4 million refugees, fewer than 1% (< 250,000) secured permanent resettlement (UNHCR, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). In contrast, most refugees remained in asylum in refugee camps, sorely lacking educational opportunities and hoping a benevolent country offered them permanent resettlement (UNHCR, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). After escaping the perilous dangers of their origin country and crossing hostile terrain with negligible rations, refugees face living situations in overcrowded, primitively designed camps rife with infectious diseases (Kanu, 2008). The UNHCR (2019b, 2019d) revealed that the world's least developed countries, regions with the poorest educational systems, hosted 81% of the world's refugee population. From 1998 through 2008, the percentage of refugee children resettled in the United States increased from 13% to 37% (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services [BRYCS], n.d.a). However, permanent resettlement opportunities for refugees dropped severely in 2017 (down 54%), leaving a 94% gap between resettlement needs and actual resettlement (UNHCR, 2019b). Thus, increasing numbers of refugees remain in internment camps.

Upon arriving at the camp, the refugees face adverse situations and ongoing stresses significantly affecting their mental health (Cernea, 2003). Through narrative inquiry of the UNHCR evaluation policy, Cernea revealed landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, food insecurity, high mortality, lack of resources, community displacement, and marginalization within refugee programs. Women travel long distances to fetch water and firewood and spend the rest of their time caring for their families (Chyngwa & Silva, 2020). Women and children stand in long lines for meager meal rations (Gillan, 2016; Roff, 2017). Adverse and pitiable camp accommodations often offer no toilet facilities and negligible privacy (Gillan, 2016; Mree, 2017). Essentials, such as shoes, remain critically scarce, and toys are hand-constructed from trash (Gillan, 2016; Trenchard, 2018). Warehoused families often possess a single plastic sheet for shelter and remain obstructed from pursuing any economic opportunity (Gillan, 2016; Mire, 2014). Education is negligible (Gillan, 2016; Trenchard, 2018). Living in refugee camps for many years means separation from families, community loss, and future uncertainty (Mire, 2014). Refugees continually endure harassment from local authorities, travel long distances by foot, and suffer detention (Gillan, 2016). Thus, refugees wait in uncertainty experiencing decades of hardships in camps reminiscent of those they experienced in their origin country.

Refugee Resettlement

Resettled refugees bring their past traumas and add additional stressors, considering that families navigate new lives in unfamiliar cultural societies and continual exposure to prolonged social, legal, and economic injustices (Balfour, 2012; Frater-Mathieson, 2004). The U.S. refugee resettlement program primarily resettles

refugees from seven regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, the Former Soviet Union, Kosovo, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Near East South Asia (i.e., Afghans, Iranians, Iraqis, Palestinians, Sri Lankans, Tibetans, and Syrians; Zong & Batalova, 2017). In the paroxysm of growing domestic and international tensions, recipient countries become overwhelmed by the immigration crisis (Zolberg, 2000). Commonly seen as a global crisis, the number of refugees from the developing world creates urgent concerns among Western countries (Sales, 2002). Such problems include a mixture of empathy for people cast adrift, accompanied by the fear that the number of refugees seeking permanent resettlement continues escalating (Van & McDowell, 2006). Thus, many country states hesitate to offer resettlement.

Of the 1% of refugees that secured permanent resettlement in 2017, the United States became home to 37% (≈ 93,000) of the African refugees (UNHCR, 2019b), adding to the African refugees already resettled in the nation. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) reported that 11% of the refugees resettled in the United States from 1975 through 2016 originated in Africa (U.S. Department of State [DOS] Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration [BPRM], 2017). Those African refugees were not monolithic; they hailed from different countries throughout the African continent (Igielnik & Krogstad, 2017). According to the Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS; 2017), in 2016, the African refugee population consisted of

- the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC; $N = 16370$) and
- Somalia ($N = 9020$),

accounting for most African U.S. refugee admissions. According to the OIS, the next three largest groupings included,

- Eritrea (*N* = 1949),
- Sudan (*N* = 1458), and
- Ethiopia (*N* = 1458).

The OIS additionally noted that refugees from Africa originated across many regions, including,

- Burundi,
- the Central Republic,
- the Democratic Republic of Congo,
- Eretria,
- Ethiopia,
- Liberia,
- Mauritania,
- Rwanda,
- Somalia, and
- Sudan, to name a few.

Therefore, while many organizations refer to African refugees (and immigrants) as a homogeneous cultural group, they consist of numerous cultures and societal backgrounds.

Refugees in the United States have become part of the more considerable marginalized minority residing in the nation (Constante, 2020). The United States resettles refugees in urban areas due to affordable housing issues (Singer & Wilson, 2007; Wilson & Singer, 2007). Each resettled refugee receives a one-time payment of

US $1,125 (BPRM, 2015) for their needs. Sadly, this insufficient funding, in turn, places the refugees among other marginalized groups in addition to being a refugee. Racial segregation, poverty, poor education, and pitiable quality of life (QoL) for colored students and their families portray devastating and observable realities (Feagin, 2001; Kozol, 2005). Educational facilitators group refugee children and youth with other colored students, such as African Americans and immigrants (Ogbu, 1987), who continually endure injustices in the United States' social, legal, political, and economic systems (Buras & Apple, 2006). As Quijano (2000) posited, race is a "mental category of modernity" (p. 536), making it easy for the dominant White society to ignore cultural diversity.

Racial categorization has a long history shaped by European colonization and the rise of capitalism across the Atlantic in the 16th century (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992). Such racism continued its detrimental destruction into the 21st century and remains prevalent in societies where African refugees hope for a safe and nurturing home within the United States of America (USA; Constante, 2020). For example, the U.S. Department of Health Office of Refugee Resettlement's (ORR; 2022a) Missouri state refugee coordinator reported that half of the 5,590 refugees resettled in Kansas City in 2016 (N = 2,743) were from Africa. Therefore, without interventions and appropriate schooling, African refugees in Kansas City have no option other than adapting to other marginalized groups in the city.

From 2003 to 2016, Missouri was home to more than 5,528 African refugees (ORR, 2022a). The five largest African refugee groups calling Kansas City home consist of Somali (N = 2,937), Burundi (N = 271), Sudanese (N = 442), Liberians (N =

718), and Congolese (N = 1160; ORR 2022a). Of these five groups, 2,360 children attend public schools (Somali, N = 1,405; Burundi, N = 92; Sudanese, N = 288; Liberians, N = 91; Congolese, N = 484; ORR, 2022a). Subsequently, refugee arrivals over the past two decades changed the face of classrooms in this Midwestern city.

Resettled African refugee youth and children often fail because the educational system does not address their needs (Stewart, 2011). Stewart demonstrated the "unique social and psychological needs of these students and [that] they are not provided with an appropriate education" (p. 6). The needs of refugees and children remain neglected, causing them to fall through the social-economic chasm of U.S. society (Kanu, 2008; MacNevin, 2012; McBrien, 2005). Educating refugee children is an obligation and an excellent benefit for the country that resettles them because of the new cultural perspectives, skills, and talents added to society (Save the Children, 2019). Thus, resettlement must support refugee students' school adjustments to their new culture, community, and future.

The Problem Statement: Refugee Education

Many refugee students attend public schools across the United States (Weddle, 2020). Unfortunately, schools and educators rarely know about refugee students and their families' challenges and needs (McBrien, 2005). Schools and educators must understand the transition refugee children and their families navigate while establishing new lives in a new country and community (Weddle, 2020). Such understanding is critical to creating schooling environments conducive to meeting refugee students' academic and social needs, thus, grooming them for self-sufficiency and preparing them for post-secondary opportunities (Roxas, 2011). To accomplish this, scholars

must understand the educational experiences of refugee students to inform schools and educators of appropriate interventions.

The science of education is the study of objective social facts; therefore, analysis and description in terms of levels of social reality present optimal exploration (Filloux, 2001). The African Communities of Manitoba defined educational experiences as economic, social, and emotional experiences (Kanu, 2008; Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Thus, in sync with the DOE (2014) assertions, educational experience includes any incident that influences school performance. In their new home country, resettled refugees meet isolation, hostility, violence, and racism (Fazel, 2018). Consequently, African refugees experience problems adjusting and becoming part of society, which impedes their learning (Abu-Laban et al., 2001; MacKay & Tavares, 2005; McBrien, 2005). Additionally, African refugee children stress about their parents' economic situations. As Banks and Banks (2004) explained, "children raised in circumstances of socioeconomic deprivation are vulnerable to an array of psychological distresses" (p.423). In other words, features such as social and economic status and past trauma cause negative academic consequences (Banks & Banks, 2004). Per Vernez and Abrahamse (1996), these challenges include:

> High residential mobility; coping with emotional stresses due to adjustments to new social norms and a new institutional environment, and/or traumas due to war, family disruptions or separations; and inadequate social support to compensate for broken community ties in their native countries and loss of support necessary for psychological well-being. (p. 3)

These issues distress students' performance and participation in school (Frieze, 2015). Positive attitudes and progress cannot occur in a climate of insufferable difficulties, cultural aggression, identity extortions, and psychological denigration (Banks & Banks, 2004). Hamilton and Moore (2004) explained the typical belief is that refugee children who enter schools at the elementary level perform better and more successfully adjust to the school environment. Hamilton and Moore noted the common societal belief that younger refugees achieve superior educational outcomes than those who enter schools at older ages.

Even so, Morse (2005) demonstrated that many refugee children and youth are unprepared for post-secondary opportunities once they leave school. Kanu's (2008) analysis of the educational challenges of African refugee students revealed a "higher school dropout rate … may account for the increase in anti-social behaviors such as criminal gang activity, prostitution, and drug use" (p. 917). Chettleburgh (2007) attributed refugee youth gang affiliations to the absence of ethnically and socially inclusive classrooms, thus, leading to fear and suspicion among themselves and within their communities. Many scholars weighed in, but the voices of the African refugee youth remain unheard.

Silence affects refugees' abilities to integrate into society and magnifies the academic, economic, and psychosocial challenges for these students to adapt successfully to the school environment (Cerner, 2019). Silence about refugee youth's high school dropout rates, and associated factors such as racial segregation, poverty, and QoL, continue impacting policymakers' and educators' understandings of refugee youths' needs (Kanu, 2008). Failure to integrate refugees into the school environment

reduces students’ socioeconomic opportunities and QoL (Kanu, 2008). Educators face numerous challenges in effectively providing a culturally and linguistically appropriate education for refugees and immigrants (Hornberger & Vinity, 2009; Miller, 2009), including:

- identification of barriers and bias in educational resources,
- the absence of culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions,
- verbal and written language, and
- resources eliminating communication barriers.

After reviewing interventions for resettled refugee children in school, the New Zealand Ministry of Education (NZME, 2006) concluded that refugee risk factors include violence, property loss, instinctive migration, flight, and war. However, other studies pointed to war-generated experiences and additional elements not yet identified (Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011). Hence, refugee children's mental health needs remain unmet (Almqvist & Broberg, 1999; Fazel & Stein, 2003), adversely affecting their educational experiences. Therefore, the refugee trauma issues, their past experiences, the impact of forced migration, and adjustment challenges contribute to the present concerns about the maladaptive behaviors of refugee children and their adjustment in schools.

Through careful literature review, I discovered clinicians, educators, and other ‘experts’ determine why refugee educational and societal acclimation failed, but the students’ voices remain unheard. These students have a right to be heard and have their educational needs met because understanding determines the success of refugee children in schools. Through this study, I explored the educational experiences of

African refugee youth (age 18 and over), who attended a U.S. Midwestern City public high school, to expose the missing knowledge affecting the problem: Why are African refugee students failing socially and academically?

African refugee students in the United States fail socially and academically, resulting in maladaptive behavior and, eventually, school dropouts (Schorchit, 2017, Traore, 2006; Ukpokodu, 2013, 2017). In addition, African refugee youths' educational experiences in U.S. public schools remain unknown, resulting in destructive behaviors, academic failure, and an inability to achieve self-sufficiency (Banks & Banks, 2004; Boswell, 1985; CCS, n.d.; Kelly, 2007; UNHCR, 2007; USCRI, 2008; NZME, 2006). Those scholars and others (Balfour, 2012; Bronstein & Montgomery, 2011; Chettleburgh, 2007; Crépeau & Nakache, 2006; Crisp, 2003; Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Kanu, 2008; …; Zolberg, 2000) provided speculation of the problem's causes, but none researched the issue from the African refugee youths' perspectives. Adding to the scholarly list, additional experts (Almqvist & Broberg, 1999; Fazel & Stein, 2003; Hornberger & Vinity, 2009; Miller, 2009; Vernez & Abrahamse, 1996) reported that the impacts of this adversity affect refugees' educational experiences. Those impacts included mental health challenges resulting in further risk factors like increased maladaptive behaviors, gang associations, violence, property loss, instinctive migration, flight, and war.

Until this study, the refugee youths attending this Midwestern City's public high school personal narratives remained unheard and, thus, unknown, resulting in a scholarly inability to develop appropriate interventions to help alleviate this devastating problem. Goulah (2011) reported that teachers are unprepared for refugee

children, and personnel do not understand their needs, culture, and values; thus, educators cannot create the needed multicultural community. Summarizing Allen et al.'s (2012), Kumi-Yeboah and Smith's (2016). and Traore and Lukens's (2006) research, Ukpokodu (2017) reported that "many students struggle and underachieve because of the challenges they faced in schools" (p. 80). Ukpokodu also echoed Deparle's (2009), Harushimana et al.'s (2013), Medina's (2009), Reyes and Curry-Stevens's (2014), Suárez-Orozco's (2001), and Traore's (2006) findings about African immigrant students' poor academic achievements. Here, the term 'immigrants' overlap the term refugees because administrators consider any foreign-born student an immigrant during school enrolment (Ashwill et al., 1999; Capps et al., 2005; DOE, n.d.b; Eldridge, n.d.). Subsequently, Ukpokodu found that many African immigrant students in U.S. schools were academically struggling, falling behind, living through educational disconnection and failure, and dropping out, resulting in criminal activities and risky behaviors.

The African refugee students' situations remain unnoticed, undocumented, and uninvestigated, so the students tend to be invisible and neglected (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2019). Therefore, lack of attention and identification silence their voices wherein they remain unheard. As a result, increasing populations of young African immigrants drop out of school (Ukpokodu, 2017). Furthermore, Ukpokodu reiterated Traore and Lukens' (2006) position that African immigrant students not meeting academic expectations experience teenage pregnancy, practice prostitution, abuse and sell illicit drugs, sag into other harmful crimes and activities, and face prison sentences.

Public policies consider African American racial students, refugees, and immigrants as one cultural unit (DOE, n.d.b); thus, African-refugee youth data remains clouded. Therefore, Ukpokodu (2018) posited that when African refugee students' data remains unclear, "they are racialized and lumped together with native-born African-Americans, so their demographic and achievement data are homogenized, and their academic needs ignored" (p. 86). Subsequently, little is known about African refugee youths' academic experiences because prior studies grouped them with African American students' general racial identity and did not collect their data considering their specific identity dimension (Harry & Klingner, 2005). In addition, Jackson and Cochran (2003) and Traore and Lukens (2006) demonstrated that researchers ignored the growing racial and interracial disputes affecting individual development and academic attainment.

Purpose Statement

This qualitative narratology aimed to explore how African refugee youth described their educational experiences. I used socio-cultural theory (SCT), migratory theory (MT), and critical race theory (CRT) conceptually crystalized as the theoretical framework to explore the lived experiences of African refugee youth (aged 18 and above) who attended U.S. public high school in Kansas City, Missouri. Through this study, I revealed the perspectives of African refugee youth about their academic and social experiences in the United States. Specifically, I highlighted their perceptions regarding their educational experiences about academics, culture, language, future self-sufficiency, and higher education preparation. Herein, I present the findings through in-depth discussion, including examples of participants' narratives.

Study Motivation

As Director of the Kansas City Refugee Resettlement Program, I continually observe African refugee youth's deteriorating academic and social struggles while lacking scholarly inquiry causes devastating consequences. Firsthand, I witness African refugee students facing problems like language barriers, dissimilar educational systems, societal stereotyping and ostracism, discrimination, inequitable school settings, and a sense of not belonging. In addition, from my interactions as a parent and my professional experiences with refugee resettlement, I continually witness African refugee students complete school with unsuccessful academic skills leaving them ill-prepared for their futures. Therefore, my motivation to conduct this study was to begin filling that void in the refugee knowledge base, thereby shining a light on their needs so that scholars can start protecting and providing for their educational needs.

Significance

The guise of U.S. classrooms continues evolving with an ever-increasing multicultural student base that includes many refugees as the number of refugees resettled in the United States increases yearly (DOS, 2017). Of the 16,786 African refugees resettled to the United States in the fiscal year 2016, Missouri became home to 786 African refugees (Refugee Processing Center [RPC], n.d.). The principal objective of the U.S. Refugee Resettle Program is to provide the refugee population with critical services to help them become self-sufficient members of U.S. society (ORR, 2022a). Early employment is vital to the refugee's self-sufficiency (ORR, 2022a). Since education is indispensable for self-dependency (UNHCR, 2007), recognizing and accepting conditions, mechanisms, and cultural contexts that foster

and help refugee children achieve their educational goals is imperative. My study findings can significantly aid that endeavor.

In the development of every society, a system of education becomes compulsory for individuals (Durkheim 1858 – 1917 as cited by Gross, 2004). Durkheim explained that, through education, society altercates how individuals should function in terms of intellectual, physical, and moral behavior (Gross, 2004). Per Durkheim, humanity survives only through vast homogeneity among its components (Gross, 2004). Therefore, per Filloux (2001), Durkheim viewed education as the element that affects and strengthens this homogeneity by inculcating in the child's mind "the fundamental relationships required by life in the community" (p. 4). Filloux posited that, through education, the human being becomes a "social being" (p. 5). Durkheim purported that homogeneity is comparative within societies and typified by a division of labor.

Thus, education develops refugee youths toward attaining economic self-sufficiency resulting in contributory benefits to their families and society, which is the essential goal of the refugee resettlement process. Therefore, findings from this study are significant to refugee resettlement programs and associated organizations such as BRYCS, ORR, BPRM, CCS, UNHCR, and USCRI, to name a few. Findings are also significant to the DOE, educational institutions, facilitators, curriculum development, and public policymakers. In addition, results can influence changes to or additional policies like the ESEA and the NCLBA. African cultural organizations and many other cultural and multicultural organizations also benefit from the increased scholarly knowledge gained by this study.

Most importantly, however, findings from this study are significant to African refugee youths and their societies. Research relative to the knowledge about the education of refugee children in the United States is sparse (Balfour, 2012; Haines & Haines, 1985; Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). Most associated research studies occurred in other countries (Balfour, 2012; Kanu, 2008; NZME, 2006; Lenette, 2014). This knowledge base gap compounds refugees' hostile social experiences, resulting in social and academic failure and a future inability for self-sufficiency (Refugee Studies Centre, 2016). Findings from this study help change those adverse outcomes to positive ones, wherein African refugee youths can emerge hopeful of a bright and fulfilling future wherein they, and their societies, prosper. Thus, this study contributes to existing refugee and educational policy, improved socioeconomic environments, and positive social change. This study also develops related theories by conceptually crystalizing SCT, MT, and CRT.

Methodology Overview

Through this critical narrative study, I explored the educational experiences of African refugee youths within their homes, schools, and workplaces in a U.S. Midwestern urban city. I used narrative research to capture the stories of study participants, the refugee youth, about their educational experiences. Creswell (2013) noted narrative analysis as an inquiry strategy by which the researcher explores the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide stories about their experiences. Creswell explained that the researcher then chronologically retells or re-stories those participants' experiences into narratives. Therefore, the narrative combines views from the participants' lives in a collaborative narration. Clandinin and

Connelly (2000) defined narrative inquiry as a method that uses: Stories, autobiographies, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories, photos (and other artifacts), and life experiences.

The refugees' stories contained experiences of their past and present realities related to education and provided strategies to help educators meet refugees' needs. Polkinghorne (1988) posted that "narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of understandable composite…a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole" (p. 13). Narratives incorporate a means of knowing; therefore, refugee youths' story organization linked events, perceptions, and understandings about their educational experiences in this study. Didion (1961/2021) suggested that narratives cement the gap between "what happened" and "what it means."

I situated this project within a conceptually crystalized theoretical framework that included SCT (establishing learning patterns), MT (incorporating refugees' unique backgrounds), and CRT (understanding the implications of the educational environment). CRT allows researchers to examine the past role of schooling among segregated, low-income, racial, immigrants, and students of color (Levinson & Holland, 1996). Many refugees resettled in deprived neighborhoods, introducing them to other marginalized groups, thus introducing them to social inequalities based on race, class, gender, and the dominant ideology of white privilege (Bourdieu, 1993). With this study, I explored the perceptions of the educational experiences of African refugee youths as they told their stories. Per West (2005), this technique identifies

strategies for supporting refugees' learning and growth after exposure to a foreign land where "race matters."

Research Questions

Through this research study, I asked the primary research question (RQ): "How do African refugee youth describe their educational experiences?" To answer this question, I probed four open-ended, exploratory sub-questions:

1. Please describe your educational experiences while living in Africa.
2. Please describe your educational experiences while living in the refugee camp.
3. Please describe your educational experiences since you arrived in the United States.
4. How have your educational experiences prepared you for college or a career?

Primary elaborating questions included:

a) Please tell me about your achievements.
b) Please tell me about your challenges.
c) Please explain what you struggled with the most.
d) Please share what helped you the most.
e) If you could, how would you change those experiences? Why?

Study Setting

The study took place in a U.S. Midwestern urban city which, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), had a racial composition of 59.7% White, 26.5% Black or African American, and 10.7% Hispanic or Latino. A setting conducive to trust,

honesty, and security was essential for the African refugee youth to share their stories without reservation. Thus, I conducted interviews in a location where participants were acquainted and comfortable (facility consent in Appendix A) within this Midwestern city. This environment was conducive to building confidence and calm during the interviews, which was crucial since participants revisited past experiences. I encouraged participants to select a convenient time within two weeks of agreeing to participate in the study. I set up audio recording tools before interviews in as unobtrusive a manner as possible to ease participant discomfort (discussed further in Chapter 3).

Participants

Participants included 10 African refugee youths (age 18 and above) who attended public high school in Kansas City, Missouri and spoke English fluently setting the minimum participant age at 18 years aligned with the UNESCO (2017) definition of youth. Participants were fluent in English to minimize the possibility of participant/researcher misunderstanding. It was important for participants to have attended U.S. public high school for their perspectives to contribute accordingly to the problem and purpose of this study. Likewise, I explored African refugees; thus, participants were also African refugees who had attended high school for at least a year. Chapter 2 presents an in-depth discussion of the term refugee. Since the most recent African refugees entering the United States were Congolese, Somali, Sudanese, Liberians, and Burundi, I purposeful sampled participants originating from these countries to ensure a balance of two (one male and one female) participants from each of those cultural backgrounds. Albeit the Sudan participants were both males however,

that deviation did not skew the results because the decreased gender balance of one was not significant and did not make cause result variations between the Sudanese and the rest of the participants. All experiences of African refugee youth matter, regardless of gender, echoed significantly similar themes.

I purposefully selected participants using a snowballing technique. Per Gall et al. (2007), "in purposeful sampling, the goal is to select cases that are likely to be information-rich" (p. 178); thus, all participants met the sample criterion. Maxwell (2013) recommended purposeful selection in qualitative sampling as "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 97). Per Maxwell, purposeful selection sampling ensured representativeness of the study context, which included the setting, the individuals, and the activities that

> adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population [and] ...deliberately examine cases that are critical for the theories that you began the study with, or that you have subsequently developed [which] ...establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals [and finally] …select groups or participants with whom you can establish the most productive relationships. (p. 98)

Snowball (AKA chain sampling) involves asking recommended people to propose cases to study, thus discovering more recommended people and increasing the number of appropriate cases (Gall et al., 2007). Per Creswell (2013), snowball sampling "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (158). The success of this method depended very much on

the first contacts and connections I made. Thus, snowballing was vital to building the network within the refugee community.

I obtained the names and telephone numbers of African refugee youths (age 18 and over) within the sample criterion from the refugee community youth center (see Appendix A). During an introductory phone call, I briefly explained the study and set a meeting with agreeable youths aged 18 and above. During that initial meeting, we reviewed the study in-depth and went over the consent form (see Appendix B). I also asked for recommendations from others interested in participating within the participant criterion. I then scheduled interviews with participants signing the interview form at a time convenient to them.

Data Collection

I collected data from participant interviews, including my field note observations. Per Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), qualitative researchers practice three leading methods to gather and analyze data: "Observing people as they go about their daily activities and recording what they do; conducting in-depth interviews with people about their ideas, their opinion, and their experiences; and analyzing documents or other forms of communication" (p. 449). Patton (2002) stated that "documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as a stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing" (p. 294). Thus, I gathered data from interviews after conducting a thorough analysis of current literature, including publicly available stories and poems relayed by African refugee youths. I retrieved those stories online before conducting interviews to understand the participants' unique circumstances better.

Such prior understanding aided interviews by increasing my knowledge which helped reveal what distinct experiences meant for the participating youths. Interviews (65 to 95 minutes; see Appendix C) were audio recorded to capture verbatim content. In addition, I conducted one (65 to 95 minute) semi-structured interview with each of the 10 participants at a time and location convenient to them (as outlined in the Participants section of this chapter) to obtain a fixed set of demographic items that included:

a) The student's war experiences in their home countries, refugee camp experiences, and the impact that the events had on their learning;
b) post-migration experiences in America;
c) barriers to social integration and academic achievement in the United States; and
d) post-secondary outlooks.

Thus, interviews focused on culture and school experiences, including challenges, successes, supports, and motivations. A semi-structured interview flows from a framework of the themes (Punch, 2004). This way, the interviews were flexible and allowed new questions to develop naturally in response to the interviewee's words while evolving from the base theme. Douglas (1985) called this approach "creative interviewing," which provides opportunities for in-depth data collection.

I also used my interview observations to guide interview interactions and collect data. Per Gall et al. (2007), "observations provide an additional source of data for verifying the information obtained by other methods" (p. 263). According to Patton (2002), "the purpose of observational analysis is to take the reader into the setting that

was observed" (p. 23). This type of observation provided the opportunity to carefully judge the merits and demerits of each phenomenon under study. Thus, I observed the youth during our interviews to gather nonverbal data that could be useful for data analysis and understanding. Although observation, particularly in this form, is more time-consuming, it provides superior data (Gall et al., 2007); thus, this data collection source was essential to the study. In addition, observations such as these provide an additional source of data triangulation (Gall et al., 2007), thus increasing finding reliability. Finally, I wrote the narratives of the experiences of the African refugee youth in this narrative study (see Chapter 4).

Data Analysis

I analyzed data through a conceptual lens of SCT, MT, and CRT. A central pillar of CRT is the counter-storytelling and narrative theory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) defined counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). At the same time, Delgado and Stefancic (1995) stated that counter-stories aim "to cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (p. 144). Data analysis incorporating counter-storytelling gave volume to the voices of the African refugee youth participants.

Thus, I qualitatively analyzed interview transcripts through methodical data extrapolation and coding. Such analysis is a systematic process for reviewing and evaluating data that involves finding, selecting, assessing, and creating data contained within them (Bowen, 2009). I carefully analyzed my observation notes and procedurally assigned codes similarly. Since I recorded and transcribed interviews

verbatim, I began by drafting the entire interview. After this, I meticulously set words, phrases, emotions, and body language into codes in line with current literature insights. Coding was descriptive to analyze themes, patterns, and trends best. Such coding incorporated a combination of enumerative data analysis and thematic analysis to condense the data by grouping them to categorize textual data to make sense of it. Actual codes evolved through data interpretation and analysis; however, base categories included:

a) The student's war experiences in their home countries, refugee camp experiences, and the impact that the events had on their learning;
b) post-migration experiences in America;
c) barriers to social integration and academic achievement in the United States; and
d) post-secondary outlooks.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Limitations and ethical considerations encompass factors presenting restraint, limitation, design weakness, external influence, assumption, or any other element affecting the study outside the study's design. Whether related to study assumptions, delimitations, confounding events, or researcher bias; thus, I addressed validity, reliability, and ethical considerations.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability directly pertained to the study's supportability, reproducibility, and accuracy. Per Maxwell (2013), reliability relates to the credibility

of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other accounting. Whereas Joppe (n.d.) defined reliability as

> the extent to which results are consistent over time. … An accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability…. If the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. (p. 1)

I identified four issues to validity and reliability: (a) The accuracy of data captured, including literature translations into English; (b) my interpretations of events; (c) my competency in negotiating the narrative relationships; and (d) my own experience with the phenomenon.

Data Accuracy

Patton (2002) noted that "systematic data collection, … multiple data sources, [and] triangulation, … are techniques aimed at producing high-quality qualitative data that are credible, trustworthy, authentic, balanced about the phenomenon under study, and fair to people studied" (p. 51). I used the abovementioned technique, in addition to crystallization, to establish the validity and reliability of this study. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) stated that "the 'security' that triangulation provides is through giving a fuller picture of phenomena, not necessarily a more certain one" (p. 44). Accordingly, Richardson and Pierre (2005) differentiated triangulation and Crystallization. Per Richardson and Pierre,

> triangulation is "a rigid, fixed, and two-dimensional object;" whereas, crystallizations is akin to "prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in

> different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose – not triangulation but crystallization. (p. 963).

Interpretation

As African refugees, the ongoing cycle of action and reflection were at the heart of the journey. Focused through SCT, MT, and CRT, I used crystallization to present multiple ways of understanding the experiences of African refugee youth by exploring various realities. Richardson (1994) posited crystallization as a technique of analysis comprised of creative forms of representation to add thickness to deeper thinking. Richardson described crystallization metaphorically to define the data analysis procedure:

> [Crystallization] combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities, and angles of approach… Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (p. 522)

Ellingson (2008, 2009) suggested that crystallization delivers a simple approach to elaborately presenting findings as encountered and to "make sense of data through more than one way of knowing" (p. 11). Multiple angles of vision about a topic are revealed by including diverse genres like storytelling, poetry, artistic expression, visual thinking, live performance, dance, and many formats (Ellingson, 2008). This concept worked well with the conceptual combination of SCT, MT, and CRT. Ellingson (2009) articulated crystallization into a framework:

> Crystallization combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, makes claims about socially constructed meanings, and reveals the indeterminacy of knowledge claims even as it makes them. (p. 4)

I used crystallization to explore and produce knowledge about the phenomenon, thus generating a deepened, complex interpretation by representing refugee narratives and associated poetry. A vital feature of crystallization was the cycle of action. According to Ellingson (2009), crystallization includes "a significant degree of reflexive consideration of the researcher's self and roles in the process of research design, data collection, and representation" (p. 10). Thus, I captured more profound, detailed, and thicker descriptions of the participants' experiences through crystallization.

Narrative Relationship Navigation

The challenges related to narrative inquiry are associated with relational inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2002; Huber and Clandinin, 2001). I negotiated alongside research participants; to hear their stories in their stipulations; and follow both plotlines. Therefore, I concentrated on how to confer about shaping manifold relationships that evolved and connected those in the complex work of attending to multiple lives. First, I thoroughly conferred various means of entering the center of an ongoing story and stood beside numerous people as they lived and shared their lives. I did this by translating each interview verbatim and documenting my

observations of the participant in the interview. Next, I analyzed that data in conjunction with insight gained from literature reviews through the SCT, MT, SRT crystalized theoretical lens. Finally, I coded and analyzed each rendition as a separate data source to achieve one final holistic narrative.

Researcher Experiences

I spent my childhood in Somalia before the Somali civil war. When war broke out, I fled the violence of my home country for the relative safety of Kenya. Along the way, I witnessed war's horror and atrocities, including losing relatives, friends, a home, and my childhood possessions. In the new country, I waited for permission to stay, my self-esteem lowered, the uncertainty of my place in the world set it, and I endlessly, desperately clung to hope. I carry my experiences with me; they inform my decisions, the relationships I create, and my aspirations.

Since I was a refugee, my experience with the phenomenon is extensive; thus, I took rigorous steps to minimize my subjective experiences during interpretation; instead, I expounded on the participants' experiences. My role as a narrative researcher was to deliver participants' experiences to the readers, albeit my kinship to the participants' experiences significantly aided my understanding, empathy, and sincerity during interviews. Josselson and Liebach (2001) explained,

> [The researcher's] kinship between self and others offers an opportunity for a deeper and more articulated understanding. Empathy becomes an attitude of attention to the real world based in an effort to connect ourselves to its readers than to distance ourselves from it. (p. 281)

Ethical Considerations

In addition to other ethical considerations, narratology's participatory nature presented ethical considerations that compounded researcher bias issues. Since I work with the refugee resettlement program, I did not recruit refugees resettled by the organization I am employed to ensure removing the potential problems of power and privilege. Instead, I submitted the name of the organization I work for to the University of Missouri Kansas City (UMKC) Institutional Review Board (IRB), after which UMKC ensured no conflict of interest in this study.

Participatory consent forms (see Appendix B) explained the parameters of the study, its importance, potential benefits, and potential risk to participants. The interview protocol (see Appendix C) also presented potential risks and the steps I took during the interviews to minimize those risks. Those risks, their justification, and the actions to mitigate them included:

a) Length of the interview (65 to 95 minutes) - This timeframe allowed for unpressured, in-depth narratives necessary for narratology. I considered participant comfort, including a temperature-stable private room, cushioned chair, unobtrusive recording devices, and opportunities to take needed breaks.
b) Possibility of emotional distress related to conveying negative past experiences - Participants' past stories were essential for complete data collection, reliability, and validity of the study. I possessed, on hand, contact information for emotional support personnel should participants

need or request such; however, none of the participants required the information.

c) Inclusion of vulnerable population - This study aimed to gather data about school-age youths' experiences; thus, I included those youths. Chapters 1 and 2 present the justifications for this study. To reduce as much age-related vulnerability as possible, I limited participants to 18 years or older.

While conducting this research on human subjects, I took extreme efforts to safeguard participants. The social sciences IRB of the UMKC requires researchers to follow fundamental ethical procedures. Those ethical procedures align with the National Institute of Mental Health (NIH). I obtained UMKC IRB approval before commencing data collection (see Appendix D, approval #253928). The UMKC IRB reviewed all protocols for research using human subjects, directed by three superseding principles:

a. Notify subjects about the nature of the study and confirm that their participation is voluntary.
b. Guarantee that the benefits of the research outweigh the risks.
c. Guarantee even distribution of the risks and benefits among the possible subject populations. (NIH, n.d.; UMKC, 2019)

Furthermore, the Belmont Report (U.S. Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], 2022) recapitulates those ethical principles and guidelines in three fundamental principles: Respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Since this study dealt with human subjects, I adhered to the ethical guidelines and protocols of UMKC IRB, NIH, and OHRP to protect the research participants. Thus, I used pseudonyms to

protect the participants' privacy and took other precautions to protect participants (further discussed in Chapter 3).

Summary

African refugee youths demonstrate maladaptive behaviors, academic failure, and an inability to achieve self-sufficiency, yet no one has ascertained the factors causing this from the perspectives of those students. Through this qualitative narratology, I used a conceptually crystalized SCT, MT, and CRT theoretical foundation to explore the lived experiences of African refugee youth (aged 18 and above) attending a U.S. public high school in Kansas City, Missouri. Through this study, I explored why African refugee youth feel academically and socially failing.

Chapter 1 introduced the study, including what constitutes a refugee, refugee camps, resettlement processes, and education. The significance of the research and the RQs followed the problem statement and purpose statements. The theoretical framework included an introduction to SCT, MT, and CRT. The design, including the setting, participants, data collection, and analysis techniques, preceded a discussion of limitations and ethical considerations. Thus, Chapter 1 presented the problem, its nature, background, repercussions, and justification for the study and briefly explained the design. Chapter 2 presents the literature review, Chapter 3 details the study methodology, Chapter 4 documents my findings, and Chapter 5 includes further discussions, recommendations, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To better prepare U.S. educators to address the multicultural educational needs of African refugee students, those educators must possess knowledge of the cultures these youths bring to school (Cervantes & Langston, 2020); however, that data is missing from current literature. Subsequently, I conducted a thorough literature review, which provided a clearer study ontology, demonstrated subject matter importance, and aided my development of this valid and appropriate research design.

The percentage of refugee children resettling in the United States nearly tripled from 1998 to 2008 (Seitz, 2016); subsequently, in 2016, over 72% of refugees relocated to the United States were women and children (BPRM, 2017). Student empowerment extending from their culture is imperative for understanding and navigating the new culture they face in public schools (Mississippi College, 2021). Thus, a comprehensive understanding of their transition experiences is critical to educational environments conducive to meeting refugee students' academic and social needs (Roxas, 2011). Alternatively, these youths face extreme difficulty becoming contributing members of the country's positive socioeconomic health without appropriate educational support mechanisms.

This chapter presents the theoretical framework, context, and in-depth literature review of refugee youths' educational and social experiences before and while attending U.S. public schools. First, I describe the literature search strategy and discuss the knowledge gaps I discovered during that search. Next, I present the theoretical framework, including my experiential knowledge of the subject and its importance to

this study. The third strand of the literature review focuses on the historical context centering on African youth education in the United States. Subsequently, the historical context includes educational conditions in refugee encampment centers and U.S. public schools, an exploration of racism in those schools, and how they affect African refugees and marginalized students. Finally, I conclude Chapter 2 with cultural challenges, behaviors, and motivations about African refugee youths.

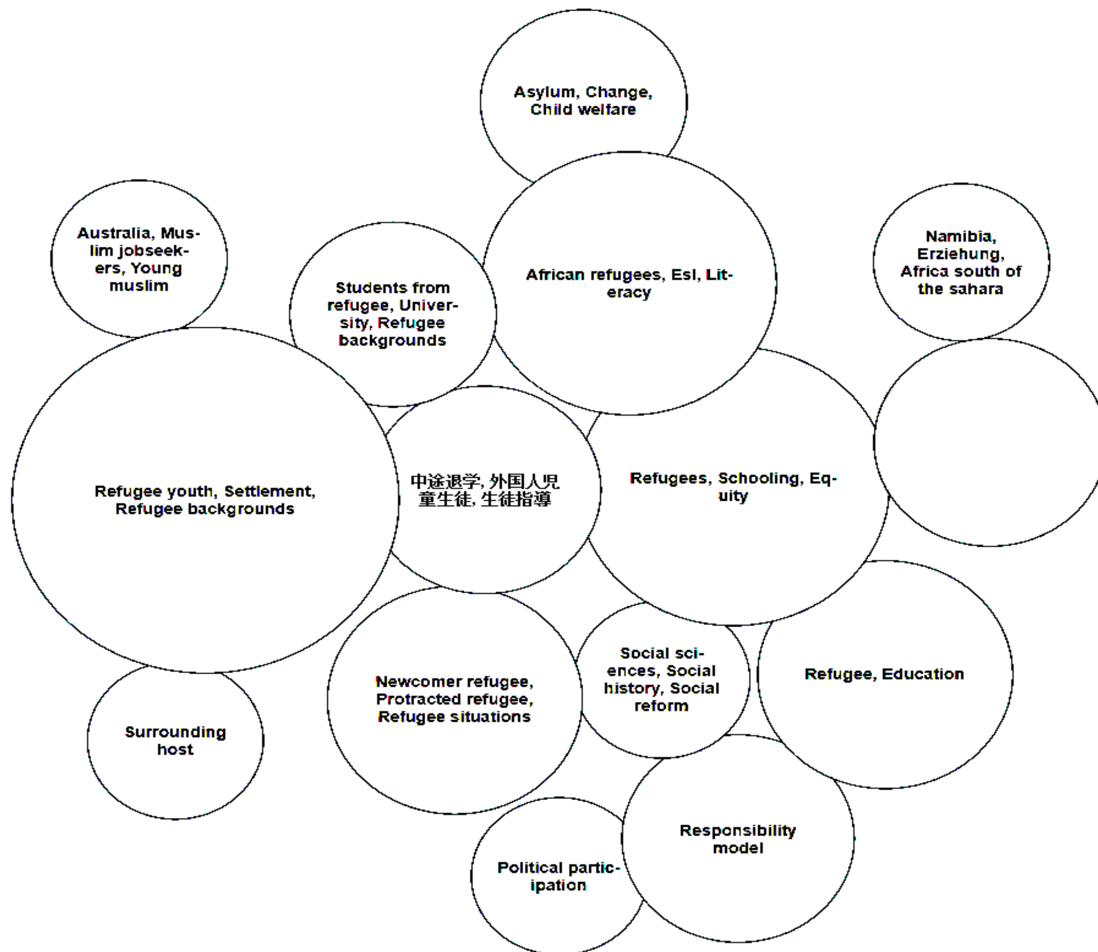
Literature Search Strategy

My literature search strategy included several reputable databases, various boolean keyword combinations, multiple date ranges, and numerous contributing authors. Primary databases I accessed included Elton B. Stephens Company (EBSCO) Information Services, Education Research Information Center (ERIC) Institute of Education Sciences, Google Scholar, open knowledge maps, and SAGE Publications. In addition, I accessed government and organizational archives, including the USCRI and UN sites. Additionally, I used Open Knowledge Maps (www.openknowledgemaps.org/index) to provide a literature map from which I launch more intensive searches; Figure 1 provides an example. While most searches were within literature from 2010 to 2018, several historical searches dated back to World War II, and many searches stemmed from author sources rather than date ranges. Keyword categories included identity, facility, subject, and group identifiers. Identities included individuals as subjects like *adolescent*, *child*, *refugee*, and *youth*. Facilities revolved around structures like *education*, *institution*, *camp*, and *school*. Subjects extended from events and occurrences like *academic*, *education*, *school*, and *teach* to

discrimination, *disparity*, *isolation*, and *racism*. Finally, groupings focused on esoteric principles like *behavior*, *culture*, *internment*, *multiculturalism*, *social*, and *transition*.

Figure 1

Refugee Youth Education Knowledge Map



Note. Researcher generated image based on input into knowledge maps. Retrieved from www.openknowledgemaps.org/index

The Unknown: The Gap in the Literature

The resulting literature focused on large-scale historical event documentation, administrative-technical understandings, and regulatory expectations centered on adult theories rather than youth experiences. Literature specific to the ontology of refugee

youths' perceptions and needs was sorely lacking, as was wholistic theoretical epistemology and guidance. All research I found focused on a limited theoretical application of adult-related phenomena like:

- Immigration
- Historical war, violence, and associated atrocities
- Clinical understanding
- Demographic shifts
- Adult acclimation
- Self-sufficiency expectations
- Minimal mandatory regulations

On reviewing this literature, I noted an apparent two-fold gap preventing effective educational strategies from being developed: The educational experiences of African refugee youth and wholistic crystalized theoretical analysis.

While many scholars pursued a wide plethora of routes associated with various migratory immigration and asylum infrastructures, the actual educational experiences of African refugee youth were nonexistent. Scholars speculated and theorized what African refugee youths' educational experiences were; however, none specifically asked those youths about their educational experiences in the United States. This lack of knowledge was significant and may attribute to many current ill-conceived interventions. My study begins to fill this gap.

Additionally, theoretical frameworks used in existing literature did not supply the holistic lens needed to resolve the complex problems facing African refugee youth.

Many theorists used SCT and MT separately, analyzing various aspects of adult refugee acculturation. Scholars used CRT to investigate adult legal, educational, and infrastructure disparities. However, no one further combined SCT, MT, and CRT to understand refugee youths' academic dysfunction in U.S. schools. In this study, I analyze data through a crystalized lens of SCT, MT, and CRT to better understand the problem.

Theoretical Framework

I used the conceptually sound theoretical framework of SCT, MT, and CRT to provide a reliable epistemological construct and guide critical analysis of the crisis faced by African refugee youths in U.S. public schools. I employed a narratological perspective to make meaning of the experiences of these youths, which exposed the foundational knowledge undergirding the study. Hopkins (2009) posited that narrative research best supplies the degree of depth and detail needed to paint a persuasive picture adequate for communication impacting public policy reform. This critical narratological study captured the stories of African refugee youths' educational, academic, and life-challenging experiences.

The theoretical framework was crucial to providing a holistic foundation, vantage, and capturing such complex and critical data. According to Maxwell (2013), a theoretical framework consists of "the actual ideas and beliefs that you hold about the phenomena studied, whether these are written down or not" (p. 39). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the theoretical frame "explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied — the key factors, concepts, or variables — and the presumed relationships among them" (p. 18). Shields and Tajalli (2006) described the

connecting characteristics of a theoretical framework as a "type of intermediate theory that attempts to connect to all aspects of inquiry (e.g., problem definition, purpose, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis)" (p. 151). Per Shields and Tajalli, conceptual and theoretical frameworks "can act like maps that give coherence to empirical inquiry" (p. 39). After researching several theoretical models, four such structures surfaced conducive to this study: SCT, MT, CRT, and multicultural education, in conjunction with researcher-related experiential knowledge. Thus, the theoretical framework of this study was conceptually crystalized with SCT, MT, and CRT, conceived from a multicultural educational perspective, and included several assumptions derived from my experiential knowledge.

Experiential Knowledge

As a refugee, I experienced the challenges of cultural shock and immersion into a completely foreign educational experience. My work and experiences gave me relevant innermost perspectives on the refugee process and helped guide the selection of the theoretical traditions and framework I used in this study. I work with refugees who come to the United States from Africa, East Asia, Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Near East, and South Asia regions. I oversee a resettlement program in Kansas City, Missouri. Most refugees in the program are from Somalia, Burundi, and the Congo. My expertise includes the director position of Della Lamb Community Services for eight years, being an employment coordinator with Jewish Vocational Services, and being a National Refugee Works Advisory Board member. In addition, I was involved in programs that help resettle refugees in the United States, such as The Refugee Healthy Marriage program, evaluating complex social programs,

and refugee employment. Due to my experience, I brought several assumptions to this qualitative study:

1. High refugee drop-out rates at the high school level are associated with racial segregation, poverty, and QoL factors.
2. Silence about these issues eventually shakes refugees' ability to integrate into society and reduces their socioeconomic opportunities.
3. Refugees suffer interrupted schooling experiences due to interpersonal experiences in war-torn countries.
4. Refugees' prior social, economic, and political circumstances present unique challenges for educators and communities.

Refugees have the same rights as all other children worldwide, as indicated by UNESCO and the UNHCR: The fundamental right to life, survival, and development. Nevertheless, I witness children living in refugee camps face deprivation of their normal childhood development. I observe security and everyday activities in refugee camps that often raise fears and challenges, which refugee youths bring with them into their new lives. These challenges include illiteracy and minimal access to educational resources (Watters, 2008). Refugee youth placement services combine them with other oppressed groups (Ogbu, 1987) who experience prolonged periods of social, legal, political, and economic injustices (Buras & Apple, 2006). Based on the historical development and contemporary issues related to Black education in America, in addition to my first-hand knowledge, refugees entering the United States experience similar cultural challenges as other ostracized minorities. Thus, the United States'

traditional miseducation of African American children also influences refugee children's education.

Culture is the frame that guides and influences lives, behaviors, and practices (Scott & Palincsar, 2009; UNESCO, 2009), making it imperative to understand refugees' educational experiences. Anderson and Fenichel (1989) asserted a "cultural framework must be viewed as a set of tendencies of possibilities from which to choose" (p. 8). Thus, culture is not a prearranged set of behaviors or characteristics but a framework to filter actions and provide checks as individuals go about their daily life. Therefore, I built this study on SCT for ontological depth and foundational base platform.

MT provided a conceptual lens focusing on the social and cultural environment of the transnational identity of each refugee. As a result, the need for individual refugee student interventions surfaced, exposing students' personal and resource requirements. Accordingly, sensitivity, knowledge, and understanding of refugee students' cultural practices improve the educational process and establish positive relationships with teachers.

Furthermore, I used CRT for a foundational understanding of race and racism and to challenge the claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy in the society wherein African refugee students come for protection. The CRT components helped me explore how African refugee youths experience schooling and highlighted counter-narratives presented as forms of resistance preexistent in the United States. I conceptually crystalized SCT, MT, and CRT from this foundation in study design, data collection, and analysis.

Socio-Cultural Theory

The conceptualization of SCT profoundly represents the work of Vygotsky (1986), who defined learning as a social process (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) stated that individuals learn through interaction with others combined with the individual's mental structure; hence, learning at two levels. According to Vygotsky (1978), "every function in a child's cultural development appears twice: First on the social level and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)" (p. 57). Tharp and Gallimore (1988) highlighted SCT, explaining a child's development:

> This view [socialcultural perspectives] has profound implications for teaching, schooling, and education. A key feature of this emergent view of human development is that higher-order functions develop out of social interaction. Vygotsky argued that a child's development cannot be understood by a study of the individual. We must also examine the external social world in which that individual life has developed…Through participation in activities that require cognitive and communicative functions, children are drawn into the use of these functions in ways that nurture 'scaffold' them. (pp. 6-7)

In a qualitative case study, Thompson (2013) developed "a theoretical understanding of the processes involved in the co-construction of a written text between a teacher and student from a Vygotskian perspective" (p. 247). Thompson proposed extra consideration for the edifice of zone proximal developments (ZPDs) through cooperative actions "for it is negotiation within this zone that leads to

development” (p. 247). Thompson conducted this study in the United Kingdom (UK) and observed the interaction of a UK secondary school’s social arbitration of cooperative action in the compromise of meaning. Thus, Thompson posited that “it is active intervention that mediates learning within the activity of writing” (p. 274).

SCT supports students’ learning and development from the perspectives of culture as a central part of its approach (Lantolf, 2000; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). Banks and Banks (2013) recommended looking at schools as social systems to help “formulate and initiate a change strategy that reforms the total school environment to implement multicultural education” (p. 18). Social and cultural development is essential to learning and presents the significance of the environment in developing experiences. Thus, recognizing the influence of culture on education requires a spotlight on individuals’ contributions to the learning process and how their involvement embodies the use of culture to solve problems.

Refugee children undergo individual and family adaptation (Weine, 2008); therefore, traditional values remain within the family. The duality of bicultural adaptation develops due to acculturation to mainstream society, introducing racial stratification (González, 1995). Logically, refugee children cater to their parent's and mainstream cultures at home and school, respectively. Thus, children often learn from their parents at home and teachers in school, acting as a bridge between those cultures. Steele (1997) presented the crossroads between the large-scale level of sociocultural patterns and individual learning performance. Steele discussed the cultural perception of achievement, recognizing that one inhibitor of school performance was the danger of stereotypes.

Moreover, the study of teachers' racial or social class biases demonstrated that thoughts and values of the wider socially classified society integrated into the micro-culture of the classroom (Sparks, 2015). Therefore, teachers must know the child's culture and the patterns of learning behavior acquired from their communal environment to avoid stereotypes, biases, discrimination, and ostracism. However, from an SCT viewpoint, global society continues its increasing racism trend, which inadvertently also fits with tenets of CRT.

Critical Race Theory

Tenets of CRT hold that (a) racial lines segregate society, (b) America is permanently and centrally racist, and (c) the nation's legal structures are, by description, racist and complicated (Brown, 2004). According to Brown, CRT highlights that "law is not neutral and objective but designed to support White supremacy and the subordination of people of color" (p. 1486). Using CRT, Bonilla-Silva (2001) argued the legal perspective that racism is usual in U.S. culture and not abnormal; therefore, counter-narratives are a useful way of understanding how racism operates and functions. According to Bell (1987, 1992), CRT starts from the premise that race and racism are pervasive and permanent.

In their study examining the Black and White achievement gap between low-income children, Burchinal et al. (2011) suggested that reducing the gap between Black and White required interventions to reduce racial gaps in home and school experiences from infancy throughout the school years. Burchinal et al. posited a substantial existing racial gap; thus, they needed policies addressing that gap early. According to Wijeysinghe et al. (1997), racism is

> the systemic subordination of members of targeted racial groups who have relatively little social power in the United States (Blacks, Latino/as, Native Americans, and Asians), by the members of the agent racial group who have relatively more social power (Whites). This subordination is supported by the actions of individuals, cultural norms and values, and the institutional structures and practices of society. (pp. 88-89)

Racial micro-aggressions stem from aspects of CRT and, thus far, primarily shed light on the U.S. collegiate racial climate that African American students attend (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Solorzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Unfortunately, while tenets of CRT help expose such racist practices, the unconscious enigma still surreptitiously hides in U.S. schools and colleges and remains minimally investigated or researched. Furthermore, current news demonstrates the significant challenges such study faces due to contentious political debate centering on CRT as challenging established power structures and social norms (Alfonseca, 2023; Bennett & Cuevas, 2022; Monroe, 2022; Waxman, 2021). However, CRT is an academic framework developed through rigorous research scholarship that provides valuable insights and analysis to complex social issues. Thus, I incorporated CRT into this study framework based on that academic scholarship and evidence supporting the framework.

Historically and currently in the United States, race classifies various sectors, from welfare benefits to energy and drive in NCAA basketball games and college rankings. According to Ladson-Billings (1998), White superiority frequently elevates through depictions representing intelligence, science, maleness or manliness, beauty

and masculinity, middle class, and school achievement portrayed by White models. Whereas epithets characterized by Black models, such as gangs, the underclass, welfare recipients, and basketball players, are present designations meant to malign marginalized and stratify Black people (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In line with CRT, nuances such as these perpetuate and legitimize racism.

Diversity education in the United States has become a dualistic approach segmented to the local Black and White students (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Barton & Coley, 2010; Hartney & Flavin, 2014; Ogbu, 2004; Tyson et al., 2005). Such misguided philosophical thoughts came to the fore after the demise of colonialism in the African continent (Chimakonam, n.d.). The rise of the American civil rights movement (1954 – 1968) and Black consciousness further solidified the fight against racism and racial divide (Anti-defamation League [ADL] Education, n.d.). Sadly, racial divide and discrimination persist in modern America and many parts of the world (ADL Education, n.d.). Aspects of CRT hold that racism is a permanent aspect of U.S. culture (George, 2021). However, with people more conscious about the effects of racism, the debate on how to eradicate such inhuman injustices continues.

Whether in economics, politics, or education, scholars explore issues about race relations, racial divide, and racial disparities so much that most research on race in America today has its contentiousness, skepticism, and divide (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2016). Such societal downplaying and dismissal of scholarly research reflects SCT and further demonstrate concepts of CRT. Meanwhile, the disparity in the U.S. educational system has continued since America proclaimed independence in 1776 (Witte, 2020). Ager and Strong (2008) demonstrated that, whether overtly

imposed or subtly influenced, segregation by race, culture, economic descriptors, gender, and many other prejudicial classifications persist and escalates in many areas, including the U.S. educational system.

The subdivision of the human species gained prominence in 1835 when it first appeared in dictionaries (Hudson, 1996). In Brazil, Schwartzman's (2007) study of intergenerational dissimilarities in skin color, monetary or financial gains, and educational dispensation demonstrated continuing racial and social divide. The practice of human segregation, especially the tradition of the caste system, continued its very prominent existence in the Indian subcontinent (Diamond & Cottrol, 1983). The sudden rise of Islamophobia (Mujahid, 2022) and the continuous media coverage of police brutality in some parts of the United States (Lancet, 2021), especially the killing of Black youths (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2021), paints a gloomy picture in many U.S. schools.

Even though scholars used CRT to analyze social inequities, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) pointed out that "the intellectual salience of this theorizing has not been systematically employed in analysis of educational inequity" (p. 50). Given that the faction exercising the most authority in a society strongly influences legitimized and widely circulated knowledge, interventions addressing racial inequalities must extend from the educational system. Gay (2003) purported that "a persistent concern of curriculum development in all subjects is helping students understand the realities of the social condition and how they came to be as well as adequately representing these realities" (p. 318). According to Gay (2010), a curriculum should unequivocally

address structural reform and social issues like racism, sexism, and economic injustices.

Thus, students' thoughts and perspectives on issues, rights, and culture must become a part of their learning experiences so that the students become multicultural classroom resources (Banks, 1993). Martin Luther King, Jr. (1957) outlined three ways an individual can react to oppression: acquiescence, non-violence, and violent resistance. Campbell (1959) posited that Martin Luther King, Jr. was correct in stating, "to accept passively an unjust system is to cooperate with that system; thereby the oppressed becomes as evil as the oppressor…the oppressed must never allow the conscience of the oppressor to slumber" (p. 17). Building from SCT, CRT, and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ideology, critical illumination of the challenges and educational inequities adversely affecting immigrant and refugee students emerges, as does the need for multicultural education ensuring educational equity and social justice. Albeit, such equitable diversity presents multilayered challenges in overcoming racial disparities. CRT is pertinent to the research on African refugee educational experiences because it highlights the historical trajectory of racism in education and connects it to the issues faced by children of color in schools. As demonstrated by SCT tenets and emphasized through CRT, racism endures throughout the societal culture. Per MT propositions, the transnational merging of cultures perpetually continues racism as part of each new iterative culture, thereby infecting other cultures.

Migratory Theory/Transnationalism

MT and transnationalism remain evolving ideologies wherein scholars and practitioners continually place increasing importance on the multicultural environment

and social understanding, critical ontologies to refugee students. First introduced by Lee (1966) as a theory of migration and adapted in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (GSE; 1979) as MT. Stark and Taylor (1991) associated MT with conditions in the home country, Schiller et al. (1992) connected MT transnationalism, and Todaro and Smith (2006) expanded MT in their neoclassic version. MT is frequently synonymous with all forms of immigration (De Haas, 2021). In all variations, an intermixing of cultures occurs, and MT's conceptual importance increases with each evolution (GSE, 1979; Lee, 1966; Schiller et al., 1992; Stark & Taylor, 1991; Todaro & Smith, 2006). Todaro and Smith posited psychological factors as causes of migration. Stark explained that families, not individuals, undergo migration. Schiller et al. defined transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement. … a product of interconnected and overlapping economic, political, and sociocultural activities" (p. 1). In 2018, it was common knowledge that U.S. public schools were multicultural microcosms wherein refugee children learn to negotiate their lives and futures in the nation.

In the United States, refugee children benefit from the same entitlement as other children to register in public schools irrespective of their national origin and immigration status (Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees Act, 1865; Immigration and Nationality Act [INA] of 1965). Literature inferred that schools influence refugees' capacity to belong, integrate, and develop socially and emotionally within their larger communities (Candappa & Egharevba, 2002; Dennis, 2002; DOE, 2014; Hek, 2005; Mynott & Humphries, 2002; Rutter, 1994). Hek stated that "schools

are recognized and valued by most refugee communities" (p. 159) for refugees who never had access to better education.

Refugee children, youth, and families resettled in a third country (origin country, interim refugee stop, new homeland) struggle with considerable resettlement concerns (Guida & Cohen, 2015). Guida and Cohen explained that those students often toil with their families, identity, and society while in school. Refugee students face barriers like education disruptions, learning new languages, adjusting to a new culture, discrimination, and racism (Yarrow, 2012). Applying MT, these issues significantly compound relative to a refugee's transnational iterations. Yarrow emphasized that these barriers present increasing burdens from their peers and parents to students dealing with an identity crisis:

> As we have seen in this study, it is even more difficult for older resettled refugee students who have to deal with academic placements that do not provide an opportunity to advance at an accelerated pace, and their situations are exacerbated by difficulties navigating the U.S. educational system and pressure to work full time. Therefore, the challenges that refugee youth face are distinct, complex, and pressing. (p. 142)

Thus, requests for additional support continually compound for refugee children and youth as they face adapting to their new U.S. school environment. Refugee youth and children suffer educational gaps, experience different learning methods, and possess incomplete English proficiency (UNHCR, n.d., 2019d, 2019e, 2021b). Refugee children and youth require cultural adjustment in the new society; a sense of belonging in the new community, schools, and locality; and welcome from

friends, teachers, and students (BRYCS, n.d.b, n.d.c). Without such nurture, the refugee's newest transnational identity develops significant maladaptive tendencies (Zettl et al., 2022). Regardless of the degree of parental support for their children's education, barriers such as language, culture, and adjustment issues hinder their supportive ability in their children's new educational demands (El Nokali et al., 2010). Through an MT lens, this is the process a refugee must go through for social change and development; thus, educators must also support the refugee youth's transnational evolution.

Student education directly connects refugee self-sufficiency; therefore, educators must recognize and know the cultural background and method needed to foster educational goals (Yarrow, 2012). Refugee resettlement programs strive for early refugee self-sufficiency through employment and integration (ORR, 2022a). Subsequently, career, family integration, and appropriate children's education best achieve long-term independence. Thus, schools are vital in pursuing the American dream (Bal, 2009). Following MT, BRYCS (n.d.d) posited that the experiences of refugee families, their characteristics, and the receiving community's infrastructure affect how refugee children adapt to their new schools.

Although existing research data revealed that, while immigrant children often enroll in U.S. schools with very confident outlooks regarding education, those students struggle to understand how others view them and how their unfamiliar environment affects them (Fuligni, 1997; Kao & Tienda, 1995, 2001; Steinberg, 1996; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001). According to Banks and Banks (2004), "where the immigrant families settle shapes the immigrant journey and experience and adaptations

of children" (p. 423). In other words, as per MT, refugee youths' educational experiences significantly shape their transnational evolution.

Commonly, schools attended by a large segment of refugee youth reflect the characteristics of their neighborhoods. Levinson and Holland (1996) found that refugees face the same situations as other minorities attending schools in the United States and caution schools against the oppression of minority students. However, Levinson and Holland overlooked the extended transnational evolution and, often traumatic, issues affecting each migratory iteration of a refugee. Banks and Banks (2004) also noted that "theoretical and empirical research suggest that exposure to negative social mirrors can adversely affect academic engagement" (p. 429). As per MT, conflictual relationships, such as breakdowns in communication, discriminatory behavior, and acculturative stress among immigrants, result from discordant orientations. Many educators tend to welcome refugee students; however, they are not well prepared since refugee settlement in the United States occurs with minimal notification to schools (USA, 2018), which also struggle to provide adequate education to existing students.

MT is holistic in considering the transnational's life (Carling et al., 2021); thus, issues outside the educational institution also shape multinational evolution. Upon arriving in the United States, African refugee families experience uncommon cultural expectations while writhed in sudden familial structure changes (Lau & Rodgers, 2020). Men lose their role as head of the household, and parents lose much of their responsibility to children learning English and new cultural expectations in schools

(Robinson et al., 2009). Lau and Rodgers (2020) noted that children become interpreters to their parents during this period, which affects their daily learning.

Refugee children's parents must learn parenting styles different from their cultural customs, which often leads to resentful sentiments and pressure on all parties resulting in a loss of distinctiveness and self-confidence (Robinson et al., 2009). In addition, parents suffering psychological and physical trauma face increasing difficulty nurturing their children (Pham, 2016). How deeply these issues affect the refugee youth in the United States remains uncertain. Nevertheless, per Ager and Strang (2008), proper education enhances the integration of refugee children and their families. According to MT, migration frequently brings two or more cultures into contact with potential changes occurring along two dimensions, one representing the preservation or forfeiture of the original culture and the other embodying the acceptance or rejection of the new culture.

Therefore, refugee students' school curriculum should be transformational and socially action-oriented. In line with MT and SCT, such a nurturing curriculum would positively shape the newest iteration of the refugee youth. However, Goulah (2011) demonstrated that many teachers remain unprepared for refugee children's needs. School personnel do not understand refugee students' needs, culture, and values, therefore, cannot construct a multicultural community (Goulah, 2011). Given the existence of bias and the importance of promoting salience demonstrated by Oakes and Turner (1986) and Turner and Bruner (1986), teachers and school personnel must give the students a higher understanding of their new experiences.

Following MT, such individual transnational comprehension spurs students to make a positive difference for themselves and their community. Oakes et al. (2013) maintained that educators' "major goals are to teach students thinking and decision-making skills to empower them, and to help them acquire a sense of political efficacy" (p. 87). For constructive decision-making skills and socially positive political efficacy to occur, educators must consider each refugee's transnational identity. Oakes et al. added that such components "require students to make decisions and to take actions related to the concept, issue, or problem they have studied" (p. 87).

According to MT, understanding the consequences of migration for migrants and those with whom they come into contact is critical for global cooperation and well-being. To attain encouraging results, school facilitators need the skills and ability to teach correctly (Keiser & Schulte, 2009), thus, empowering and motivating the students beyond the scope of the class. Only then will students learn the importance of diverse perspectives and use their knowledge to positively and constructively shape the world around them. Nieto (2010) posited that schools could groom students for civic commitment, and Nieto (2004) stated that:

> Our schools reflect the sociocultural and sociopolitical context in which we live. The context is unfair to many young people and their families and the situations in which they live and go to school, but teachers and other educators do not simply have to go along with this reality. I believe one of our primary roles as educators is to interrupt the cycle of inequality and oppression. We can do this best by teaching well and with heart and soul. (p. xxii)

Helping students learn citizen collaboration by familiarizing refugees and other students remains paramount (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Following SCT and MT, students learn from the curriculum, teachers, and peers in and out of the classroom. Thus, students develop their new transnational identities. Ukpokodu (2016) inferred that teachers and administrators in public schools with refugee enrollment were ill-prepared for their students' diversity. This skill gap indicates that teachers and administrators need competent and culturally appropriate service providers. Per Ukpokodu (2009), "the theory of transformative learning is concerned with how learners critically reflect on experiences including existing knowledge and beliefs and how they integrate new knowledge to reflect a change in experience" (p. 1). Such competence requires appropriately trained educators to work in a multicultural setting effectively. MT is particularly conducive to such a setting because the migratory processes introduce refugee youth to different cultures. One of the most significant educational challenges is training teachers in an increasingly diverse society inside and outside the classroom.

Training must prepare educators and staff to transform "unjust and oppressive social, economic, and political institutions into just and non-oppressive alternatives" (Gil, 1998, 2013, p.1). Such training incorporates SCT, CRT, and MT concepts to create and empower refugees and native-born students. According to numerous scholars (i.e., Daniel, 2008; Gill, 1998: Schmitz et al., 2001; Van Soest, 2004; Van Soest et al., 2000), this ethical approach includes vital elements in curriculum development to:

a) Promote human rights and respect for those who are different from oneself.

b) Disseminate knowledge concerning the historical and social realities of oppressed groups.
c) Teach understanding of racism, classism, and other forms of inequality.
d) Demonstrate ways of ensuring political, social, and economic equality.
e) Examine power in relationships.
f) Increase understanding of the impact of oppression on people's lives.
g) Facilitate the development of critical thinking skills.

Knowledge construction through a multicultural framework like MT entails critically analyzing one's schooling and societal curriculum, which tremendously influences understanding ourselves and others (Banks & Banks, 2004). Education and societal curriculum provide the foundational framework for learning a language, acquiring culture, obtaining knowledge, developing beliefs, internalizing attitudes, and establishing behavior patterns (Banks & Banks, 2004). Therefore, knowledge construction is crucial in a multicultural education supported through MT. Banks and Banks (2013) posited that "teachers need to help students understand, investigate, and determine how implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed" (p. 19).

However, discussions about diversity remain vague and lacking in prior literature (Goodwin, 2002). Migration theories focus on understanding the reasoning and motivations behind individuals' and families' decisions to relocate from one location to another; however, they do not embrace critical aspects of forced migration

(Bueno & Prieto-Rosas, 2019). Faltis and Valdes' (2010) warnings succinctly described problems with multicultural education in the United States:

> Much of the current literature on teaching immigrant students, refugee students, and English language learners [ELL]is generic or focused mainly on elementary school contexts. At times, it is overly concerned with helping teachers learn relatively simple strategies for making academic content understandable to [ELL]. This literature also tends to essentialize immigrant students, refugee students, and [ELL], treating them as if they all need the same social, language, and educational resources, rather than recognizing the complex variation within these groups. (p. 289)

Through this conceptually theorized crystallization of MT, SCT, and CRT, I delved deeper into multidiscipline studies, including social sciences, religion, multicultural contexts, language, and political science. Moreover, this theoretical framework guided my research throughout my in-depth literature review into the historical context of this problem.

Historical Context

All three labels needed elaboration to fully understand the altercated phrase African Refugee Youth. African refers to people originating in Africa, and youth is a time of growth between early childhood and maturity (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). UNESCO (2017) defined youth as any person aged 15 through 24. In this study, a youth was a school-aged adolescent aged 18 or older. Furthermore, after the Second World War, the UN general assembly adopted an official international definition of

refugee law and incorporated such into the UNHCR's 1950 statute. Subsequently, the term refugee in this study encompassed UNHCR (2019a) global descriptors.

Refugee Education in Internment Camps

Refugees experience extreme trauma before fleeing, while escaping, while seeking refuge, and often continue enduring inhumane conditions after arriving at their perceived sanctuary destination (Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center [RHTAC], n.d.). Trauma includes major psychologically overwhelming events (Breire & Scott, 2006); thus, the standard reference to psychological trauma. Due to persecution and associated traumatic experiences, like sexual violence, genocide, losing loved ones, and many more, refugees flee their origin country, irrespective of sex, age, color, ethnicity, environment, or culture (Lo, 2013; Mhaidat & ALharbi, 2016; UNHCR, 2019b, 2019d). Thus, when viewed through SCT guidelines, a refugee's first learning experiences were derived from the traumatic environment of their origin country.

While traveling, refugees face an unplanned journey lasting for days, weeks, and months continually challenged with food and water scarcity (UNHCR, 2019b). In addition, refugees traverse dangerous, waterless terrain without shelter from environmentally scarred wastelands, deserts, mountains, oceans, rivers, and jungles (UNHCR, 2019c). During the escape, the elderly, women, and children suffer the most (Mhaidat & ALharbi, 2016). Although there are numerous examples, Jensen (2018) recounted one notable instance by revealing the traumatic events endured by the lost children of southern Sudan.

Children who lost their parents and villages due to violent government bombardment ($N \approx 40{,}000$ orphans) regrouped and traveled thousands of miles to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya (Jensen, 2018). Jensen described their 2,000-mile journey fleeing from militia attacks, helicopter bombardments, vicious lions, and crocodile-infested rivers without food and water, wherein they lost friends and loved ones. MT tenets indicate that a refugee's culture evolves with each society they experience during their travels, culminating in a life-changing, multicultural evolution; therefore, this severe trauma became part of their culture. However, adversity does not cease upon a refugee's arrival at their destination.

Regardless of housing type (internment camp or urban dwelling), refugees must seek protection and register with the UNHCR (2012) upon their arrival in the foreign country. Such obligatory reasons include national or refugee security, a minimal population of refugees from their origin country, local mandates, and more (UNHCR, 2012). As a result, most refugees end up in internment camps with many other refugees UNHCR (2012), wherein, per MT, each possesses different multicultural iterations. Thus, the refugees become part of several differing and unpredictable social cultures; thereby, per SCT tenets, the refugee begins learning from that society.

Upon arrival in the camp, refugees face adverse situations and ongoing stressors that compound their already compromised mental health (BRYCS, n.d.a). The accommodations in refugee camps are adversely pitiable; warehoused families endure restriction from any economic opportunity (USCRI, 2008). Women must travel long distances to fetch water and firewood and stand in long lines for food, water, and other necessities rationing (Burns et al., 2022). Cernea (2003) revealed that landlessness,

joblessness, homelessness, food insecurity, high mortality, lacking resources, community displacement, and marginalization are valid descriptors within refugee programs.

For example, refugee women experience significant emotional distress and mental health disorders (as per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV), as well as a lack of shelter, absence of essential hygiene availability, and more (Badri et al., 2013). Badri et al. performed a detailed interpretive phenomenological study of adult female Darfuri refugee students (*N* = 20) in the Netherlands. In this negligent society, refugee youths' next cultural iteration develops (MT), and they begin education (SCT).

Refugees may spend decades in the camps waiting in an indeterminate state until a country offers them a new home (Devictor, 2019). According to Adelman et al. (1996), an extreme example of refugees staying in the refugee camp included those who fled Burundi, crossed to Tanzania in 1972, and were still there until 1996, when Adelman et al. conducted the study. During extended residency within these internment camps, refugees recognize the importance of education (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). However, with schools destroyed, teachers and educational personnel primarily inaccessible, and lacking teaching materials (Dryden-Peterson, 2011), the likelihood of students attending classes decreases, making children more susceptible to ongoing violence.

Following MT and SCT, this unacceptable existence becomes a vicious cycle of cultural iteration and social evolution. Formal education is continually interrupted within these camps (Dryden-Peterson, 2011); however, non-formal education through

families and community members becomes the norm for refugee children (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). UNESCO (1997) defined non-formal education as "any organized and sustained educational activities that do not correspond exactly to the definition of formal education. Non-formal education may therefore take place both within and outside educational institutions and cater to persons of all ages" (p. 41).

Once conflicts cease, refugees start non-formal education for their children (Sommers, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). Such non-formal education programs' curricula and arrangements are as diverse as the multicultural society in the camps (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). However, that sorely inadequate education presents the only option to fill the gap left by absent formal schooling (Dryden-Peterson, 2011). Since non-formal education programs are often the only education source for the refugees in the camps, many refugees experience such non-formal education for the first time during their internment. As expected, in correlation to SCT and MT, refugees in such camps experience various subjects, from life skills to adult education and religious studies.

The Resettlement Process

Subsequently, UNESCO set eight Millennium Development Goals to achieve by 2015, wherein the second pertained to universal education (UNESCO, 2009). In 2023, this goal remains unmet. Current events and curriculums frequently remain absent within refugee internment camps (Beogo et al., 2018). Humanitarian organizations working in refugee camps often reduce refugee education due to logistic problems (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). Therefore, they tend to borrow program approaches from other countries, thus avoiding the broader issues that refugee children may face in the future (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005)

pointed out that, during a crisis, education may be the least important concern for humanitarian agencies. Still, it is one of the most critical concerns for refugees. Thus, refugee youths in these camps quickly learn that society does not value refugees' education (SCT). Yet, Weine (2008) exposed that officials neglect consideration of such refugee experiences when measuring resettling refugee children against the same academic and social expectations as youths living within that country's culture since birth.

The UNHCR provides limited assistance in finding countries wherein refugees can pursue residency, and each country has its regulations, requirements, and processes by which refugees must abide (UNHCR, 2017). Refugees seeking asylum in the United States must cross many hurdles (American Immigration Council, 2022). The UNHCR (2007) presents its documentation to BPRM's RPC as part of the USRAP (RPC, n.d.). Through the help of the assigned joint voluntary agency, the refugees then present asylum applications and wait for interview appointments with an officer from the DHS's Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS; BRYCS, n.d.c, 2017). If approved, BRYCS explained that the refugees wait for an appointment with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to get a medical exam, receive cultural orientation, and obtain a loan for travel to the United States. Thus, the next iteration of the refugee's culture begins (MT).

After the United States accepts refugees, it assigns voluntary agencies, matching those refugees with U.S. affiliates (BRYCS, n.d.c, 2017). Thus, the U.S. refugee resettlement program ensures program compliance as required by BPRM (2015) and ORR (2022a, 2022b). In addition, per my career-related experience, once

the refugees receive their flight information, the resettlement agency prepares a home for them before they arrive in the United States.

The resettlement agency representative welcomes the refugees from the airport, and then the process of U.S. resettlement begins (BPRM, n.d.b). I continually witness the fear of the unknown, hope for the future, and excitement of the present splash across their faces as the refugees enter the apartment or house they can now call home. From that point, their newest identity iteration begins ascertaining their society developing from that ontology (MT, SCT).

The BPRM and ORR dictate the services and supplies provided to the refugees (USCRI, 2008). Although the BPRM and ORR require the house to be safe, sanitary, sufficient size, and affordable, often, it is not (Renfroe, 2020). Through the community's help, the resettlement agency furnishes the refugees' new home and stocks it with food and utensils, albeit necessities seldom meet refugees' needs (BPRM, n.d.b). According to Reed et al. (2012) and the USCRI, many refugees must find appropriate housing and supplies independently. The BPRM noted that the resettlement agency has deadlines at 30-, 120-, and 180-day mile-markers to make the refugees employable and self-sufficient.

During the first 30 days, the resettlement agency should provide various services to enhance self-sufficiency and cultural adjustment (USCRI, 2008). The case managers help the refugees apply for the social security identification needed for school enrollment and work purposes (BPRM, n.d.b). The USCRI requires that school registration, medical evaluation, enrollment in English Language Training (ELT), community orientation, and home visits occur within the first 30 days. Once they

receive their social security number, adult refugees are eligible to work in the United States and must do so within six months of arrival (USCRI, 2008). After a year, refugees are eligible to apply for permanent residency; after five years in the United States, they can apply for citizenship (CIS, 2019). Per the USCRI, the refugees spend many years overcoming past trauma and creating new lives, often resulting in other crises and unrecoverable disparities. This process is very stressful for refugee families as they try to make a new life for their children amid financial deficiencies, inadequate housing, and a lack of employment, community support, resources, and transportation (Reed et al., 2012; USCRI, 2008). Therein, the refugees' social surroundings begin teaching them that their cultures play no part in their new society, thus, devaluing them (SCT).

U.S. Public Education for African Refugee Youth

Despite BPRM, ORR, USCRI, and other regulatory institutions, African refugee youth continue facing ostracization like, and worse than, that of native-born Black Americans (Immigrant Learning Center, 2020). Historically, and supported by CRT, vast documented disparities exist between the quality of education for Blacks versus Whites in American schools (Brown, 2008). Integration into the American majority for European immigrants occurred more effortlessly than for African Americans and other racial and ethnic groups separated and deprived of language and cultural rights in schools (Burchinal et al., 2011; Eltis, 1993; Spring, 2010). Anderson (1988) noted that "there have been essential relationships between popular education and the politics of education of oppression. Both schooling for democratic citizenship

and schooling for second-class citizenship have been traditions in American education" (p. 1).

Race, gender, class, and other identity indicators shape our school system through the relationships developed within the teaching and learning process in schools (Brown, 2008). Hence the importance of SCT in comprehending how culture influences learning and human behavior. When viewed through CRT, this societal culture permeated the U.S. school system since Blacks could attend school.

After the civil war, the formerly enslaved people established schools (Renfer & Sandifer, 2003). The Freedman's Bureau Acts of 1865 and 1866 describe the formerly enslaved people's efforts at self-education. By the middle 1870s, albeit different educational ideas still held in the south, the formerly enslaved people pushed for education, advancing their economic and political position in the south (Alvord, 1980). In the 1890s, the nature of education for the formerly enslaved people developed two prominent leaders with differing views, Booker T. Washington (1856 – 1915) and W.E.B. Du Bois (1868 – 1963). Washington frequently related to the segregation of schools (Frontline, 1998), whereas Du Bois (1994) wanted an education for Blacks that mirrored their leaders protecting the social and political rights of the community.

Du Bois spearheaded the development of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which led to the successful struggle against school segregation in the United States (Hutchison, 2010). Du Bois was also one of the leaders of the Niagara Movement, founded in 1905, aimed at addressing Black civil rights issues (Special Collections and University Archives, 2010). In addition, Du Bois strongly opposed discrimination in education and employment

(Banks & Banks, 2004; Marable, 2005; Spring & Spring, 1990). Banks and Banks, Marable, and Spring and Spring all pointed out Du Bois' vision for African American education by African American leaders providing protection of social, political, and economic rights and an awareness of the constant struggle for African Americans.

Du Bois' vision harmonized with SCT tenets to create an educational system that valued multicultural identities; however, when viewed through CRT, Du Bois' dream did not materialize. Du Bois' (1903) study of John, an African American who meets with a judge on a bluff with his sister while viewing the vastness of water, demonstrated Du Bois' educational vision:

> Long they stood together, peering over the gray un-resting water.
>
> "John," she said, "does it make everyone—unhappy when they study and learn lots of things?"
>
> He paused and smiled, "I am afraid it does," he said.
>
> "And, John, are you glad you studied?"
>
> "Yes," came the answer, slowly and positively.
>
> She watched the flickering lights upon the sea and said thoughtfully, "I wish I was unhappy, -and-and" putting both arms about his neck, "I think I am, a little, John." (pp. 531-532)

Eventually, John was able to ask the judge to be able to teach the Black school (Du Bois, 1903). Du Bois' essay stated, "every step he made offended someone…he had come to save his people, and before he left the depot, he had hurt them" (p. 532). The judge's conversation with John echoed White society's agenda when the judge said,

> John, that in this country the Negro must remain subordinate, and can never expect to be the equal of White man…But when they want to reverse nature, and rule White men, and marry White women, and sit in my parlor, then by God! We'll hold them under if we have to lynch every Nigger in the land. (pp. 531-532)

Many issues related to African American education recount historical tensions (Anderson, 1988); those tensions continue into the 21st century, often leading to gang involvement (Reyes & Curry-Stevens, 2014). In addition, most African Americans attend public schools with epidemic poverty rates wherein 75% of the students qualify for free reduced lunch and fewer graduate from high school or attend college (Sable, 2009). The promise of quality education as an equal human right remains unrealized in U.S. public schools, a concept supported by CRT.

In three qualitative studies, Kanu (2008), Msofe (2014), and Sallu (2012) explored the educational needs and barriers of different African refugee students. Kanu researched the perspectives of students attending two inner-city high schools in Manitoba, Canada, and Msofe interviewed three African refugee students in Ontario. Sallu queried middle-school refugees in the Southwest United States. Both Kanu and Msofe discovered that academic, economic, social, and psychological barriers affected African refugees' participation in school, thus, deteriorating their economic opportunities. Sallu reported mixed perceptions of teachers' helpfulness and curriculum, unruly peers, and negative observations of teachers' skills and classroom environments, which aligned with CRT.

Including 40 African Refugee students, Kanu's (2008) study focused on specific groups, classroom observation, and individual interviews, and Msofe's (2014) explored a limited sample. Additionally, Sallu (2012) only interviewed ten 7th and 8th-grade students. Kanu posited needed improvements at the government, school, and family levels, curtailing educational, economic, and psychosocial challenges revealed in the study. Sallu documented responses and provided potential interpretations of their implications.

Neither Kanu's (2008), Msofe's (2014), nor Sallu's (2012) research was generalizable to the participant base of this study. While Kanu and Msofe interviewed youth analogous to this study, their research deviated in geographical regions. Kanu's and Mosfe's research took place in Canada, which has a drastically different culture, scholastic, and government system, mirroring more closely British infrastructures. Unlike the United States, Britain embraces the sensitive issues of refugees by offering help such as art therapy and other constructive interventions (Cumming & Visser, 2009; Miller et al., 2019). Thus, Canadian and British studies demonstrated limited generalizability to the U.S. education system. Sallu interviewed students in the United States but sampled younger children than in this study. Older, developmentally mature youths are typically better able to recognize and articulate more informed opinions and observations (Sallu, 2012). Thus, youths aged 18 and above who attended U.S. high school can better convey how their U.S. educational experiences prepared them for future self-sufficiency.

Whether through non-formal or formal means, related literature identified the amalgamated difficulties refugee children face for academic success (Collier, 1995;

Fantino & Colak, 2001; Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock, 2002; Rutter & Jones, 1998; White, 2016). Additionally, once the refugees arrive in the United States, resettlement organizations provide cultural orientation to adults, not children (BRYCS, 2016); thus, youths remain ill-prepared for U.S. school culture and experiences.

Furthermore, many Black refugee youths remain unprepared for college or post-secondary opportunities after high school (Strekalova & Hoot, 2008). Hickey and Choi (2016) related the scarcity of literature regarding the unique needs of refugees in their study of 30 Burmese migrant college students. Moreover, few studies exist about refugee youths earlier than college age. Thus, filling the current literature gap by furthering an understanding of African refugees' experiences in U.S. schools through the conceptually crystalized theoretical framework of SCT, MT, and CRT was critical to their success and viable post-secondary opportunities.

The first step in understanding the African refugee youth experience in the U.S. educational system was reviewing the known to expose the unknown. Since any educational experience builds from preexisting foundations, refugee ontology begins well before entering American soil. Thus, this comprehensive literature review progresses through education in refugee camps; refugee youth educational experiences in their new homes, refugee needs in U.S. school environments; racism in U.S. education; and multicultural education, behavior, and motivation.

Refugee Camp Education

Article 3 of the Dakar educational forum for all humans partially addressed refugee youth education with the declaration to the teaching of refugee children (UNESCO, 2000). However, while a commitment to refugee children exists, current

conditions imply that refugees remain stymied in securing educational support within refugee camps. The existing research recap revealed additional insight through a crystalized SCT, CRT, and MT theoretical review.

Researchers identified several amalgamated difficulties of refugee children in achieving academic success (Collier, 1995; Fantino & Colak, 2001; Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock, 2002; Rutter & Jones, 1998). Those difficulties included the traumas of their homeland, fleeing, dwelling in refugee camps for many years, and multiple stressors as they tried to make new lives. Other studies exposed the experiences of other war-generated issues needing identification (Pryor, 2001), yet mental health needs remain unmet for refugee children (Almqvist & Broberg, 1999; Fazel & Stein, 2003). Unfortunately, none of these studies sampled African refugee youths in U.S. public schools.

MT tenets infer that these issues are an integrated part of a refugee's transnational identity and, as such, concepts of SCT integrate comprehensive socialization interventions. Almqvist and Broberg (1999) evaluated 39 preschool children in Sweden, and Fazel and Stein (2003) sampled the teachers of 101 children (ages 5 to 18) in Oxford, England. At the same time, neither study included the narratives of refugee youths nor limited their research to African refugees; insights correlated to sound theory provided direction for further analysis. Per SCT, learning happens first on the social and individual levels; thus, past trauma stemming from war, flight, internment, and disassociation affects learning before separate processing stages. MT concepts suggest that these refugee youths bring the cultures of their traumatic homes to their refugee camps; then, they carry both to their new home for yet another

transnational iteration. Considering CRT concepts like segregation, racism, and disassociated infrastructures, crystalized understanding provided critical insight.

For deeper comprehension, I looked closely at the first iteration of the refugees' transnational evolution: From home country to temporary internment. Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) noted that "while for humanitarian organizations, education is the last priority in an emergency, for refugees, it is among the first" (p. 254). Per MT, this disconnect was a critical concern separating social understanding and the multicultural camp environments. Additionally, education in a refugee camp is rife with complex educational dilemmas like what language to use and teach the students. Are there qualified teachers? What is the best teaching method?

Humanitarian organizations working in refugee camps work to reduce refugee education to logistic problems and, thus, tend to borrow materials from other countries and avoid the broader issues that the refugee children may face in the future (Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). Even though neither Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) nor Waters and Leblanc interviewed the children within the refugee camps, both researchers revealed crucial educational ontologies in those camps. Verdirame and Harrell-Bond and Waters and Leblanc exposed that the core function of education, that of shaping refugees into citizens, remains ignored in refugee camps. According to Durkheim (1956),

> all educational practices, whatever they may be…have in common one essential characteristic: They all follow from the influence exercised by one generation on the following generation with an eye to adapting the latter to the social milieu in which it is called upon to live." (p. 95)

Each society, therefore, exclusively moves toward education for its reasons and moves forward from the context of its unique culture. Per MT, the new culture is a merging of what was before and what is current, albeit SCT tenets indicate the culture of the society provides the initial learning experience. Durkheim (1956, 1961, 1984), like Dewey (1859 – 1952; 2016), viewed education as the widespread cord of all societies and the best method for transmitting knowledge from one group to another. SCT supports this concept well; however, community alone does not account for the transnational influence put forth in MT. Durkheim (1956) understood that education is the indisputable institution of sociological intelligence worldwide.

Thus, education is the prime social dissemination of all human associations and provides the background by which standard patterns of thought, behavior, and social interaction spread (Dill, 2007). SCT supports the idea of the educational environment as the breeding ground for public life and associated expectations in which society socializes the young. However, refugee camps fail to consider the issues presented by MT in youth educational attempts and neglect much of the social impact of SCT. Thus, educational experiences in refugee camps often compound existing mental health and other issues youths face during their internment residency. From such events, the refugee children enter their next transnational iteration, resettlement in their new home countries. They must immediately join that unknown society while meeting the same measures as other youths in their new country.

Refugee Youths' New Home Educational Experiences

Now in a third country (sometimes more), refugee youths enter yet another iteration of transnationalism, an iteration of MT and SCT compounded by CRT. Hek

(2005) effectively demonstrated the critical nature that education plays during refugee children's resettlement experiences. Yet, Dryden-Peterson (2011, 2015) reported that global refugee education continues to suffer after refugee children resettle in their new homes. Despite the Copenhagen association between educational health and civil society (Campbell, 2006) and the positive implications of socialization in Hong Kong (Chau-kiu & Kwong-leung, 2010), refugees' educational experiences in their new homes remain problematic.

Refugees have difficulty adjusting to their new home cultures, which impedes their learning (Abu-Laban et al., 2001). Bhugra and Becker (2005) discussed the extreme cultural bereavement of refugees internationally, as did Bronstein and Montgomery (2011). Birman and Tran (2008) also documented Vietnamese refugees' deep psychological distress. However, Denny (2004) reported some success with customized education improved psychological distresses in New Zealand. Albeit, Abu-Laban et al. documented Kosovar refugees' acclimation experiences in Northern Alberta, exposing disturbingly challenging settlement experiences. Beogo et al. (2018) reported similar among refugees in Northern Burkina Faso. Fantino and Colak (2001) documented continuing identity problems for refugee children in Canada, and Fazel (2018) exposed inadequacies that even high-end countries have supplying passable education for refugee children. Furthermore, Agllias and Gray (2012) demonstrated the compounding traumas these difficulties impart worldwide on refugees' ability to integrate into their new homes.

Once in their new home country, administrators categorize resettled refugees with other natural and immigrant children without acknowledgment of, or concern for,

their background and why they came to their new home nation (Stewart, 2011). Fransen et al. (2018) exposed the negative impacts of refugees' traumatic experiences on their education, and Frieze (2015) documented the adverse effects trauma has on students' learning. Boostlingo (2019) and Frater-Mathieson (2004) posited that cultural interpretation is an essential educational element for refugees. Allen et al. (2012) detailed the positive effects of culturally relevant pedagogy on West African immigrants' identities. Therefore, due to the severe traumatic refugee experiences, culturally appropriate education is critical and crucial for refugees. In Sweden, Almqvist and Broberg (1999) demonstrated the substantial importance and benefits of such sensitivity on refugee children, and in Canada, Black et al. (2012) found similar.

An immigrant's road to their new home country is quite pleasant compared to the traumas refugees endure (Davaki, 2021). However, there are significant differences between immigrants and refugees; therefore, combining the two into one scientific grouping results in substantially skewed research findings (Njue & Retish, 2010). Per Rutter (1994), refugee children living in Britain faced difficulty finding a school, schools failed to recognize children's records, and they inhibited students causing aggressive actions. Rutter reported that refugee youths suffered poor concentration, racist remarks, and harassment by students. Furthermore, Rutter noted that these children felt that teachers were not friendly, and educators possessed preconceived ideas about the students and their language barriers.

Additionally, most refugee youths have significantly more familial responsibility outside of the school environment, and alterations in family roles put additional stress on parent-child relationships (Busch et al., 2004). Yet, as Mynott and

Humphries (2002) exposed in the UK, many refugee children and youth are separated from their families upon resettlement in line with traditional Europeanisation practices. Concepts of SCT and MT combined shed a great deal of light on the need for quality education to assist refugees in adjusting to new environments, lowering the emotional toll of transition, and strengthening their awareness of belonging in the host community. Rutter's (1994) findings aligned with SCT, MT, and CRT, further validating the conceptual, theoretical framework I used for this study. While Rutter studied educational conditions in Britain, those findings provided insight for further research in the United States.

Several countries, like Britain, possess tools to help educators better facilitate refugees (British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCME; 2009, 2022). However, Faltis and Valdes (2010) and Short and Boyson (2012) related teachers' tendencies to ignore the difficulties of refugees' experiences and, instead, deal with the concerns and perceptions of the refugees in the same manner as immigrants. Kelly (2007) revealed how Bosnian refugees in Britain continually question their place within their communities due to refugee and race-related disparities, including educational negligence. Dennis (2002) effectively demonstrated the continued neglect and failure to support refugee children in England adequately. This gap in distinguishing refugee children from other immigrants, naturalized, or natural-born Africans introduces the refugees to the labels and the other altercasting that those minorities face, thereby adding another cultural identity to their already chaotic cultural evolution. Therefore, through the lens of MT, refugees are introduced to unfamiliar cultures in various stages of migration.

Such supportive learning environments could effectively offset the negative findings reported by Stewart (2011). Stewart's research on immigration and education revealed that refugee children often start their education with significant shortcomings compared to immigrant children. Most refugee students come from war-torn countries without ties to their pasts, they may not have transferable academic skills, and current economic and social supports are often negligible (Stewart, 2011). While educational systems between Canada and the United States are dissimilar, based on definition alone, the relationship between refugees and immigrants is similar worldwide.

Additionally, most teachers do not possess the practical and educational training or experience to prepare them for the rising diversity of their students (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2003; Oliva, 2015). Ladson-Billings conducted numerous research studies involving educators in general, which did not isolate African refugee youth. Oliva's mixed method inquiry surveyed 75 newcomers in two Western U.S. high schools and did not differentiate between immigrants and refugees. Thus, Oliva's study also did not isolate the educational experiences of African refugee youth. Therefore, those studies did not consider the vast differences between refugees and other students, which infers a substantially larger educator deficit than Ladson-Billings or Oliva noted.

Many administrators consider educational and intellectual as a single element (Mendoza-Denton, R. 2014). However, according to Aronson and Steele (2005) and Chau-kiu and Kwong-leung (2010), that stereotype threatens interpersonal learning, which is quite fragile and dependent on the social learning environment, which strongly correlates with SCT. Aronson and Steele's motivational sociological works provided some direction for this study, albeit Aronson and Steele did not isolate

refugee youth in the educational system. Still, Aronson and Steele posited that adults in school who develop trusting relationships and supportive learning environments for their students empower student achievement outcomes, a concept strongly supported by SCT.

Furthermore, African refugee youth experience dismissal and sidelining from socially unacquainted teachers and non-refugee students (Haffejee, 2015). Stereotyping knots people into one layered, generalized set that overlooks the intricacy of their lives and experiences (Ngo, 2008). Children negotiate acceptable behavior and unreasonable biases according to their ethical intentions and societal messages (Bigler & Liben, 2007). Duckitt et al. (1999) posited that eradicating children's discriminatory and prejudicial conduct is significant for the well-being and prosperity of refugee youth. Teachers must form an attentive individual rapport with refugee students (Snow et al., 1996). Per tenets of SCT and MT, such nurturing reinforcement positively affects refugee educational achievement.

Many issues may disconnect refugees from their teachers, like language barriers, diverse ways of viewing concepts, various lifestyles, different behavioral expectations, and many others, all strongly influenced by trauma, culture, and environmental adaptation (McBrien, 2005). Teachers must understand the importance of cultural and family expectations surrounding the refugees to gain insight into illuminating and easing difficulties faced by the refugees (Lau & Rodgers, 2020). Facilitators must understand refugee youths' traumas, tragedy, fear, and anger before arriving in their classrooms (Casey & Barbera, n.d.). Through SCT, teachers can also benefit from the ZPD by guiding students to achieve their learning objectives.

Educators must understand the educational experiences of their African refugee students, not attach labels, stereotypes, and alter casted expectations (Chwastek et al., 2021) rather than the typical facilitator conduct that George (2015) demonstrated among U.S. institutions, including schools.

Therefore, for refugees to learn in their new home countries, teachers need to know their students and use that understanding to create a conducive learning environment of respect, support, and anticipation to learn. As supported by SCT and MT, teachers, support staff, and administrators can lead the students to success by understanding the individual child's background. The SCT viewpoint emphasizes the role of people in mentorship positions in shaping who we become. In contrast, MT reinforces the infrastructure required to meet the needs of newcomers and promote their full integration into society. As Sapir (1929) put it, “the worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not the same world with different labels attached” (p. 209).

Not many policies in the United States regulate refugee children’s education and school integration (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Taylor and Sidhu noted that most policies, and the discourse around them, center on immigration and asylum in and of themselves. As a result, refugees aren't given much consideration in government policy, which is a significant barrier to their integration into society and threatens their capacity to maintain their status (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). In addition, Taylor and Sidhu posited that inadequate educational assistance leaves refugees and immigrants with very little social, economic, and political power, thereby preventing them from being able to speak for themselves.

Acquiring academic and social knowledge is essential to enhancing refugee youths' power since it equips them with tools such as language and communication abilities and an awareness of the society in which they live (Charbonneau et al., 2010). Furthermore, as supported by SCT and MT, refugee youths' social and educational acclimation evolves according to their current culture and further merges with previous transnational iterations. Thus, U.S. refugee youths' multinational evolution centers around American cultures, demonstrating the need for specific African refugee youth research in the United States.

Refugee Needs in Public School Environments

Refugees are integral to U.S. national identity (Weddle, 2020). Weddle accurately and poetically recalled that the United States is a nation of refugees fleeing persecution since its beginning, with the "Pilgrims fleeing religious persecution to the Irish fleeing famine to the Syrians fleeing Assad" (p. 434). Therefore, refugee education should be paramount to the U.S. citizenry; yet, as Renfroe (2020) demonstrated, the U.S. refugee resettlement system continually fails to protect and fulfill refugee educational needs.

Notwithstanding, the United States maintains three nation-based public policies that apply to the education and educational services of refugee youths: Title I, Parts A and C of the ESEA; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA, n.d.a). In the ESEA, refugee youths receive the same or equal education and resources as natural-born youths; thus, there is no intervention assistance considering the substantial traumas most refugee youths endure. As a result, refugee youths' transnational traumas

remain unaddressed. ESEA requires only the same minimal education for all U.S. students and does not address individual considerations. IDEA only pertains to children possessing diagnosed disabilities, and the NCELA only provides limited resources for research strategies into language development. Subsequently, since maladjustment issues stemming from transnational traumas are not a disability, IDEA does not assist.

Additionally, NCELA only pertains to learning English and offers no other aid. Insufficient public policies further exasperate refugee students. Even though refugees do not have the opportunity for education while in the camps, administrators place them in grade levels according to age, which does not relate to their learning level (BRYCS, n.d.i). Furthermore, BRYCS noted that language difficulties limit how much refugees can learn, their educational prospects, and their advancement. Subsequently, it is vitally important for teachers and administrators to be aware that refugee children significantly suffer traumatization (National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], 2018); thus, educators carry multiple responsibilities beyond the school environment.

Refugee children and adolescents represent almost half the world's refugee populations (Reed et al., 2011). Reed et al. reviewed evidence-based data about individual, family, and community societal risk and mental health outcomes exposing income, neglect, violence, and other mediating disparities impacting refugees' success. Not only did Reed et al. document the lack of ongoing research, but they also noted several policy recommendations and interventions. Likewise, Schorchit (2017) determined that, despite inclusive policies like ESA, IDEA, and NCELA and

admonishments from entities like NCTSN, refugee children continue facing major educational obstacles in U.S. public school systems.

Unfortunately, students, counselors, administrators, educators, and policymakers have differing perspectives regarding refugees' educational needs (Goodwin, 2002; McBrien, 2005; Mendoza-Denton, 2014; Oliva, 2015, Strekalova & Hoot, 2008). For example, Oliva found that while students reported strong self-esteem, counselors were concerned for students' emotional well-being. In addition, McBrien documented the vast differences between public opinions, official government priorities, and researchers' evidence-based data regarding refugee educational needs. Considering that varying groups often have vastly different life experiences, it is unsurprising that this plethora of values, attitudes, beliefs, and expectations (VABES; Clawson, 2012) influences the refugees' educational experience.

Among U.S. educational institutions, educational facilitators' VABEs play a dominant role in who, what, where, why, when, and how students' learning is facilitated (Dewey, 2016; Durkheim, 1956, 1961, 1984; Ladson-Billing, 1998, 2003; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995; Strekalova & Hoot, 2008). Strekalova and Hoot posited that U.S. teachers are mostly a White, monolingual homogeneous group from a secure middle-class background with limited international travel experience and no understanding of the violent horrors and traumas that refugee students experienced. Consequently, such individuals are not likely to grasp the unique needs of refugee students and are not prepared to facilitate learning for these vulnerable children (Ukpokodu, 2016). Thus, Strekalova and Hoot and Ukpokodu inferred that unprepared educational facilitators could not meet refugee students' needs without significant

additional cultural sensitivity training. Meanwhile, McBrien (2005) recommended segmented assimilation to approach refugee diversity. Goodwin (2002) touted extensive teacher preparations, and most scholarly experts emphasized that all refugee educational experiences must address the issues challenging refugee education.

Understandably, refugee students' educational environments must consider the issues challenging their successful education. These issues range from fundamental pedagogical structures like fail-testing (Mendoza-Denton, 2014) to community environment (Keiser & Schulte, 2009) and parental involvement (Weine, 2008), as well as bullying and gang pressures (Powers, 2022; Renfrow, 2008; Reyes & Curry-Stevens, 2014). In Keiser and Schulte's elementary school comparison, the community's importance in a refugee's life is fundamental to their educational success. Additionally, the refugee's family is an integral part of their psychological makeup, wherein Weine emphasized the need to include parental elements in the academic structure. According to Keiser and Schulte, Weine, and many others, such community, and parental integration are critical needs for refugee youth but often sorely overlooked in U.S. public school environments.

Bullying causes refugees to feel segregated, dreadful, desolate, frail, and decreases their self-confidence, prompting sorrow, self-hurt, and desperate conduct (BRYCS, n.d.h). In addition, bullying compels refugees to acquiesce and fit in (BRYCS, n.d.h, Powers, 2022; Renfrow, 2008; Reyes & Curry-Stevens, 2014). This acquiesence implies that those bullied would rather surrender to peer pressure and participate in maladaptive conduct, including gang association and substance abuse than withstand and continue being bullied (BRYCS, n.d.h, Powers, 2022; Renfrow, 2008; Reyes & Curry-Stevens, 2014). By surrendering to peer pressure and attempting to

fit in, refugees lose their past and culture, creating conflict and social partitions inside their families and communities (BRYCS, n.d.h). BRYCS reported that when bullying in school becomes exceptionally harsh, refugee youth drop out, significantly and negatively affecting their lives and families.

Additionally, when analyzing the community environment of refugee youth in U.S. public schools, commonplace bullying is overwhelming and frequently results in refugee students' culture shock, isolation, trauma, and traumatic recurrences (Powers, 2022; Renfrow, 2008; Reyes & Curry-Stevens, 2014). Powers highlighted the staggering difficulties bullying causes for refugee students entering U.S. schools. Powers and Renfrow admonished the U.S. education system's inability to protect students from bullying. Though Renfrow expanded on potential solutions in 2008, Powers demonstrated that, 15 years later, bullying remains deeply entrenched in U.S. schools. Reyes and Curry-Stevens discussed how gang environments compounded the situation and added significantly increased educational challenges.

Albeit Reyes and Curry-Stevens (2014) discussed the risks and increased vulnerabilities that gang environments pose for African youth, those concerns become overwhelming for African refugee youth because of their unique needs. Agllias and Gray (2012), Bhugra and Becker (2005), Bronstein and Montgomery (2011), Busch et al. (2004), Fazel (2018), Keiser and Schulte (2009), … Weine (2008), among many others emphasized the importance of community for refugees. Unfortunately, many African refugee youths fall into gangs for their community needs because educational systems neglect the refugees' critical need for community (Chettleburgh, 2007; Kanu, 2008). Sadly, as Mendoza-Denton (2014) demonstrated, assessment of students' crucial

psychological needs remains primarily ignored in U.S. schools in favor of rigid, non-inclusive standardized testing and pedagogies.

Minority students, immigrants, refugees, students of color, and other vulnerable populations need multicultural, psychologically relevant, and transformative educational experiences to succeed (Allen et al., 2012; Grande, 2014; Lockwood, 2010; Mendoza-Denton, 2014; Miller et al., 2019; Szente et al., 2006; Ukpokodu, 2009, 2013, 2016, 2017, 2018). Mendoza-Denton succinctly attributed the growing achievement gap in U.S. schools to the pedagogical obsession with standardized performance testing, accurately nicknamed fail-testing. Since 2009, Ukpokodu has emphasized multicultural pedagogies' transformative and academically successful benefits highlighting ethnic distinctiveness, responsible urban teaching, and social integrations. Miller et al. posited that trauma-informed practices are essential to refugee education.

Reputable organizations like BRYCS (n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.e), Mississippi College (2021), National Association of School Psychologists (NASP; 2021), NCELA (n.d.b), Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities (PTFED; 2022), UNESCO (2000, 2009, 2017), and others emphasized the importance of such culturally responsive teaching practices. Miller (2009) stressed the importance of culturally responsive teaching for refugee learners because of their previously interrupted education, especially in science, vocabulary, and literacy pedagogies. Grande (2014) posited that understanding refugee students' needs and facilitating relevant literacy, activities, and curriculum capitalizes on strengths. Yet, sadly, as Lockwood (2010) demonstrated, the U.S. education system remains ill-equipped to address learners' needs in increasingly pluralistic schools.

Scholars, researchers, educators, humanitarian, and governmental entities agree that U.S. refugee education needs culturally sensitive, emotionally supportive, community-involved pedagogical practices (BRYCS, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.e; Mississippi College, 2021; NASP, 2021; NCELA, n.d.b; PTFED, 2022; UNESCO, 2000, 2009, 23017). Szente et al. (2006) emphasized educators' need to address refugee children's unique needs. Weine (2008) strongly emphasized the need for parental involvement in the refugee learner's curriculum. Reynolds (2018) recommended educational interventions toward social integration among schools and communities for refugee children and youth. Mthethwa-Sommers and Kisiara (2015) emphasized the need for educators to listen to refugee students, get to know them, and understand their world and requirements. Nuñez (2014) detailed refugee students' challenges, including significant language barriers, parental and community inclusion, feeling secure and supported, traversing a new land, and cultural barriers.

Yet refugee learners remain isolated, adrift, and poorly educated; thus, some organizations published resources to help alleviate the problem (Online MSW Programs, n.d.; NCTSN, 2018). Others used refugees' stories to help bridge the gap (Haffejee, 2015; Warsi, 2017) and highlighted skills and attributes that refugees can share with their new communities (Newsome, 2022). In a few rare cases, courageous teachers and educators stepped out of the institutionalized system to create environments wherein refugee children and youth thrive (McLean-Donaldson, 1997; McLaren, 2019). Anti-discriminatory educators like those highlighted by McLean-Donaldson took the proper steps, albeit they encountered societal condemnation for their loving efforts. Despite such adverse societal reactions, twenty years later,

McLaren reported on two all-refugee schools (in Atlanta, Georgia and Columbus, Ohio): The Fugees Academy.

The Fugees Academy curriculum, activities, and community strives to address refugee needs that U.S. public schools do not (McLaren, 2019). For example, McLaren reported that the Fugees Academy tackles language barriers, isolation, familial involvement, appropriate grades for their academic level (not their age) and understanding refugees' unique challenges. Thus, traditionally racially-driven disparities such as educational dispensation, fail-testing, political influences, posterization, stereotyping, altercasting, segregation, isolation, bullying, and discrimination (Green, n.d.; Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Kozol, 2005; Pyke & Dang, 2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) are quickly identified and corrected. But unfortunately, these two isolated schools do not address two critical factors: Most African refugee youths remain in inadequate, ineffective, racially-driven educational institutions, and how those refugee students perceive their U.S. educational experiences in such.

Racism in United States Education

Racism extends from stereotypes, labels, history, beliefs, and many other societal practices and influences (Green, n.d.; Pyke & Dang, 2003). Inequality in the American educational system persists (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Lason-Billings & Tate, 1995), despite Kozol (2005) drawing attention to such in 1991 by demonstrating significant gaps in educational dispensation for three races: Whites, Blacks, and Latinos. Ashwell et al. (1999) and Jennings and Lynn (2005) demonstrated that poor public policy education formulation protracted racial divides and inequitable educational resources.

Such division and altercasting permeate from political environments to schools in the United States (Campbell, 2006; Pattillo, 2007). Anderson (1988) noted that "there have been essential relationships between popular education and the politics of education of oppression. Both schooling for democratic citizenship and schooling for second-class citizenship have been traditions in American education" (p. 1). Brown (2008), Jennings and Lynn (2005), and Pattillo exposed race, gender, class, and other identity indicators shaping U.S. school systems through the relationships developed within the teaching and learning process in schools.

Many issues related to African American education recount historical tensions (Anderson & Span, 2016). Racial concerns reappear at every stage in the history of American education (Anderson & Span, 2016). Per Banks and Banks (2004), "power is often displaced by more comfortable concepts such as tolerance" (p. 242). American policies rooted in the ordinary, racist, and preponderant context persistently probed the merit of African Americans as educated citizens (Harper et al., 2009), inferring the intellect of African Americans was inferior. Seen through the lens of SCT, these overt examples of CRT permeate U.S. schools, effectively integrating with the African refugees' newest transnational identity (MT).

Racism has lasting consequences on self-awareness and the worldview of its sufferers, especially when those victims are children and youths (Cross, 1971, 1991; Huber et al., 2006). Considering most Black youths' experiences with racism occur in the school environment, educational oppression historically disrupted the academic progress of Black children (Jennings & Lynn, 2005; Neville et al., 2004). Viewed

through CRT, the promise of quality education as an equal human right remains non-existent in U.S. public schools.

Applying SCT, learning is a social process; thus, further segregation by economic status understandably compounds the situation. Many African Americans and other minorities attend public schools with prevailing poverty rates where 75% of the students are eligible for free reduced lunch, few are likely to graduate from high school, and fewer still attend colleges (Sable, 2009). UNESCO (2019) reported that poor school facilities, the absence of technological tools like computers and other vital implements, poorly trained teachers, insufficient meals, uneducated parents and guardians, and intolerant societies adversely affect refugee student learning and development.

In conjunction with MT, SCT and CRT support the concept of oppressive environmental factors negatively shaping refugee youths. Additionally, per McLean-Donaldson (1997), racist teachers play a significant role in dissuading minority students from progressing academically, a concept fundamentally supported through CRT. While McLean-Donaldson broached the subject from the educator's viewpoint, given the tenets of MT, the idea has even more significance for the African refugee student.

Incorporating CRT, racist educational resources influence racist tendencies. Lo (2013) effectively demonstrated a substantial lack of refugee-related contemporary literature. Thus, due to the absence of antiracist educational concepts, students of color continue to experience significant racial abuse by teachers and other academic facilitators, as indicated by CRT and SCT tenets. Combining that understanding with

SCT, it logically holds that while children of color possess indispensable knowledge and creativity, they quickly learn that society does not value them as people. Thus, such minority youths believe that people of different color do not care about their historical accounts, linguistic significance, personal life experiences, or cultural diversity.

Minority school children believe their educational institutions do not give their racial literacy credence (Berna, 2002), while language is an essential tool for learning in SCT. Berna's research primarily involved Latino education; however, the concepts equally apply to other minorities and, with the additional insight of MT, significantly compound for African refugee youth. Racial literacy is a term used to compare races regarding educational achievement in which literacy was a property exclusive to the White race (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2003). Applying CRT, such subliminal messaging implied that acquiring literacy was impossible and out of reach for the Black race until the late 20th century when Black consciousness and the struggle for civil rights gained momentum in the United States.

Racism negatively affects the education of all minority children; however, African refugee youths suffer compounded abuse. Often fleeing from violent, traumatic, and war-torn homes, African refugee youths suffer while in flight, in the internment camps, and continue to suffer when they reach their new homes in the United States (Haffejee, 2015). Haffejee explained that terror-stricken, under-educated children enter their new U.S. schools eager to learn but with fear in their hearts due to horrifying experiences.

Exasperating the problem, in U.S. schools, educators typically set low expectations for African American youths and children, humiliate them, stereotype them, and teach them a White privileged curriculum (Huber et al., 2006; Jennings & Lynn, 2005). Huber et al. researched the U.S. California education system by evaluating its educators, curriculum, and facilities. Even though Huber et al. did not gather the students' viewpoints, their findings still added insight into the racism within U.S. schools for all minorities. Predispositions against refugee students enrolled in urban schools often permeate facilitators' attitudes toward addressing refugees' needs in those schools (McBrien, 2005), which loosely correlates with CRT and a requirement of SCT fundamentals tenets sensitive to individual and cross-cultural diversity.

Such educational conditions make countless African American youths and children depressed about their values and culture (Bailey et al., 2019; Pattillo, 2007). McBrien (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of existing literature through 2004, wherein McBrien found no research about the refugee youths' views. Many other scholars concur with McBrien's accounting of U.S. educational systems, as do CRT tenets.

According to Ukpokodu (2016), "many students in urban schools experience impoverished and second-class education that in turn keeps them and their families and community inescapably poor" (p. xx). Thus, African refugees attend congested, short-staffed schools overwhelmed by violence (García-Coll & Magnuson, 1997, 2000; García-Coll et al., 2005; Mehan et al., 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Willis, 1977). Therefore, Ukpokodu posited that African refugees resettled in those areas meet students who "are tired of the second-class education" (p. xx) and learn from that

hostile environment per tenets of SCT. For African refugees, such stigmas quickly become irreversible as socialization (SCT) and racism (CRT) unite in their newest transnational iteration (MT).

Cultural or environmental disadvantages, including poverty, unemployment, hostile living conditions, and racial discrimination, cause poor educational performance among Black children in American schools (Hawkins et al., 2000). Through CRT, the various effects of inequality, discrimination, race, and racism and how they impact achievement disparities become clear. Thus, enhanced atmospheres, suitable schools, well-trained teachers, and comprehensive support can elevate the living and educational foundations of any school setting. However, U.S. school funding comes from Federal, State, and limited Local sources (Biddle & Berliner, 2002). Albeit, Biddle and Berliner revealed that most of the funds come from local property taxes; thus, there are considerable funding differences between poor and affluent communities.

Consequently, refugee children quickly learn they cannot access the same education as other schools due to their address and parents' economic status. According to the ESEA, U.S. schools are supposed to deliver equal education to all children in the country; nevertheless, it is well-known that many schools do not receive essential educational resources (Kober & Rentner, 2020). Regarding equitable education, as Karl Marx (1818 - 1883) posited in the *Law of Increasing Poverty,* the rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. In this setting, the prosperous receive more access to academic resources while the underprivileged receive less. Thus, susceptible refugee children live in poverty, which is a significant forecaster of youth depression

(Denny et al., 2004). Such negative stressors and multicultural inequalities manifest in social environments in various ways, mostly increasingly detrimental. Therefore, CRT supports the researcher's examination of racial influences on refugee youths' lives in U.S. public schools.

Cultural Challenges that Influence Behavior and Motivation

Refugee children in U.S. schools often display historically significant behavioral and attitudinal signs such as despondency and violent outbursts (Weine, 2008). Per Szente et al. (2006), the refugee students they studied in Buffalo, New York, exhibited various behaviors, from lethargy and aggression to quiet reserve, while often keeping external signals hidden. Szente et al. explained that some students avoid intermingling or conversing with youths of the same culture and origin because of differences in cultural hierarchy indicative of their native caste systems. While Szente et al. used sound theory to present their findings, they did not obtain the youths' opinions. Nonetheless, SCT holds fundamental learning as a societal process, and MT explains why these deep-rooted behaviors carry forward in children's developing personalities. Considering the strong CRT correlations prevalent in refugee youth's U.S. schools, results include social apprehension, unease, and aggression. With the added multicultural differences related to the origin country, trauma experienced, internment camp environment, and racial abuse revealed by this literature review, refugee youths begin their new lives in the United States at a critical disadvantage.

Language challenges add to those disadvantages because they substantially influence initial academic enrollment in the United States (Isaacs, 2012). Hos (2012) reported that many refugee children speak languages without written form. During their

first encounter with school, children from refugee camps often speak their mother tongues until they adapt to English (BRYCS, n.d.d, n.d.e, n.d.f). In my childhood and profession, my experiences demonstrated that this scenario was prevalent in newly arriving refugee children who never had formal education in refugee camps.

Even children who hail from multilanguage homes have difficulty adjusting to their first years in school (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). Furthermore, because refugees come from countries unfamiliar with American English, the U.S. dialect of English is often not the primary language used at their home. When language difficulties occur, school facilitators can place these children in ELL classes until they attain proficiency in the English language (Friendlander, 1991); however, that does not always happen (De Jong & Harper, 2005). Even with the assistance offered by the NCELA, refugee youths often do not receive the English language assistance they need (Friendlander, 1991). Thus, many students' linguistic expressions evolve from immersion in whatever cartoon series is on television (TV), often resulting in fractured and dysfunctional linguistic patterns (Lodhi et al., 2018). While these trending entertainment programs help refugee children learn English, they frequently include violence, health, safety concerns, and poor role models (Mandrapa, 2014). Computers and other technologies at home provide similar positive/negative repercussions when unfacilitated by a caring educator (Mandrapa, 2014). SCT, MT, and CRT combine with the influence of other youths attending the refugee's school resulting in maladaptive linguistics and communications, adding to existing behavioral challenges.

The behaviors of refugee children coming from conflicted regions or residing many years in refugee camps often suffer from a wide assortment of maladaptive

behaviors (Vaghri et al., 2019). Black et al. (2012) reported that 1 in 4 youths experience substantive trauma resulting in disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other trauma-related issues. Black et al.'s subject matter was youth trauma treatments in general; they did not differentiate between average youths and refugees. While Black et al.'s research centered on treatment for adolescents in general, that research demonstrated the harsh consequences of severely trauma-subjected children. Since African refugee youths all experienced extreme traumas, the dire reports of Black et al. jumped from 25% to 100% trauma-suffering refugee youths. As seen through MT, refugees develop their cultural experience through migration.

The U.S. Division of Global Migration and Quarantine (2022) listed the risk factors of refugees, including violence, property loss, forced and instinctive migration, flight, and war. Gemignani (2011) reported that,

> [a refugee's] past is linked to persecution and psychological stress; the present and the future are a result of such a past and, therefore, are seen under the magnifying glass of what has previously occurred. Whether directly (e.g., PTSD patients) or indirectly (e.g., in the definition of a refugee), the overarching discourse assumes a deterministic relationship between the refugee's psychological state and traumatic past. In other words, from the traumatic experience on, the life of the person is seen as indissolubly bound to trauma. (p. 140)

Additionally, these children lack adequate mental health care supports in the United States (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004). Hernandez (2004) presented an accounting of demographic shifting and trends in the United States, demonstrating the increase of

African immigrants and refugee youths, including economic, familial, and educational implications. The SCT influenced my perception that trauma-informed pedagogy should not be reduced exclusively to a biomedical understanding of trauma but to the refugee youth's life, value, and meaningful experiences.

Thus, because of cultural and language barriers, refugee students with mental illness may not communicate their problems with others (Hernandez, 2004; Mhaidat & ALharbi, 2016). An essential aspect of the SCT paradigm is that the learning process necessitates using artifacts such as language to embody a person’s experiences. While some students become troublesome in the classrooms, others weaken, decreasing their attention span or becoming reluctant to complete assignments (Ruiz-de-Velasco et al., 2000). Race and ethnicity are multicultural in all U.S. educational environments (Aud et al., 2010; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Kim, 2011). Albeit, through CRT, racism is not a natural aspect of everyday life; however, race is a social construction.

Additionally, Lockwood (2010) stated that “the dichotomy of racism is no longer just Black and White, but now includes people from all over the world who are a multitude of colors” (p. 66). Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. (2000) reported on Mexican and Central American immigrants and made no distinction between immigrants and refugees. Thus, Ruiz-de-Velasco et al. did not convey the significant trauma that compounds the ontology of the refugee youth.

Without understanding individual refugee children’s backgrounds, schools face challenges helping those youths integrate due to cultural and migratory considerations (BRYCS, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.e, n.d.f, 2016, 2017). SCT emphasizes the role of culture in the process of child development. While some educators possess a basic

understanding of their refugee students' cultures and languages, many do not by not understanding the sociocultural perspective that reinforces the role teachers play in shaping the development of refugee children. Regrettably, some educators harbor negative preconceptions about children from specific ethnic, cultural, or linguistic groups and, consequently, have low opinions of these children (Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Hamilton & Moore, 2004; McBrien, 2005; Watters, 2008). Even though most of this research was from a clinical viewpoint, the result is further marginalization; thus, a clear tenet of CRT is that racism is an accepted feature of society and embedded in systems and institutions that perpetuate racial inequality.

According to BRYCS (n.d.e, n.d.f), research demonstrated that refugee parents care immensely about their children's education, making resettled refugee children and families more spirited. However, those youths traverse the road to recovery from violent issues dealing with sensitive pasts often involving memories of death, pain, and widespread affliction (Cole, 2007). Resettled refugees display signs of flexibility and adaptation (Watters, 2008). Onsando and Billett (2009) indicated poor dissonance and pedagogical practices negatively affected refugee students in Australia. Subsequently, Onsando and Billett emphasized the need for socially inclusive transformation in the educational system.

Several scholars posited various recommendations from technology to practice (Cole, 2007; ELL Programs, 2010; Grande, 2014; Houstman, 2017; Waters, 2008). For example, Houstman reported potential improvements related to website resources for educators of refugee and immigrant students. Grande presented literacy resources aimed at refugee high school students, and ELL Programs produced a counselor's

handbook for working with refugee students in school. Cole discussed worldwide tolerance and reformation through unrepressed historical education, and Watters proposed global best practices concerning the horrors experienced by refugee children.

Subsequently, these scholarly indications inferred refugee children's positive social acclimation and future promise for the world. For example, Cicchetti (2003) described refugees' resilience as "a dynamic developmental process reflecting evidence of positive adaptation despite significant life adversity" (p. xx). However, mainstream refugee research focused on detecting persecution and war-linked issues such as PTSD, war-related experiences, and maladaptive displays (American Psychological Association, 2010). Consequently, these viewpoints missed the real-time experiences of African refugee students in the United States, thus, exposing a significant gap overlooking African refugee youths' silent voices.

African Refugee Youth Voices

I scrutinized publicly available stories and poems relayed by African refugee youths for inquiry stimulus and to aid interview data extraction and understanding. Document analysis is a qualitative research technique for reviewing or evaluating text or images to extract meaning, increase awareness, and acquire empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007). Document analysis is an accepted strategy for assessing data (Berg, 2007). Document analysis is a systematic process for reviewing and evaluating documents involving assessing and creating data (Bowen, 2009). Thus, reviewing and analyzing these video documents had vital importance to this research design and answering the RQ.

The types of documents one can analyze, according to Bowen (2009), include "public records, the media, private papers, biographies, visual documents, minutes of meetings, strategies, policies, and action plans" (pp. 27-28). In addition, Patton (2002) noted that "records, documents, artifacts, and archives … constitute a particularly rich resource of information about many organizations and programs" (p. 293). Patton also instructed that "learning to use, study, and understand documents and files is part of the repertoire of skills needed for qualitative inquiry" (p. 295).

Deciding what document quotations to include depends on whether those documents are public records and, therefore, sharable without breach of confidentiality or plagiarism (Patton, 2002). Thus, I chose African refugee youths' publicly available stories and poems from YouTube. Patton (2002) further stated that "documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing" (p. 294). Therefore, I analyzed pertinent documents, such as poetry and publicly shared stories and accounts of African refugee youth experiences, before conducting interviews to develop interview questions and understand the participants' unique circumstances better.

Such prior understanding aided interviews by helping reveal what distinct experiences mean for the participating youths. Creswell (2013) emphasized the importance of key connecting features in a qualitative study; subsequently, I identified that the shared refugee experiences conveyed by each presenter in their language linked these videos. Furthermore, corroborating findings across the current literature videos helped reduce bias during study data collection because examining information

collected from these videos supported and strengthened my interpretation of participant interviews.

To correlate with my intended study participants, I selected recordings whose participants resettled as Burundians, Congolese, Liberians, Somalians, and Congolese, the same population that I interviewed. I meticulously examined each video to increase my understanding and observation skills prior to finalizing interview questions and tentative codes. Subsequently, the videos introduced me to Bill, Emmanuel, and Jean-Jacques from Burundi (Pulitzer Center, 2009), Emmanuel Jal from Sudan (TED, 2009), Kacey and Karen from the Congo (Denver Public Schools, 2017), Nymbio Yorke from Liberia (TEDx Talks, 2017), and several youths from Somali (Askar, 2012).

I used SCT, MT, and CRT lenses to explore thematic patterns and implications among the videos, thereby identifying seven themes: escape, beneficial encounters, cultural experience, U.S. resettlement, recurrence, social illumination, and defensive mechanism. These themes provided foundation and insight toward participant interview structure, flow, and flexibility. Therefore, the seven document-related themes (escape, beneficial encounters, cultural experience, U.S. resettlement, recurrence, social illumination, and defensive mechanism) informed potential thematic elements likely to occur during interviews. Thus, increasing the study results in confidence and credibility.

Escape

Experiences like breaking away from harm, anguish, trials, suffering, and distress during departure from the participant's origin country forged a theme of escape. Identifying flags included descriptors of flight, struggle, and loss. Flight

included fleeing from unsafe conditions like violent fighting, war, oppression, abuse, torment, and victimization; struggle reflected their spirited effort in the face of challenging encounters, and loss exposed their grief when deprived of a loved one.

For example, Nymbio Yorke (TEDx Talks, 2017) highlighted the flight of their journey:

> My mother and father [were] born and raised in Liberia. They moved to the Ivory Coast in 1990. Um, the reason they moved to Ivory Coast is in 1989, a civil war broke out in Liberia. The civil war cost 800,000 people, including my family, to move from Liberia to neighboring countries in West Africa. They moved to a refugee camp, and after they moved to the refugee camp, I was born. [So] I grew up in the refugee camp. I lived there for 11 years.

Kacey and Karen's Story (Denver Public Schools, 2017) highlighted their struggle:

> [Amid their excitement… tragedy.] My mom died in the process of us coming to America. [Their mother died shortly after giving birth to another set of twins, who joined their siblings and the rest of their family in Denver.]

Emmanuel Jal (TED, 2009) recounted loss:

> I was born in the most difficult time when my country was at war. I saw my village burned down. The world that meant a lot to me, I saw vanish in my face. I saw my aunt in rape when I was only five. My mother was claimed by the war. My brothers and sisters were scattered. And up to now, me and my father were detached, and I still have issues with him. Seeing people die every day and my mother crying, it's like I was raised in violence. And that made me call myself a war child.

African refugees are typically compelled to escape their homes because of brutality, armed clashes, and monstrous fundamental liberties infringement (Hassan, 2020). Hassan emphasized that, during their escape, refugees frequently became separated from family members. MT focuses on refugee experiences while fleeing oppression and human rights violations, shaping their lives throughout the refugee process through permanent settlement. Thus, MT supported understanding the escape process while shedding light on the theme encompassing beneficial encounters.

Beneficial Encounters

Unexpectedly positive experiences of giving and care surfaced as beneficial encounters and included examples of help and love. In this context, help included receiving relief and protection and promoting self-confidence through respect, harmony, and music. Whereas, love proceeded from witnessing others' emotional well-being, thus creating a bond of mutual affection.

Emmanuel Jal (TED, 2009) focused on the benefit of help that they received from one of the Sudanese child-helpers:

> Well, now, my time is going, so I want to sing a song. But I'll ask you guys to stand up, so we celebrate the life of a British aid worker called Emma McCune, that made it possible for me to be here. I'm gonna sing this song just to inspire you on how this woman has made a difference. She came to my country and saw the importance of education. She said the only way to help Sudan is to invest in the women, educating them, educating the children so that they could come and create a revolution in this complex society. So, she even ended up marrying a commander from the SPLA. And she rescued

> over 150 child soldiers. One of them happened to be me now. And so, at this moment, I want to ask [you] to celebrate Emma with me. Are you guys ready to celebrate Emma?

Kacey and Karen (Denver Public Schools, 2017) illustrated love by relating the affection and bond they got from their school:

> After the election and everything, the kind of love our community gave back to us, our school gave back to us… Our school told us that they needed us. That, even though it feels like we have nothing to give, us just being here shows how much love this school has given to us… They want to match your heartbeat. They don't want to see your skin color. They don't want to know where you're from. The only care about is that you're human and that we all have one goal in life, and that's to become successful.

Refugees in refugee camps do not possess anything, leaving them dependent on whatever helpful groups offer; however, these helpful groups frequently lack essential living items (Heitmann, 2021), including education. Education is all children's fundamental freedom (UNESCO, 1997, 2000, 2009, 2017, 2019). Moreover, refugee children must receive schooling to build safety and trust, which is regularly lacking in refugee settings (Unite for Sight, n.d.). Colorin Colorado (n.d.) noted that community partners sometimes offered resettled refugees critical help, understanding, and volunteers about issues connected with meeting essential requirements and associating families with resources. SCT established that social exchanges with family, teachers, friends, and relatives build understanding and relations (Drew, 2022). Therefore, the

SCT provided solid identification of the beneficial encounter's theme and added support to the cultural experience theme.

Cultural Experience

Cultural experience incorporated the aggregate knowledge, experience, convictions, values, meanings, implications, progressions, religion, time comprehension, jobs, spatial relations, universal ideas, and material assets procured by a community during ages through individual and community endeavors. Indicators of cultural experience included longstanding culture, new culture, and conflict. Longstanding culture referred to past traits (habits, beliefs, traditions), life paths, and the usefulness and significance of the past environment and its adaptations. New culture reflected societal changes and new ways of living and growing together. Finally, conflict was apparent when cultural beliefs and ideas clashed and introduced new behaviors and attitude standards.

For example, a participant in the Somali American Youth discussion (Askar, 2012) was answering the question of how everyone handled their parents when they communicated the Somali longstanding cultural/traditional practice of respectfully not replying to parents (by not talking back):

> Some people, they don't handle their parents. They're disrespectful and, you see, parents get mad in doing some stuff, so … Like, don’t talk back to your parents when they're talking to you. Like, I understand if they're mad; let them cool down if they're mad at you.

The youth in the Somali American Youth discussion (Askar, 2012) also touched on a new culture experience:

> I mean, we all go to the same school, so we have, like, the same sense of style. So, we understand, like, what we want to wear, but then when it comes to our parents. I mean, yeah, they're gonna, maybe, buy it, but I don't think they'll probably approve of us wearing it the way we want it.

Nymbio (TEDx Talks, 2017) described conflict:

> The real reason I'm here tonight is people always discriminate [against] immigrants. People always look at us differently. Like, when people do not welcome us here and, as the immigrant, it hurts. It hurts in refugees and immigrants only here to steal jobs; they don't live here to benefit from the United States and didn't go back home. They're only here to disrupt us. That's not the case. I live in St. Louis, Missouri, and when I moved to St. Louis five years ago, the city was going downhill. I mean, it's still one of the most violent cities in the United States. Don't get me wrong, but for jobs and businesses, stimulus was going down. I live in South City, St. Louis. When I first moved there, most of the businesses were closed two years after I moved to St. Louis. Two gas stations got shut down right now. But, with the immigration population in St. Louis, it has been growing so fast that most immigrants were reopening those businesses. If you go on South…so, that's some of the job opportunities they bring when they come to the United States.

Our convictions affect our mindsets (Boer & Fischer, 2013). Ward (2001) proffered that effectively progressing and adjusting to another world involves approaches to oversee unpleasant circumstances while welcoming societal changes like

learning new social standards. Given that refugees undergo significant changes in their lives, they must understand and adjust to new cultural expectations to live in the cultural context of the nation where they settle. People who live in countries where refugees settle see this change from the other side as the population of their country shifts, often very quickly and dramatically (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Thus, SCT provided a cognitive reference point for perceiving the refugee's world and making decisions by influencing behaviors and thought processes, as explained by Bhugra and Becker. Bhugra Becker also emphasized that the lack of cultural harmony hampers communication, acceptance, and inclusion, a concept strongly present throughout the U.S. resettlement theme.

US Resettlement

All the youth in the videos resettled to the United States and each discussed *new home* and *unease/burden* associated with the experience. *New home* clearly represented their transfer from an asylum country to the United States and included key words like essential knowledge, skills, treatment, and abilities needed for resettlement. Conversely, unease/burden involved the careful effort, labor, toil, and trouble that afflicted and caused constant discomfort in their new home.

Nymbio Yorke (TEDx Talks, 2017) explained the process they endured when resettling in their new home country, the United States:

> I was about eight nine at that time I had a good asleep that day without food in 2002 my older sister got referred to the United States immigration agency to be resettled in the United States by the end of 2003 2004 she moved to the United States this was one of the buses that pick her up from the refugee

> camp and she moved to the capital city of Ivory Coast and when the first group of refugees who moved to the capital city of Africa's they're living in hotels at that time they were being supported still by the United Nation she spent two years living in a hotel going through the immigration process so before you can be admitted to the United States you have to go through a vetting process I'm gonna tell you now this is one of the hardest interview I have ever been to I've been to five interval and this was one of the toughest one I remember I was between the age of eleven and twelve and we had to go to an interview and it was my mother I in the office and there was this immigration officer interview us

Nymbio Yorke (TEDx Talks, 2017) further described the unease/burden associated with their resettlement:

> They want a home. My family wanted a home. My mom made a sacrifice working a job that she doesn't like. She, like I said, she used to be a teacher in Liberia, now she [is] our custodian at Washington University. She made their sacrifice, so I can get a better opportunity. There are a lot of refugees parents who are praying every day to have that opportunity to give their children a better education so they can better their life in the future

Additionally, the participants in the Somali American Youth discussion (Askar, 2012) expanded on the unease/burden kids face in schools:

> I think that's kind of hard on the parents. So like the kids who go to school like that, to me, they, I think those kids are the most like [pause], I think they have to face it the most, probably to their parents [pause]. I think is their

> parents do not trust them because sometimes kids they're being bullied or even do bad things at the school, and they don't tell their parents, so sometimes parents do not trust is the most important things.

According to BPRM (n.d.b), "refugees are placed where they have the best opportunity for success through employment with the assistance of strong community services" (para. 4). Refugees receive employment approval upon entrance to become self-sufficient immediately (BPRM, n.d.b). Albeit, commencing upon their arrival, numerous hurdles continually confronted the refugees throughout the self-sufficiency process (Immigrant Voices, n.d.). For example, according to the BCME (2009), refugee children and their families experienced significant changes and challenges with limited English proficiency as they adjusted to American culture, which affected the students' learning opportunities.

Dislocation and trauma continue affecting refugees after leaving their home country, resulting in community distancing, lethargy, and indifference (BCME, 2009). In line with MT, it is vitally important to realize the inherent parts of the broader processes of social adjustment and development (Lee, 1966). Through applying MT, refugees' experiences in a new country are a challenging and frequently contentious integration process, which I found expressed by the youths in the videos. I also found that, by applying SCT, as Drew (2022) explained, these recurring renditions inspired and served as significant conduits for newcomers' adjustments during resettlement.

Recurrence

Recurrence was associated with the individuals' feelings of dishonor and the tedious renewal of their past traumatic memories. Identifies here included revisit,

trauma, and bully. Revisit indicated remembering helpful or harmful past experiences while contemplating new experiences. Trauma included disturbing, damaging, and distressing references and bully portended being the target of aggressive behavior, disgrace, or hatred by others, causing constant worry within a community membership.

Nymbio Yorke (TEDx Talks, 2017) conveyed their happy moment with an apprehensive revisit:

> In my culture, people say rain brings down blessings, so whenever it rains, every kid on the camp was out playing, and I still remember, up to this day, every time it rains, I want to go outside, but I don't trust American rain. It's always lightning. Yeah, it's always lightning, hail, or something trying to kill you.

Additionally, Nymbio Yorke communicated a sad moment to describe trauma:

> The food that was given to you, it was supposed to last you for a month. I remember this one time we were in the refugee camp, and we had a leak in our house in the rain; it destroyed most of the food, so it was about two weeks left, and we didn't have enough food to continue for the rest of the week, for the rest of the month I mean. Excuse me. So we had to manage how we ate the food. I remember eating one meal a day for a week, and then by the end of the month; it was about two days left. We ran out of food. My family and I had to go hungry.

Emmanuel Jal (TED, 2009) explained how vengeful feelings drove them to become a bully due to being bullied:

> And not only that, when I was eight, I became a child soldier. I didn't know what was the war for. But one thing I knew was an image that I saw that stuck in my head. When I went to the training camp, I say, "I want to kill as many Muslims and as many Arabs as possible." The training wasn't easy, but that was the driving force because I wanted to revenge for my family. I wanted to revenge for my village.

Whereas Nymbio Yorke (TEDx Talks, 2017) explained their experience of being targeted by a bully:

> People always discriminate immigrants. Only here, people always look at us different, like when people do not welcome us here, and as the immigrant, it hurts. It hurts in refugees and immigrants.

Traumatic experiences are just one of many refugee challenges (Murray et al., 2010). Murray et al. explained that trauma is not merely a previous peculiarity but progresses with loved ones frequently remaining in refugee camps or crisis areas. At the same time, Stopbullying.Gov (n.d.) reported that bullying lastingly affects all involved individuals, including the victims, onlookers and witnesses, and the perpetrators.

Furthermore, pre- and post-migration stressors differently predict children's and adults' symptoms and grief (Birman & Tran, 2008). Albeit, Birman and Tran explained that resettlement agencies, healthcare workers, and school officials might begin to reverse the traumatic effects across the refugee's lifespan. Such an intensive process requires culturally profound care and support during resettlement when high tensions frequently remind the refugees of other traumatic events in their lives (Birman & Tran,

2008). SCT enhances social interaction, a significant aspect of understanding refugee development, thereby providing insight into recurrence and social illumination.

Social Illumination

Social illumination centered on the enlightening insight needed to accelerate growth for every learner equitably and were represented by equality and humanitarian references. Equality pertained to being the same in status, rights, and opportunities. Humanitarian was related to possessing and seeking positive and beneficent human welfare.

Equality was a focal point during the Somali American youth discussion (Askar, 2012):

> I just wish that parents, like sometimes, would compromise, or, like, at least understand, from a girl's point. Like a boy's point of view and a girl's point of view, like, they're different. I think they should… she can [be] equal because they don't want to be fair if the boys are just laying around the house playing video games.

Kacey and Karen (Denver Public Schools, 2017) highlighted their humanitarian intentions to further human welfare:

> So, when I am done with everything with prelaw, I am going to go back and sponsor my country. After I become a doctor, I want to go back to my country in Congo and become an OB-GYN [obstetrics and gynecology] to help women who (would die from) the same thing my mom died (from).

Refugees should receive similar privileges and assistance as other lawful inhabitants, including freedom of thought, development, and independence from

torment and debasing treatment (UNHCR, 2002). Economic and social privileges are similarly appropriate (UNHCR, 2002). Refugees should equally receive medical attention, education, and work options as other citizens (UNHCR, 2002). According to the UNHCR (2020), half of the world's refugee population is younger than 18 years of age; hitherto, their new homes often do not provide education for them.

Just 3% of refugees advance to higher education (UNHCR, 2020). CRT tenets indicate that not all school groups require the same resources or opportunities to thrive; thus, equality can exacerbate community inequities in social and racial justice movements (Martinez, 2022). Therefore, in-line with CRT, schools should include sociocultural methods creating communities supporting refugee students toward bridging the cultural issues and avoiding destructive defensive mechanisms.

Defensive Mechanism

Defensive mechanism centered on individuals' self-justifying methods and practices to isolate themselves from unsavory occasions, activities, or contemplations. Expressions of hope, resilience, and success were key indicators of defensive mechanisms. Hope included feelings of trust, expectation, and future dreams/desires. Resilience was apparent in the youths’ ability to recover swiftly from difficulties, deal with hardships, and the endurance to accept suffering. Finally, success implied accomplishment and robust belief systems.

Emmanuel Jal (TED, 2009) demonstrated hope in creating a unity with their past:

> So, I happened to forgive. Now I sing music with the Muslims. I dance with them. I even had a movie out called "War Child," funded by Muslim people.

> So that pain has gone out. But my story is huge. So, I'm just going to go into a different step now, which is easier for me. I'm going to give you a poem called "Forced to Sin," which is from my album "War Child." I talk about my story. One of the journeys that I trod when I was tempted to eat my friend because we had no food, and we were like around 400. And only 16 people survived that journey. So, I hope you're going to hear this.

Emmanuel Jal (TED, 2009) also recounted resilience through their persistence despite their sorrow:

> And also, the easiest one was when I was doing it in form of music…Also, one thing that kept me pushing this story, these painful stories out, the dreams I have, sometimes, is like the voices of the dead that I have seen would tell me, "Don't give up. Keep on going." Because sometimes, I feel like stopping and not doing it because I didn't know what I was putting myself into.

Kacey and Karen (Denver Public Schools, 2017) related their success by acknowledging their achievement:

> Even though it feels like we have nothing to give, just being here shows how much love this school has given to us. [Inclusion was no longer just a dream to Kacie and Karen.] They, they want to match your heartbeat. They don't want to see your skin color. They don't want to know where you're from. The only care about is that you're human and that we all have one goal in life, and that's to become successful.

For refugees, hope is an ability to survive after escaping war to seek the wellbeing, satisfaction, and love cherished by all humans (Todras-Whitehill, 2016). Youthful refugees are an incredibly vulnerable group due to distress resulting from awful encounters in their origin nation, during their subsequent flight, and the transformation to another life and culture in a host country (Sleijpe et al., 2017). As of August 2019, just a single percent of global refugees attend school (UNHCR, 2019e). Attending school offers refugee youth the chance to learn, foster new abilities, further develop work prospects, and lift their confidence (Refugees to College, n.d.). Advanced education among refugees prompts balanced, comprehensive, and varied experiences for refugees; thus, they become better worldwide residents (Refugees to College, n.d.). MT propositions helped me decipher the refugees' defensive migratory experiences throughout their geopolitical challenges. Per MT tenets, once transnational migrants and refugees travel to another country, they encounter social procedures that reflect geological, social, and political associations. Albeit, Newsome (2022) reiterated the goal that, despite their insurmountable traumatic experiences, refugees emerge as highly resilient and hopeful individuals.

Thematic Synopsis

All seven themes (escape, beneficial encounters, cultural experience, U.S. resettlement, recurrence, social illumination, and defensive mechanism) were evident in the five YouTube videos presented by refugee youths.

- Escape reflected the refugee breaking away from harm, anguish, trials, suffering, and distress through flight, struggle, and loss.

- Beneficial encounters exposed the unexpectedly positive experience of giving and care via help and love.
- Cultural experience alluded to the aggregate knowledge, experience, convictions, values, meanings, implications, progressions, religions, thoughts of time, jobs, spatial relations, universal ideas, and possessions procured by a community's longstanding culture, new culture, and conflict.
- U.S. resettlement embodied the durable solution, international cohesion, and responsibility-sharing for those who could not protect themselves and encompassed their new home and unease/burden.
- Recurrence cogitated the focal issues of dishonored individuals and the tedious renewal of their past terrors centering on revisits, trauma, and bullying.
- Social illumination revealed enlightening insights toward equitable growth acceleration for every learner in equality and humanitarian aspects.
- Defensive mechanisms included self-justifying methods and practices that individuals used to isolate themselves from unsavory occasions, activities, or contemplations based on hope, resilience, and success.

Overall, the current literature and thematic analysis explained the refugee youths' descriptions of their educational experiences, which supported and strengthened interview question creation, conducting the interviews, and data interpretation.

Summary

This Chapter detailed the literature search strategy and explored the theoretical framework, historical context, and current educational experiences of African refugee youth in the United States. African refugee youths are children who fled their war-torn native countries in Africa to escape the violence and horrors of their homeland. Often, such youths crossed immensely hostile terrain, lost loved ones and companions, and suffered abuse, hunger, and thirst to reach asylum. Frequently, their journey led them from one refugee camp to another until they finally found an internment camp to reside in until a benevolent country offered them permanent sanctuary.

While in these temporary camps, African refugee youths often experienced much neglect, not the least of which was their education. Unfortunately, education in refugee camps was often nearly non-existent. Even the semi-permanent internment camp environment offered minimal education. Additionally, camp education was haphazard; dependent upon inconsistent educational resources; and included whatever culture, language, curriculum, and transferable skills were available at the time. Therefore, African refugee youths typically relocated to their new homes without formal education.

When the African refugee youth entered the U.S. educational system, educators grouped them with other minorities and immigrants without concern for their significantly traumatized backgrounds. Here the African refugee youth experienced the same racism, shattered hopes, diminished self-worth, and hostilities directed at natural-born Black Americans, Hispanics, immigrants, and other minorities. For the African

refugee, however, these degrading disparities significantly compounded their preexisting traumas.

Existing literature provided enlightenment revealing these situations and events but did not analyze them holistically. I developed a more transparent picture using a conceptual combination of SCT, CRT, and MT. SCT indicated that every social and cultural exposure a person encountered taught that person something. Thus, learning began first with society and second with the individual. The MT lens focused on each significant evolution of self-identity iterated with each instance of transnational exposure creating a permanent imprint from which the self-identity grew. Thus, refugee youths already possessed at least three significant issues of rebirth and self-reevaluation by the time they entered their U.S. schools. Given the assumptions of CRT, the ontology of the United States subjected African refugee youths to a plethora of racism, from harsh and abrupt encounters to subtle, barely recognizable manipulations.

In this detrimental environment, African refugee youths became educated U.S. citizens. With their past experiences against them, their haphazard acculturalization shaping them, and racism both stoking and dampening their spiritual fires; they grew into self-sufficient, productive adults. Society expected these adults to become the nation's future world leaders but were irreparably beaten down and victimized. Scholars reported it happened but did not evaluate the subjects: the African refugee youths. Educators realized the injustice but pushed it under the rug by teaching tolerance of such actions. Political and community leaders saw it happen but placed their focus on adults, expectations, and meeting statistical goals. These youth

facilitators guessed, inferred, hypothesized, theorized, and conjectured, yet none asked the one group that could provide missing information: the African refugee youths.

Therefore, the influence of the African refugee youths' input upon their education was crucial to developing appropriate interventions to counter this problem. Moreover, those youths' stories represent the most significant part of the missing knowledge of the issue. Therefore, to fill this abysmal gap in the literature, I listened to African refugee youths to collect their stories and explain to the world:

- How their education in the camps affected them.
- How their U.S. education affected them.
- How their education prepared them for the future.

Analyzed through a conceptual, theoretical lens of SCT, MT, and CRT, that data begins identifying trends, themes, and patterns highlighting answers and filling the existing knowledge gap in current literature.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this narratology, I conceptually crystalized SCT, MT, and CRT as the theoretical framework to explore why African refugee youth (aged 18 and above) who attended U.S. Kansas City, Missouri public high school believed they socially and academically failed. Next, I investigated the educational experiences of African refugee youth by analyzing field note observations, interviews, and narrative retelling techniques to identify issues hindering those youths' self-sufficiency. Finally, I coded and analyzed the data related to Congolese, Somali, Sudanese, Liberian, and Burundi refugee youths, thereby exposing themes, patterns, and trends to answer the central overarching question:

How do African refugee youth describe their educational experiences?

The primary goal of the ORR (2022a) is to assist U.S. refugees' self-sufficiency. Findings from this study help recognize conditions, mechanisms, and cultural contexts that fostered and aided refugee youths' achievement of their educational goals, thus, gaining self-sufficiency as described by the UNHCR (2007). In addition, Durkheim (1858 – 1917), Gross (2004), and Filloux (2001) reported that education developed refugee youths toward attaining economic self-sufficiency, which resulted in contributory benefits to their families and society. Therefore, my findings are significant to refugee resettlement programs and associated organizations such as BRYCS, ORR, BPRM, CCS, UNHCR, and USCRI.

Additionally, findings are significant to the DOE, educational institutions, facilitators, curriculum development, and public policymakers. Results can also

influence changes to or additional policies like the ESEA and the NCLBA. African cultural organizations and many other cultural and multicultural organizations can benefit from the increased scholarly knowledge gained from my study findings. Most importantly, however, my results are significant to African refugee youths and their societies. Thus, this study contributes to existing refugee and educational policy, improved socioeconomic environments, and positive social change. I also expanded related theories by conceptually crystalizing SCT, MT, and CRT.

This Chapter presents the methodology, including the (a) rationale for a qualitative study, (b) the tradition selected (narratology), and (c) the role of the researcher. Chapter 3 also includes (d) details of the study design in enough detail that other scholars can recreate the study in the future. Those details include (e) an in-depth discussion of participants, (f) data sources, and (g) data analysis. (h) Limitations and (i) ethical considerations end the Chapter; thus, Chapter 3 is dedicated to study design details and rationale.

Qualitative Research Rationale

It was crucial to understanding their experiences from their perspectives and their ontology to comprehend why African refugee youth fail academically and socially. Per Creswell (2009), qualitative research "is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (pp. 3-4). Geertz (1973) related qualitative data as vivid in "… their richness and holism, … nested in real context, [thus] revealing complexity, … and have a ring that has a strong impact on the reader …" (p. 20).

Thus, qualitative researchers strive to identify how people compose meaning of their lived experiences, which connects the researcher with their participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Per Corbin and Strauss, "it is not distance that qualitative researchers want between themselves and their participants, but the opportunity to connect with them at a human level" (p. 13). Thus, qualitative methodology was idyllic for this research design. Therefore, I selected qualitative study for the following aims:

a) The need to deeply understand participants' experiences.

b) The undertaking of simplifying and handling complex data.

c) The necessity to comprehend an unfamiliar area.

d) The commitment to learn from the participants and keep their true voices.

Qualitative traditions vary greatly; therefore, the tradition I selected for this study was critical to the scope of the research. Participants' rich, descriptive stories were a key data source in this study, as was the ability to give volume to their voices. Thus, I needed to employ a tradition that allowed the natural examination of participants' reminiscences, feelings, and experiences while incorporating methodology amplifying participants' declarations.

Research Traditions

There are five significant traditions of qualitative strategy: Grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and narrative research (Creswell, 2009). Per Corbin and Strauss (2008), the focus of a grounded theory design is to create "a unified theoretical explanation" (p. 107). Creswell (2007) further explained grounded theory as

a method to create a format “for a process or an action” (p. 83). Thus, grounded theory formulates foundations from which further study extends the conceptualization of new or developing theories. However, grounded theory was inappropriate for this study as I was not searching for a unified explanation or establishing a process; instead, I sought to expose the participants' stories.

Other qualitative traditions frequently focus on a particular subject matter. For example, per Creswell (2007), ethnography describes, deduces, and focuses “on [an] entire culture-sharing group” (p. 90). Thus, ethnography might include an extended immersion into a unique tribe or culture so that the researcher observes, interacts with, and becomes part of that group. Creswell noted that ethnographies often consume years of participatory study. Following MT, refugees’ cultures evolve from multiple iterations and, thus, not a single culture. Furthermore, I did not wish to spend excessive time on a participatory study. Ethnography was, therefore, not appropriate for this study.

Both phenomenology and case study presented potential traditions for this study. Creswell (2007) reported that phenomenological research “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 76). In contrast, a case study is the study of a subject through one or more cases in a society or context (Yin, 2009). While I searched for themes, trends, and patterns related to why African refugee youth were failing socially and academically, I also desired to give voice to their unique ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Since phenomenology focuses on the common phenomenon rather than the individual

aspects, and the case study explicitly explores the group or event, neither was appropriate for this study.

Narratology presented the best tradition from which to build this study. Narrative studies account for the stories of experiences of one or more individuals as they experienced them in life (Czarniawska, 2004). According to Czarniawska, "narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (p. 17). Narrative research is a strategy of inquiry wherein the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks participants to provide stories about their lives (Creswell, 2009). The researcher then retells or restores those stories chronologically into narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1989). Creswell (2007) related that "inquirers may select several options, depending on whether the person is marginal, great, or ordinary" (p. 111). Creswell (2013) also discussed the three-dimensional inquiry, stating that "in narrative research, as in all forms of qualitative inquiry, there is a close relationship between the data procedure, the analysis, and the form and structure of writing report" (p. 223). Creswell (2013) further elucidated that the story may emphasize the 'key event' or the epiphany. Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln defined narrative as the retelling of interactional moments and experiences, positive or negative, that mark people's lives. Thus, the narrative analysis took the participant's story as its object of investigation and was perfect for this study.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, African refugee youth are marginalized individuals with stories about their experiences. Per Turner and Bruner (1986), refugee communities value stories as "culturally constructed expressions [which] are among

the most universal means of organizing and articulating experiences" (p. 15). Green (1968) reported that people hear stories wherever they go. In my experience as an African refugee and working with African refugees, their communities respect their stories and appreciate them for their value and how those stories assisted them in making life experiences meaningful.

This cultural phenomenon reflects Polkinghorne's (1988) inference that "narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of understandable composite…a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole" (p. 13). Furthermore, Didion (1961/2021) suggested that narratives cement the gap between "what happened" and "what it means." Thus, the narrative tradition presented the means to organize the story and link it to the African refugee youth participants' events, perceptions, and experiences so that their stories could remind people of the past, share the present, and predict the future. Therefore, in a narratological fashion, I limited discussions to first-person accounts of individuals' stories and responses to their experiences by incorporating associated field note observations and poising inter-related accountings.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the narrative researcher was to deliver participants' experiences to the readers through empathy and connection, providing a deeper understanding of those stories as recommended by Josselson and Liebach (2001). Thus, my role was to draw the reader's attention more personally than simply restating. The shared understanding approach drew on how narrative inquiry happens among participants, built as a thoughtful community. Noddings (1986) stated that "too little attention is

presently given to matters of community and collegiality and that such research should be construed as research for teaching" (p. 510). Noddings (1995) also stressed the collaborative nature of the research process, where all contributors understand themselves as participants in the community, which is vital to participant, theory, and practice. Thus, my role as the researcher was not only to analyze the data and retell participants' stories.

I possess over 14 years of professional experience in U.S. Refugee programs (detailed in Chapter 2). I brought several assumptions to the study: (a) War-related experiences significantly interrupted refugees' educational experiences. (b) Refugees' prior traumas present unique challenges for educators and communities. (c) Current refugee high school drop-out rates are associated with racial segregation, poverty, and QoL factors. (d) Collectively, these issues reduce refugees' ability for adult self-sufficiency.

Study Design

To understand the RQ answer and address the problem at the center of the study, Maxwell (2013) posited

> your methods are the means to answering your RQs, not a logical transformation of the latter. Their selection depends not only on your RQs, but also on the actual research situation and on what will work most effectively in that situation to give you the data you need. (p. 100)

In narratology, the study design centers on participants drawing data from their individual stories, wherein findings emerge (Maxwell, 2013). Subsequently, Maxwell posited purposeful selection as an essential consideration in qualitative research.

Maxwell explained purposeful sampling as "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (p. 97). Per Maxwell, purposeful context representations include the setting, individuals, and activities to

> adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population, ...deliberately examine cases that are critical for the theories that you began the study with, or that you have subsequently developed, ...establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals, [and] …select groups or participants with whom you can establish the most productive relationships. (p. 98)

Research Questions

Through this research study, I asked the primary question: "How do African refugee youth describe their educational experiences?" To answer this question, I probed four open-ended, exploratory sub-questions:

1. Please describe your educational experiences while living in Africa.
2. Please describe your educational experiences while living in the refugee camp.
3. Please describe your educational experiences since you arrived in the United States.
4. How have your educational experiences prepared you for college or a career?

   Primary elaborating questions included:

   a) Please tell me about your achievements.
   b) Please tell me about your challenges.
   c) Please explain what you struggled with the most.

d) Please share what helped you the most.

e) If you could, how would you change those experiences? Why?

Study Setting

I conducted this study in a large metropolitan urban community in Kansas City, Missouri. Most newly arrived refugees were resettled in this city, making the location optimal for this study. In my professional experience, African refugees are resettled in this midwestern City because the refugee program encourages resettlement agencies to relocate refugees to areas with good public transportation, affordable housing, and employment opportunities. In addition, Merchant (2021) reported that the city has stable employment opportunities for refugees who can typically start from entry-level positions.

In the early 1990s, the Somalis and the Sudanese Lost Children were the first African refugees to settle in Kansas City, followed by Liberian, Burundi, Congolese, and other African refugees (Singer & Wilson, 2007; Wilson & Singer, 2007). Zong and Batalova (2017) estimated that 3,900 African refugees arrived in the United States from 2011 to 2015. Okpareke, Coordinator of Refugee and Immigrant Forum (verbal communication to me, January 11, 2019), said approximately 2,500 African refugee children and youths lived in Kansas City by the end of 2018. I drew my participants from among such African refugee youths and held interviews in Kansas City.

The specific interview location was according to participant preferences. Feelings of trust, honesty, and security were essential to enable African refugee youth to share their stories without hesitation. Thus, I conducted interviews in locations that participants were acquainted and comfortable with, a youth center (facility consent in

Appendix A). This environment helped build confidence and reduced stress during the interviews, which was critical for participants to revisit their past experiences. Participants selected convenient times within two to three weeks of agreeing to participate in the study. I audio-recorded interviews as unobtrusively as possible.

Participants

The most recent African refugees arriving in Kansas City, Missouri, were Somali, Congolese, Liberians, Sudanese, and Burundi. Thus, I chose to study these groups because (a) they remained in the refugee camps for decades and (b) they originated in Africa. I interviewed 10 English-speaking African refugee youths (age 18 and above) who attended Kansas City public high school. UNESCO (2017) defined youths "as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by the Member States" (para. 5). Thus, while some were attending Kansas City high schools, others had graduated from Kansas City high schools.

Requiring all participants to speak fluent English minimized the possibility of participant/researcher misunderstandings. Public high school participation was imperative for participants' perspectives to contribute to the study's problem and purpose. I interviewed two (one male and one female) African refugee youths from each ethnicity (Somali, Congolese, Liberian, Sudanese, and Burundi) to ensure participant balance from each cultural background. Albeit the Sudan participants were both males; however, that deviation did not skew the results because the decreased gender balance of one was not significant and did not make cause result variations between the Sudanese and the rest of the participants. All experiences of African refugee youth matter, regardless of gender, echoed significantly similar themes.

I used a snowballing technique to recruit information-rich participants to achieve that specific sample. Thus, I ensured population heterogeneity associated with the phenomenon I studied, which enabled comparison and contrast within the population pool. Subsequently, all potential participants met the sampling criterion from which I networked to identify additional potential participants until I met my desired sample number.

I obtained the names and telephone numbers of African refugee youths (age 18 and over) within the sample criterion from the refugee community center. During the introductory phone call, I briefly explained the study and set a meeting with youths aged 18 and above. During that initial meeting, we reviewed the study in-depth and went over the consent form. I also asked for recommendations from others interested in participating within the participant criterion. I then scheduled interviews with participants who signed the consent form at a time and in a place (see Appendix B) convenient to participants.

Data Sources

I used multiple data collection sources, including interviews with the African refugee youth, and my observations of the participants during interviews. I began by reviewing the current literature associated with African refugee youth experiences to familiarize myself and provide inquiry stimuli usable during interview sessions, particularly the five YouTube video presentations by refugee youths from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberian, Somalia, and Sudan. After which, I began journaling my observations of participants into field notes primarily centered on participants non-verbal communications.

Field Note Observations

Field note observations included all contacts with participants from initial participant solicitation to final participant contact during this study. Since field note type observation was the most time-consuming data analysis, I observed participants throughout the interview data collection process and utilized those observations to inform additional data review. I organized data chronologically using extensive field notes and transcribed the data verbatim. I conducted all transcription myself. I stored all digital data on my password-protected personal computer and physical documents in a locked file cabinet in my private office. I used MS Office to analyze the data.

Participant Interviews

According to Gall et al. (2007), “questionnaires and interviews are used extensively in educational research to collect data about phenomena that are not: inner experience, opinions, values, interest, and the like” (p. 228). In this study, I extrapolated what experiences African refugee youth associated with their academic and social failings and what they meant for those youths. Punch (2004) explained that interviews allow the evaluation of people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of the situation, and reality building.

Subsequently, I used semi-structured questions with a fixed set of demographic items in flexible interviews allowing for new questions to emerge in response to what the interviewee shared. Punch (2004) noted that, in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a framework of the themes, allowing the discussion to evolve from that framework. In this study, my structured themes evolved from current literature insights associated with African refugees’ youth experiences and included the following:

a) The student’s war experiences in their home countries, refugee camp experiences, and the impact that the experiences had on their learning.
b) Post-migration experiences in America.
c) Considerations to social integration and academic achievement in the United States.
d) Post-secondary outlooks.

Therefore, to answer the central RQ, “How do African refugee youth describe their educational experiences?” I asked each participant four base questions:

1. Please describe your educational experiences while living in Africa.
2. Please describe your educational experiences while living in the refugee camp.
3. Please describe your educational experiences since you arrived in the United States.
4. How have your educational experiences prepared you for college or a career?

Depending on their responses, I asked elaborating questions to gain a rich description that included specific examples from the youths’ perspectives. Elaborating questions included:

a) Please tell me about your achievements.
b) Please tell me about your challenges.
c) Please explain what you struggled with the most.
d) Please share what helped you the most.
e) If you could, how would you change those experiences? Why?

Per the interview protocol (see Appendix C), one interview with each of the 10 participants lasted between 60 to 90 minutes at the time and location the participants

chose, as outlined in the Participants Section of Chapter 1. The interviews focused on culture; school experience; challenges, success, support, and motivational experiences in school. I audibly recorded interviews to capture words and verbal expressions verbatim, allowing me to place added focus on observation analysis during the interviews. Like my observational data, I conducted all transcription myself and stored all digital data on my password-protected personal computer and physical documents in a locked file cabinet in my private office. I used MS Office to analyze the data.

This approach allowed greater flexibility with what Douglas (1985) called "creative interviewing," which provided opportunities for successful in-depth interviews. During these individual interviews, I asked participants to revisit experiences they associated with academic and social failure, allowing them to speak about uncomfortable things to discuss in a group setting. Subsequently, I explored and revealed key factors inhibiting African refugee youth education. My findings begin filling the current knowledge gap and can advise potential policy changes and interventions.

Data Analysis

Through this study, I examined the experiences of African refugee youth using a crystalized lens of SCT, MT, and CRT. As explained in Chapter 2, SCT and MT flow well with narrative study and counter-storytelling. Additionally, CRT uses both techniques as a central pillar of analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Solorzano and Yosso (2002) defined counter-storytelling as "a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told" (p. 26). At the same time, Delgado and Stefancic (1995) stated that counter-stories aim "to

cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (p. 144). Since I wished to expose the stories from the perspectives of the youth who experienced them, it was critical to avoid preconceived stereotypes; thus, counter-storytelling was a perfect epistemology for data analysis.

The narratives from which I retold the stories in this narratology stemmed from identical open-ended interview questions as recommended by Gall et al. (2003). According to Gall et al., this open-endedness allowed participants to impart as much detailed information as they desired. Likewise, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that "qualitative interviews are, of course, supposed to be open-ended and flowing…" (p. 4) to produce narrative accounts combined as semi-structured interviews with close-ended items. Thus, through data analysis, I combined data collected from all data sources to build a chronologically coherent narrative.

To combine data, I 'crunched' all data together. Per Van Maanen (1988), "crunching text requires text to first be put in crunchable form" (p. 131). I reduced the data to a common denominator to accomplish such data crunching. Since I recorded and transcribed the interviews verbatim, I began data analysis by drafting each interview verbatim. I then reviewed the recordings a few times to capture additional details; thus, I rendered two full interview transcriptions to ensure conversion reliability from verbal to text. This technique yielded the orally related stories of participants to the same data form as data collected from the field note observations. Then I analyzed data for common trends, themes, and patterns.

I coded all text data to identify trends, themes, and patterns. I used descriptive and interpretive codes to condense data by grouping them to determine themes; hence,

categorizing textual data made sense, as Miles and Huberman recommended (1994). Per Owen (1984), themes are “a limited range of interpretations used to conceive of and constitute relationships” (p. 274). Through coding, I developed descriptive, interpretive codes derived from the current literature insights, interviews, and observation notes. According to Grbich (2013), this coding process allowed enumerative data analysis, “which is useful to the RQ” (p. 28), and thematic analysis as “a process of data reduction” (p. 61). To ensure consistency and reliability, I followed specific steps in my data analysis plan:

1. Code all data from all sources into a single database so that all data sources merge into a single data source.
2. Transcribe all audio recordings verbatim.
    a. Re-listen and transcribe again to ensure reliability.
    b. Compare both transcriptions to ensure one complete data set.
3. Systematically review each data set, coding items appropriately.
    a. Read a response to ascertain the general coding category.
        i. If no category exists, create a new code category.
    b. Read each sentence in that response to break down data into one or more related items.
    c. Review each item within that breakdown to isolate specific code details.
    d. Flag each detail with the associated code(s).
        i. Create a new code within the appropriate category if no related code exists.

ii. Review data for associations with the new category/code.

4. Systematically review each observational note (field note observations), coding items appropriately.
    a. Read an observation journal entry to ascertain the general coding category.
        i. If no category exists, create a new code category.
    b. Read each sentence in that entry to break down data into one or more related items.
    c. Review each item within that breakdown to isolate specific code details.
    d. Flag each detail with the associated code(s).
        i. Create a new code within the appropriate category if no related code exists.
        ii. Review data for associations with the new category/code.
5. Analyze codes for trends, themes, and patterns.
    a. Identify categories and codes with more and less data.
    b. Look for related and unrelated item groupings.
    c. Organize groupings chronologically.
    d. Look for associations and trends in chronological groupings.
6. Describe and interpret trends, themes, and patterns chronologically with narratology associated with SCT, MT, and CRT.
    a. Narratively merge researcher experiences with participant experiences and code trends, themes, and patterns.

b. Analyze each trend, theme, and pattern with SCT, MT, and CRT.
    i. Identify any specific code or grouping that stands out.
    ii. Notate any specific code that seems anomalous.
c. Retell the narrative chronologically relevant to how it fits or does not fit with the theoretical frameworks: SCT, MT, and CRT.

Data Representation

Data representation interprets data analysis into an understandable logical account of results and findings, AKA research text. Research text is created by the researcher and derived from data analysis. Item six, describe and interpret trends, themes, and patterns chronologically with narratology associated with SCT, MT, and CRT, is the step wherein I created the research text herein.

Research Text Creation

As denoted in item six, my research text creation included narrative data merging, analysis, and chronological narrative retelling through the crystallized SCT, MT, and CRT theoretical lens. Therefore, I narratively merged data based on my experiences and understandings. I then meticulously analyzed every code, theme, and trend in accordance with each aspect of my crystalized theoretical framework. After which, I arranged the data chronologically and according to my theoretical framework to convey my findings through retelling the holistic narrative. Since narratology directly involves the researcher, my participation was an integral part of data representation.

Researcher Participation

Therefore, this narratology presents my chronological findings in a narrative retelling that combined the data from all sources. Per Connelly and Clandinin (1990), "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (p. 20). Creswell (2013) explained, “data collected in a narrative study need to be analyzed for the story they have to tell, a chronology of unfolding events, and turning points or epiphanies” (p. 189). This approach is common when writing a narrative in which the author presents life in stages or steps (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1989). Connelly and Clandinin posited that "research is a collaborative document, a mutually constructed story" (p. 20). Josselson and Liebach (2001) asserted that the researcher’s empathic relationship with the participant paints a real-world connection between the research and the readers. Thus, this narrative combined views from the participants’ lives in a collaborative narration wherein participants’ collective stories were incorporated and combined during data analysis.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study had inherent limitations and ethical considerations. Patton (2002) stated that “qualitative inquiry, because the human being is the instrument of data collection, requires that the investigator carefully reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of bias and error” (p. 51). Bias and errors can significantly affect findings' credibility (Maxwell, 2013). Even though I used systematic data collection, rigorous training, multiple data sources, and triangulation in a crystallized design to support this study, several concerns remained.

Validity and Reliability

The main factors influencing the validity and reliability of this study included data accuracy, interpretation, narrative relationship navigation, and researcher experience. However, in narratology such as this study, all four of those concerns were unavoidable. Thus, I minimized these limitations using interrelated steps indicative of the crystallization technique for improving validity and reliability.

Data Accuracy

Through crystallization, I increased the validity and reliability of this study. Thus, the in-depth, robust narratology provided increased findings credibility. In addition, the prisms of the crystallization supplied data reflection and refraction, which presented more accurate narrations. This strategy also enabled vivid narrative presentation, drawing the readers into the participants' experiences, and allowing readers to interpret and associate more deeply with the storytellers.

Interpretation

I maintained the stories of the African refugee youth participants as the heart and focus of this study throughout data collection, coding, analysis, and interpretation. I used SCT, MT, and CRT to present their stories with understanding by exploring multiple realities. Thus, I revealed participants' stories via a rich, holistic depiction with the increased reliability of the crystalized framework, data sources, and interpretation. To counter any misinterpretation weakness, I included diverse storytelling genres, poetry, artistic expression, visual thinking, and multiple visionary angles. The study's narrative design also created a cycle of action that added reflexive consideration and representation.

Narrative Relationship Navigation

While my narrative reflection strengthened the study, it presented a distinct challenge. I associated the stories of the research participants, teachers, administrators, and families as one to explain all plotlines together, which made it challenging to hear individual thoughts. Therefore, as manifold relationships evolved and connected, I took time to understand and present the story of multiple lives. I did this through carefully coding verbatim transcript interpretation, observation interpretation, and finally, presenting results from those data into a single holistic narrative.

Researcher Experiences

Since narratology involves researcher interpretation, my own experiences potentially influenced study findings. With my childhood experiences of war and violence in Africa, the anguish of familial and community loss, and endless desperation in hoping for a safe new home, my experiences often resonated with the African refugee youth participants. Thus, it is possible that my past, like those of the refugee youths in my study, informed my decisions. Subsequently, while my experiences may have biased the study, they also strongly correlated with the participants, minimizing the potential for any substantial deviation from their stories. However, I limited researcher bias by analyzing data subjectively and objectively and documenting all observations accordingly in my field note observations journal. Therefore, any potential bias was minimal and within ethical considerations.

Ethical Considerations

Potential researcher bias was only one of several ethical considerations I addressed in this study design. For example, I am a part of the refugee resettlement

program; thus, I did not recruit any refugees resettled by any organization I was associated with at the time of this study. This participant pool limitation removed potential issues of power and privilege. I also submitted the name of the organization I work for to the UMKC IRB, whereby they ensured no conflict of interest within this study.

My fundamental ethical responsibility was to protect participants from physical or psychological harm, discomfort, or danger that could arise due to research procedures; wherein I took several steps to ensure participant protection. First, I explained every risk and gained full consent according to UMKC IRB. According to Creswell (2009), “do not put participants at risk, and respect vulnerable populations” (p. 89). My study participants included vulnerable populations because the refugee youths came from different ethnic groups wherein, they fled internal conflict and trauma. Second, thorough participatory consent forms (see Appendix B) summarized this study's importance, potential benefits, and potential risks to participants. Third, I carefully reviewed those consent forms with participants to ensure they completely understood the research and their part in it. Finally, I answered all their questions and provided my contact information and the contact information of the UMKC liaison.

Due to the vulnerable participant pool and the nature of the phenomenon under study, participant interviews presented some potential risks, so I carefully and sensitively addressed those concerns. The interview protocol (see Appendix C) and the participant consent forms (Appendix B) described potential risks. The interview protocol detailed steps that I took during the interviews to minimize those risks. The risks, their study importance, and efforts to mitigate them included:

d) Length of the interview (60 to 90 minutes). This timeframe allowed for the unpressured, in-depth narratives necessary for narratology. Additionally, I considered participant comfort, including a temperature-stable private room, cushioned chair, unobtrusive recording devices, and opportunities to take needed breaks.

e) Possibility of emotional distress related to conveying negative past experiences. Participants' past stories were essential for complete data collection, reliability, and validity. Participants were permitted to have a trusted companion in the room during the interview if they requested such. In addition, I had contact information for emotional support personnel should participants need or ask.

f) Inclusion of vulnerable populations. I aimed this study toward gathering data about refugee youths' experiences; thus, those youths were included. I justified this study throughout Chapters 1 and 2. No participants less than 18 years old were allowed to participate to reduce as much age-related vulnerability as possible.

Therefore, I made the utmost effort to safeguard participants. The social sciences IRB of the UMKC requires all researchers associated with the university to follow fundamental ethical procedures. Those ethical procedures correlate closely with the NIH. This study, like all research using human subjects, was closely monitored by the UMKC IRB, and adhered to three superseding principles:

a. Notify subjects about the nature of the study and confirm that their participation is voluntary.

b. Guarantee that the benefits of the research outweigh the risks.
c. Guarantee even distribution of risks and benefits among the possible subject populations (NIH, n.d.; UMKC, 2019)

Furthermore, the three fundamental principles of the Belmont Report (OHRP, 2022) recapitulate those ethical guidelines focusing on respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Therefore, I ensured that all aspects of this study adhered to the ethical guidelines and protocols established by UMKC IRB, NIH, and OHRP to protect the research participants. Accordingly, I used pseudonyms to protect the participants' privacy and took other precautions to protect participants. Additionally, I completed the social-behavioral-educational (SBE) module of the collaborative institutional training initiative (CITI) program on human subject research (HSR) and adhered to that training.

I secured all data to ensure participants' safety and privacy throughout the study. I will continue to do so for at least five years after the study's completion. The computers used to store data were password protected so that only I could access the data. Field notes and other physical data, such as recordings, were kept in a locked file cabinet. Additionally, I locked computers and file cabinets in my private office. Only I possessed the keys to all locks. As a result, only I and the UMKC had access to study data and records throughout the study. That security will remain for the duration that I maintain the data, at least five years, as required by UMKC.

Summary

For this narratology, I used SCT, MT, and CRT conceptually crystalized as the theoretical framework exploring why African refugee youth (aged 18 and above) who

attended U.S. public high school in Kansas City, Missouri, believe they failed socially and academically. Then, using data from field note observations and interviews, I chronologically retold the participants' stories, giving voice to those youths. Finally, I used this narratology's crystalized framework and design to explore and explain those stories to increase the scientific understanding of why African refugee youths fail socially and academically. Through such comprehension, educators and policymakers can develop appropriate interventions to begin helping these youths succeed and become productive, self-sufficient citizens.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Using a crystalized SCT, MT, and CRT theoretical framework, I explored the educational experiences of African refugee youth to expose how they felt about their U.S. public high school education. Using a narratological approach, I captured the participants' thoughts and understandings as they shared their stories. Creswell (2009) explained that narrative research is an analytical procedure wherein the investigator concentrates on the revelations of people as they recount their lived experiences. Czarniawska (2004) noted that narratives consist of spoken or composed text enabling a record of sequentially linked occasions and activities. Accordingly, examining participants' experiences through narrative analysis was critical to addressing the RQ in this study.

Subsequently, I extracted data from two primary sources: field note observations and participant interviews, primarily focusing on the latter. The field note observations included all interactions between me and participants throughout the study. In addition, I conducted ten interviews with refugee youth participants, two Congolese, two Somalis, two Sudanese, two Liberians, and two Burundians. Herein, I present the study results crystalized through a lens of SCT, MT, and CRT.

Interview Contributions

Interviewing people aims to discover what is on their minds, what they think, or how they feel about something. As Patton (2002) has remarked:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational data is more desirable, valid,

> or meaningful than self-report data. The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. (p. 8)

Therefore, Patton (2002) stated the interview allows the researcher to “enter into the other people’s perspectives” (p. 341); accordingly, a “qualitative interview begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowledgeable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories” (p. 341). Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1990) posited that the interviewing process was a qualitative researcher's most important data collection technique. Feiman-Nemser and Parker emphasized that the qualitative researcher seeks to describe and extract the meaning of central themes in the life world of the research subjects. Therefore, the main interview task is to understand the importance of what the interviewee says (Kvale, 1996). According to Gall et al. (2007), educational research “questionnaires and interviews are used extensively in educational research to collect data about phenomena that are not: inner experience, opinions, values, interest, and the like” (p. 228). In this study, I aimed to extrapolate what experiences mean for the youth who went through them.

In this study, I used standardized open-ended interviews as Gall et al. (2003) recommended, wherein I asked participants identical open-ended questions. Such open-

endedness allowed participants to impart as much elaboration as they desired. In addition, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) stated that "qualitative interviews are, of course, supposed to be open-ended and flowing…" advice which influenced my efforts to keep open-ended communications flowing as a central part of my data collection process.

Interview Process, Questions, and Coding

The interviews were semi-structured and flexible, allowing new questions to elicit a more resounding, more immersive response relative to participants' experiences. Punch (2004) noted that such semi-structured interviews provided a framework for deeper theme exploration. Thus, for every participant, I used the same four interview questions to answer the overarching study RQs from which further elaborating questions evolved:

1. Please describe your educational experiences while living in Africa.
2. Please describe your educational experiences while living in the refugee camp.
3. Please describe your educational experiences since you arrived in the United States.
4. How have your educational experiences prepared you for college or a career?

Additionally, I consistently used several repeated elaborating questions with every participant:

a) Please tell me about your achievements.
b) Please tell me about your challenges.
c) Please explain what you struggled with the most.
d) Please share what helped you the most.
e) If you could, how would you change those experiences? Why?

Participants' responses to these questions provided the data from which I extrapolated codes and themes from phrases, expressions, and ideas common among research participants, as Kvale (2007) recommended. I developed associated descriptive and interpretive codes throughout the interviews by identifying, isolating, and grouping together those data. I used that combination of enumerative data analysis, which Grbich (2013) posited "is useful to the RQ" (p. 28), and thematic analysis, which is "a process of data reduction" (p. 61), to analyze the interviews. Using descriptive and interpretive codes, I condensed the data, grouping them to determine the themes, hence categorizing textual data to make sense of it, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). This process was vital to connecting the themes in the field note observations and interviews.

Participant Profiles: Retelling Their Stories

Each youth trustingly and sincerely shared their experiences, struggles, and successes throughout their flight, internment, and U.S. resettlement while explaining their educational journey. The participants (Ale, Assana, Babeta, Byamungu, Confidence, Crescent, Dabor, Daud, Eemay, and Erasto [pseudonyms]) disclosed how they became refugees. They shared their lives in the refugee camps, described their joys and challenges resettling, and discussed the continuing complexities of U.S. life. Each life spoke volumes, and none were more important than others. Thus, I present each of their narratives alphabetically via their chosen pseudonym.

Ale

Ale's parents were born in Burundi and sought refuge in the Congo where Ale was born. When Ale was young, war erupted in the Congo, causing the family to seek

refuge in Tanzania. Ale did not live in the refugee camp but as an urban refugee registered with the UNHCR. Ale never attended school because they were not a Tanzania citizen. As a result, ale never had the opportunity to go to a school staffed by UNHCR. Instead, Ale collaborated with their father on a small farm the family rented so that they could get food and sometimes sell items in the streets. Ale always envied the students carrying books and wearing school uniforms but never lost hope that they would attend school one day.

Ale came to the United States with their single parent and two other siblings. Ale first resettled in Houston, Texas, and started school in Houston public schools. After three months, Ale moved with their family to Kansas City, Missouri. Ale did not speak English at all when they enrolled in school. Ale struggled to understand the facilitators' instructions and directions. Ale dreamt of becoming educated, but those dreams were a shattered reality. Ale faced bullies in school who emotionally and physically abused them. Ale tried to force themself to adapt to the harsh new environment. Albeit, Ale feared they would use drugs like other refugee kids because of their environment. Ale felt helpless and alone because nobody was helping any of the refugee children. Ale explained that,

> The only difficult thing was not English. Uhm, it wasn't just English. Uhm, bullying was another thing. There was a difficulty here because people coming here to America, that is, the African refugees, people saw us as different people. [Native-born U.S. citizens] didn't see us as equals or the same people, so getting bullied by kids at school, calling us names and stuff, that hurt us a lot; but, thanks to God, we made it. Some people just go into

> drugs, some into the jail, some to gangs, and some dropped from school; but I made it with the power of God.

At this point, gazing vulnerably into my eyes, Ale declared their desire to share their personal story. Then, after a long pause, tears fell from the eyes, and Ale stutteringly spoke. Ale became tongue tide as they told me about their brother who went to jail. Ale's brother did not speak English and did not understand U.S. law but was sentenced to eight years because, as Ale voiced, "ignorance itself is a crime in the United States." With tears in their eyes and their body shaking, Ale cried out that it was not fair that their brother did not get to go to school but ended up in prison. Ale lamented, "I think he has been swallowed by a system full of discrimination."

Ale also struggled with gaining the right friends, dangers like using drugs, joining gangs, and confusion, with nobody to help. Ale explained,

> the school prepared me (pause). The school keeps on telling us make friends to progress. It is extremely hard to know who a good friend can be, and one can end up in problem. For example, my brother had been working hard to make friends, but he ended up making bad friends who he thought were good friends and fun to be with them.

Apart from the struggles in school, Ale's family also struggled to sustain daily encounters, so Ale participated by helping their mother and sister. Ale always went with their mother to translate. Ale became emotional when they talked about their mother's struggle, but always, Ale's mother reminded them that they should get educated so that they would not suffer the way she suffered. Ale emphasized that "what helped me the most is God, my relatives, my parents, and a pastor." Ale also explained

that “their belief and the love I had for my parents also helped me to avoid all the dangers that I could have entered into.” Ale is thankful they finished high school and thinks about attending college, but they are skeptical of their academic standing, fearful it will prevent them from getting into college.

Assana

While their parents came from Burundi, Assana was born in a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Assana explained that after their parents fled for safety from Burundi into the Congolese refugee camp, war broke out in the Congo. Hence, they had to move from the Congo to relative safety in Tanzania. Assana relayed that they could not continue school in Tanzania because they had to help their father secure enough food allotments to meet the family’s basic needs within this temporary location they now called ‘home.’ Before Assana and their family became legally enrolled and designated as refugees by the UNHCR, they struggled severely; thus, after years in the refugee camps, the family felt truly fortunate to be permitted to resettle in the United States.

Subsequently, Assana and their family resettled in Kansas City, Missouri, through the support of a local refugee resettlement agency. At first, Assana was relieved and content that the unending, arduous trauma-filled flights from chaos had ended. Assana felt their new U.S. home signified that the “immediate suffering” they and their family experienced was over. Assana believed that the prayed-for assurance of basic safety and rest had prevailed, thereby delivering the family into this new land.

Assana was 17 years-old when they started high school in Kansas City. Assana had high hopes for their new land, home, language, laws, and life. Upon arrival, the

U.S. education system enrolled Assana in the high school curriculum course appropriate for American-born students who could speak, read, and write in English. Educational administrators placed Assana, by age, with American children already familiar with the culture and critical learning development essential for U.S. academic success. However, comparatively, Assana began their studies while their American peers were already completing their academics. Effectively, Assana, and other refugee students, were expected to start the 12-year educational process, insurmountably abbreviated to capture all necessary learning experiences within a 1 – 4-year period.

To the refugee youths, the experience was akin to being required to complete 12 years of study within four or fewer years, compounded by language and cultural ignorance. While Assana was highly excited to get the opportunity to attend the school, soon, the almost impossible academic realities became overwhelming. Compounded with mountainous literary attempts, Assana confronted the difficulties of adapting to new cultural situations, new societal values, and ever-expanding family financials, including increased expenses against stagnantly limited income. Assana had never experienced the resulting family conflict and struggles they now faced.

To help ease the family's economic burdens, Assana took a fulltime job while also in school, wherein Assana emphasized their commitment to do their best at every endeavor. However, afraid of unidentified but desperately dreaded repercussions to the family and themself, Assana never told the school counselors, teaching staff, or anyone else all their burdens and responsibilities. Mostly, Assana drudged forth, attempting to meet each of these humongous responsibilities, confronted by a daily fear that, “God

forbid," if they failed, the unknown authority within this confusing newly adopted homeland would "turn on them" and take-away their younger siblings.

While raggedly juggling these tremendous pressures and fears, Assana relived past trauma due to a nasty rumor spread by other kids about Asana's father's death resulting in associated verbal repetitions. Kids repeatedly lied and retold horrific tales about Assana's family killing their father. Slowly and unbelievably, this horror became a familiar stereotypical echo from most African refugee students. The results became an almost unbearable daily burden for Assana as, throughout the school day, they would hourly encounter other students who claimed the lies were "the truth." To Assana, this was the most severe kind of bullying.

Amazingly, Assana persevered and got tougher throughout the ordeal, despite the harassment and bullying. Assana never once cowered, always putting their faith in God. Assana was genuinely exhausted, tempted to withdraw, and daily confronted with "not measuring up, not meeting obligations," which unsurprisingly resulted in a growing disinterest in school. Asana's father ended up committing suicide. Asana's mother found their father hanging from the basement roof of their home, and only then did the family learn that he had ended his life in desperation. Assana was very distraught when sharing their father's death,

> May his soul rest in peace - he committed suicide - we did not know when he killed himself. And my mother found his body hanging in the basement …[verbal statements ceased, Assana began crying and visibly shaking, interview temporarily stopped] … [interview reconvened upon Assana's

> request] … During this time, I prayed a lot… I asked God to help me not to lose my mind.

Today, as I listen to their story, I discover that Assana finished high school amazingly but initially decided to work full-time and help raise the other siblings, supporting their mother and the family. Assana settled by explaining,

> I am not prepared to attend college because I still have a problem with my academic work, and I want to feed and work for my family. The school could not prepare me academically because I was struggling, and nobody could understand my situation.

Such personal assessment and determination provided critical evidence of Asana's maturation well beyond their years. Assana's self-awareness pointed to a family commitment admirable beyond expectation. Assana remains very traumatized by their father's loss. Assana was adamant that they feel obligated to carry forth responsibilities for the family on behalf of their absent father. Assana also recommended positive changes to counter refugees' classroom struggles,

> There should be a change in school - for example, they created congested classrooms of refugees from Congo … It could have been good if we were mixed with other students so that we could teach each other languages … for example, we could teach them Kiswahili, and they can teach us English.

Albeit Assana remains committed to "helping [their] siblings and [their] children attain higher education." Historically placing their personal needs secondary to the family, Assana declared, "if I will be learning anything, I am thinking of learning a certain skill that I can develop to enhance my career."

Babeta

The wars and the refugee crises, not unlike similar traumas of other refugee families, caused major educational disruptions for Babeta. Babeta's family originated in the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, Babeta's parents married in Tanzania and had all their children in a Tanzania refugee camp while awaiting re-assignment to a new country. Subsequently, Babeta speaks French, Kiswahili, and Bemba. Even though Bemba was their native language, Babeta also learned Kiswahili because it was the primary language in Tanzania. However, the Tanzanian refugee camp school taught French in alignment with the Democratic Republic of Congo educational system.

The refugee camp school sorely lacked adequate essential resources and qualified teachers. The harsh refugee camp living environments, food deficiencies, water scarcity, limited and unsanitary toilet access, and unsafe security conditions compounded difficult learning conditions. Unsurprisingly, confusion permeated Babeta's education, critically stunting their educational opportunity. Babeta explained,

> That was kind of difficult for us … When you have the mind to say 'I want to get here' but you do not have the opportunity to get there … I mean what you want to be. It is kind of difficult at that moment because you only depend on hope. We were learning more about [the] French and Congo culture that we were not practicing … it was like we were just forced to learn … I wish we learned the Tanzania education.

Babeta vividly remembered the refugee camp where girls suffered the most due to inadequate essential resources, youth marriage, pregnancy, and severe poverty. There were no hygiene products for school-aged females. Girls feared forceful early

marriage. Furthermore, Babeta detailed poverty, fear, suspicion, and disease as major factors hindering females' education in the camp.

Babeta arrived in the United States with their family in 2017. When Babata was excited to continue their education when they enrolled in U.S public school. Babeta believed there would be no other obstacles that would hinder them from achieving excellence … for they had enough food and sound transportation to go to school … So, Babeta bantered that they thought they would continue their education until tiring or went to help those who left behind. However, Babeta described how bullying and stereotyping challenged their education,

> Some of the students from here, kind of, see you different from them … because you come from [a] different place than them … and so they kind of treat you different … so this is a challenge, and so we also try to get education as much as possible … all of these things are in our heads … we are also are thinking about our parents and our future career.

Thus, Babeta continued to face unsafe conditions and extreme difficulties in school. Peer pressure toward forcing Babeta to use drugs and join gangs was constant both in and outside school. They explained that first, the gang members attacked culture by manipulating feelings and inferring Babeta's was a "backward culture." Then peers tried to entice or bully Babeta into abandoning personal traditions and living a life filled with drugs and crime. The neighborhood in which Babeta's family dwells remains insecure, filled with street drugs, gunshots, and other traumatizing fears. Consequently, Babeta experienced constant fear of traveling to and from home.

Likewise, Babeta's parents were distraught when they heard shocking news stories of crime-filled streets, local murders, and robberies in Kansas City.

Such fears added to Babeta's isolation and compounded all attempts to integrate into U.S. social circles triggering revisited traumatic memories. Babeta described intense loneliness, much like their past experiences, stating that they do "not have a real friend in the United States." Babeta explained all their "friends are in Africa" and that one day they want to visit their friends if they are still alive. Babeta passionately described how they would empower girls back at the refugee camp,

> The thing that I should change if I was in Africa … is to have more opportunities for women and ladies. They should have more opportunities because they end up in bad places. So other, like deodorants, and not something I used back in Africa, so when we came here in the United States, we did not know how to use it a lot. Some part was true, and some parts were false when people tell us you stink. So, the change should be children should be trained at school when they come to the United States or by the agencies that bring refugees. Back in Africa, we did not use that (laughter). We used (silent). Do you know we used to cut our clothes in half (palming hands in tears)? And whenever you are on your periods, you put that to hold the blood.

Babeta also worried about their parents, who lost their relatives, and her maternal grandmother's getting older in the refugee camp. Babeta would love to see their parents retire with dignity for the remaining years of their lives. But for now,

Babeta continues, "struggling with my classes … but once I graduate, I would like to do CNA [Certified Nursing Assistant] and work with elderly nursing home patients."

Byamungu

Byamungu's parents hailed from the Democratic Republic of Congo and fled to the Tanzania refugee camp where Byamungu was born as a Congolese citizen. Life in the refugee camp was hard as Byamungu's family struggled with food scarcity and other basic household needs. Byamungu noted that

> whenever I came home, there was no kerosene, or lights, to study at night. There was fear in the refugee camp about the war that was happening in Congo because more of our relatives were still in hiding, especially my grandparents. There was also constant fear in the refugee camp because of fear from the locals.

Byamungu attended school at the French-speaking Tanzania refugee camp. Subsequently, Byamungu speaks Kiswahili and French fluently. Albeit, Byamungu confided that they "struggle[d] with math and science because I never had a teacher who taught me well [in both camp and U.S. schooling endeavors]."

Through many comparison examples, Byamungu shared intense frustration with their educational experiences in both the refugee camp and the U.S. public school. Byamungu explained that U.S. education

> was quite supreme compared to what I had been getting back in the refugee camp... If only an individual can understand what they are learning in school, then the individual can become successful in the United States. … [However,] nobody was going for the parade, no singing of the national

> anthem, and there were no permanent classes, in which the teachers were coming to the student … but in the United States, students were coming to the teachers.

Byamungu struggled in U.S. school due to language barriers and did not understand the school culture because it significantly differed from the refugee camp learning process. Furthermore, Byamungu experienced insults and bullying in the U.S. School because of color, nationality, and refugee status, and "even today, the trauma still haunts me."

Byamungu felt that kids in the refugee camp were more disciplined than the kids in the United States because the refugee kids had corporal punishment. Generally, such violent discipline does not happen in U.S. public schools. Although Byamungu described it as a bullying method but stated that the practice helped solve disciplinary problems. Byamungu explained how

> sometimes you can be walking around the school, and you get insulted because of the color of your skin or from the environment you came from. For example, one boy shouted behind me, "shit-hole boy, go back home" …I was ignoring the other bad boy and kept ignoring them. There were many more incidents of insulting behavior, but those were the most of my struggles … which I think are not safe.

Additionally, Byamungu lives in an unsafe and insecure neighborhood. Byamungu lives in an area where "the sounds of bullets echo every week." Just outside Byamungu's home, there are people selling drugs and smoking—consequently, fear and suspicion continually cloud Byamungu's mind. Byamungu's parents were traumatized by the events around them, which also caused revisits remembering their

past traumatic and chaotic experiences. Byamungu described how "they always cross their fingers, not knowing when a bullet will enter the house."

Complicating matters, Byamungu is the only child in the family who learned to speak English fluently, so their parents always rely on Byamungu as a family interpreter. This translation responsibility causes Byamungu to miss classes due to accompanying their parent(s) to different service providers. Since Byamunga's sister is learning to speak English, she now joins in helping with the family's interpretation needs. Byamungu expressed significant frustration over the educational, personal, and cultural hardships the situation caused,

> One final thing I want to tell you is that I have missed classes while translating for my parents in places like DFS [Division of Family Services], for Insurance, for the Doctor, and for many more. These places sometimes share with me things that are very private, that is so hard to share with my parents, especially my mother. Culturally it is so hard for me to talk to my mother about her body, although for now, my sister is doing it. I remember a nurse asked me something, and when I told my mother, my father was uncomfortable, and so I decided to ask my mother any other question and gave the nurse what I saw as the right answer.

Subsequently, Byamungu does not know what they will do in college because they are prepared to work, help the family, and then, "after that, join a college or develop a career." Byamungu relies on courage, hope, faith, and resiliency to meet harsh demands. When faced with a situation, Byamungu always looks to past encounters, never gives up, and emphasizes that if they had the power to change

anything, it would be the chronic racism and bullying in the school. Byamungu shared a deep, heart-wrenching concern over the lack of love and dignity that teachers, students, and administrators shared for the refugees. However, Byamungu leans on spirituality, explaining, “when you start doing good, people try to tell you, you cannot do it; therefore, I get the spiritual energy when they tell me you cannot do it.” Byamungu also admonishes that “by ignoring these kids, the school is making them believe they do not belong in this country, thus, leaving them surrounded by an environment full of bad choices.

Confidence

Born to Liberian parents, Confidence came into this world in the refugee camp; thus, Confidence only knows Liberia through their Liberian parents, friends, and relatives’ stories. Confidence bore witness to their parents’ struggles as they lost family members, relatives, and home. Confidence described how their parents went hungry due to the refugee camp's destitute conditions. Despite such sparse living, Confidence claimed that they were one of the lucky because they attended Catholic school. The school never had enough resources resulting in poor learning conditions and improvised learning methods wherein Confidence sometimes used paper scraps instead of books or wrote on the floor. The students often memorized their formulas through singing and retained knowledge through memory. Throughout their camp life, Confidence admitted that they and their “parents were in constant fear.”

Thus, Confidence was a fear-filled child relocating from a Liberian-rooted refugee camp to America. Sadly, Confidence’s new U.S. home was amid unsafe and insecure neighborhoods, intensifying the difficulty of acclimating to their new,

unfamiliar environment. Confidence enrolled in a Kansas City public school where, despite speaking fluent English, Confidence's accent exasperated their immediate frustrations due to peer and teacher bullying. Surprisingly, Confidence explained that when they came to the United States, they did not know racism existed in America.

Thus, Confidence did not understand the difference between "colors" and genuine racism because they believed the "terms meant favoritism and not racism." Furthermore, for example, Confidence did not possess the luxuries of other students, like a TV, and that inadequacy caused critical communication issues. On one such occurrence, Confidence went to school during heavy snow because, without a TV, Confidence was unaware of school cancelations due to inclement weather. Complicating the issue, a passing bus driver saw Confidence and their sister out in the cold. Still, the driver could not understand them because of their accent, so the siblings suffered the freezing temperatures much longer. Confidence explained that they "learned very quickly" that were definite cultural differences between Africa and America because of incidents like that.

> When we came to the United States, the Agency put us in this apartment that was with roaches and was lead-infested. My younger brother became extremely sick for a long time, and when he was evaluated, he tested extremely high with lead. The Health Department instructed a social worker to evacuate us from the building because we did not know anybody else to help us. Our life started in the wrong way because nobody counseled us or introduced us to this new society. The building looks beautiful but is more dangerous and poisonous than the hatch in the refugee camp. Nobody did

> share with us with the racism and struggle that African Americans have been facing for centuries. The pain of the new life was like a storm, a storm that you must carry your own cross in it. We struggled a lot, yes, there was help in terms of food and clothing, but by God, there was a lot of psychological torture.

Confidence also shared how they "struggled academically" because they spent too long in the ELL class, which caused their current struggles to learn things they should have learned years ago. In addition, such efforts frequently caused Confidence to revisit their past by pondering how they were "mistreated by teachers and school staff, who [they] trusted as people who would guide [them] to the truth."

> For example, I had to do TB [tuberculosis] tests over and over again. The TB. test will always show positive because of the immunization that I took in Africa. Those tests that I took were not necessary. During the Ebola epidemic, my TB test became an issue. Knowing that I come from Liberia, I will always be asked if I have been back to Liberia or if my parents or relatives have been to Liberia. Therefore, they will always look at me with an eye of a [Master] and try to kill my spirit. Frankly speaking, I face a lot of prejudice in school, which has a lot to do with racism.

Confidence firmly believes that they would have made better choices if they had learned about what they would experience in the new world, the culture of their new community, and the associated historical experiences, like the existing centuries-old racism. Still, Confidence remains appreciative of their experience in U.S. schools, explaining that the negative and the positive experiences contributed to who they are

now. Confidence claims to understand the different justice systems in this country and is aware of their surroundings. Confidence emphasized that they are alive despite tremendous struggles, and Confidence remains optimistic about the American people and the future of refugees here. Confidence firmly asserted that "there are more good people" than bad.

Crescent

Crescent was born in Liberia and moved to a refugee camp with their parents during the Liberian Civil War. The war devastated civilians, claimed many innocent victims' lives, and displaced more than a million individuals into refugee camps within the strife-filled neighboring countries. Crescent and their parents struggled greatly during life in the refugee camp, where they lived in constant fear, desperate to secure necessities like water, sanitation, and food. Education was not their priority; food, water, and safety were far more critical.

Crescent's schooling often occurred under the trees but sometimes in crowded classrooms built by the UNHCR. Although they attended school daily, they had to bring their chairs to school and sorely lacked materials and resources. At night, they could not study because it was challenging to find a candle or kerosene to light a lamp. Frequently, Crescent and their family had to abandon the refugee camp due to fears of imminent attacks on the camp, forcing the refugees to run "helter-skelter" seeking safety. Because of the conditions in the refugee camp, education proved a significantly secondary priority.

Thus, upon arriving in the United States, Crescent was immersed in vastly different environments and norms. Crescent observed that

> what was rare back in the refugee camp was found to be plentiful in the United States, especially related to food, educational materials, and resources. On the other hand, refugee students respected their teachers in the refugee camp, while in the United States, it seems rare for a student to respect a teacher.

Some challenges Crescent faced when they enrolled in school included culture shocks and language barriers. Crescent explained that,

> Back in Africa, when we were in school, we would stand in line in the morning and we do a devotion … We salute the flag. We say the national anthem … but here in America, you can just walk swiftly in your classroom, and you sit down, and you don't sing the national anthem and the pledge and stuff like that. The English language was hard to understand because the way we pronounce things in English is different from the way Americans pronounce it. So, for that reason, we would be very slow, really slow. One other thing that challenged was reading … I was not a good reader in Africa … we also do not have a textbook to be reading … but here, we have to read and do assignments on daily bases.

Additionally, Crescent constantly faced "bullying and will be called derogatory terms," mainly because they were not "assimilating" into street-drugs, alcohol, and tobacco-smoking peer groupings. Although Crescent struggled academically, they continued to learn, prepared for graduation, and remained hopeful and appreciative:

> Uh, I really do not know [what my achievements are], but what I can say is at least I have a future, but not as I wanted, and that is how the world is;

> maybe my children will get it, God willing, better than me in Education. What helped me the most was when I got a counselor who will always take me to [their] office and encourage me and serve as a tutor for me. … Always patience, [the counselor] will guide me through reading and writing and explain to me the fundamental of reading and writing in American society. I wish [my counselor] understood where I came from, or my culture, [so they] could have done better. … Anyways, gradually, I started to pick up as time went by, so that so is one of the helps I got from my counselor. … I will say that I am blessed to be in America. … The experience I have so far here, I was able to learn and be self-sufficient. … I have a job and planning to stay between my job and school so that I can pay back to my people here and my community.

But Crescent also feels betrayed by the United States because the country has not responded to the requests of Liberians begging for assistance to end the fighting even though freed Americans founded Liberia. Because of the historical connection between the United States and Liberia, Crescent expected African Americans and the entire U.S. nation to welcome them as Liberians. However, as a green card holder, Crescent feared the xenophobic harangues touted by President Trump [45th U.S. President, 2016 - 2020], who repeatedly spoke and acted against refugees and immigrants. Furthermore, crescent worries for their parents, who rarely sleep due to the anti-immigrant news and listening to President Trump talk negatively about refugees and immigrants. Crescent explained that they and their family's worries and fears continued to grow under those conditions. Even so, Crescent maintains hope for

refugees and immigrants coming to the United States to improve their lives. Crescent believes everyone can live in harmony in America. Crescent's last refugee hope is that they will one day become a U.S. citizen and never need to fear xenophobic discrimination again. Despite the anti-immigrant, anti-refugee rhetoric and community disparities, Crescent remains proud to call the United States home.

Dabor

Dabor was born in Darfur, Sudan, and attended kindergarten there. Still, soon after, Dabor left Darfur because of the war, pursuing relative safety in the Kakuma Refugee Camp, where hunger and uncertainty were the norms of the day. Dabor joked about "learning hardship itself, although the school never graded us on hardship … and that hardship was an obstacle in [our] learning."

Dabor learned to speak Swahili and English to defend themself against the locals and the police. Dabor appreciated the refugee camp because it held a semblance of peace, but Dabor worried about their future due to the overwhelming fear of the police and the locals. Thus, Dabor struggled to survive in the refugee camp. In the morning, Dabor went to school and then worked in the garden in the afternoon to supplement the family allotment of food given by UNHCR. In the refugee camp school that Dabor attended, the Teacher could not manage many students in their classroom, so education was minimal. In the afternoon, Dabor had no time to study. Subsequently, growing up in the refugee camp, Dabor had no real education.

At 19 years old, Dabor came to the United States expecting to enroll in school and finally get an education, but, Dabor was over the enrollment age limit. So, Dabor's

resettlement case manager focused on a simple GED [general education diploma] so Dabor could help the family instead.

> The worst was … I wasted a lot of time finding the proper education … not process. Nobody helped me, and even my refugee agency did not help me. I remember the case manager telling me I needed to enroll [in] GED, which I did not know about it. But anyway, God was always with me. … It is through that hope that I became successful.

Dabor struggled with language, general education, and many other challenges, including working late-hours to help their parents financially. Dabor also helped their parents by interpreting and translating documents for them. Dabor held onto hope to lift spirits and achieve excellence,

> What helped the most was hope … and attending the school. I became frustrated when they refused me to go to high school, I almost gave up in life, but my hope and the job core helped me get my high school and career. I believe through education; one can do what is good and right.

Dabor encountered good people and bad friends while attending school in the United States. Being a foreigner who could not speak English well, Dabor struggled in the first days of school but became friends with others who struggled and offered advice. Not permitted to attend high school, Dabor could not join the soccer team, his dream career. Dabor remains outraged that they could not enroll in high school to continue higher education but is also content with attending career school. Dobor often reflects,

> I think if you are at the age of high school, they should not deny you the high school. I am told that refugee children are not helped in school because the school only minds about the outcome of tests. I think they should teach us and not test us. For now, the flame of my hope is burning and illuminating.

While Dabor remains hopeful and incredibly grateful for what this country provides, they believe refugees should get proper advice when they come to the country so they can make better choices from the start.

> I am still in School, but I hope I start my own business in plumbing. I have been trained well. I am also thinking about studying construction and solar roofing, then buy houses from Northeast, build and renovate and start renting them. I have a plan.

Dabor also has a plan B wherein, if the career path does not work out, they will join the U.S. Air Force to have a job, defend their newly adopted homeland, and get a free education while serving the Nation that helped while in need.

Daud

Daud was born in Darfur, Sudan, and started learning the Quran in the traditional school, so they never attended a secular institution. Daud admonished that "the government did not build enough schools for the people of Darfur, so there was no meaningful secular school in the area." When the war started in Darfur, Daud lost many loved ones and witnessed the horrible murders of close relatives and neighbors., Tears fell while reflecting on those atrocities, and Daud cried, "I do not know how to describe it." Daud escaped with their family to the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya.

In the refugee camp, Daud did not attend school but did learn the Quran and Arabic. In the refugee camp, education was a prerequisite and not a prime need because the family struggled to put food on the table. Nevertheless, Daud memorized the Quran at 14 years old and continued studying the science of Transliteration of the Quran. Daud loves memorization and still uses it to help in school. Daud resettled in the United States and enrolled in school 15 days after arrival.

At first, Daud was thrilled, but soon realized that they must face new challenges; foremost was English language proficiency. Daud struggled with the unfamiliar environment, the culture, and the people. Daud was bullied a lot by the students, called derogatory terms, and could not defend themself. Without any relative or guide, who could read in English and help with homework, Daud grappled with academic work at school and home. Subsequently, Daud felt lonely at school,

> It is tough when you do not have friends… when you do not know people in school, and you do not understand the language, and the facility, and the environment, and the culture, especially when everything is different. We really have to go into this struggle and a lot that I cannot say right now because I do not want to cry. At the time I came here, especially at the time I went to school, I had no friends, I had no people I knew in the school, … I had lack of language, the culture was different, and the rule in the school was not the same as the one I am used to, and not as I expected.

Daud shared the excruciatingly, unbearably distressing experience of racism in Darfur, refugee camps, and the United States. Daud explained how

> racism in the United States seems hidden and silent and is quite different from that of Africa. … What people in America think of Africa is different! They think people in Africa are subhuman. Behind the brain of the teachers, they also think like that. But the good thing is that they give you the American smile … which is people smile even if they do not mean it. You have to face these difficult and different challenges a lot, … especially if you are people of color. Racism is the biggest problem. … People say there is no racism, … that is a lie, man. That is a lie. I can guarantee you that this Country is one of the most top racist countries in the world. I can diffidently say that. People say it is not a racist country. Yes, it is. If you are not one of the people with color, you cannot tell. But if your wise enough, just listen to when Trump [Donald Trump, 45th U.S. President, 2016 – 2020] opens his mouth or some of the leaders say something about race in America.

Daud finds it hard to explain and share individual experiences with others, especially experiences involving racial injustice and racism, because very few can share their encounters. Daud also finds it hard to share their experiences and feelings with the other Africans who came to the United States centuries ago because they see the newly arrived Africans as "a foreigner and not as a person who is suffering like them." Daud believes patience, hope, ignoring insults, praying, and remembering where they came from, helped them to avoid gangs, street drugs, and stay out of jail. Daud is thankful for their educational experiences but remains dissatisfied with how teachers, administrators, and other students treated the refugees. Daud intends "to join the military to build my career."

Eemay

Born in the refugee camp, Eemay never got to see their parents' home, Somalia; nor how their parents fled for safety to the refugee camp in Kenya in 1992. Eemay's parents were newlyweds when the Somalian war started, and they fled to safety. While in the refugee camp, Eemay's mother gave birth to nine children. Two of Eemay's siblings married in the refugee camp and had children. So, all Eemay knows about Somalia is through their parents and relatives. Eemay did not attend a formal school in the refugee camp; instead, Eemay participated at the Koran school and memorized a third of the Quran at an early age before relocating to the United States at an incredibly early age, so they did not have educational experience.

Unfortunately, the family was separated when they resettled in different states because of family composition and refugee resettlement assignments. The family relocated to parts of Texas, North Carolina, and Missouri and struggled to unite in this new world. By the time the family consolidated in Missouri, Eemay had moved across much of America, which made it even harder for them to make friends. Eemay struggled with English and cultural issues,

> I struggled with reading because English was not my first language … and then after that, just moving across the country and just going to multiple different schools … and so one of the challenges that I had was that of different schools' new friends—the exact challenge about making friends as someone that did not speak the language and then communication. I think because I had to move to so many different places and explain the same situation that I was in, that is, I just don't like to shut off people. I didn't

> explain my situation as well going forward. I hate to explain myself over and over again about my experience because most these people think I come from the jungle. I had this girl ask me about the lions in Africa and if I was able to see one in the jungle.

However, the hardest thing for Eemay was the accent. Even though Eemay learned English, people looked at them differently because of their accents. But Eemay was glad they went through all those tribulations because that helped them with their communication skills.

Eemay described three distinct cultures, White American, African American, and their parents' culture. One of Eemay's main challenges was fitting into people's demands in these diverse cultures. Eemay found that the school's central culture is White because all the history taught in the school is about the experience of the White communities and less about other communities. Later, when Eemay moved to a suburban school, they got a good teacher who understood them better and could lead them toward success. Subsequently, Eemay's academics and learning picked up. While wearing their "hijab" and being comfortable, Eemay joined the Sports Club, where the students were welcoming. Eemay strongly encourages the school and counselors to inspire other African students,

> I think the only thing I could say is, (pause) counselors in high schools should encourage students from other countries to pursue higher education. They should be there by heart and physically. They should call students when they are in the junior high or senior years to the office and discuss with them on their next option and how they can move from high school to

> college, and they should be able to explain to them the opportunities that are available for them. … Like for example, some students even do not know about financial aid that helps them to college and how they can plan for the feature. So, I encourage teachers in high school should help and involve refugee, Mexican, and African American students to be educated. … I feel ashamed and see a lot of injustice in this Country, but I always keep quiet about it when I think of the Country; I come from Somalia. What bothers me is not the experience that I had by myself but the stories that I hear from my friends and relatives from the other school districts, which I also faced from other school districts.

Eemay remains happy and appreciative of what they have. Eemay is also thankful to the teacher who could talk to and hear them so that they can be who they are now. Eemay is also grateful to their family members who supported them as a community.

Erasto

Erasto's parents were teenagers when they arrived in the refugee camp, married, and began their family there. Each of Erasto's parents has unique experiences of the Somalian war. Erasto did not attend a formal school in the refugee camp but participated at an Islamic School. In the Islamic School, Erasto learned how to read, write, and speak in Arabic, purely meant to memorize the holy book, the Quran. Erasto could remember the entire Koran in 2 1/2 years but needed to stay longer to learn the transliteration of the text.

Erasto Came to the United States at 12 years old, and the U.S. educational experience presented a challenging shock. Erasto grappled with significant issues in the

new country, and negative emotions and stress had detrimental effects on Erasto. Without any cultural orientation, Erasto struggled with adjustment in the United States, personally, with family, school, and society. Erasto explained how they felt about not knowing what to do when enrolled in the school,

> I did not know what everybody was saying. When the teacher, (pause) even if the teacher was trying to help me, I would not know because there was no somebody, there was nobody who is, was there to translate for me. So, it would be like, (pause) and even a deaf person would be better than that person, deaf person would be like, and understanding stuff just because of the sign language, but I would be worse than that because I do not understand what the teacher was trying to say.

Additionally, adopting the new social behaviors of the school created conflicts between Erasto, their parents, and their peers. Erasto alluded to the disputes that refugee girls faced at home and school.

> Oh yes, some of the girls, like I said, culture-wise or religious; either way, some of the girls feel pressured by this new society when they have a hijab on, I do not know if that makes sense, but girls would be asked 'Why you are wearing this? What is this? Why do you have this on? Why you do not take it off here, you are in a better place now?'… Hmm, so, you know, some girls tend to take off the hijab when they are like, you know, on their way to school, and then put them back on when they are going back home because of that pressure. They do not want to deal with that. And so, this pressure in the school and the pressure at home.

Erasto was shocked that the teachers and the school administration were doing nothing regarding racism. Erasto felt that "people hated them just because of their color and where they came from." Erasto found

> it to be very much upsetting when the school and the administration do not get involved to stop this crisis … so the only option left for me and the people like me is to give up school altogether. Racism - there is a lot, like you know, especially, like when you come from the continent of Africa. They may say there is no racism … but there is still a lot of racism because most of this, the most I would say…. Many kids tend to just ignore school. They would be like; I would rather like, you know, have a job, will do this instead of doing that.

Erasto feels the ELL Program did not help much because the ELL classroom was more of a place to bring all international students together. Erasto admitted they did not learn well in the ELL classroom because the Program did not connect the student to the language. Erasto felt that the Program was not valuable for cognitive or comprehensive language development, explaining that most refugee children who went through ELL programs still took ELL classes even when they enrolled in college classes. Erasto also described losing other subjects' academic content due to wasted time in the ELL classrooms.

Erasto is devoted to advocating for refugee children to get cultural orientation in the school and within the refugee resettlement program. Erasto believes that teachers need to know the refugee children because they cannot teach if they do not know where their students come from or what they experience. In addition, Erasto wants to see

more teachers helping the students upon arrival with onsite interpreters and translators to aid newcomers and introduce existing students to the refugees, thereby promoting people in a community environment.

Interview Themes

I identified twelve overall themes throughout the interviews: Escape, cultural experience, U.S. resettlement, academic shock, intolerance, toil/exertion, challenges, recurrence, defensive mechanism, beneficial encounter, academic effect, and social illumination (see Table 1). These themes contained codes drawn from phrases, expressions, and ideas that participants shared, which I analyzed through the crystalized theoretical framework lens constructed from SCT, MT, and CRT. Very few discrepancies emerged; however, I present a detailed discussion of those cases in the Discrepancies section of this Chapter.

Table 1

Cross Interview Analysis

Theme	Code	Ale	Assana	Babeta	Byamungu	Confidence	Crescent	Dabor	Daud	Eemay	Erasto
Escape	Flight	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Hardship	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Refugees	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Inferior schooling					X		X	X	X	X
Cultural experience	Conflict.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Shock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Connection	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
U.S. resettlement	Resettlement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Environmental change	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Orientation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Academic shock	Gap	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Language	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	ELL-seclusion	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Fail Testing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Translation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Intolerance	Racism	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Prejudice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Stereotype	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Injustice	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toil/ exertion	Struggles	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Burden	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Disparities	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Documentation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Parental	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Challenges	Bullying	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Hate/violence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Drugs/gangs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Security/ safety	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Recurrence	Revisit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Trauma/ shock	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Isolation/ lonely	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Withdrawal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Defensive mechanism	Hope	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Resilience	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Confidence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Beneficial encounter	Love/ acceptance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Help	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Academic effects	Education										
	Work/career	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Dropout	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Social illumination	Reform	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Community	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Note. Discrepant cases are highlighted for identification ease.

Escape

The escape theme was related to breaking away from harm, anguish, trials, suffering, and distress. Four interpretive codes supported this theme: Flight, *hardship*, *refugees*, and *informal schooling*. *Flight* encompassed fleeing from fight, war, oppression, abuse, and victimization in favor of safety. *Hardship* refers to severe suffering, adversity, and discomfort due to supply shortages necessary to maintain life. *Refugees* included the influx of displaced persons who crossed national boundaries seeking asylum. Finally, *informal schooling* pertains to learning experiences outside formal school settings and institutions.

Many participants shared origin country-related traumatic experiences extending their parents' experiences since the participants were born in the refugee camps. For example, Confidence stated that,

> I never had experience in Liberia because I was born in the refugee camp, and the only experience I had of Liberia and the war was through my mom and other relatives who suffered a lot and lost many relatives and loved ones.

Every participant shared similar stories but with different experiences through their or their parents' journeys. For example, Eemay shared their *flight* from their parents' perspectives since Eemay was still in their mother's womb:

> Although I claim to be from Somalia, I was not born in Somalia. I was born in the refugee camp. All that I know about Somali is what I hear from my parents, relatives, and my reading and news. My parents went through hardships, death (pause, tears dropping), and even rape. I do not want to say more about it.

The *hardship* code centered on severe suffering or adversity and feelings of discomfort due to supply shortages needed to maintain life. Crescent's explanation emphasized their horrible experiences:

> Yes, it was very hard because, for one fact, you cannot be hungry and then want to learn. First, our priority was to find a way to look for food because if you cannot eat, you cannot learn, so it is all about both hunger and learning.

Assana explained *hardship* in the refugee camps and how they tried to rearrange their daily lives while hoping for education:

> So, I was not getting full education because the environment that I was in that was one that compelled me to do a lot of work in order to help my parent get food for us. Simply, I left school because of helping my parents.

Conversely, Babetta explained *hardship*:

> So, the school was kind of a difficult one because sometimes we can go to school hungry and no transportation. We had to walk to school for miles, and sometimes we stayed at home because we had to find something to eat. So, there was a lot of challenges.

The code *Refugees* represented the influx of displaced persons who crossed national boundaries to settle in a temporary settlement camp. Crescent explained how the daily struggles continued in these refugee camps:

> Other challenges are that we keep on running away from fear for our lives because we do not know what will happen the next, whether someone will attack our camp or not. So, constantly we were just looking up and getting

> ready to move at any time. So basically, education was off and on. I cannot even remember good education in the refugee camp.

Daud described how difficult life in camps was for *refugees*:

> Well, living in the refugee camp is tough, really tough. Especially the people who live over there; they do not care about education at all because they think about how to survive. They do not have a lot of facilities in schools, not enough qualified teachers who will explain the importance of education, so they experience over there in the refugee camp is really hard. I mean, really hard. Nobody cares about it. We did not spend much in school because we are hungry. The situation in the camp is tough because the parents have experienced pain in the past and got a lot of worry in the camp.

Confidence described the constant fear the *refugees* faced while in the refugee camp:

> I was 13, and a lot of times, we were hungry. We had no books most of the time, and if not, we used papers, and if we didn't have books, we used to write on the floor. Sometimes we wrote on the desks. That was one big chair where a lot of children sat on it. That was school life. It was also very hard to get food, and we constantly feared war and genocide to start in the refugee camp itself.

Informal Schooling code occurred outside formal (school) settings and institutions where most participants attended Christian or informal Islamic education. Erasto shared what their informal education included:

> Well, in Africa, we only had Islamic schools over there, and most of it which was memorizing the Koran and learning about the religion. That's all. Also,

> well, they would have some schools but they, but they'll only be private schools if you have the money to go there. I was in the refugee Camp.

Crescent reported *informal schooling* started by the community without a formal curriculum:

> Well, when I was living back in Africa or at the refugee camp, the education system, people were trying to go to school, and in that process, we were taking our own chairs to go to school because we wanted to learn. Our teachers do not have all the means, so, at the end of the day, they will try whatever possible means they have to make us learn something so that we can be useful in our community.

Daud discussed *informal schooling* from a different perspective:

> Yes! Yes! Alluhduliallah [praise be to God]. In the refugee camp, I went to Madarasa [Islamic School]. I went to Duksi [Quran Memorization School] while I was in the Islamic school. I finished my Quran. I finished Quran in Arabic, called khitmi [Memorization of the Quran book]. I finished when I was 14 or almost 15 years old, and, Allhumduliallah [praise be to God], that is all I did. Mostly, I did not get a chance to go to school, but I was able to go to duksi.

Participants' experiences supported Fransen et al.'s (2018) declaration that, during the initial refugee experiences, children usually end up in a temporary condition where they may not have a school to attend or a proper education. Like Hynd (2021), I found that some participants' recollections stemmed from the commonplace day-by-day contentions and survival struggles to get by in brutal conditions, not extraordinary

snapshots of savagery they endured during their escape. Every participant described life and death struggles during their flight and subsequent internment.

Thus, the escape theme sheds light on forced migration, the experiences of those escaping oppression or human rights infringement, and the fragile new social sphere that aligns with participants' original nation and their new settlement. MT positions home country conditions and transnationalism to developing cultural evolution (Lee, 1966; Schiller et al., 1992; Stark & Taylor, 1991; Todaro & Smith, 2006), which provided solid foundational support to this theme. USA for UNHCR (n.d.a) reported that the average time refugees spend in camps fluctuates depending upon the emergency and the root cause of the catastrophe. Thus, many refugees spend decades interned.

In circumstances where mass uprooting impacts a country, refugees might spend many years residing in refugee camps wherein it is normal to have children born in the camp with multiple generations experiencing childhood there (USA for UNHCR, n.d.a). In these circumstances, the UNHCR provides more substantial shelters conforming to the local village communities. In addition, amenities are extended to incorporate education, assisting refugee families with modifying their lives (USA for UNHCR, n.d.b). Unfortunately, refugee education is minimal and contains lopsided student-teacher quality due to exceptionally high populations in most refugee camp schools (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). Dryden-Peterson noted that educators focused on rote education and preaching to students rather than offering the opportunity to pose inquiries or participate in imaginative or creative contemplations and critical thinking. For children's development to be comprehended, it is necessary to examine cultural

influences on learning and behavior within the context of engaging in activities that call for cognitive and communication skills, and sociocultural theory provides this essential perspective in this theme.

Cultural Experience

The cultural experience theme relates to participants' ideas, customs, and social behaviors about past environments and adaptations. Three interpretive codes developed into the cultural experience theme: Cultural-*conflict*, -shock, and -connection. *Cultural conflict* pertains to traditional beliefs and ideas clashing with new behavior and attitude standards. *Culture shock* included societal changes and new ways of living that excluded participants from their familiar culture, environment, or societal norms when transplanting them into new cultures, settings, and standards. Finally, *cultural connection* connected past traits, characteristics, and ways of life from participants' past environment and merged relationship information from the past into the present or future.

The refugee students experienced *conflicting* new behaviors and attitudes, which caused and intensified cultural struggles due to the *cultural conflict*. Eemey explained the *cultural conflict* of embracing their new U.S. culture:

> We are normally taken to schools whereby there are other Africans who came to the United States a long time ago. So, we have to learn and serve three cultures that is the one of African American, that of the whites, and that of our parents.

Confidence related *cultural conflict*:

> One time, we were writing, and the end of my pencil broke, and I retrieved a knife to sharpen it. However, one student was watching me, and he became scared because I was in possession of a weapon that was prohibited in school. I didn't know if it was an offense because, in Africa, it is common, but in the United States, they use sharpeners instead. Laughter! I was called into the office for disciplinary action with my sister. They requested one of my parents come to school. The next day I brought my mother, and after she explained everything that, it was common in Africa.

Daud mentioned how a smile caused *cultural conflict* due to different cultural practices:

> What people in America think of Africa is different! They think people in Africa are subhuman. Behind the brain of the teachers, they also think like that. But the good thing is that they give you the American smile, which is people smile even if they do not mean it.

The interpretive code *culture shock* emerged with the participants' introduction to societal change and their new way of living. Participants felt cut off from their familiar cultures, environments, and societal norms by being transplanted into a new culture, environment, and standards. Eemey exasperatedly shared:

> We are normally taken to schools whereby there are other Africans who came to the United States a long time ago. So, we have to learn and serve three cultures that is the one of African American, that of the whites, and that of our parents. The white culture is that of the school; for example, when we learn history, we talk about Christopher Columbus as the man who

discovered the United States and that whites have been welcomed by Native Americans, and that is why we have thanksgiving and that power seems to be in their hands, and then politely pretend to be intelligent. And then, if we get out of the school, we have to face the other cultures; for example, if you do not know how to Rap, then you are in problems, or you have no certain moves, then you do not belong to the people. When the Hispanics look at us, they see us as African Americans. The Whites also see us as the African Americans (pause), but African Americans do not see us as African American; they see us as others or African or foreigners. And then, finally, our parents also see us as rebellious, who do not want to follow their religion and culture. That is why some girls wear Hijab from home and remove it before the bus, while the Hijabi [one who wears Hijab] girls are harassed by other students or are seen as the others.

Interpretive code *cultural connection* encompassed the past traits, characteristics, and lifestyles of participants' past environment. All participants had deep ties to their home country, even those who never saw their origin country. For example, Confidence established their *cultural connection* by reexamining the "lone star" of the Liberian flag, which resembled the U.S. 13-stripe flag, but with one star:

> The name and history of Liberia evolved from the return of the slaves from America to Africa after slavery was banned. The stories I hear from people are that Liberia was established by the freed slaves, but actually, there were the natives who lived in the land before the arrival of the freed slaves. In terms of leadership, it was the previous freed slaves who always held the

> helm. They treated the locals the way the whites treated them in America, that is why the country was in problems. The people are divided over the American History. The educated or the rich became the freed slaves from America and, therefore, had more control over the natives. But the lone star was a symbol of unity in Liberia.

Participants agreed that it was difficult to adjust to another home, environment, and customs; the process caused them to feel as if they did not fit anyplace. However, when analyzing participant statements, I found that most refugee families did not believe they should disregard their inborn cultures to squeeze into American culture. This concept supported BRYCS's (n.d.b) report that it is difficult to find an equilibrium between new and old cultures; hence this polarity makes it challenging to conform to their new life. BRYCS further assumed that adapting to their unique cultures becomes difficult if refugees stay in communal environments and do not engage with their new town and school.

Additionally, participants' experiences supported BRYCS's (n.d.b) determination that many Americans obstruct refugees' social change by not allowing refugees into their lives and communities. BRYCS noted that media stories and politicians impact and uphold stereotypes of the newcomers, a practice in direct conflict with Barkley's (2019) emphasis that educators cannot establish individualized guidance or inspirational conditions without knowing their students.

Applying SCT, classroom relationships between students and teachers aid learning; thus, relationships promote participation in social interactions and active learning tasks (Drew, 2022). Accordingly, profoundly successful educators deliberately

open doors to discover their students' cultures and find ways of conveying to students that they are known and seen (Barkley, 2019). Awareness and strong connections among students, educators, and guardians are essential to building a harmonious community (Schaps, 2003). Those strong connections are the core of community building (Schaps, 2003). According to Schaps, awareness and strong relationships empower students from different settings to bring their inspirations, sentiments, and encounters into the classrooms, thereby internalizing those mental patterns.

However, Western traditionalists protect the current curriculum, subjugated by Euro-American male writers (Banks & Banks, 2004). Their analysis extended from an epistemological structure that works against diversity and society, which was present in the cultural experience theme. According to Gay (2003), "students and teachers should become scholars of ethnic and cultural diversity and generate their own curriculum content" (p. 171). Multicultural education becomes limitless on many different levels by continually reforming education, renewing and energizing society, and creating culturally effective education grounded in democracy, justice, and equity for all. Therefore, CRT aided my understanding of how racism shaped and integrated into U.S. public education.

SCT supports students' learning and development from their interactions and experiences with the society around them (Lantolf, 2000; Thompson, 2013; Wertsch, 1991, 1998). Through the lens of SCT, the cultural experience theme exposed the importance of children and educators shaping cultural classroom connections, thereby supporting learning through understanding the varying cultural environments that

shaped people. According to MT's tenets, learning from SCT must include the entire cultural journey, including U.S. Resettlement.

U.S. Resettlement

U.S. resettlement related to the durable solution for refugees resulting from international cohesion and responsibility-sharing to protect those who could not defend themselves. Three interpretive codes formed the U.S. resettlement theme: *Resettlement*, *environmental change*, and *orientation*. Resettlement encompassed the refugee transfer from asylum countries to the United States and their introduction to their new environment. *Environmental change* refers to the situation and understanding refugees encounter in their new world. *Orientation* included the essential knowledge, skills, treatment, and abilities needed for resettlement.

Resettlement challenges abounded during participant interviews. Ale explained their unfamiliar environmental experience based on communication:

> When we arrived in the USA, I did not know English at the time. But I had so much difficulty getting to make friends and getting to like the languages here because it was really hard and difficult to learn the language.

Whereas, Confidence explained their experience relative to security:

> When we came to the United States, the Agency put us in this apartment that was with roaches and lead-infested; my younger brother became very sick for a long time when he was tested, he tested extremely with lead. The Health Department instructed a social worker to evacuate us from the building because we did not know anybody else to help us. Our life started in the wrong way because nobody counseled us or introduced us to this new

> society. The building looks beautiful but more dangerous and poisonous than the hatch in the refugee camp.

Erasto explained their *resettlement* encounter as a newcomer:

> Well, I came here as 12 or 13 years old, and by that time, I was, and I had no idea, and when the agency brought us here, they didn't give us any sort of cultural information [about] what we would expect. All they [the resettlement agency] did was take us to school and register, and then that was it. So, it was really hard for me to transform from my culture and my previous schools to this new one. Which led me to stay home, sometimes not wanting to go to school just because I didn't understand the language.

Erasto also provided *resettlement* advice for arriving newcomers' needs:

> I would say when a student comes to a new place, they're not going to fit in in the first year or so. They will have, they will need to have, somebody, guide them; like help them, like you know, fit in. Help them understand the environment because things, like you, can't just adapt to a new environment the second, like you are there like; you need time in order to for you to adapt. So I would just say mostly, when the agencies bring people here, give them that time they need to adapt before they throw them back in the streets.

Environmental change encompassed the situation and understanding the participants encountered when trying to understand their new world. Crescent elucidated their experience via frustration at lack of respect:

> Okay, my challenges were culture shock language barrier because, like in the school back in Africa when we were in school, we would stand in line in the

> morning and we do a devotion, we salute the flag, we say the national anthem, but here in America you can just walk swiftly in your classroom, and you sit down, and you don't sing the national anthem and the pledge and stuff like that.

Dabor explained *environmental change* as follows:

> First of all, when I got here in the United States, I was nineteen years old. I was supposed to be admitted into high school, and they said no. That your age is too big, we cannot accept you in high school. They told me to do GED. I tried to ask for help to anybody, and nobody would help me. After months, while working in seven eleven, I got an African American customer who told me to come; I will take you to a place you can get your high school diploma and a career. I stopped the job I was doing then enrolled at the job core.

Orientation was the essential knowledge, skills, treatment, and abilities that participants needed during resettlement. Erasto explained how they, and other youths, did not receive cultural orientation during arrival and when enrolling in school:

> One way I would change this like, when agencies bring people here, they would first have to educate those people to the point where, like, at least they're, you know, where they can stand on their own; they would, you know To try to teach them like this culture, what would be like, you know, help them. What would be like, you know, be beneficial to them. What would be what could be acceptable? What would be like, you know, unacceptable?

All the participants alluded to needing student *orientation* before they started school. For example, Ale explained:

> If the children know what to expect, they try to prepare themselves to face the problems they will face. The schools should also tell other students about refugees. I do not know how I will change it personally, but I think it should be something that should be done to before the refugees start a school. The refugees should be taken to good schools that have enough teachers in which everybody gets orientation.

Throughout interviews, it was apparent that participant refugees came from nations with different faiths, sociocultural, and political settings than those in their new country: the United States. Overwhelmingly, participants echoed UNHCR’s (2021b) declaration that once the refugees arrive in their new country, they undergo extreme change adjusting to their unique setting. As the UNHCR recommended, participants also emphasized that they would significantly benefit from the sense of peace that comes with nonjudgmental support. The UNHCR documented that the scope of changes, including the different languages, weather patterns, everyday habits, new food, shopping practices, and new money, substantially hinder refugee resettlement.

These all-encompassing challenges influenced refugees' general prosperity as they faced new settings and cultures. Tran et al. (2007) determined that refugees must adjust to a new climate, language, and culture and simultaneously adapt to the lack of their country and their previous natural approach to getting things done. Participants in my study echoed those facts. Furthermore, according to the International Rescue Committee (IRC; n.d.), although adult refugees undergo cultural orientation, refugee

children do not receive that same cultural training. The IRC noted that child refugees' introduction to their new culture occurs with volunteers, the adults at home, and instant emersion into their contemporary, foreign society; refugee children learn the hard way.

Based on participant outcries, refugee youths did not receive the comprehensive supportive orientation into the United States that they desperately needed. Every year, roughly 100,000 refugees resettle in the United States (Lerner, 2012). Nearly 50% of these refugees are kids (Lerner, 2012). As a result, youth instructors must establish comprehensive and supportive classroom conditions (Warsi, 2017). In addition, refugees may not comprehend the extent of change and difficulty; therefore, the UNHCR (2021b) emphasized that it is essential to give refugee children opportune, exact, and rehashed recapitulated newcomer orientation at each progression of the interaction.

Refugee resettlement relies upon the presence or nonexistence of societal communities influencing resettlement (Garip, 2008). An SCT perspective prompts viewing a child's development and how significant it is for an educator to comprehend the conditions where the students grew up and the conditions and challenges that compose their environment. During resettlement, the refugee youths made numerous adjustments catalyzing participant suggestions toward needed refugee wellbeing and support. Sociocultural theorists posit shared inspiration (Drew, 2022), providing significant conduits for newcomers' adjustment during resettlement. Hitherto, SCT featured how behavior indicated participants' environments and backgrounds, which helped me accurately code the resettlement theme and exposed the academic shock theme.

Academic Shock

The academic shock theme concerns students' experiences when presented with voluminous communication beyond the individual's appreciation, education, or experience level; subsequently, such interactions result in unproductive and harmful academic accomplishment (Lodge et al., 2018). I exposed five interpretive codes composing the academic shock theme: *Gap*, *language/dialect*, ELL program *seclusion*, *fail testing*, and *translation and interpretation*. *Gap* indicates a failure to acquire a skill or meet a learning standard. *Language/dialect* inferred the host language's thoughts and expressions through coherent sounds and the introduction of an English dialect spoken in parts of Africa. *ELL program seclusion* encompassed regulations enforced upon anyone who did not learn American English as their primary language. It included involuntary confinement in ELL classrooms, with administrators refusing to attend to students' educational experiences. *Fail testing* included unsuccessful academic goal achievement while focusing on examination. *Translation and interpretation* grouped working with skilled language experts to communicate with students.

A *gap* indicated a failure to acquire a skill or meet a learning standard, which I found existed before, during, and after resettlement in the United States. For example, Ale explained a prior educational gap, "well, while living in Africa, I didn't have the opportunity to go to school, so the only opportunity I had to go to school was when I came to America." Albeit a Daub described meeting the educational requirement despite their *gap*:

> Yes, I came to the United States with zero knowledge, definitely with zero knowledge. Zero knowledge means no education. I went and was admitted to

> school. It took me years to learn more about this world and this country, especially, you know, the school over here is really tough. More so if you are new in the United States, and you do not know, and you do not know about the language or how to speak English. It is tough when you do not have friends, when you do not know people in school, and you do not understand the language, and the facility, and the environment, and the culture, especially; when everything is different. We really have to go into this struggle and a lot that I cannot say right now because I do not want to cry.

Such educational lacking stemmed from various sources, including *language and dialect* differences.

Confidence explained what it was like to speak native Liberian English as additional pressure, which they overcame by less than conventional means: "When we came, we spoke little English because we came from Liberia. We learned English by watching cartoons at home." Crescent elucidated their *language/dialect* challenges:

> Yes, so one other challenge is our friend who would constantly say we don't know how to speak English and would be laughing at us and mocking our accents and more like that. We are now used to that because, if I'm new in a school, if you want to help me, show me the way, and do not make fun out of me. People make fun out of our language because they say we do not know how to speak good English, stuff like that. So, look, Kraal is my native language, and the dialect we speak is English Kraal.

Confidence described the *language/dialect* experience as quite conflicting:

> In the fifth grade, the teacher recommended to my mom that I should take 5th grade over again because of my language accent. It is not because I chose to be behind but because I sounded different. The language I speak is English. It is so hard to change English to English; by that, I mean changing Liberian English to American English.

Eemay emphasized how their *language/dialect* experience altered after relocating:

> I think for most of us, the toughest thing we face is, since our accent is different from the American accent, even if we know the language, we kind of feel like shy speaking to others. So, with us not interacting with other students in schools makes a little outcast, but when I moved to the north schools' things changed.

While the ELL program offered support for language and dialect gaps, they often resulted in segregation. I found that ELL seclusion referred to the regulations enforced upon the participants who did not learn American English (American) as their first and primary language. Participants repeatedly described the involuntary confinement of new students in ELL classrooms wherein educators refused to support other essential educational experiences. Assana compared *ELL program seclusion* to imprisonment:

> They created a congested classroom of refugees from Congo. It could have been good if we were mixed with other students so that we can teach each other languages. For example, we can teach them Kiswahili, and they can teach us English. To tell you the truth, our school was like a small jail.

Erasto detailed the *ELL program seclusion*:

> When you first arrived and go to school, and then when it comes to education experience, it is just a whole other level of difficulties because, whenever you get there, the first thing they would do there is to just throw you into these classes called ELL classes. So, when they do that, the teacher already has 30 or 40 more students. And he [the teacher] will not be able to help every single student in there. The teacher can only help so much in there. And if every person speaks a different language or, say, two students say they speak the same language, they would be the only two that understand each other and would go to their own corner. The rest would be just sitting there like waiting for the teacher to do something…. Yes, like you just make you feel like you are wasting your time there, and you're not understanding anything; what's the point of going. Right. Well, yes, what is the point of going? If you do not.

Fail Testing focused on examination rather than academic achievement. For example, Dabor described school teaching as a test rather than a skill:

> The refugee children are not helped in school because the school only minds [cares] about the outcome of tests. I think they should teach us and not test us.

Erasto conveyed their *fail testing* experience:

> They have not prepared me for anything much. Because the only thing I got from there was that paper, that diploma. Because the only things the schools want, like these days, is a headcount and teaching to the test or saying we have foreign students. So, saying that we have this much students in our

> classrooms, the teachers. Some teachers don't even care if the student is doing their work or not. They just go there, the students go there, sometimes even sleep in classes, and the teacher is just standing there saying nothing, not even talking to the students, not even asking them… And I would say they will not prepare, especially if you have ELL classes, you know, you don't learn anything new in your classes. Let's just say like that even when you go to college. You are still in ELL class.

The *translation and interpretation* went beyond written methods and included working with skilled language experts to communicate with its students. Byamungu's recommendation echoed the other participants' feelings:

> I think the thing that will help the most is the translators. In our school, translators are not available. For example, if a new student comes to our school, most of the time, the school will send another kid who speaks the same language, and perhaps he or she may not speak good English and, anyway, they partner them. For example, the other day, we were in class, and I was called to the office, and I was told there was a new student who came to the school, and I was to translate. She was not good in my native language, and I am not good at it too; therefore, we were struggling and could not translate some stuff back. I wasted my time and hers too. Therefore, if I have to change something, we need translators in school to help the students, and not students to translate. You may speak the language, but it is hard when you try to translate it to another language.

Byamungu also emphasized their *translation and* interpretation needs:

> One final thing I want to tell you is that I have missed classes while translating for my parent in places like DFS, insurance, doctor, and many more. These places sometimes share with me things that are very private; that is so hard to share with my parents, especially my mother. Culturally, it is so hard for me to talk to my mother about her body, although, for now, my sister is doing it. I remember a nurse asked me something and, when I told my mother, my father was uncomfortable, and so I decided to ask my mother any other question and gave the nurse what I saw as the right answer.

Dabor experienced *translation and interpretation* similarly:

> I struggled with the most problems, that is, language and education. I also struggled with my parents by trying to go with them all the time to everywhere so that I can translate for them. I had also had to go to different jobs at night to help my parents.

While schooling is fundamental to children's accomplishments (UNHCR, 2021b), I found that when refugee children resettled in the United States, they felt like they were beginning their schooling over again. Participants supported BRYCS's (n.d.d) statement that refugees battle with the American school system once they arrive. Therefore, though refugees need extra support because of educational gaps during their flight and internment, they were placed in curriculums that did not relate to their learning needs.

Moreover, my findings supported BRYCS's (n.d.g) report that language difficulties limit how much a child can learn, their educational prospects, and their advancement, which happened to participants in my study. BRYCS posited that

assuming a youngster consistently faces unfortunate correspondence in school, the academic progressions of that child, even when receiving quality training, fundamentally disintegrate. Participants confirmed Boostlingo’s (2019) assumption that language-based communication barriers ought not to be an obstruction. Thus, Boostlingo emphasized that integrating proficient translators into the school system is urgent to guarantee that all students have equitable access to similar education.

Participants explained that refugees battle the American schooling system because educators and administrators possess an inadequate understanding of refugees' needs. Participants echoed BRYCS’ (n.d.a, n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.g) declaration that refugees were not acquainted with, or ready for, state testing. In some cases, refugees remained uneducated for extended durations in the refugee camps, after which administrators placed them in grade levels that did not relate to their learning level (BRYCS, n.d.b, n.d.g). Furthermore, I found that language difficulties limited how much participants learned, their schooling prospects, and their growth.

Participants frequently described gaps in their educational experiences and loneliness caused by language barriers. Participants' experiences supported Word-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium (2015) reports of schools serving ELL students with interrupted educational foundations across the United States. These undereducated students face academic disappointment resulting in extremely high dropout rates (WIDA Consortium, 2015). Most refugees who come to the United States possess restricted English language skills, which factors into societal mistreatment (Mthethwa-Sommers & Kisiara, 2015). Thus, as the PTFED (2012)

reported, students become aware of separation and their societally demonized racial status leading to related educational inequalities.

CRT tenets establish that racial inequity manifests in many ways. This inequity supports PTFED's (2012) findings of intricate associations between ethnic and racial personality and educational adjustment. All my study participants expressed similar sentiments. Furthermore, State-funded schools increasingly receive decreased financing due to the monetary downturn; therefore, educational specialists must brainstorm the best methods to adjust school spending plans while focusing on every student's language improvement (Chen, 2022). Sadly, participants voiced racial inequality within school funding via overcrowded English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

In addition to the legitimate liabilities of educational systems to provide language support to refugee children, academic personnel must comprehend the requirement for translators and interpreters (Dynamic Language, n.d.). According to Dynamic Language, "interpretation refers to orally rendering communication from one language to another, whereas translation refers to the written word" (p. 1).

Thus, educational systems with refugee students whose primary language is not American English must focus on oral and composed word communication with those children and their guardians (Dynamic Language, n.d.). Therefore, social interchange and support are integral to American English Language facilitation and adaptation. Per SCT tenets (TwinklHive, n.d), children's learning should connect their current and proximal development by moving what an individual cannot comprehend or perform

alone toward what they can accomplish with direction and help rather than intolerance and isolation.

Intolerance

Intolerance encompassed the entrenched racial disparities and unwillingness to accept understandings, values, or conduct that differed from one's own. It included the intention to deny a person or an equitable group acknowledgment, thus infringing on their human rights. The intolerance theme contained four interpretive codes: Racism, *prejudice*, *stereotype*, and *injustice*. Racism included a system of advantage based on race and power aimed at systematic discrimination through individual, societal, and institutional policies and practices. *Prejudice* indicates arrogance based on inadequate information, stereotypes, and alter-casting. *Stereotype* refers to a broadly held, fixed, and eventually distorted image or idea of a particular people. *Injustice* inferred unfairness, offense, contamination, and an unaware environment with limited options and choices.

Every participant mentioned how they faced *racism* daily while adults in the schools stood by watching. For example, ale explained such an experience:

> I was being bullied in class, and the teachers did not see it as bullying, and the teacher kept supporting other American kids while she would be telling me to keep your distance you are smelling.

Confidence detailed another type of *racism* in school:

> Though I was young and did not notice the prevalence of racism or racial discrimination, there was one time I did a good job on a given assignment, and many students felt I did a wonderful job. Because the teacher was a

> Caucasian lady, instead of being given the microwavable popcorn as a prize, it was given to another White girl who did not deserve it. I regarded that action as favoritism and not racism because I did not understand the meaning of racism at that time. I did not see color at that time or did not put meaning to it.

Daud conveyed their experience with *racism* throughout their refugee journey:

> That is why we spent twelve years in the refugee camps. That is why we came to the United States. That is why my parents sacrificed a lot so that we can come to the United States. We struggled in the camp; theirs no jobs in the camps. We tried to grow our own food. We took a rough path, but I thought we made it. I think we are close to making it in the Unites States of America. We sacrificed a lot. But one thing I can tell you is racism has been following us from Darfur to the refugee camp and in the United States. I can say it is a bad omen because it has been following us for the reason for our color. I can say that we thank God for he protected us and gave us the color. It is a heavy load, but I think we are the chosen ones. (pauses).

Whereas *prejudice* pertained to arrogance based on inadequate information and stereotypes; as Babeta pointed out, "people think they are better than you because of your culture because of where you are from."

Confidence explained their encounters with *prejudice*:

> The other [point of view] we cannot assimilate, so value the refugee phonetics, culture, and way of living so long as they are not bringing problems to you. In my case, I have been speaking many languages;

> therefore, it was very hard for me to pronounce as I wanted, and teachers wasted my time in what they wanted and made me lose the academic contents of subjects such as mathematics and many more. I know my teacher wanted to make me an American, and as I think over it, I understand the American she wanted me to be. She was thinking in the lines of MAGA [Make America Great Again], which is purely based on racism.

Stereotype included broadly held assumptions of participants regardless of the reality. All the participants had experienced *stereotypes,* as Eemay shared:

> I hate to explain my self over and over again about my experience because most of these people think I come from the jungle. I had this girl ask me about the lions in Africa and if I was able to see one in the jungle.

Daud frustratingly described *stereotype* similarly to racism:

> Racism was another problem that I faced. It was a big problem, especially for those African refugees or immigrants. People come to you and ask you many questions, especially when you go to school when you come to Africa and you are a refugee from Africa; especially people that are African-born. In America, they do not respect and treat us as brothers. They say, "oh, you have no knowledge." That is what one guy told me. They do not help you but keep saying ''Niger… Niger'' and cuss at you mostly. The worst thing is that you cannot do anything. They initiate fights when you talk back at them. They just want to make you mad, so you can say some bad words, get mad and frustrated, and then fight with them; that is all they want. Really that is a

> big problem, and a lot of refugees cannot figure out why these people are violent.

The interpretive code *injustice* includes experiences wherein the participants felt mistreated, offended, and as if they were contaminated. Eemay expressed deep sadness:

> I feel ashamed and see a lot of injustice in this country, but I always keep quiet about it when I think of the country I come [from], Somalia. What bothers me is not the experience that I had by myself but the stories that I hear from my friends and relatives from the other school districts, which I also faced from other school districts.

Confidence shared an experience of *injustice*:

> After many years, you learn to get by, but over the years, I had screwed myself being tested over and over because I sounded different because I come from a different country and different environment. For example, I had to do TB tests over and over again. The TB test will always show positive because of the immunization that I took in Africa. Those tests that I took were not necessary. During the Ebola epidemic, my TB test became an issue. Knowing that I come from Liberia, I will always be asked if I had been back to Liberia or if my parents or relatives have been to Liberia. Therefore, they will always look me at an eye of a master and try to kill my spirit. Frankly speaking, I face a lot of prejudice in school, which has a lot to do with racism. To make the matter worse, nobody helps, and the school system is a swimming pool of racism; it is a big hurdle. But, I overcame it because I

> came to learn that racism itself is part of my learning it; it is a steep and rough mountain of racism to climb, but you have to adapt to succeed in this country, or else you end up in a physical jail or a mental jail.

A significant attribute of stereotypes is that they knot people into one layered, generalizing set that overlooks the intricacy of individual lives and experiences (Ngo, 2008). Bigler and Liben (2007) reminded us that children decide their fair ways of behaving and unreasonable biases following their ethical intentions and messages of their social situation. Thus, eradicating children's discrimination and prejudicial conduct is significant for the well-being and prosperity of refugee youth (Duckitt et al., 1999). To accomplish such positive change, participants in my study suggested a collaborative classroom community against bias and discrimination, wherein the educational programs build on children's requirements and encounters.

These participants conveyed that African refugee youth faced prejudice because of visual ethnic and racial contrasts. These sentiments echoed Haffejee's (2015) statement that African refugee youth frequently encountered rejection and sidelining from socially uninformed instructors and non-refugee students. Education can maintain and eradicate disparity by supporting or lessening dissimilarity (OHCHR & UNESCO, 2003). Banks (2006) explained that bias reduction urges educators to help school children create uplifting mindsets toward different races and social groups during education.

Subsequently, parts of the curriculum remain visible to the children and the youth at schools, while other equally influential factors rest underneath what is communicated in the standards (Manning & Baruth, 2009). The hidden curriculum

taught in school affects all children regardless of race and culture (Manning & Baruth, 2009). Manning and Baruth posited that a hidden curriculum includes “any number of events, behavior expectations, and attitudes that might appear relatively unobtrusive to some learners but might appear out of character or context to other learners” (p. 192). Therefore, Tamer (2014) emphasized that Schools must reconsider classroom schemes, and family commitment practices, explore social gaps and teach to inspire. Jay (2003) demonstrated how such hidden methods in the concealed curriculum are significant conduits of sociocultural reproduction. Subsequently, CRT exposed the significance that race and racism played in participants’ daily U.S. lives.

CRT principles required that I scrutinize race and racism within refugees’ introductory societies. The United States, its laws, and establishments were established and made because of racial oppression (Ed Post Staff, 2021). Since racism was entrenched inside our frameworks and establishments and woven into American public policy, this racial imbalance was strenuously duplicated and sustained (Ed Post Staff, 2021). Hence, systematic racism appeared in every aspect of life for minorities (Ed Post Staff, 2021). Supported by CRT, the intolerance theme focused on race by amplifying voices neglected and exposed to toil and struggle.

Toil and Exertion

Toil and exertion included the labor and expenditure of physical or mental effort a refugee underwent in unfamiliar environments. Five interpretive codes formed this theme: Struggles, *burden*, *disparities*, *documentation*, and *parental*. Struggles included a spirited effort in the face of difficulty. *Burden* included problems that were hard to bear physically or emotionally and accompanied by the busyness and

unreliability that pervaded youths' everyday life their new environment. *Disparities* encompassed bewilderment in unfair environments and included careful effort, labor, toil, and trouble within unpleasant or harmful situations. *Documentation* referred to facts providing official information that served as records of a person's life. *Parental* indicated a family caregiver and caretaker and included existing without needed care and the responsibility of caring for another.

Struggles encompassed participants' spirited efforts in the face of difficulty. All participants shared translation *struggles* like Byamungu's:

> One final thing I want to tell you is that I have missed classes while translating for my parent in places like DFS, insurance, Doctor, and many more.

Ale discussed *struggles* when facing difficulty:

> Hum, here, what I struggled with the most it was getting to know the right people because all my friends they… especially I, was friends with Mexicans, they ended up on drugs, and they tried me to join them, and, therefore, I decided to cut off the friendship from that moment. From there, it was difficult for me to attend the same school, and I knew other people who were in danger, and so our parent moved us to Kansas City in, which we were faced with almost the same challenges.

Assana's explained experiences facing *struggles* and obscurities:

> To tell you the truth, our school was like a small jail. Putting us together, (pause) we are really struggling sometimes. We try to find and imitate other friends, which may lead us into danger. I don't know. I don't think I will

> continue with education. If I do, I will learn a skill that will help me in a job. But I will make sure that my younger brothers and sister and my children get a good education.

*Burden*s were hard to bear physically or emotionally and included the busyness and unreliability that permeated the everyday life of the refugee youth participants in my study. Ale explained their *burden* in an unfamiliar environment:

> I decided to go with my mother to see the supervisor. When I talked to him, he told me she needed to be fired because she does not speak English and does not communicate well. So, he decides to fire her anyway. It was painful to see my mother cry. I really wanted to drop from school ;(pause, tears falling), but she told me do not leave your school, or else you will be fired from your job like me.

Assana explained their *burden* this way:

> One other thing that was a problem for me was the language [English]. That stops me from learning throughout my high school. It was a burden to everybody, including myself. We also feared to tell our teachers and counselors about our issues or problems because we feared they go home and take the other children who are in our house because we are told the counselor report to the government whenever there was a home problem.

Disparities included participants bewildered due to unfairness and careful effort, including labor, toil, and trouble in unpleasant or harmful situations. Assana shared some of these distresses and misfortune:

> The other problem I lost a father I love, I after his death, my biggest worry was who will help us and where should we be living. But when struggling with hope, that comes with the power of God. I need to wear his shoes.

Ale shared their inequitable *disparities*:

> My mother got a job in Kansas City, that was a relief. She encountered a lot of challenges because the jobs required her to speak English. It was very! Very difficult for her to get a job. She found a job at Aspen and ended up working at mid-night because she was not speaking English. And the funny part is when they hired her and so that she can do well, so they decided to exploit her by making the position where two people were working to be done by her alone. And so, I decided to go with my mother to see the supervisor. When I talked to him, he told me she needed to be fired because she does not speak English and does not communicate well. So, he decides to fire her anyway. It was painful to see my mother cry. I really wanted to drop from school (pause, tears dropping), but she told me, "do not leave your school or else you will be fired from your job like me." That one incident and another one when, while in school, a teacher called me stupid.

It is hard to get official school records, which can affect enrollment and placement (BRYCS, n.d.d). Thus, the interpretive code *documentation* holds facts that provide official information that records the participant's life. Crescent described a frustrating experience with *documentation*:

> Well, mainly, as a green card holder, it is a challenge because you never know what will happen. But we hope for the best and because the new policy

> of the current president [Donald Trump] is trying to introduce hate, which I think will not be healthy for the people who are immigrants or have refugee status. But we will hope that everything is turning positive so that the government will change their mind and know that people who come here are immigrants and want to make their life better and make this country better. And to improve the economy of this country so that we can all live in peace and harmony. And sometimes I get worried. Most of the time, I believe things are going to change. My parents never sleep; they get more worried whenever they see our president on the TV. I will try to work for my citizenship so I can make everything better.

The interpretive code *parental* referred to the roles of family caregivers, caretakers, and participants. Ale shared significant *parental* struggles:

> The other thing that made me move was also not attending classes because I have to interpret for my parents. I struggled with helping my family pay the bills, that is why I had to leave and go.

Assana shared their *parental* experience:

> What helped me the most is I learned little English and math, which I think will help me get a job, but I do not know if I can continue with higher education. The other problem, I lost a father I love. I, after his death, my biggest worry was who will help us and where should we be living. But, when struggling with hope, that comes with the power of God. I need to wear his [father's] shoes.

Babeta shared their *parental* experience:

> My parents also get worried about work and language. That is why I want to get a better education. If I get a good job, my parents will not work again or anymore because of the work they do and how they struggle for us. The work makes them so tired. Their age is another issue, and also the money they get is not enough. Because of that, I will stay at home whenever I get a good job.

I found that participants were all casualties of segregation and mistreatment, which correlated with Nuñez's (2014) finding that companies perceive refugees' determination and fear to keep their positions. Nuñez explained that those perceptions led to manipulation wherein the refugees were assigned less attractive and increasingly risky jobs. This racist aspect loosely correlated with refugees' treatment in school. Subsequently, people who are lawfully free U.S. citizens (refugees) receive unequal treatment.

Participants reported that American English challenges, refugee-related inconveniences requiring time off school, and restricted transportation presented genuine struggles, burdens, and many other issues, affirming Nuñez's (2014) similar declaration. Popal (2021) and Wicks and Johnson (2018) documented the struggles of early refugees' social and financial ramifications. Child refugees were required to translate, interpret, and settle decisions for their parents, track down applicable data, and otherwise help as needed. Like Nuñez, participants explained the overwhelming pressure of supporting their parents in a new unacquainted culture that added immense pressure hindering their educational experiences.

Whenever refugees initially appear in U.S. resettlement cities, most families live in metropolitan counties, working in low-wage occupations that result in guardians and youths working (Weine, 2008). Weine noted that these circumstances led to fewer opportunities to spend time with family than they were previously acclimated to, which increased varying maladaptation. Anderson (2020) demonstrated that refugee youth encounter extreme pressure connected with their family's changes, struggles, and educational challenges, affecting schooling, language, and social encounters, often barring attendance and amplifying unfairness and work stress.

Participants' toils and exertions indicated that refugee youth were defenseless against poor formative and educational disparities wherein they frequently reached the United States with no assets, support systems, and limited grasp of the nation's language and culture. Thus, it correlates with Hooper et al.'s (2016) expectation that refugee youth typically confront additional serious dangers after arrival. Weine (2008) also emphasized the traumas and misfortunes the refugee families experienced in their origin nations, in flight, in refugee camps, and during resettlement, situations subject them to severe additional strain.

Therefore, within the concepts of CRT, policymakers, administrators, and educators must develop new strategies, practices, and educational programs o assist students as they ponder the foundations that shaped their lives. Additionally, SCT supports the importance of the social world as a mediator of the child's cognitive development. When applied accordingly, these assumptions will reduce toil and exertion while minimizing refugee youths' overwhelming resettlement challenges, thereby improving their educational experiences.

Challenges

Challenges were related to a refugee's difficulties in dangerous situations through aggressive behavior, fierceness, drug environments, and gangs. Four interpretive codes composed the challenges theme: *Bullying*, *hate/*violence, drugs/gangs, and security/safety. *Bullying* refers to being the target of aggressive behavior by another student or students. *Hate/violence* included fierceness against a person driven by bias and prejudice against the person's community membership. *Drugs/gangs* encompassed an environment of substance abuse induced into the body, bounded by suffering harm, and accompanied by a group of students involved in illicit or delinquent activities with a confined social conscience. Finally, *security/safety* was the feeling of not being protected and the risk of harmful external threats.

The interpretive code *Bullying* reflected immense aggressive behavior that participants endured inflicted by others. All the participants experienced *bullying* like Byamungu's experience:

> In the school that I am attending, there are bad things that are going around; there is a lot of bullying. Sometimes you can be walking around the school, and you get insulted because of the color of your skin or from the environment you came from. For example, one boy shouted behind, "shithole boy, go back home," and kept ignoring him, and many more incidents of insult. Those were the most of my struggles which I think is not safe.

Dauds also shared an unprovoked *bullying* experience:

> Other refugees remain silent and do not want to share your problem, and that is why I, especially one time I was a freshman I got a punch on my head for no reason, and I was innocent at that time the guy started cussing at me showing off to his friend but still continued cussing at me.

Byamungu shared their *bullying* experience:

> The bullying is not in schools only. It is also in the streets, even when you buy items from the gas stations or even at the school bus stage. People come to test your limits without any reason. I have been harassed several times whenever I try to get items from my locker or when I walk along the hall. One time a kid poured water over me. But whenever you have a problem or struggling, there is always somebody to help you. So, my advice is, do not keep to yourself, tell adults or close friends, for one, you cannot solve the problem by yourself.

All the participants experienced significant, psychologically-scarring *hate* in school. Babeta emotionally described:

> You are Africa; you stink! They tell you a lot, a lot, and a lot. These were my challenges. You, Africa, you stink. You are not like us; people think they are better than you.

Ale experienced *hate/violence*:

> I was being bullied in class, and the teachers did not see it as bullying, and the teacher kept supporting other American kids while she would be telling me to keep your distant, you are smelling. The other thing I had to face in school was to fit in; you have to do what other students that look like you do;

> and I could not fit in because I saw that I would end up in a gang or smoking crazy stuff, which are not the right choices I could make in order to support my parents. The other thing is the African Americans that looked like me see the other people from another country as a terrorist, backward people, and people without culture; it is funny while I am a Christian, they still saw me as a Muslim terrorist.

Drugs and gangs reflected participants' experiences with students who engaged in illicit or delinquent activities. Though participants all had different experiences with *drugs and gangs*, each conveyed repeated pressure from such. Ale shared their difficulties:

> Hum, here what I struggled with the most it was getting to know the right people because all my friends they… especially I was friends with Mexicans. They ended up on drugs, and they tried to get me to join them, and therefore I decided to cut off the friendship from that moment. From there, it was difficult for me to attend the same school, and I know other people who were in danger… In the school where we are, gun violence is getting worse. I was involved in it, but this is how I got out of it. That is, I always looked at my parent and how they suffered for us. I decided to run away from the gangs, and sometimes they will come and beat me, but I would lie to them.

Byamungu experienced *drugs/gangs* as follows,

> I always try to stay with my family. Because whenever I leave our house, there are always a group of boys and girls who smoke weed around our neighborhood. Around our home and neighborhood, it is not safe; there are a

> lot of gunshots, the fear is constant because you do not know when the bullet will enter your house and kill somebody. It always reminds me of the past, and it is through prayers that I calm myself.

The final interpretive code was Security/ Safety meaning the feeling of not being protected and the risk of external threats that may cause harm. The participants all shared *security/safety* experiences. Many of those experiences resulted from dwelling in fear and suspicion in the neighborhood, as Eemey described:

> What I struggled with the most was moving from school to school. My family was struggling in finding proper settlement because most of the areas were always had poor security and full of danger.

A student elucidated on their experience of *security/safety*:

> The apartment that I am in is not saved, is not saved. The people who live around us are mostly in the gang and stuff like that, smoking weed in all the places. It is too loud and not safe. And every time I hear a gunshot. I am gonna say it is kind of affecting my education because all the time I am worried. When I get from home to school, I get worried because I have to watch around when I am going and coming from school. Constantly, you have to be careful. My parents also get worried about work and language.

Participants reported challenges like housing, living costs, and low-paying jobs. Nuñez (2014) found that refugees often spend months living in confined lodgings, anxious to move from distressing settings, with no place to turn. BRYCS (2017) reported that refugees said the only housing they can afford is in risky areas. Participants in my study echoed Nuñez and BRYCS's statements by voicing worries

about security, poor neighborhoods, and transportation issues. I found, like Nuñez, that refugee participants in my study encountered harm and burglaries, were concerned about gang movements and drugs, and feared these environments. Also echoing Nuñez, participants stressed these conditions while grappling with significant resettlement issues, trying to gain a proper education, and continually being subjected to racism and bullying.

Bullying causes refugees to feel segregated, dreadful, desolate, frail, and decreases their self-confidence, prompting sorrow, self-harm, and desperate conduct (BRYCS, 2016). Participants reported that bullies compelled them to surrender and fit in. This acquiescence implies they succumb to peer pressure and participate in exercises they would rather not, including gang association and substance misuse (BRYCS, n.d.h). By surrendering to peer pressure and attempting to fit in, BRYCS (n.d.h) reported that refugees lose their past and culture, increasing conflict and social partitions inside their family and community. Participants noted, like BRYCS (n.d.h), when bullying became exceptionally harsh, refugee youth dropped out of school, negatively affecting their and their families' lives.

Several researchers posited that minority gang enrollment indicated more significant cultural issues like destitution, separation, isolation, and urbanization (Ngo, 2015). Drug use among refugees is disturbing in numerous metropolitan American urban cities (Cooley et al., 2021). Koch et al. (n.d.) reported that U.S. state-funded schools, including those requiring ELL courses, traditionally were foundations of abuse, xenophobia, integration, and Americanization for refugee youth.

Several participants explained that ELL classes significantly segregated them, and they felt that such purposefully arranged seclusion positioned them as inferior to U.S.-born students. BRYCS (n.d.i) reported that segregation psychologically and intellectually influenced refugees, thereby holding them back from accomplishing their maximum capacity and preventing them from achieving the American dream. However, Page and Marcelin (2003) explained that refugee youth must attend voluminous additional classes, sometimes all day, to familiarize them with speaking American English. All participants revealed experiences supporting Page and Marcelin’s conclusions by enduring the disparaging racially hostile critique by their American peers, including actual brutality during and after school.

Refugee youth experience bullying for numerous reasons, including racial, spiritual, and ethnic individuality (Mthethwa-Sommers & Kisiara, 2015). The refugee youths I interviewed continually managed harassment and bullying from juveniles and adults, peers, facilitators, and support personnel in all parts of their lives, especially while attending U.S. public school. Bullying is the most significant and adverse issue that refugees face, wherein the psychological and intellectual effects of segregation preclude refugees from success (BRYCS, n.d.h, n.d.i). Per principals within CRT, racial and ethnic disparities, including race, privilege, unconscious forms of bias, overt forms of prejudices, and discrimination, lead to social problems and disadvantages. Within the lens of SCT, these social problems and weaknesses cascade uncontrollably without caring attention and academic support; thus, refugee students easily succumb to gangs and drug use. Such cascading challenges also intensify past traumatic recurrences.

Recurrence

Recurrence was related to a new occurrence of something that previously happened or a rehash of a past event. Four interpretive codes formed the recurrence theme: *Revisit*, *trauma/shock*, *isolation/lonely*, and *withdrawal*. *Revisit* encompassed all aspects of remembering a past helpful or harmful experience. *Trauma/shock* included disturbing, damaging, and distressing experiences. *Isolation/lonely* indicates feeling sad and alone, disconnected from the world while feeling sad, remorseful, and dissatisfied over the past. *Finally, withdrawal* inferred giving up and retreating from reality.

Revisit included participants' helpful or harmful experiences wherein, like Babeta, they rethink their past:

> Stories of my friend back in Africa (pause) because in here, I do not have a real friend. Back in Africa, we had a group of friends that we were together, and we were planning to finish secondary school. So, we were planning to get a job and start work over there. When I was planning to come to the United States, one of my friends got married (tears dropping). I was talking to her when I got here in the United States. I asked her what happened to her. She said in here; we do not have any future. We do not know what is in our back or in front; we just live with hope. We cannot develop goals or anything to do with future. So, she got married. Now she has kids, and the kids do not have futures too. My parents are also worried about their relatives who are back in Africa, especially my grandmother and my aunty.

Confidence revisited their experience:

> I have been always dreaming about my cousin, who is also was my childhood friend, who died while we were in the refugee camp. My parents also miss their relatives who are back in Liberia and cannot come to the United States.

Trauma/Shock grouped the disturbing, harmful, and distressing experiences that all the participants shared. For example, Asana described an alarming incident in the United States:

> May his soul rest in peace; he committed suicide. We did not know when he killed himself. And my mother found his body hanging in the basement (crying and shaking [stopped the interview]) … [restarted the interview].
>
> During this time, I prayed a lot. I asked God to help me not to lose my mind

Ale shared a disturbing *trauma/shock*:

> I want to share with you a personal pain (a long pause and tears pouring). You know Abdul, (pause tongue tied… drank water) my brother is in jail now. In 2017, he was still young. He did not speak English and did not understand the law of this country, but they still put him in jail for almost eight years. It is not fair (tears). They denied him a lawyer who could have consulted. This is one big thing we still struggle with when it comes to facing the law. They see us Black people as bad and, therefore, we suffer as African Americans under the justice system. Well, we did not know what to do. Nobody taught us these laws or told us what we can face in this country, or how we can avoid the problem if we get into it, or how we can get out of it. After my brother was bullied a lot and suffered a lot, he drops from the

school in his senior year. He was supposed to be a role model for me and my sister, but I miss him. He is in jail now. I do not know what will happen to him, maybe he is gonna come out, or maybe he will be continued with his education in jail. I don't know. And then I think he has been swallowed by a system full of discrimination.

Isolation/lonely, reflected participants' sadness, loneliness, and disconnection from the world. Feeling sad, remorseful, and dissatisfied over an experience, Daud shared:

> I am from Darfur, Sudan. The main reason why I am in the United States is because I ran from the war. I lost my family, cousin, brothers, and friends. I lost a lot of people, approximately 95 percent of my family member.

Assana shared their *isolated/lonely* separation experience:

> I could have prayed to God to keep my father, but I am satisfied with everything because I know life is life. I am thankful to have been helping my parents from when I was ten years. My father was always asking for help, but I do not know what happened to him. After his death, a different organization came to us, telling us, "Sorry for your loss."

Giving up and retreating from reality, Assana shared their experience with *Withdrawal* along with the determination to make it through:

> Putting us together (pause), we are really struggling. Sometimes we try to find and imitate other friends, which may lead us into danger. I do not know. I don't think I will continue with education if I do. I will learn a skill that

> will help me in a job. But I will make sure that my younger brothers and sister and my children get a good education.

Assana also explained their *withdrawal* and subsequent alienation:

> The other problem that I got personally is that in school, people were telling me that my family killed my father. This is an issue that was raised mostly by other African students but spread all over the school. I could not face nobody. But through patience, faith, and hope, we preserved. We did not kill our father; all I knew was that my father had pressure. May his soul rest in peace. He committed suicide. We did not know when he killed himself. And my mother found his body hanging in the basement (crying and shaking [stopped the interview]) … [interview started]. During this time, I prayed a lot. I asked God to help me not to lose my mind. I did not stop my education and the love I had for my father. It was God who lifted me all the time, and so I decided to run to that God. I am graduating; no more school. I need to work and stop all people.

Although confronting outrageous stressors, several participants were sufficiently versatile in negotiating resettlement difficulties. The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (CDCHU; n.d.) noted that individuals, families, and community offer flexibility, providing refugees the assets and trust they need to endure and flourish in their new country. CDCHU emphasized that quality educational encounters were vital to improving resilience, wherein caring educators and friends support refugee youth in an inviting and safe setting. CDCHU further underlined the importance of encouraging students to expand their abilities by

empowering local area cooperation, individual improvement, and cultural distinctiveness to assist refugee children in creating certainty, an emotionally supportive network, and the capacity to adapt to pressure.

Thus, school initiatives and culture are essential to refugee children's integration into their new countries. In addition, Reynolds (2018) noted that educational management makes more culturally receptive learning settings, thereby advancing refugee children's sociocultural integration. Therefore, it is central to foster educational strategies recognizing caring issues, supporting resilience, and decreasing undesirable outcomes. Educators must understand refugee youths' past traumas (like violence and oppression) to help them negotiate traumatic recurrence.

Participants all reported the same conditions described by the NCTSN (n.d., 2018), wherein they encountered trauma connected with war and oppression that influenced their psychological and actual well-being long after the trauma occurred. In addition, the NCTSN (n.d., 2018) reported that refugees traumatic incidents happened while in their origin nation, during flight, and in the US. Resettlement process. Their hardships did not end upon their arrival in the United States.

When resettled in the United States, participants reported conditions reflecting those noted by NCTSN (n.d., 2018), including stressors in four significant classifications: Traumatic pressure, culture stress, resettlement stress, and isolation. However, participants displayed strength regardless of their past traumas. Participant data also supported BRYCS (n.d.e) in that, even as adult refugee youths, participants reported being especially vulnerable to working-age family pressures. Findings also supported BRYCS' statement that some refugee high school students exited school due

to obligatory feeling to assist with family costs, thereby adding to the refugee participants' trauma.

Trauma influences refugee children's emotional and social progress (NCTSN, n.d., 2018), as demonstrated by the refugee youth participants in my study. Refugee participants encountered exceedingly distressing occasions by sharing the bad memories and events they experienced during their escape, reiterated by their recurrences in their new country. It was challenging to characterize each kind of occurrence refugees endured since, as noted by the RHTAC (n.d.), refugees' sufferings regularly begin before the essential incident that drove them to escape. Regardless, all participants reported the recurrence of such nightmares continued after resettlement in various manners because of past trauma reminders within the new uncertain environment of their new homes, which correlated strongly with MT tenets.

Whenever refugees resettle to a new country, the refugees must adjust to another dwelling and language under indeterminate conditions and with uncertain prospects (RHTAC, n.d.). Additionally, social disconnection is a considerable obstruction to effective adjustment in the new resettlement setting, with some family members increasingly more vulnerable to detachment and dejection (Agllias & Gray, 2012). Agllias and Gray explained that social seclusion results from hardship, language, training absence, and mental issues for many refugees. SCT helped me understand how these negative social implications influenced the refugee youths' abilities to build new lives.

Rebuilding and restoring their home and themselves while attempting to shuffle the errands of day-by-day livelihood in a completely new environment is another

enormous challenge that the refugees must embrace (RHTAC, 2022) as they resettle in a new country. BRYCS (n.d.b) reported that differentiating the cross-cutting issues of culture from trauma-induced actions requires fundamental physical and emotional considerations, without which traumatic scaring becomes substantially exasperated. Consequently, recognizing and understanding the unseen wounds of schooling is vital to support refugee students' changes following their new school environments (BRYCS, n.d.a). In line with SCT, Drew (2022) demonstrated that parents and teachers interact with children to direct their learning. Accordingly, educators and parents played a critical role in minimizing the potential adverse effects of recurrence while optimizing the positive outcomes, which also influenced refugees' defensive mechanisms.

Defensive Mechanism

Defensive mechanism related to individuals' self-justifying methods and practices to isolate themselves from unsavory occasions, activities, or contemplations. Three interpretive codes formed the defensive mechanism theme: Hope, *resilience*, and *confidence*. Hope was a feeling of trust, expectation, and desire to dream. *Resilience* focuses on the ability to recover swiftly from difficulties and deal with hardship, the endurance to accept suffering with restraint, yielding to the supernatural divine, and the determination and the state of living in difficult circumstances. Finally, *confidence* revolves around a firm trust in one's ability to control oneself emotionally.

Hope included participants' stories of courage and hope. All participants shared hopeful experiences. Daud offered cautionary advice:

> If you are one of the people with color, you don't know where you will be tomorrow and what is going to happen to you at the end. My advice is to control yourself, respect yourself, and be patient.

Babeta elucidated *hope* as:

> People try to tell me bad stuff about nursing, but they just would love you to say I will quit. I am not going to be part of that. The CNA that I am doing right now will take me to the medical school right now, or I can work with it at the center of the old people. Some people discourage me by telling me that you will be washing their private parts all day because you are Black, and they will never give you the other best parts of the job. But I tell them that I will work twice as hard as them who are favored. I want to become a doctor, but it takes a long time, and I also do not know what is coming tomorrow. The school has a biology class. They have microscopes which make us practice about cells and research and about human development. With that kind of stuff, I think the school has prepared me.

Byamunga shared their *hope* as:

> What helped me the most is that every time bad things come or happen, I always look for a solution. For example, if I do not have much time to study, or I want something, but I cannot do it, I have to find a way to achieve it, even if it is asking somebody to help me out. For example, I want to be a carpenter, but I do not know that much carpentry, so I took a class at Emanuel Tech; that is how I introduced a task to myself. What really helped me the most is hope; even if I am struggling, lord behold, there is one day I

> will win it through hope that I keep on winning. And therefore, my best experience in life is hope.

The endurance and determination in the interpretive code *Resilience* reflected participants' strong recovery skills. Daud offers his spirit:

> We used to go to school hungry and not knowing when our next meal will come. Yes, the school was good for us to learn, but we were also learning hardships. Therefore, the school was not grading us on hardship (laughter), but hardship was an obstacle in our learning.

A participant explained their *resilient* spirit as

> The new hope that I have, although racism is following me, is that I do not care what people say about my color. Because if you have faith, you will not lose. It is my number one aspect in my life. I do not care about racism because I know who created me. I am the best in His eye. He also told us that I created you for the best you are. If my creator said you are beautiful, what else do you need? You do not care what people say because the creator created them too. If people can put you in a situation to wonder negatively with your color, then you are in the wrong. You must accept your color and take care of it. Have a strong faith in what God gave you. All these different colors will become manure. So, don't worry about color.

Confidence revealed participants' significant trust in their ability to control themselves emotionally. Dabor shared:

> What helps the most, I think, is confidence. Confidence helps because if you believe in yourself and believe in God, you can do anything, and nobody can

> make you stop, no matter who tries. Sometimes your mind may tell you, you cannot do this or enough for these, but with confidence and believing in yourself, you can earn what you can and want to do.

Daud explained their *confidence*, their conviction as:

> I would always control myself. It is easy to get frustrated; it is so easy, but I try to manage myself and control myself. What you need is patience. I take patience as the number one thing I learned, and it helped me the most. Because without patience, you can get mad, and start fighting and end in trouble. I learned my patience from my parents, especially from my mother, and my parent, and people around them. One of the best things that one can possess to get educated is patience. And so, I usually go around the people who are patient because my father tells me if you want to be successful, you have to be with people who are successful or succeeding. If you want to succeed, you have to follow the best student in class and make them as friends. I think my parents handed me the knowledge of patience. Patience is controlling your anger because anger is Satan's fire. It is hard to calm yourself by just swallowing the bitter pill and ignoring insults. If it was not for patience, I think I would have been in jail, and I think patience helped me a lot.

Youthful refugees face many difficulties yet become strong and spirited (Crooks, 2020). Hope is an emotional status brought into the world of a youth's initial connections to their guardians (Yohani & Larsen, 2009). Once the child embraces their feelings, they figure out how to trust, which empowers them to trust and hope (Yohani

& Larsen, 2009). However, Yohani and Larsen noted that hardly any research explicitly analyzed trust in refugee and migrant youths, the shortfall of faith and hope, a direction toward the future, or its accounting for troubling elements affecting the traumatized child.

Notwithstanding countless risk issues and difficulties, the youths in this study demonstrated exceptional flexibility and resiliency. Jani et al. (2015) posited that a significant part of this defensive strength improved the prosperity of children through trust and hopefulness. Likewise, Sleijpen et al. (2013) suggested that an emphasis on strength and toughness in youthful refugees might help address their reactions to affliction, aid them in grasping their necessities, and mold any intercessions.

Considering the tenets of MT, transnational migrants, and refugees experience social procedures that reflect geological, social, and political lines as they travel to another country. Hitherto, movement establishes irreplaceable circumstances or misfortune, which can prompt undesirable results in youth growth (Wu & Ying, 2021). However, Wu and Ying explained that, regardless of the dangers and difficulties, youths and children in the refugee setting can adjust well.

Albeit, Wu and Ying (2021) noted that there were refugee youths who worked better compared to others while battling against the undesirable results of the refugee process. This adjustment speaks to MT's tenets, and SCT strongly supports the societal and learning adjustment process. Additionally, CRT helped reveal racially-based disparities aggravating issues. Overall, the refugee youth participants in this study exhibited strength and resilience as defensive mechanisms in dangerous circumstances and competently identified beneficial encounters along the way.

Beneficial Encounters

The beneficial encounter theme captured the delightful moments and realistic interactions of truths and trials. Two interpretive codes within the beneficial encounter theme were love/*acceptance* and *help*. Love/*acceptance* revolved around affection or attachment for someone and being acknowledged and accepted. *Help* infers assisting someone by offering resources, companionship, and information to resolve a problem.

The interpretive code *love/acceptance* revealed that, although the participants encountered many challenges, they all noted moments of love and acceptance. Eemay shared:

> What helped me the most was my brothers and sisters, who worked hard to remove us from the Ghetto schools to the Northland schools. Here, I met a good teacher who loved me, and encouraged me, and will sometimes meet me in the library. She encouraged me and will always challenge me, and she will tell me what I should expect. She was my guiding star.

Byamunga shared *love/acceptance*:

> I think I will change those experiences by making sure that other students are given the love rightly. And second thing, I will make sure there is no bullying, for no one has the right to humiliate and oppress the other because of the color of their skin, race, and where they come from stuff like that

All participants shared their encounters with somebody who helped them. For example, ale described help from a spiritual leader:

> I asked a pastor to move me, and who helped me. After a while, I was told the leader of the gang moved out of Kansas City, and I came back here, and now I will attend college.

Ale described *help*:

> In the school which we are, gun violence is getting worse. I was involved in it, but this is how I got out of it. That is, I always looked at my parent and how they suffered for us. I decided to run away from the gangs, and sometimes they will come and beat me, but I would lie to them. So, I decided to go to another state and told everybody that I was going back to Africa. I asked a pastor to move me, and who helped me. After a while, I was told the leader of the gang moved out of Kansas City, and I came back to here, and now I will attend college.

Or when Confidence shared what *help* was to them:

> What helped me the most is, I believe, is the relationship with my family. My family believes that no matter where we come from or what we go through, we can make it a group. It is that hope that lifts me up. I had seen my mother work so! So! Hard. My mother will always not eat until all of her children can eat; she sacrificed so much for us.

All the participants surmised that educators could have a positive effect when refugee children and youth arrive if those educators maintained a positive and inviting environment. Participants depicted conditions like the BCME (2022) reported: a significant part of their first experience with school life and early relationship building happened in the classes with educational personnel. Chan (2022) emphasized that educational programs

that attach academic learning to students' lived experiences are especially effective. Subsequently, I found that participants' stories supported Chan's assumptions. Thus, to reconstruct their lives, refugee youths require understanding and support.

The word refugee relates to the term asylum, for a refuge is a protected safe house wherein an individual dwells for security reasons (Farris, 2020). Such a refuge is essential to resolving the issues of refugees' lives to perpetuate their social integration into their new communities (Farris, 2020). Providing assurance and aid to escaping individuals looking for shelter is one of humankind's most longstanding practices (Nicholson et al., 2017). Nicholson et al. posited that such assurance is a common and integral part of numerous religions and social customs and is a critical aspect of global regulation.

However, each country is obligated and responsible for providing material help, security, medical care, education, and necessary social amenities to assist every refugee with safeguarding their self-esteem (Farris, 2020). Sadly, these refugee groups face legal and social obstacles that keep them from accessing essential aid in many countries (Online MSW Programs, n.d.). That is why Online MSW Programs emphasize that service providers, social workers, and volunteers must intercede to address the difficulties confronting refugees in vulnerable circumstances toward redefining their and their children's lives.

Through an SCT lens, educators can nurture children's inexperienced skills and ideas with community guidance (Masterclass, 2022). Per SCT tenets, social learning and cultural factors are the most crucial aspects of human development (Masterclass, 2022). According to the Masterclass website, these SCT-based concepts led some

educators to develop pedagogies emphasizing individual cultural norms rather than adhering to bygone universal learning process approaches, thus, influencing academic effects and outcomes.

Academic Effects

The Academic effects theme relates to the degree that a student accomplishes their learning objectives. There were five interpretive codes within the academic effect theme: Education system, *educate*/knowledge, *work/career*, *achievement/success*, and *drop/dropout*. The education system encompasses the public education systems of gaining knowledge. *Educate/knowledge* indicates an enlightening experience and practical understanding of a subject. *Work/career* centered on undertaking tasks for an occupation requiring a substantial portion of a person's life and included chances for growth. *Achievement/success* inferred accomplishing something with a purpose and mastery. Finally, *drop/dropout* refers to study abandonment and pursuing an alternative lifestyle due to poor and insufficient education.

All the participants indicated they struggled with their academic education but were grateful they could speak English. Albeit some participants, like Confidence, viewed their *education* with hostility:

> What I struggled with the most; was academics. Since the teachers were always focused on my ESL, they neglected everything else, such as Math and other subjects. Now I am making up for that. The ESL programs wasted my time while other students were learning other academic subjects.

Byamunga described their *education system* as follows:

> One thing I can say, living in the United States, is that education in the United States is good because here you get an opportunity, unlike in Africa. Nobody will help you choose a career pathway; it is a matter of survival. But, US, if you are lucky to understand what is taught in the class, then you are free to find one. If you study enough, you can study to prepare yourself to become a doctor or a teacher. You can participate in community services to prepare of these careers in school.

Babeta explained *educate/knowledge* experiences as follows:

> The achievements that I had was, now I speak English and having hope to attend Nursing school, and also learning about nursing at the school. I wish I can help those girls who were my friends back in the refugee camp.

All the participants worked jobs helping their parents but were looking for a better education to advance their careers. Dabor explained *work/career*:

> I wish I could get into proper high school in this country and spend like my friends for four years of high school. I really wanted to play soccer, but no problem, I developed a skill in the job core. Although they seemed to be the same, I still wished to have done the high school, they killed my spirit, but I lifted it by myself.

Babeta shared their *work/career* experience:

> We have a different program at the school. Like. For me. I am taking CNA at the school to prepare myself. I get out of high school, and I get a job as a CNA. But, in the future, I want to be a nurse, or maybe I should continue to be an assistant nurse. I think that will prepare me to continue my college and

> get experience while I am in high school and maybe will give me a direction in the future.

Confidence explained *achievement/success* as:

> I think I learned through the hard way and was not spoon-fed. The other thing is I can tell the different justice system that happens in America, which will always help me make a decision better. Academically, there is a gap in my education, but I am working twice as a normal American kid. Truly, I am thankful to America because I am a life, and at least, I can say I struggled.

Although most participants graduated by attending high school, some sought alternatives to help their families, such as *dropping out* of school. For example, Assana sadly noted:

> I am not prepared to attend college because I still have a problem with my academic work, and I want to feed and work for my family. The school could not prepare me academically because I was struggling, and nobody could understand my situation.

Likewise, Crescent exasperatedly discussed *dropping out* of school:

> Uh, I really do not know, but what I can say is at least I have a future, but not as I wanted, and that is how the world is. Maybe my children will get it, God willing, better than me.

Dabor has this to say about *drop/dropout*:

> If I have to change my experience, I need to first educate myself; I had a lot in my mind that I wanted to do when I came here, but I found different things. For example, I had to put in my mind that I will attend high school,

> go to college, and many more when I came here. All those things were not there for me. I think if you are at the age of high school, they should not deny you the high school. I am told that refugee children are not helped in school because the school only minds about the outcome of tests.

Thus, my findings supported McLaren's (2019) statement about refugee age vs. graduation,

> if refugees arrive in the United States at a young age, under 13, they are almost as likely to graduate high school as their U.S.-born classmates. If they arrive after the age of 14, however, their likelihood of graduating plummets. (p. 1)

Early childhood, middle, and secondary school education are critical times of physical and social growth (BRYCS, n.d.c); thus, creating positive companion connections is significant. However, like BRYCS, I found that refugee students experienced issues making companions in schools mainly due to racial and cultural harassment. Further, I noted that those adverse circumstances grew, leaving the refugee participants in consistent trepidation that negatively affected their education, resulting in some dropping out of school entirely.

Education is a definitive strengthening device particularly significant for refugee youth (USA for UNHCR, n.d.b). Caring education and a protected learning environment inspire refugee youth toward their futures while assisting them with recuperating from their refugee-related sufferings (USA for UNHCR, n.d.a). Unfortunately, while the UNHCR (2012) dictates that resettlement includes guaranteed and appropriate schooling, refugee youth do not receive such education (Schorchit,

2017). According to Schorchit, refugees encounter multiple educational deterrents in refugee camps that cause significantly increased resettlement complications; however, the poor educational experiences also extend to the refugees' new home country.

Once in their new country, administrators group refugees with other immigrants, wherein the refugees do not receive the needed accommodations due to their challenging educational encounters (Schorchit, 2017). New refugees must adapt to schooling systems, new friends, different community standards, new language and speech patterns, various assumptions, study requirements, and conflicting instructive methodologies (Schorchit, 2017). However, as Powers (2022) explained, refugees are introduced into economically stressed schooling systems in nations entangled inside themselves about subjects such as which of its histories to teach, thereby further deteriorating their educational opportunities.

Considering, within the lens of SCT, the ZPD includes abilities acquired with the assistance of expert others (Theodore, 2022), a lack of such aid results in reverse. Unsurprisingly, a refugee's ZPD often includes those who have withdrawn from education or are struggling in the circumstances requiring assistance from caring experts. Whether from a lens of SCT, MT, CRT, or a crystallized lens of the three, academic effects shape and mold refugee youth according to their societal communities. Therefore, from metropolitan regions to small municipalities, U.S. educational systems present the central defining moments in refugee family integration (Powers, 2022). Thus, the academic effects theme strongly influenced refugee resettlement drawn from social illuminations when viewed through this crystalized theoretical lens.

Social Illumination

Social illumination relates to learners' equitable enlightenment, insight, and growth acceleration. Two interpretive codes formed the social illumination theme: *Reform* and *community*. *Reform* focused on refining and restructuring to improve education, the power to act, and the quality of being fair and impartial. *Community* refers to sharing mutual aims and the advantage of group interests or descendants of common ancestors.

All the participants desired and requested school reform and expressed educator and community silence as a response. Finally, Daud shared their emotional encounter to change:

> If I get a chance to change my past, I would change my school programs, especially what I just experienced myself, for nobody told me about it. I felt it, and I saw it and really feel inside out (paused… tears dropping). I keep it inside. If I had to change, I would differently change that pain to not happen to anybody else, whether a refugee or not, because in this world, everybody deserves to get educated because it is important to have knowledge in life and making sure that the world has knowledgeable people in the world.

Byamungu shared their *reform* view and how they would improve the system:

> If I have the power or the authority, I will change bullying because most of the refugee students experience it. And it [bullying] is painful because they [the bullies] try to lower your dignity and try to make you believe you do not belong in this country. Over time, one thing that I have learned well is that you should not listen to people; listen to your heart and your spiritual voice.

> When you start doing good, people try to tell you, you cannot do it; therefore, I get the spiritual energy when they tell me you cannot do it.

Confidence viewed *reform* as:

> (Deep breath) first, I will change the living conditions the refugees undergo when they come to this country. Even though it was always better than the refugee camp, we were not prepared for the new life we were to face in the United States. I believe we should have more resources for both the refugees and the host communities, who are mostly the African Americans. The schools should concentrate on helping the children instead of benefiting their own programs that help them with salaries.

Additionally, all the participants desired and requested a nurturing cooperative community. Daud stated:

> I want all kids to be equal in school. You know, the African Americans who are born here have to treat other kids that are from Africa as their brothers and sisters. You know that we must go through the same path of suffering and poverty and many more. We must unite to uplift ourselves from this deep hole. No need to say you are from Africa, Liberia, or Congo. So what is that, for we are all equal (hitting the table) if we all unite; we can change the problems the people face in the urban school and our life in general.

Confidence shared their view on how the stakeholders should be a community:

> The other thing is that the refugees will be settled in poor schools because they are poor, they are foreigners, they are mostly black and colored people, and because the society is set like that to create doom for them. I never lose

> hope so long as I understand the direction of the prejudices. The other thing is the refugee agencies should place the refugees in good housing and train the refugees to be prepared for the storms that are facing them. One thing I will add is that nobody will know the problem of a child until they ask that child. So, I think the teachers and social workers should ask children, and their parents, in order to be real social workers and teachers. With everything, there is room for improvement, and I believe there is hope for refugees so long as there is an atom of good spirits in the good people of America.

Crescent emphasized the historical *community* connection between their origin country and the United States:

> Liberia was formed in 1822 by the free slave from America. They're a tie between my country and the United States that friendship goes all the way back to 1822. And we got our independence and declared ourselves a free state in 1822. When the free slaves were sent back to Africa and settled in Liberia, and our flag was seen as the United States flag, red, white, and blue with one star. And also, our Constitution was from the United States Constitution, and pledge and allegiance are the same as the United States pledge and allegiance; except we do not have under God in our pledge, but the rest is word for word.

All participants voiced the need for community groups' full participation in meeting their needs; many stated that participation was vital to their education and school involvement. For example, the NCELA (n.d.b) noted that to assist with advancing

social mindfulness, educators must cultivate sensations of profound security in school by regarding each student's viewpoint and empowering all students to be respectful of each other. In addition, schools must coordinate refugees into community networks, inventively and thoughtfully welcoming and serving refugee youths (NCELA, n.d.b). Participants echoed these sentiments by collectively begging that schools perceive the unique requirements of refugees and equitably recognize these students as citizens and not as unwanted intruders.

However, rather than nurture, the refugee youth in this study encountered unfairness and bigotry throughout their experiences and the learning opportunities that the school presented them. They intrinsically faced segregation and discrimination through long-term institutional practices that influenced and affected their self-awareness and educational direction. Adair (2015) noted that individual victimization against refugee youth in schools takes many shapes.

Under stress, instructors emphasized demand-focused assignments, memorization, and repetition to improve test results. Confirming Adair’s (2015) assumptions, educational administrators and service workers dismissed innovative refugee youth preferences for focusing on academic commitment, critical thinking abilities, and confidence in favor of teachers degrading bilingualism and refugee newcomers’ home-language capabilities. In addition, educators ignored affirming societal integrations, acknowledgments, and acceptances, like Liberia’s community connection with the United States, among others, thereby oppressing much-needed socially illuminating reform.

Refugee populations regularly need significant associations with schools to build healthy networks and grounded communities (Adair, 2015), which directly correlates with all tenets of SCT. Thus, Adair proffered that school staff must engage refugee students and include their parents/guardians in creating a learning community. To aid such endeavors, Renfrow (2008) recommended providing translators to instructors and staff so that they can interconnect with refugee youth and parents about educational prospects and progression. Renfrow also emphasized that all schools should be required to offer fundamental documentation and structures in various languages.

Providing such structure and documentation in culturally appropriate formats strongly correlates with CRT's inferences for the needed multicultural revampment of the U.S. legal systems away from currently dominant White precepts. BRYCS (n.d.i) recommended educators invite refugees to share their stories but never compel them to be a spokesperson for their community, thus inferring equality and not subjugation. I analyzed participants' stories of American society through a CRT lens wherein racism resulted from individual prejudices or biases and became ingrained in U.S. institutions and laws (NASP, 2021). Thus, the CRT lens strongly influenced the social illumination theme development as it exposed foundational racism affecting refugee youth education. As Daud said,

> I can guarantee you that this country is one of the most top racist countries in the world. I can diffidently say that.

Accordingly, per NASP (2021), understanding that systemic racism is ingrained in American history and continues to exist in contemporary society was a vital

component of the CRT aspect of my analysis. Fundamentally, however, not only is racism an essential element of CRT, but racism and its byproducts also played an integral role in SCT and MT, crystalizing the three theoretical lenses to illuminate an overall thematic synopsis of these study findings.

Thematic Synopsis

Throughout these interviews, I gathered data to answer the central RQ of how the participants viewed their educational experiences as refugees. While twelve themes emerged from interview data, and I revealed several foundational building blocks, all twelve themes held a central alarming fundamental cornerstone. I found examples of societal racism in every theme regardless of which theory by which I viewed the data: MT, SCT, CRT, and the crystallization of all three strands of my theoretical framework. From subtle to overt, from passive to aggressive, and from inferential to extreme violence, the refugee youth participants in this study answered the RQ by describing their educational experiences with varying degrees of societal racism. I grouped 12 themes into three base categories: Persecution, community, and education.

Persecution

Considering the participants were African refugee youth, I expected the emergent themes of escape, intolerance, challenges, and defensive mechanisms. Furthermore, I was equally unsurprised to find racism embedded within these four themes. After all, escape was about breaking away from fundamentally racist societal traumas like harm, anguish, trials, suffering, and distress, apparent in the theme's coding: *Flight*, *hardship*, *refugees*, and *informal schooling*.

Likewise, intolerance included society's entrenched racial disparities and unwillingness to accept VABEs that vary from their own, resulting in infringing others' human rights, including associated codes: *Racism*, *prejudice*, *stereotype*, and *injustice*. Challenges centered on refugees' difficult encounters, including dangerous situations, aggressive behavior, fierceness, drugs, and gang environments classified by corresponding codes, all indicative of societal racism: *Bullying*, *hate/violence*, *drugs/gangs*, and *security/safety*. Albert, defensive mechanism presented methods the participants used to isolate themselves from unsavory occasions, activities, or contemplations.

Conversely, I found that, while all defensive mechanisms stemmed from varying aspects of societal racism, participants' coping methods resonated with optimistically positive coding: *Hope*, *resilience*, and *confidence*. Finally, I analyzed the data through the crystalized theoretical lens of MT, SCT, and CRT. I noted the heavy societally racist overtones that CRT focused on, and MT explained. Still, I also noted the positive potential presented by SCT. Thus, the SCT aspect of my theoretical lens led me to group community support themes.

Community

I found community support, strength, and perseverance within the cultural experience, toil and exertion, beneficial encounters, and social illumination themes despite the significant presence of societal racism. Throughout this study, participants' cultural experiences played integral roles in their *ideas*, *customs*, and *social behaviors,* which all stemmed from past environmental adaptations of whom they considered their people.

However, the unfamiliar, confusing, and hostile environments these refugee youth entered contained societally racist overtones, which drove the theme's subsequent coding: *Cultural-conflict*, *-shock*, and *-connection*. The toil and exertion theme exposed significant societal racism as participants described the excessive physical and mental labor they and their parents underwent due to the hostile environment highlighted by the themes' codes: *Struggles*, *burden*, *disparities*, *documentation*, and *parental*.

Despite those hardships, participants' sense of family and community remained present. The beneficial encounter theme exposed participants' resulting delightful moments and realistic interactions of truths and trials driven by deeply emotional coding: *Love/acceptance* and *help*. Moreover, that community spirit carried throughout the social illumination theme. Rather than succumbing to the societal racism participants endured, the refugee youth expressed deep desires for societal enlightenment, insight, equitability, and growth for every learner reflected in the theme's coding: *Reform* and *community*.

While these themes contained aspects of CRT principles and echoes of MT foundations, SCT most clearly focused on the community spirit and positive future goals these refugee youth conveyed. Considering how each participant spent time focusing on their future dreams and the central educational RQ inferences, the academic focus of the remaining four themes was logical.

Education

Since I interviewed African refugee youth resettled in the United States about their educational experiences, the U.S. resettlement, academic shock, recurrence, and

academic effect themes seemed a natural progression. Albeit, the refugee youth continued facing disheartening societal racism and enduring disparities. International cohesion and responsibility-sharing provide a durable solution for refugees by resettling them in a safe and nurturing environment to protect those who cannot defend themselves (Martin et al., 2019). For the African refugee participants in this study, U.S. resettlement indicated a permanent and nurturing home in the United States, drastically different from any prior environment they experienced. Subsequently, any resettlement included *resettlement*, *environmental change*, and *orientation*, as the theme's coding indicates. In addition, such resettlement had schooling. However, the accompanying confusion, disparity, stress, and trauma the participants endured reflected significantly elevated and surprising levels of societal racism.

The academic shock theme contained deeply entrenched racism reflected by the experiences the students had when presented with voluminous communication beyond their education and experience. Subsequently, those exasperating communiques included entirely foreign VABEs from the refugees' own. Such unresolved disconnect resulted in significant hindrances and failures to achieve academic goals as reflected in the theme's codes: *Gap*, *language/dialect*, *ELL program seclusion*, *fail testing*, and *translation and interpretation*. Exasperating the situation, participants consistently experienced the recurring theme whenever a new event echoed/reminded them of prior trauma as indicated by the theme's codes: *Revisit*, *trauma/shock*, *isolation/lonely*, and *withdrawal*.

This chain of recurrence intensified educational obstacles reflected in the academic effects theme by demonstrating the degree to which the refugee students

accomplished their learning objectives. I found a wide variety of academic effects within the interview data reflected by coding ranging from positive educational outcomes to highly negative results leading to complete academic failure: *Education system*, *educate/knowledge*, *work/career*, *achievement/success*, and *drop/dropout*.

I leaned heavily on all three strands of my theoretical framework when analyzing this theme. SCT strongly supported the academic chain of progression and how the refugee youths socially based academic interactions influenced their educational experiences. MT loomed large within the numerous instances wherein recurrence affected participants' educational experiences. Within all four themes, systemic societal racism significantly and substantially influenced the refugee youths' academic performance and educational experiences, as supported by CRT. All themes considered, from all theoretical vantages, societal racism entrenched refugee youth participants' educational experiences. Wherein that hostile societal racism significantly stunted educational opportunities and outcomes for the participants, which discrepancies highlighted.

Discrepancies

While I uncovered some discrepancies, those cases further exposed African refugee youth's educational experiences by highlighting the variations. First, I noted two distinctive discrepancy types: (a) Discrepancies between current literature insights and interview data and (b) discrepancies between the primary data and the interview data. Subsequently, I analyzed both discrepancy types individually through the conceptually crystalized lens of MT, SCT, and CRT.

Discrepancy Insights Among Current Literature and Interview Data

The glaring discrepancy between current literature and interview data was the missing themes from the current literature (see Table 2). Thus, I analyzed the nature of how academic shock, intolerance, toil/exertion, challenges, and academic effect, as well as why those themes appeared in interview data but not current literature. The five missing themes (academic shock, intolerance, toil and exertion, challenges, and academic effect) contained commonalities about interview participants' difficulties, fear, helplessness, disbelief, striving, and trials. These resettlement similarities revolved around refugee youth's experiences in U.S. high schools and included interview participants' intense personal experiences shared during in-person interviews but not shared by the publicly available current literature video documents. I surmised this discrepancy because I addressed participants' privacy and protection during interviews, whereas the publicly aired video documents/current literature had no such precautions. In addition, to acquire a better understanding, these experiences reflected MT factors associated with the refugee youth participants' destination experiences.

Table 2

Current Literature vs Interview Themes

Theme	Literature	Interviews
Escape	X	X
Cultural experience	X	X
U.S. resettlement	X	X
Academic shock		X
Intolerance		X
Toil and exertion		X
Challenges		X
Recurrence	X	X
Beneficial encounter	X	X
Academic effect		X
Social illumination	X	X
Defensive mechanism	X	X

Note. The table provides clarity to discrepant themes between current literature and interview analysis.

Discrepant Interview Cases

During interview data analysis, I uncovered two discrepant cases: (a) Five participant cases lacked any data coded to informal schooling, and (b) I coded no data whatsoever in the education/learning node (see Table 1). Of the five cases lacking informal schooling data, four participants attended a formal refugee school system, and one did not attend school at all. In contrast, the remaining participants started with informal religious learning schools. In addition, the education system code contained no data which encompasses the public education systems of gaining knowledge. Even though all the participants claimed to have received a better education in the United States than in Africa, they all reported lagging behind their educational level and continuing to face resettlement challenges. Administrators required all participants to

continue their education toward work or career despite their struggles with academic work.

All participants appeared resolute not to give up by displaying great hope and trust in education as the most important means of climbing the socioeconomic hierarchy. Furthermore, many participants desired to become accomplished professionals who might help their new nation and the world. Subsequently, SCT was critical in coding these emotions due to the theoretical emphasis that SCT places on the zone of proximal development. Applying SCT, I revealed the significance of supportive guidance and assistance that refugee students need to embrace their feature learning objectives.

Summary

My findings revealed a critical understanding of how African refugee youth experiences in U.S. public high schools affect their U.S. educations and educational outcomes. Thus, my findings answered the primary study RQ: How do African refugee youth describe their educational experiences? While I discovered 12 themes in the combined data, one consistent commonality was present: Racism profoundly influenced the African refugee youths' learning experiences. I found similar patterns throughout the data regardless of the thematic groupings (persecution, community, and education). Through each facet of my theoretical analysis, I found examples of societal racism in every theme: MT, SCT, CRT, and the crystallization of all three strands of my theoretical framework.

While I quickly observed racism in the persecution grouping, the phenomenon was not as easily identifiable in community and education groupings. Persecution

included escape, intolerance, challenges, and defensive mechanism themes that contained commonly racially malicious codes: *bullying*, *drugs/gangs*, *flight*, *hardship*, *hate/violence*, *informal schooling, injustice, prejudice*, *racism*, *refugees*, *security/safety*, and *stereotype*. Thus, entrenched racial disparities, human rights infringements, and societal ostracism were unsurprising patterns. However, I also observed heavy societally racist overtones within the optimistically positive codes, including *confidence*, *hope*, and *resilience.* Throughout the persecution grouping, CRT focused, and MT explained my theoretical analysis with SCT providing uplifting overtones and revealing community-related groups.

The community grouping included cultural experience, toil and exertion, beneficial encounters, and social illumination themes that contained *burden*, *cultural-conflict, -shock*, *-connection, customs*, *documentation*, *disparities*, *ideas*, *parental, social behaviors,* and *struggle* codes. In this grouping, exposed societal racism obstructing community support aggravating unfamiliar, confusing, often hostile environments. Albeit, within the *community, help,* l*ove/acceptance,* and *reform* codes, I discovered hope and spirit despite racially driven hardships. SCT provided the most theoretical insight into community groups. MT presented a solid foundation. CRT helped expose racial overtures, expanding into the education group by providing structure highlighting hidden patterns.

While CRT illuminated racial disparities among the education grouping, MT provided relevant insight into African refugee youth, and SCT supplied essential understanding. The education group included U.S. resettlement, academic shock, recurrence, and academic effect. The education group themes included

achievement/success, *drop/dropout, educate/knowledge*, *education system*, *ELL program seclusion*, *environmental change*, *fail testing*, *gap*, *isolation/lonely*, *language/dialect*, *orientation, resettlement*, *revisit*, *translation/interpretation, trauma/shock*, *withdrawal,* and *work/career*. Overall, I found various academic effects ranging from positive educational outcomes to complete academic failure. My crystalized theoretical analysis uncovered deeply entrenched systemic racism significantly influencing African refugee youths' educational outcomes. Thus, my findings answered the RQ:

> In their own words, what were the educational experiences of African refugee youth that resulted in their academic and social failure and, thus, prevented them from becoming self-sufficient U.S. citizens?

Chapter 4, the study results, included the interview contribution reports with in-depth result presentation and discrepancy explanations. Finally, chapter 5 consists of my interpretation, discussion, implications, and future study recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETATION, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS

Using a crystalized theoretical foundation of MT, CRT, and SCT, I conducted this narratological research study to identify African refugee youths' educational experiences. Systemic societal racism permeated participants' educational experiences, causing extreme difficulty. Chapter 5 includes findings interpretation, limitations, recommendations, and implications.

Findings Interpretation

These powerful stories of trauma, struggle, grief, failure, hope, and success reveal a consistent deep-rooted phenomenon that my findings exposed: Systemic societal racism permeated participants' educational experiences to degrees undetermined and unimagined by U.S. policymakers and educational facilitators. These findings deepen social scientific understandings of what African refugee youth must overcome and continually endure while attempting to navigate the U.S. educational system, thereby gaining an inadequate, unequal, and inequitable education compared to native-born U.S. children. My findings begin filling knowledge gaps and strengthening theoretical understandings.

How Findings Correlate with Existing Literature

Even though numerous researchers studied many paths of migratory immigration and asylum infrastructures (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bueno & Prieto-Rosas, 2019; Carling et al., 2021; De Haas, 2021; Faltis & Valdes, 2010; Goodwin, 2002; GSE, 1979; Lee, 1966; Oppedal & Idsoe, 2015; Schiller et al., 1992; Stark & Taylor, 1991; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001; Todaro & Smith, 2006), literature about

African refugee youths’ U.S. educational experiences was nonexistent. While some scholars hypothesized and postulated about the educational experiences of African refugee Youth, few had directly interviewed diverse African refugee youth about their American educational experiences. Kanu's (2008), Msofe's (2014), and Sallu’s (2012) studies were not generalizable to my participant group due to differing demographic and racial grouping. My findings confirmed that academic, economic, social, and psychological barriers affected African refugee youths’ economic opportunities. My results demonstrated and substantiated African refugee youth's dire struggles during their U.S. education.

My findings also confirmed that the U.S. educational, language, and cultural disparities postulated by Burchinal et al. (2011), Eltis (1993), and Spring (2010) do occur and become significantly compounded during African refugee youths’ U.S. educational experiences. Additionally, my finding exposed how those severe educational inadequacies, disparities, and challenges affected African refugee youths’ adult perspectives, thereby confirming Collier (1995), Fantino and Colak (2001), Nsubuga-Kyobe and Dimock (2002), Rutter and Jones (1998), White (2016), and Strekalova and Hoot’s (2008) inferences. Thus, my findings correlated with the existing hypothesis regarding educational disparities among U.S. students, filling this literature void and substantiating prior scholarly conjectures; additionally, my results revealed the substantial additional disparities faced by African refugee youth.

Furthermore, this information gap may contribute to many poorly thought-out educational pedagogies. Anderson (1988), Banks and Banks (2004), Brown (2008), McLean-Donaldson (1997), and others described significant discrimination and

oversight between White and Black students in American educational and public policy. My findings confirmed these disparities and demonstrated the exponentially increased effects of such policy on African refugee youth. Anderson and Span (2016), Campbell (2006), Cross (1971, 1991), Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Kozol (2005), Lo (2013), and Neville et al. (2004) all documented detrimental racial disparities between White and children of Color. My findings demonstrated that those disparities negatively affected African refugee youth even more significantly. African refugee youths' compounded traumas related to their flight for their lives during their escape, survival, forced migration, and associated violent experiences while seeking asylum accounted for that increased significance.

While regulatory institutions provide public and educational policy to support refugees in their newly resettled homelands (BPRM, BRYCS, ESEA, NCLBA, ORR, UNESCO, UNHCR, USCRI), my findings demonstrated that such policy remains sorely inadequate. Bailey et al. (2019), Berna (2002), Huber et al. (2006), McBrien (2005), and Ukpokodu (2016) exposed U.S. educational disparities within the curriculum, support, attitudes, expectations, and more; my findings confirm those inequities and demonstrate their effect on African refugee youth. My results confirmed García-Coll and Magnuson's (1997, 2000), García-Coll et al.'s (2005), Hawkins et al.'s (2000), Mehan et al.'s. (1996), Portes and Rumbaut's (2001), and Willis' (1977) assertion of severe negative emotional traumas resulting from racism. Albeit, I documented significantly increased adverse effects on African refugee youth due to their refugee-related recurrences. My findings also exposed the critical need for sound theoretical frameworks to consider refugee youth's unique challenges, experiences, and

attributes instead of grouping them with native and naturalized citizens and immigrants.

How Findings Correlate with the Theoretical Framework

Even as my findings began filling knowledge gaps in existing literature, my research added to exposed theoretical insights, and needed conceptual, theoretical expansion. While SCT, CRT, and MT each added necessary theoretical foundations, no single theory was sufficient to adequately extract, analyze, and interpret the African refugee youth educational phenomenon. Thus, a deeper understanding emerged by conceptually employing SCT, CRT, and MT, thereby revealing critical knowledge. During this research process, by using SCT, CRT, MT, and the crystallization of all three strands of my theoretical framework, I found examples of systemic societal racism through each theoretical lens.

Socio-Cultural Theory

SCT provided robust support for the academic chain of progression and how socially oriented academic interactions affected the educational experiences of refugee youth. From the perspective of SCT, instructors, parents, and students lack needed supportive relationships. Thus, educators and refugee liaisons must cultivate such. Per SCT tenets, teachers and parents play significant and critical roles in youth education. By analyzing data through an SCT lens, I found ineffective educational direction in the culturally diverse U.S. classroom.

Applying SCT, diverse cultural groups communicate their views to influence one another, which makes every social and cultural exchange a person has a substantial educational experience. I found countless examples of this foundational aspect of SCT,

strengthening the SCT tenet that the learning process starts within society and then within the individual. Herein, by following SCT propositions, the heavy negative burden of societal racism significantly and critically hindered the educational experiences of the African refugee youth in this study.

Migratory Theory

Following MT principles, refugees undergo social processes that mirror environmental, social, and political outlines as they move from their home nation to refugee camps and their new homeland. Whether physically, emotionally, or psychologically, recurrence is a significant factor in MT. I found numerous situations wherein recurrence profoundly impacted participants' educational experiences. Those memories were triggered, exasperated, and even perpetuated by multilevel racism due to color, culture, language, and origin, all significant factors in MT.

According to MT tenets, the relocation process causes challenges for refugees due to their loss of local culture and the need to adjust to the new host countries' cultures. For example, during the U.S. resettlement process, I found that integrating into the American educational system is one of the most challenging obstacles for African refugee youth. Through the MT lens, I witnessed African refugee youth experience the disintegration of the school community in their origin country, lack of access to appropriate education in the refugee camps, and struggle to establish themselves in a new community upon resettlement.

Via the MT lens, when refugee adolescents enroll in U.S. schools, they have experienced at least three significant difficulties of rebirth and self-reevaluation due to transnational exposure wherein their self-identities where challenged. Per MT tenets,

this process repeated with each occurrence of transnational exposure, permanently imprinting the youths' self-identities during several significant stages in identity development. Even though MT emphasizes that educational institutions assist youth in developing a sense of civic identity and impart values and views consistent with their cultural contexts, such nurturing did not occur. Instead, through the MT lens, African refugee youths' self-identities where further threatened during their U.S. educational experiences due to a lack of cultural nurturing, support, and equity and harmful disparities related to existing racism, stereotyping, altercasting, and prejudices.

Critical Race Theory

Tenets and propositions of CRT glaringly exposed the systemic societal racism affecting refugee youths' academic performance and educational experiences during this study. Given CRT presumptions, U.S. society exposed African refugee youth to racist experiences ranging from subtle, barely noticeable confrontations to sudden severe manipulations. Using CRT to blend the outcomes of the stereotypes, biases, prejudices, and ostracisms the participants experienced into their developmental framework, I exposed the severe damage such racism caused.

The primary purpose of CRT is to reveal shortcomings leading to insight enabling educators to teach anti-racist, culturally responsive, and sustaining methodologies; however, CRT shed light on the inequalities manifested in the U.S. educational system during this research. The CRT lens helped me investigate the attitudes and biases that educators brought into their classrooms, resulting in significant adverse educational outcomes for the African refugee youth in this study. Analysis

through the CRT lens distinctly revealed, exposed, and highlighted the systemic societal racism in nearly every aspect of participants' U.S. resettlement and education.

Crystallized Framework

While SCT, MT, and CRT all revealed racism, each provided insight from a different focus. Only the crystallization of all three strands of my theoretical framework allowed me to extract, analyze, and interpret data specific to the African refugee youths' U.S. educational experiences. I needed the societal propositions of SCT, the transnational insights of MT, and the systemic tenets of CRT to provide a solid foundation for answering the RQ: "How do African refugee youth describe their educational experiences?" Thus, my main theoretical contribution to social science is this crystalized SCT, MT, and CRT framework.

Using all four theoretical structures (CRT, MT, SCT, crystallization), I provided a sound, reliable, valid, credible, reproducible, accurate, and ethical foundation for this research study. Furthermore, I gained critical and valuable insight while building the crystalized framework, which provided repeatable and verifiable structures to study further using such a framework, allowing me to expand this concept to provide a theoretical framework specifically for refugee studies. Such a theoretical model devoted to refugee studies as distinguishable from immigrant studies is crucial to supporting the multitude of displaced, traumatized refugees worldwide.

Limitation of my Research

Even though the African refugee youth in my study welcomed me and accepted me because of my African refugee experiences, I based this research entirely on the participants' viewpoints, which was an empowering experience. Albeit, this research

did contain limitations. My sample included only ten African refugee youth meeting the study criteria. Thus, this research did not have the 100s of other African refugee youth that also met the study criteria and does not fully represent the entire community. Further significant limitations arose from my chosen study delimitations that aided study focus and addressed the RQs specifically.

In this study, I focused primarily on the educational experiences of African refugee youth, not their teachers, parents, and administrators. Consequently, I did not pay attention to the entire range of African refugee experiences, including those of their families and teachers. Furthermore, I did not observe the classrooms or teaching methods of the schools, facilitators, or administrators. Instead, I drew data about educators, school settings, and all other environmental influencers solely from the participants' renditions of their experiences. Thus, all data trustworthiness directly stems from the participants' memories.

Since this narratology was distinctly delimited to the participants' experiences as they remembered them, all trustworthiness was accordingly linked to those participants' stories in their own words, strengthening the findings' overall reliability. Furthermore, I respected their diverse life experiences and understanding of individual norms and viewpoints, as they trusted me to be one of them; hence, from the introduction of the interviews, we developed mutual trust and communication.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this research revealed much about African refugee youth's educational experiences, more study is needed to understand how to improve the problem. Future considerations for the next steps include investigating the educational experiences of

African refugee youth more deeply by involving parents, teachers, peers, and school administrators. Such insight will add information connecting critical variables that influence schooling outcomes among African refugee youth displaced due to war or persecution. I would also recommend incorporating observations in the study data collection and spending more time monitoring the students from the day of school enrollment to exit.

In addition to drawing data from existing ontologies, future studies could expand by adding participant-recommended elements and studying the outcomes. For example, adding translators, peer connection, community immersion and education, enhanced educator training, culturally sensitive facilitation, and other similar suggestions could change the educational experiences of African refugee youth. Furthermore, a similar study could expand beyond Africans to all refugee youth. The possibilities, knowledge, and potential positive interventions could lead to many positive implications for the future.

Theoretical Recommendations

While I successfully built a research study using sound theory and am confident in my findings, I exposed a gaping theoretical absence in social science theory. No single theory was sufficient to analyze refugee-specific social implications, mainly aimed at traumatized, forcefully displaced youth education. For example, SCT does not account for transnationalism, MT does not adequately address forced migrations, and CRT does not expose systemic racism against refugees. While the crystallization of all three can support these and other missing factors, such crystallization also includes irrelevant elements and does not focus on traumatized refugees specifically.

Consequently, a credible and reliable theory toward a deeper understanding of the refugee migration processes enhanced from the context of broader social change processes will be beneficial to understanding forced migration, environmental migration, and the plight of internally displaced persons. Moreover, such a theoretical foundation will be indispensable to refugees' support, education, care, and nurture in their resettled homelands. Subsequently, I will combine my new insights with other social scientists to develop, validate, and publish such a theory. The implications of such theoretical support, framework, tenets, and propositions are significant and will greatly benefit our global society.

Implications Toward Interventions

The positive implications of my findings illuminate the hurdles African refugee youth encounter in high school and higher education, thereby providing insight into interventions that can improve their educational experiences, academic performance, and transition into U.S. culture. Improving these skills will assist African refugee youth when transferring to higher education and careers by providing relevant, high-quality, and valuable learning during their primary and secondary educational encounters. In addition, these findings offer essential knowledge to the UNHCR; National and State government partners; U.S. refugee resettlement agencies and programs; school districts; primary, secondary, and higher educational institutions; social workers; and other organizations serving refugees. While my findings provide critical insight for numerous positive social changes, the African refugee youth in this study emphasized four to alleviate the problem, guide resettled refugee youths to maximize their potential, and enrich American society.

Educate Students and Staff About Refugees

Teachers are a critical and essential element in creating equitable educational opportunities for students from various racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. However, to accomplish such, an educator must recognize that multicultural education springs from the defense of the fundamental U.S. principles of liberty, justice, and equality. In line with these National sentiments, public policies like the Freedman's Bureau Acts, ESEA, IDEA, and NCLBA, among others, were spearheaded and implemented by U.S. leaders and government institutions, including the CIS, DHS, DOE, NCELA, OHRP, USCRI, and others. Thus, the United States welcomes immigrants and refugees to make their homes in this nation. Furthermore, U.S. public policy, leadership, and society dictate that refugees are considered citizens due the same respect, rights, and freedoms as natural-born citizens. By inviting, welcoming, and committing to the well-being of so many peoples from countless widespread global cultures, the United States created a multicultural home for all the nation's people equally and equitably. Thus, educational facilities are, by nature and design, multicultural as intended by the U.S. forefathers, leaders, and people, wherein educators must equitably facilitate learning for all cultures. To this warm, welcoming, nurturing, healing, and uplifting vision, African refugee youth escape terror, persecution, violence, and other atrocities to find sanctuary, home, and peace.

Such is the vision that African refugee youth come to the United States where administrators relocate them to metropolitan locations, place them wherever inexpensive housing is available, and expose them to varied groups of peoples and cultures. Such multiculturalism could be a boon if teachers and other educators know

the demographic factors in their students' urban locations, including the socioeconomic realities of segregation, poverty, culture, and many more. Because the classroom reflects these realities, educational facilitators must teach social justice and embrace it by enhancing the student's sense of self, developing appropriate curriculums, and addressing all discrimination within the school populations' living environments.

Additionally, because these diverse urban communities are often isolated from the economic mainstream of middle-class jobs, refugees are not provided with adequate social services directly impacted by those areas' political and economic conditions. Therefore, it is essential to construct a multicultural education and implement a rigorous, culturally diverse curriculum. Multiculturalism must permeate all aspects of the school, be integrated into everyday activities, and include culturally relevant literature in the curriculum. Manning and Baruth (2009) demonstrated and emphasized that such multicultural literature is essential for developing pupils' self-awareness and appreciation for what unites all cultures. Albeit, teachers and administrators often view such multicultural curricula with trepidation.

However, teaching children from varied cultural backgrounds is neither challenging nor impossible; the task requires revising teachers' attitudes, techniques, and strategies. Four levels, or methods, work harmoniously to incorporate multicultural knowledge into the curriculum: The contributions approach, the additive approach, the transformational approach, and the social action approach (Banks & Banks, 2004). The techniques mimic fastening a ladder since the stages gradually progress into the curriculum. For diverse learner achievement, facilitators' perspectives must focus on instructional strategies and practices that include all levels of multicultural integration

(Banks, 2006): Levels one and two contain the contribution and the additive approaches, respectively.

The contribution method emphasizes heroes, festivals, and other cultural features directly influencing the cultures' respective ethnic groups (Banks, 2006). Banks noted that the best placement of ethnic content occurs within special days observed by members of a particular ethnic community. For instance, ethnic communities celebrate specific days, weeks, and months to remember certain cultural events.

In the additive method, Banks (2006) posited that the instructor has the freedom to include ethnic material in the curriculum without modifying its framework. Banks also explained that the procedure “would take substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals” (p. 1). Banks referred to the additive method as the “first phase in a transformative curriculum and to integrate it with ethnic content, perspectives, and frames of reference” (p. 1). In contrast to the contributions approach, this method has considerable shortcomings.

According to Banks (2006), one of the downsides of an additive approach is that “it usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspectives of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists because it does not involve a restructuring of the curriculum” (p. 1). Therefore, daily curricula must contain multiculturalism, and multicultural education must become a standard feature of the school system in the United States from multicultural perspectives and sources. A multicultural curriculum reverses the physical isolation of refugees and other ethnic groups within the school, allowing students to interact with peers from different

cultures and life experiences. Thereby, such a multicultural approach prevents reinforcing stereotypes and fosters trusting and respectful individuals who are not afraid of those who are different. In addition, the multicultural curriculum should explicitly address structural reform, social concerns, racism, bullying, sexism, and economic inequality. By incorporating the students' rights, voices, views, and viewpoints on such life-affecting topics into their learning experience, the learning facilitator transforms them into a multicultural classroom resource.

The transformative approach encompasses becoming a transformative servant. Banks (1991) insisted transformative facilitation includes serving "students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic activity" (p. 131). According to Gay (2010), students must be the change agents dedicated to upholding greater equality, a natural extension of the transformation approach into the social action approach.

Therefore, the social action approach includes teachers personalizing interventions for each student, including each refugee student, to address the student's concerns and priorities and adapt instruction to the individual's needs and resources. Understanding, sensitivity, and familiarity with the refugee student's cultural traditions strengthen the process and connections. Hence, the curriculum must address structural change and societal challenges, including racism, bullying, sexism, and economic inequality. For students to become multicultural classroom resources, their rights, voices, views, and viewpoints on these issues should be included in their educational experiences, promoting a culturally responsive community.

Building Culturally Responsive Learning Communities

Building a culturally responsive relationship and learning community requires positive perspectives on parents and families, elevated expectations, learning within the cultural context, student-centered instruction, reshaping the curriculum, and a transformed teacher taking a social approach. Culture is fundamental to education for communicating, getting information, and influencing the thinking process of groups and individuals. African refugee youth's past and present lives are essential to their societal reality in the United States. They center on the influence of culture and ethnicity on human growth.

Thus, culturally responsive relationships and learning communities are the foundation of effective teaching and learning pedagogies, wherein such responsive relationships extend to the entirety of those influencing the culture. Collaborating with various parents and families requires an appreciation, acceptance, and respect for the cultural backgrounds of the students and their families; hence, it is necessary to offer them culturally appropriate educational experiences. Working with adolescents and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds presents educators with unique challenges that require continual learning, thereby inspiring a culturally responsive learning community wherein members learn from each other. Thus, a transformative learning community dictates a pedagogy that considers the student's culture responsively by recognizing all cultural influences and embracing the larger cultural community.

A pedagogy that recognizes, responds to and remembers foundational cultures provides equal and equitable access to education for students of all cultures, thereby

fostering connections and a community of learners. Ladson-Billings (1998) reminded us that culturally responsive instruction is a methodology that recognizes the necessity of incorporating students' cultural orientations into all aspects of learning and promotes creativity, innovation, and critical thinking. Without such problem-solving skills, humanity would experience no new ideas, inventions, or progress; therefore, culturally responsive relationships are vital for all learning communities. For refugee youth, such a culturally responsive community environment naturally begins with an orientation to their new community, so they do not become overwhelmed.

Refugee Youth Orientation and Transition Liaisons

When refugee children and youth come to the United States, they face many challenges, including language barriers, bullying, educational gaps, increased and foreign responsibilities, and figuring out how to belong. These barriers often create confusions that eventually bring the refugee youth loneliness and hopelessness. Culture shock, lack of comprehension and understanding, and the inability to communicate make it problematic for the refugee youth and children to gain American friends. Unfortunately, when the youth face such a dilemma, they become a target for bullying, hindering their participation in class activities and, hence, missing educational opportunities. Parental language barriers also compound the problem, leading to missed education because the students must become interpreters for their parents, burdening the children and youth with additional responsibility and missed classes. However, appropriate orientations and transition liaisons can significantly address this problem.

During the refugee youth cultural orientation, the resettlement agencies must give a more detailed cultural exposure to discuss the communal and individualistic cultural aspects, including the challenges that may surface from adjusting to the new culture. In addition, educational facilitators can conduct orientation sessions with the refugee youth to inform and help them understand what they may face and how to overcome language barriers. Such a program should include the community wherein the refugee youth and other students in the school work together to help acclimate the refugee with the community and vice versa.

A family transition and language liaison who speaks the refugee's language should also help develop rapport between the students, the teacher, and the parents. Such a transitional mediator facilitator will ensure that the student can participate in class each day, gain teachers' help, assist in reading sessions, and follow the instruction in their native language to facilitate educational opportunities. In addition, such a trained liaison would promote and provide cultural services to the stakeholders (students, families, learning facilitators) on a real-time basis and maintain a campus presence. Extending such in-depth orientation, transition services, and community involvement beyond the school setting, refugee youth and students participate in intensive language training. As a result, they become adjusted, oriented, and integrated with the community. They are no longer alone and isolated. They are part of society.

Considerations for Creating Inclusive Societies

The refugee youth and their families must be integrated locally within the communities, school districts, universities, and institutions wherein the refugees resettle. Such inclusion is essential to solicit the collaboration and participation of

critical stakeholders in the community, in particular: Schools districts, municipal and county governments, local neighborhoods, refugee community organizations, welfare services, faith-based and community groups, sports clubs, youth organizations, media, grassroots organizations, and services, human rights organizations, and universities among others. Subsequently, such open and inclusive societies must be created by involving more people.

Every part of the community plays an integral role in creating such an open and inclusive society. For example, local organizations and educational institutions can help make neighborhoods more inviting and accepting of all cultures by creating awareness about refugees in schools and hosting events to educate the public and fight prejudice and xenophobia. Public service organizations, community services, clubs, and groups can offer community-based volunteer opportunities for relocated refugees and sponsor cultural events, including festivals and special days like World Refugee Day. Community groups and clubs can actively encourage refugees to join local groups and activities like sports teams, social clubs, and organizations. Administrators at all levels and institutions can ensure that resettled refugees have a voice in management and decision-making. Schools, communities, and resettlement agencies can create events promoting children mixing and learning by participating in artwork, sports, and extra curriculum activities.

Additionally, administrators must form refugee community services to provide advocacy, encouraging parents, families, and supporters to band together to fight for the multicultural public schools every child deserves. The organization should increase parents' knowledge and capacity, empower them to participate as advocates

individually and collectively in the education process, and affect the changes they desire. This community service must advocate for providing children with a high-quality multicultural education and considering their well-being, including refugees' entitled health, social, and supplementary services. The organization's goal should engage in policy and systemic advocacy strategies with parents and other stakeholders to eradicate policies and practices that have denied children reasonable access to education.

Conclusion

I designed this research study to discover how African refugee youth describe their U.S. educational experiences. Thus, I collected data to address that primary study question. While twelve distinct themes emerged using multiple foundational building blocks, each included a fundamental worrying cornerstone: racism. I identified evidence of systemic societal racism in every topic through each theoretical framework I used to extract and examine the data: MT, SCT, CRT, and the conceptual crystallization of all three. The refugee youth participants described their U.S. educational experiences from varying perspectives and focus, but all conveyed experiencing substantial societal racism. These experiences ranged from covert to overt racism, stereotyping, and altercasting; from passive to aggressive racism, inequity, and inequality; and from inferential to extreme forms of physical, mental, and emotional violence.

The African refugee travels from their origin country to the refugee camps and, eventually, to their new homeland resettlement country. Throughout these experiences, minimal educational opportunities in the refugee camps and inappropriate and

inadequate U.S. education resulted in the neglect of African refugee youths' education. In addition, their U.S. educators inappropriately placed them with other minority groups and immigrants without considering the refugees' enormous trauma endured during their journeys. As a result, these African refugee youth resettled in the United States faced the same discrimination, broken dreams, low self-esteem, and hostility that native-born Black Americans, Hispanic immigrants, and other minorities face. However, these dehumanizing differences added to the African refugee's underlying and extensive traumas. Existing literature inferred that this horrendous oversight was due to a gap in social science understandings of African refugee youth traumas and perspectives. Logically, this study's perspectives of African refugee youth are essential in shaping effective responses to their issues and enabling appropriate public and educational policy, administration, and facilitation.

When members of a nation's minority groups cannot achieve full structural inclusion through the nation's social, cultural, economic, and political structures, ineffective citizens are produced (Banks, 2015). Likewise, when native and naturalized citizens fail to absorb the values and ethos of that country, experience structural exclusion within that country, and have very mixed sentiments about that country, citizenship socialization has failed (Banks, 2015). Thus, when refugees enter such a system that fails to produce productive citizens and fails to develop citizenship socialization, these phenomena are compounded. Race has long played a significant part in American law, society, and daily life. Thus, we must have the zeal to examine race and its complexities in the context of a post-racial epitome that recognizes the

commonality of humanity and advocates for a more nuanced, individualistic approach to integrating and interpreting human behavior.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FACILITY CONSENT

Re: A Narratological Inquiry into U.S. African Refugee Youth's Educational Experiences

Consent is hereby granted for the researcher, Abdulkadir A. Bakar, to utilize this facility to recruit participants and conduct private, recorded interviews on these premises. Said interviews will be conducted with volunteer African (Congolese, Somali, Sudanese, Liberians, and Burundi) refugee youths, age 15 and above, attending public high school in Kansas City, Missouri. Each interview will last no more than 90-minutes and be used for the purpose of data collection used in analyses of the above referenced research study contingent upon approval by the social sciences Institutional Review Board (IRB) of University of Missouri, Kansas City. Upon said approval, Abdulkadir A. Bakar will contact the representative listed below to arrange a schedule that best fits the needs of this facility and the interviewees for these research sessions. This consent form hereby acknowledges permission to utilize this facility as laid out herein.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and all questions and concerns have been addressed. On behalf of my organization / institution, I consent for recruitment and use of my facility for this study.

Organization Name [redacted]

Organization Address [redacted]

Organization Phone number(s) [redacted]

Signature [signature] Date 9-7-2019

Printed Name: [redacted] Title: Program Manager, Refugee Services

Contact Representative Name [redacted]

Contact Representative Phone Number: [redacted]

Contact Representative Email Address: [redacted]

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least seven years, post-study.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Office of Research Services

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: A Narratological Inquiry into U.S. African Refugee Youth's Educational Experiences

Authorized Study Personnel
Principal Investigator: Abdulkadir Bakar (816)9160549
Secondary Investigator: Dr. Omiunota Ukpokodu, Ph.D Office 816-235-2469

KEY INFORMATION

You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are an African Refugee Youth. Research studies are voluntary and only include people who choose to take part. The purpose of this research is to explore how African refugee youth describe their educational experiences. The total amount of time you would be in this study is between 60 to 90-minutes. During your participation you will be involved in a one-on-one, face-to-face, recorded interview. Taking part in this research involves the following risks or discomforts: remembering your past. There are no benefits to you for taking part in this study. You have the alternative of not taking part in this study.

Please read this consent form carefully and take your time making your decision. As the researcher(s) discusses this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. Please talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

The purpose of this study is to explore how African refugee youth describe their educational experiences. You are being asked to be in the study because you are an African refugee youth (age 15 and above) attending high school in Kansas City, Missouri. You must be 15 years of age or older to participate in this study.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Approximately 10 people will take part in this study at a location of their choice.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?

You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face, recorded interview. Each interview will last between 60 to 90-minutes and follow-up question may follow.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

The study will be in 3 months and may have follow-up questions.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

It is not expected that you will be exposed to any physical risk by participating in this research study. However, some emotional stress may be encountered due to recalling educational experiences associated with past. The researcher, Abdulkadir A. Bakar, will have potential crisis outreach contact information available should you wish to utilize such.

IRB ID: 2017376
Approval Date: 12/05/19
Continuing Review Before: N/A
Reference Date: 12/04/19

Page 1 of 3

UMKC IRB
Consent Form Version Date 12/04/19

UMKC
Office of Research Services

Consent to Participate in Research

ARE THERE BENEFITS TO TAKING PART IN THE STUDY?

It is not expected that you will receive any benefit from participating in this research study. However, African refugee youth in general could benefit from the increased understanding resulting from this research study.

WILL MY INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

The University of Missouri System, Authorization No. 00-018 requires research data to be retained for 7 years after the final report.

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for Seven years after the study is complete. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for seven years after the study is complete. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS TO YOU?

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

WHAT ABOUT COMPENSATION?

No compensation will be provided for your participation in this study.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM DURING THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

Your well-being is a concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

WHAT ABOUT MY RIGHTS TO DECLINE PARTICIPATION OR WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

You can choose to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you are entitled. However, if you decide to stop participating in the study, we encourage you to talk to the researcher first to make sure it is safe to do so.

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researcher(s).

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

UMKC
Office of Research Services

Consent to Participate in Research

WHOM DO I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS?

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.
For study related questions, please contact the researcher(s) listed at the beginning of this form.
For questions about your rights as a research participant, or to discuss problems, concerns or suggestions related to your participation in the research, or to obtain information about research participant's rights, contact the UMKC Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office

- Phone: (816) 235-5927
- Email: umkcirb@umkc.edu

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

The purpose of this study, procedures to be followed, risks and benefits have been explained to me. I have been allowed to ask questions, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been told whom to contact if I have questions, to discuss problems, concerns, or suggestions related to the research, or to obtain information. I have read or had read to me this consent form and agree to be in this study, with the understanding that I may withdraw at any time. I have been told that I will be given a signed copy of this consent form.

____
Printed Name of Subject

______________________________ ________ ________
Signature of Subject Date Time

____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

______________________________ ________ ________
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent Date Time

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Topic: The educational experiences of African refugee youth

Date ____________________________

Time ____________________________

Location _________________________

Interviewer _______________________

Interviewee _______________________

Release form signed? ____

Prior to interview time:

- All recording equipment will be set up and tested to ensure smooth functionality.
- Bottled water, crisis contact information, and any other requested accommodations will be in place so as not to delay the start of the interview or cause undue stress.
- Associated consent forms will be signed ahead of time and on location.

Notes to the interviewee:

Instructions
Good morning (afternoon). My name is Abdulkadir A. Bakar. Thank you for meeting with me today. I want you to feel relaxed by saying what you think and how you feel. If you do not feel comfortable, you can end the interview at any moment. Please do not feel apologetic for laughing, crying, or expressing any emotions of any kind. I believe your input will be valuable to this research. Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed. The interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes and will explore various stages of your educational experiences.

Tape-recorder instructions

I will be recording our conversation to get all the aspects of the interview without having to stop our conversation from writing out your responses. I will later watch and listen to this recording and write everything you said exactly as you said. I guarantee you that all your comments will stay confidential. Then, I will compile a report containing your words without referencing your name. Do you have any questions before we begin?

5. Please describe your educational experiences while living in Africa.
6. Please describe your educational experiences while living in the refugee camp.
7. Please describe your educational experiences since you arrived in the United States.
8. How have your educational experiences prepared you for college or a career?

   Elaborating questions might include:

   f) Please tell me about your achievements.

   g) Please tell me about your challenges.

   h) Please explain what you struggled with the most.

   i) Please share what helped you the most.

   j) If you could, how would you change those experiences? Why?

Thanks, and end:

The interview is now over. Thank you very much for participating. Do you have any additional questions before you go? Feel free to contact me if you should think of any questions. Thank you.

Notes

Response from Interviewee

Reflection by Interviewer

APPENDIX D: UMKC IRB APPROVAL AND CERTIFICATION

Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Kansas City

5319 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, MO 64110
816-235-5927
umkcirb@umkc.edu

December 05, 2019

Principal Investigator: Omiunota Nelly Ukpokodu
Department: Teachr Educ & Curr Studies

Your IRB Application to project entitled "A Narratological Inquiry into U.S. African Refugee Youth's Educational Experiences" was reviewed and approved by the UMKC Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	2017376
IRB Review Number	253928
Initial Application Approval Date	December 05, 2019
IRB Expiration Date	N/A
Level of Review	Expedited
Application Status	Approved
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Expedited Categories	45 CFR 46.110.a(f)(6) 45 CFR 46.110.a(f)(7)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Type of Consent	Written Consent Parental Consent (One Parent) Child Assent
HIPAA Category	No HIPAA
Approved Documents	Final Approved Student Consent Version Date 12.04.19 Approved Parental Consent Version Date 11.04.19 Consent to Conduct Interview on the Premises Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement Protocol

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date (if applicable).
2. All unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB on the Event Report within 5 business days of becoming aware of the problem. Unanticipated problems are defined as events that are unexpected, related or possibly related to the research, and suggests the research places subjects or others at a greater risk of harm than was previously known or recognized. If the unanticipated problem was a death, this is reportable to the IRB within 24 hours of notification of occurrence/becoming aware of occurrence.

3. On-site deaths that are not unanticipated problems must be reported within 5 days of awareness on the Death Report, unless the study is such that you have no way of knowing a death has occurred, or an individual dies more than 30 days after s/he has stopped or completed all study procedures/interventions and required follow-up.
4. All deviations (non-compliance) must be reported to the IRB on the Event Report within 5 business days of becoming aware of the deviation.
5. All changes must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce immediate risk. All changes must be submitted on the Amendment Form.
6. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
7. For studies requiring a Continuing Review Report (CRR) must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date. If the study is complete, the Completion/Withdrawal Form may be submitted in lieu of the CRR.
8. Securely maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date or longer depending on the sponsor's record keeping requirements.
9. If applicable, utilize the IRB stamped consent documents and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eCompliance. These documents are highlighted green.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB at 816-235-5927 or umkcirb@umkc.edu.

Thank you,
UMKC Institutional Review Board

Certification of Acceptance
of
Doctoral Dissertation

Candidate's Name: **Abdulkadir Bakar**

Candidate's Degree Program: **Doctor of Philosophy (Curriculum and Instruction / Social Science Consortium)**

Dissertation Title:

A Narratological Inquiry into U.S. African Refugee Youths' Educational Experiences

On the recommendation of the candidate's Supervisory Committee, this dissertation is hereby accepted by the SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the above-indicated doctoral degree.

Date accepted: 5/1/2023

School of Graduate Studies Acceptance by: Nancy Hoover

c: Supervisory Committee Chair: **Omiunota Ukpokodu**
Graduate Records Office
Degree Candidate

* *

Upon receipt of this certification, students may proceed with the online submission process to ProQuest. The UMKC electronic thesis and dissertation submission site is located here; http://www.etdadmin.com/umkc

* *

TO: Graduate Records Office

The final copy of this candidate's dissertation has been successfully uploaded to the ProQuest System.

School of Graduate Studies ____________ Date ____________

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VITA

Abdulkadir Bakar was born in Somalia in 1978. He received his BSBM from the University of Phoenix in 2008. He continued his MBA at the University of Phoenix and graduated in 2010. He also completed several intensive courses, including the United Nations Intensive Course at the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University in 2010, and the International Public Health Intensive Course at the Institute for Internal Medicine (INMED), University of Missouri in 2010. This dissertation research study, *A Narratological Inquiry into U.S. African Refugee Youths' Educational Experiences*, completes Abdul's I-PhD in Curriculum and Instruction, Social Science Consortium at the UMKC.

Abdul worked with refugee resettlement programs and community involvement. He participated in providing effective development, operations, and management of Refugee Resettlement programs and services in Kansas City, Missouri. Supervised direct service and support staff across the resettlement programs and contracted services.

Abdul received several awards, including:

- The 2007 Young Global Advocate award from United Nations Association (UNA)
- The 2008 Crescent Peace award for leadership in the community
- The 2006 Order of Malta MVP award for those who give their time to help others and exemplify leadership, dedication, and a commitment to improving their communities through volunteerism

- The 2016 Kansas City World Citizen of the year award; a Mayor's United Nations Day award

Upon completing his degree requirements, Abdul plans to continue working with Humanitarian Organizations, become a social science educator, and pursue research.