

# **Satisfying the Basic Psychological Needs of Students with Refugee Backgrounds: Implications for Their Academic Development, School Inclusion, and Psychological Wellbeing**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis describes a mixed-methods multiple case study that examined students with refugee backgrounds' basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness (both student and teacher relatedness), and autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008b) relative to their Canadian background peers in a small Canadian urban centre. It also examined school level differences between the students with refugee backgrounds based on whether the students were attending junior high school or high school. The Comprehensive School Health framework (Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health, 2019b) was adopted to understand group differences and to gain insights into how the school system and individual schools were either meeting or thwarting the students with refugee backgrounds' basic psychological needs, and consequently their inclusion at school.

In total, 47 students (25 students with refugee backgrounds and 22 Canadian background students) completed questionnaires that measured their psychological needs. 2x2 ANOVAs showed that the students with refugee backgrounds felt significantly less competent than their Canadian background peers. No significant difference was found between the junior high and high school students with refugee backgrounds' levels of competence. The junior high students with refugee backgrounds reported feeling significantly less student relatedness compared to the Canadian background junior high students and the high school students with refugee backgrounds. Conversely, no significant difference was found between the high school students with refugee backgrounds and the Canadian background high school students on student relatedness.

For teacher relatedness and autonomy, no significant differences were found between the groups.

The qualitative data, gathered through researcher observations, document analysis, and 34 interviews with students, teachers, school administrators, and community workers, indicated that the students with refugee backgrounds' low level of competence was likely negatively affected by many of the school and school system's policies and procedures, especially as they relate to the early inclusion of these students in mainstream programming without adequate supports. The differences between the junior high and high school students with refugee backgrounds' sense of student relatedness was likely a reflection of the more welcoming, supportive, and diverse social environment present for the high school students relative to junior high students with refugee backgrounds. Finally, recommendations on how schools and school systems can better support the psychological needs and inclusion of students with refugee backgrounds, especially as they relate to smaller urban contexts, are discussed.

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## DEDICATION

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I dedicate this work to the memory of my ever supportive,  
loving, and deeply missed parents:

My mother, Diane Bernice Power (Hollett)  
December 3, 1944 – March 23, 2001

and

My father, Bernard Paul Power  
April 28, 1946 – October 9, 2008

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	i
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	iii
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	iv
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	xi
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b> .....	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>1.1 Statement of the Research Problem</b> .....	4
<b>1.2 Overview of the Research</b> .....	11
<b>1.3 Research Questions</b> .....	13
<b>CHAPTER 2</b> .....	16
<b>Study Context</b> .....	16
<b>2.1 Canada's Refugee Program</b> .....	16
<b>2.2 Refugee Resettlement in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador</b> .....	18
<b>2.3 Settlement Services for Refugees Resettled in Newfoundland and Labrador</b> .....	19
<b>2.3.1 Settlement workers in the schools program</b> .....	20
<b>2.3.2 Summer programming</b> .....	20
<b>2.3.4 Lunch time programming</b> .....	21
<b>2.3.5 Youth bridging program</b> .....	21
<b>2.3.6 Other programming</b> .....	22
<b>2.4 Newfoundland and Labrador Education System</b> .....	22
<b>2.4.1 Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN) Program</b> .....	23
<b>2.4.2 ESL curriculum and instruction</b> .....	25
<b>2.4.3 Mainstream classes and programming</b> .....	25
<b>2.4.4 School transportation policies</b> .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 3</b> .....	28
<b>Review of the Literature</b> .....	28
<b>3.1 Challenges Facing Students with Refugee Backgrounds</b> .....	28
<b>3.1.2 Pre-migratory and Migratory Issues</b> .....	29

3.1.3 Post-migratory challenges .....	33
3.1.3.1 Socio-environmental challenges .....	35
3.1.3.2 Financial challenges .....	36
3.1.3.3 Lack of social support networks and the challenges of acculturation .....	39
3.1.3.3.1 Microsystem .....	40
3.1.3.3.2 Mesosystem .....	44
3.1.3.3.3 Exosystem .....	46
3.1.3.3.4 Macrosystem .....	48
3.1.4 Educational challenges .....	52
3.1.4.1 Language and literacy barriers .....	53
3.1.4.2 Pedagogical practices and challenges .....	56
3.1.4.3 Educational and social policy .....	61
3.2 Summary .....	65
CHAPTER 4 .....	67
Theoretical Perspective: Self-determination Theory .....	67
4.1 Overview of Self-Determination Theory .....	67
4.1.1 Basic psychological needs .....	70
4.1.1.1 Competence .....	70
4.1.1.2 Relatedness .....	70
4.1.1.3 Autonomy .....	71
4.1.2 Types of motivation according to SDT .....	72
4.1.2.1 Amotivation .....	73
4.1.2.2 Intrinsic motivation .....	75
4.1.2.3 Extrinsic motivation .....	79
4.1.2.3.1 External regulation .....	81
4.1.2.3.2 Introjected regulation .....	82
4.1.2.3.3 Identified regulation .....	82
4.1.2.3.4 Integrated regulation .....	83
4.2 Self-determination and Wellbeing .....	87
4.2.1 Goal aspirations, goal attainment, and wellbeing .....	88
4.2.1.1 Intrinsic versus extrinsic aspirations and wellbeing .....	90
4.2.1.3 Autonomous versus controlled regulation and wellbeing .....	96
4.2.1.4 Goal attainment and wellbeing .....	98

4.3 Self-determination and Academic development .....	99
4.3.1 The psychological needs, student motivation, and regulatory processes .....	101
4.3.1.2 The need for competence.....	105
4.3.1.3 The need for relatedness.....	107
4.3.1.4 Intrinsic versus extrinsic learning goals .....	111
4.4 Summary.....	113
CHAPTER 5 .....	115
Evaluative Framework: Comprehensive School Health .....	115
5.1 Origins of the Comprehensive School Health Framework .....	115
5.2 Overview of the Comprehensive School Health Framework.....	118
5.2.1 The Four Components.....	119
5.2.1.1 The social and physical environment .....	120
5.2.1.2 Teaching and learning .....	122
5.2.1.3 Partnerships and services.....	123
5.2.1.4 Healthy school policy .....	126
5.3 Summary.....	130
CHAPTER 6 .....	132
Research Methodology .....	132
6.1 Research Design: Mixed Methods .....	132
6.1.1 Philosophical assumptions of mixed methods research.....	137
6.1.2 Mixed method case study .....	139
6.1.3 The researcher's role in the research .....	145
6.2 Research Methods.....	146
6.2.1 Participants.....	146
6.2.1.1 Student participants.....	146
6.2.1.2 Adult participants .....	148
6.2.2 Recruitment procedures.....	150
6.2.2.1 Schools involved in the study .....	151
6.2.3 Data collection and analysis .....	153
6.2.3.1 Student questionnaire.....	153
6.2.3.2 Interviews.....	154
6.2.3.3 Observations and field notes .....	156



6.2.4 Reliability and validity .....	158
6.2.4.1 Reliability in quantitative research .....	159
6.2.4.2 Validity in quantitative research .....	160
6.2.4.3 Validity in qualitative research.....	161
6.2.4.4 Validity in mixed methods.....	166
6.3 Research Ethics .....	167
6.3.1 Research approval .....	167
6.3.2 Informed consent .....	168
6.3.3 Participant anonymity .....	168
6.3.4 Risks to the participants.....	169
CHAPTER 7 .....	172
Results: Students' Basic Psychological Needs .....	172
7.1 Competence .....	173
7.2 Student-relatedness.....	179
7.3 Teacher-relatedness .....	185
7.4 Autonomy.....	192
7.5 Summary.....	197
CHAPTER 8 .....	200
Results: Comprehensive School Health Analysis.....	200
8.1 The Teaching and Learning Component.....	200
8.1.1 The LEARN Program.....	201
8.1.2 Mainstream classes .....	205
8.1.3 ESL instruction .....	212
8.1.4 Teaching resources.....	215
8.1.5 Educator training and preparedness .....	219
8.2 The Social and Physical Environment .....	229
8.2.1 School and classroom climate .....	229
8.2.1.1 Acknowledging and celebrating diversity.....	229
8.2.1.2 Integration, inclusion, and student engagement .....	233
8.2.2 Physical and emotional safety .....	242
8.2.3 Use of physical spaces .....	247
8.3 Partnerships and Services .....	249

8.3.1 Key partnerships with non-governmental and other community-based stakeholders .....	250
8.3.2 Family communication and engagement .....	255
8.4 Policy .....	260
8.4.1 Leadership support .....	260
8.4.2 Inclusive education policy .....	266
8.4.3 Student assessment.....	275
8.4.3.1 Assessment at intake .....	276
8.4.3.2 School and course placement .....	279
8.4.3.2 Assessment of special needs.....	284
8.4.4 Transportation .....	287
CHAPTER 9 .....	291
Discussion.....	291
9.1 Overview of the Findings.....	291
9.1.1 Student competence .....	291
9.1.2 Student relatedness .....	297
9.1.3 Teacher relatedness .....	300
9.1.4 Student autonomy .....	301
9.2 Recommendations .....	304
9.2.1 Social and physical environment .....	305
9.2.2 School policy .....	307
9.2.3 Teaching and learning .....	308
9.2.4 Partnerships and services.....	310
9.3 Future Research .....	310
9.4 Closing Remarks .....	311
REFERENCES.....	313
Appendix A: Ethics Approval.....	354
Appendix B: School District Approval Letter.....	355
Appendix C: ANC Research Approval.....	356
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (Adult Participants).....	357
Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Students Under 19 Years of Age) .....	362
Appendix F: Adult Recruitment Letter .....	368
Appendix G: Student/Parent Recruitment Letter .....	369

<b>Appendix H: Student Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>Appendix I: Interview Protocol (Students).....</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>Appendix J: Interview Protocol (Adults).....</b>	<b>378</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

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Figure 3. 1 Bioecological Model. ....	41
Figure 4. 1 Self-determination continuum showing the types of motivation with their regulatory styles, loci of causality, and corresponding processes .....	73
Figure 5. 1 Comprehensive school health framework .....	119

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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COT – Causality Orientations Theory

EECD – Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

CMA – Census Metropolitan Area (St. John's)

CSFP – Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador

CSH – Comprehensive School Health

ELL – English language learner

ESL – English as a second language

IRT – Instructional Resource Teacher

JCSH – Joint Consortium for School Health

LEARN – Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers

MMR – Mixed Methods Research

NL – Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

NLESD – Newfoundland and Labrador English School District

OIT – Organismic Integration Theory

PCS – Perceived Competence Scale

SDT – Self-determination Theory

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WHO – World Health Organization

## CHAPTER 1

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### Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we are currently witnessing the greatest level of displacement on record with more than 68 million people around the world having been forced to flee their homes. Approximately 25.4 million of these individuals are classified as refugees with over half being under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2019a). Rutter (2006) noted that the word refugee was first introduced into the English language by Huguenots, French Protestants who sought refuge in the United Kingdom to avoid persecution by French Catholics in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The word itself is derived from the French *se refugier*, which means to seek shelter or take refuge. However, the term refugee only became a legal construct with the creation of the 1951 Refugee Convention, which has been ratified by Canada and defines a refugee as a 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 nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (United Nations, 1951, p.14)

Of the millions of refugees that have been forced to flee their native lands, only a small percentage are actually resettled in high-income states such as Canada where they are admitted and granted permanent settlement. For instance, in 2016 only 125,835 refugees departed for resettlement to a third country. However, this level of resettlement

represented an increase of 58% over the previous year (UNHCR, 2017b), and Canada in particular has been resettling record numbers over the past few years.

Child and youth refugees often endure serious physical and mental health challenges during their displacement. Many migrate for long periods under uncertain and deplorable conditions, experience separation from their loved ones, and navigate dangerous environments before they find refuge and security. They represent a particularly vulnerable cohort who have been identified as being at increased risk to experience psychopathology due to their exposure to these stressful events (Barenbaum, Ruchkin, & Schwab-Stone, 2004; Miller & Rasmussen, 2010). However, it has also been well established that hardships for these individuals do not end once they have been resettled, even in high-income countries that can offer a multitude of services and supports to help them with their adjustment and acculturation. In fact, the resettlement stage for many represents a period fraught with an array of daily stressors (e.g., poverty, discrimination, language barriers, etc.) that can directly undermine one's psychological wellbeing and lead to confounding complications when coupled with the previous traumas many experienced before resettlement (Bogic et al., 2012; Montgomery, 2009; Porter & Haslam, 2004).

Granting the hardships and daily stressors that many refugees face after they have been resettled, evidence also indicates that the provision of resources and supports can mitigate these stressors and help newly settled individuals from refugee backgrounds acculturate to their new environments in such a manner that fosters psychological wellbeing (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). As Porter and Haslam (2004) noted, "psychopathology among refugees is not an inevitable posttraumatic consequence

of acute wartime stress but reflects contextual factors that can be significantly remediated by generous material supports on the part of governments and agencies” (p. 610). Taylor and Sidhu (2012) echo this sentiment and argue that countries such as Canada that continue to resettle large numbers of refugees need to closely examine their institutions and policies to ensure they are optimally supporting these new citizens<sup>1</sup> as they navigate and overcome the numerous challenges and barriers associated with resettlement.

One institution that plays a vital role in supporting refugee children and youth as they integrate into their new communities is the education system (Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2014; Christie & Sidhu, 2002; Pinson & Arnot, 2010). Schools provide these newcomers with structure and a sense of normalcy, which can foster students’ resiliency and assist with the acculturation process (Rutter, 2006). Moreover, access to other social institutions and community structures that many children and youth depend on for psychosocial supports such as neighbourhood cohesion and extended family networks are less likely to be present for those from refugee backgrounds, which consequently enhances the importance of schools for this particular cohort of students (Fazel et al., 2012). Despite this recognition, it has also been well documented that many developed jurisdictions are ill-prepared and under resourced to meet the academic and psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds (Block et al., 2014; Kanu, 2008; Li, Que, & Power, 2017; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Sidhu, Taylor, & Christie, 2012; Stewart, 2011, 2012; Taylor, 2008). For instance, Stewart (2011) stated, “While some meritorious programs and services do exist in pockets across the country [Canada],

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<sup>1</sup> While newly arrived individuals from refugee backgrounds who resettle in Canada are not automatically afforded citizenship status (they are given permanent resident status upon arrival), the word citizen is used to indicate that they are now permanent and contributing members of Canadian society.



the reality is that schools are, for the most part, failing these children and contributing to their marginalization in society” (p. 8). Moreover, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) and others such as Matthews (2008) and Pinson and Arnot (2007) note that until the recent past, research on the particular needs of students with refugee backgrounds has mainly been ignored. Accordingly, Taylor and Sidhu (2012) argue that “these exclusions – from public policy and academic research – establish the context for a lack of targeted policies and organisational frameworks to address the significant educational disadvantages confronting refugee youth” (p. 42).

### **1.1 Statement of the Research Problem**

As the number of refugees fleeing war, violence, and persecution continues to rapidly increase from year to year worldwide, it is imperative that research is conducted to best understand how to support these individuals when they resettle in new and unfamiliar environments (Thommessen & Todd, 2018). Research directed at identifying factors that negatively and positively impact young refugees’ psychological wellbeing is more important than ever. As Stevens and colleagues noted in their response to Zamani and Zarghami’s (2016) editorial, “we are at a critical juncture in which scientific research should be dedicated to deepening our understanding of risk and resiliency factors for refugee youth which will be able to inform policymakers throughout the world” (p. 582-583). Thus, given the importance that educational institutions play in fostering the academic development, psychological wellbeing, and inclusion of students with refugee backgrounds, it is essential that research is conducted to best understand how these institutions can maximize outcomes for these individuals. It is also imperative to conduct

research throughout multiple jurisdictions given that each location and its contextual conditions and dominant cultures can provide valuable insights into understanding how resettled refugee youth prevail under differing circumstances. For instance, in their meta-analysis of the factors associated with the mental health of refugees, Porter and Haslam (2005) comment that studies focused on refugee mental health are often exploratory in nature with a specificity on local circumstances, which make generalizations difficult to establish. However, they also concluded that the psychological aftereffects of displacement are strongly influenced by the unique economic, social, and cultural conditions in which refugees are placed.

Accordingly, this study sought to explore how the education system in a relatively small urban centre in Canada, namely St. John's, is supporting the psychological and academic needs of refugee background youth. St. John's is the provincial capital and largest city in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) and according to the latest census data, approximately 205, 955 people live in the census metropolitan area (CMA). Amongst the population, there is relatively low ethnic and linguistic diversity: less than 3% of the NL population identifies as visible minorities and approximately 97% speak English as their mother tongue (Statistics Canada, 2016). NL also receives a small number of refugees per year compared to larger Canadian urban centres such as Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver; however, these numbers have been steadily increasing. For instance, the Association for New Canadians (ANC), a non-profit, community-based organization delivering settlement and integration services to immigrants and refugees in NL, reported that within the 2015-16 fiscal year there was a 60% increase in the number of refugees that they serviced from only two years prior (as cited in Oldford, 2016).

El-Bialy and Mulay (2015) pointed out that small centres offer refugees unique place-related supports and challenges that differ from larger urban centres. It has also been noted that there is a paucity of research that has examined the needs and challenges of refugees who have resettled in smaller centres characterized by limited ethnoracial diversity and ethnospecific infrastructure (El-Bialy & Mulay, 2015; Reitmanova & Gustafson, 2009). In line with these findings, only a few studies to date have been published with a partial or indirect focus on understanding the needs of those from refugee backgrounds who have settled in the unique setting of NL. For example, El-Bialy and Mulay (2015) conducted an ethnographic study that examined the impact of place-related determinants on the sense of wellbeing of a group of ten adults from refugee backgrounds residing in St. John's. From a youth perspective, Baker, Price, and Walsh (2016) analysed junior high and senior high school students' observations of racism in St. John's, and Baker (2013) examined the effects of racialized name-calling on a group of 12 visible minority refugee youths living in the province. In 2018, Lewis, McLeod, & Li investigated high school immigrant students' experiences of inclusion and belonging through a visual art-making project.

Only four peer-reviewed studies, to the author's knowledge, have focused on the educational needs of students with refugee backgrounds and their families in NL. The first, by Li, Hua, and Power (2016), focused on service providers' views on newcomer youth integration. The aim of this study was to gain perspective on the specific needs of newcomer youth in NL, and it explored the services and services gaps that exist to facilitate their integration. Another study used interview data from 11 newcomer parents, five children, and one settlement worker to explore issues around parental supports for

newcomer children's transition to school (Li, Doyle, Lymburner, & Ghadi, 2016). The third study examined issues in newcomer education from the perspectives of educators (Doyle, Li, & Grineva, 2016), and the final study addressed matters related to the academic and social adjustment of high school refugee youth in the province (Li & Grineva, 2016). Finally, one other report worth noting, which was commissioned by the NL provincial government to examine the K-12 education system and provide recommendations to improve student outcomes, dedicated one chapter to multicultural education (Collins, Fushell, Philpott, & Wakeham, 2017). While the report did make a few essential recommendations for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) on how to improve outcomes for students with refugee backgrounds, the scope of the chapter was nevertheless limited and did not provide a comprehensive overview of the needs of these students and their families.

It is important to note that of all of the aforementioned studies that have focused on NL, all but two (El-Bialy and Mulay; Li & Grineva, 2016) have included perspectives and explored issues around *newcomer* integration. That is, the studies addressed issues related to individuals from both immigrant<sup>2</sup> and refugee backgrounds. While both groups may be considered newcomers, the inclusion of both groups in the same studies may be problematic as it can conflate the needs of two distinct cohorts of people. This can lead to confusion about each group's distinct needs, and quite possibly diminish the severity of the needs of those from refugee backgrounds (McBrien, 2009). Sidhu and Taylor (2007) noted:

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<sup>2</sup> Although resettled refugees are considered immigrants, the word immigrant here refers to those individuals that *chose* to resettle in Canada for economic, educational, or family related reasons.

Refugee education continues to be subsumed within broader education policies and programmes concerned with social justice, multiculturalism, and English language provision. Such categorizations are premised on an undifferentiated ethnoscope that ignores the significantly different learning needs and sociocultural adjustments faced by refugee students compared with migrants and international students. (p. 283)

As a prime example, it has been shown that the ESL needs of students with refugee backgrounds are quite distinct from other immigrants and that clustering students under a single policy framework (i.e., using the same pedagogical practices for all ESL learners) may not meet the specific needs of students with refugee backgrounds (Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). Woods (2009) argued that students with refugee backgrounds often have a requirement for first time literacy support, yet schools tend to prioritize language acquisition through traditional ESL classes rather than provide the appropriate programming needed to aid literacy competence. This finding was also found by Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzales (2008). They noted that each English language learner (ELL) has specific needs based on his or her prior background and that proficiency in one's native language acts as a resource for learning a second language. Accordingly, those who have strong and linguistic literacy skills in their native language, usually gained through formal schooling, tend to be more successful learning a second language than those who have missed out on formal schooling opportunities (Thomas & Collier, 2002), which is the case for many refugee children and youth. Lucas and colleagues (2008) contended that:

a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching ELLs is bound to fail because students bring varying linguistic and academic backgrounds to learning. To successfully scaffold learning for ELLs, classroom teachers must become familiar with the students' native-language ability - especially, their literacy skills - and their academic preparation in their native language. (p. 364)

Since many students with refugee backgrounds often lack formal schooling, they often do not possess strong literacy skills in their native language. Moreover, they also lack a broad range of subject matter knowledge and skills to draw on while learning a second language, which can ease the burden of having to learn subject matter and a new language simultaneously (Lucas et al., 2008).

The notion of conflating the needs of these two distinct groups was also noted in a recent report entitled “*Supporting Refugee Students in Canada: Building on What We Have Learned in the Past 20 Years*” (Ratković, Kovačević, Brewer, Ellis, Ahmed, & Basptiste-Brady, 2017). The authors of the report conducted a scoping review of Canadian cross-sectional literature and policy documents addressing the resettlement, education, and wellbeing of students with refugee backgrounds and concluded that the literature all too often addresses issues on migrant education from the perspective of immigrant and ELL perspectives and fails to adequately provide a distinction between the needs of immigrants and refugees. Shakya and colleagues (2012) further noted that:

In Canada, evidence on the educational pathways of refugees is particularly thin because the education sector does not collect considerable data about pre-migration experiences or arrival immigration status. Instead, sector level data on educational experiences tend to lump refugees into a single category of “foreign-born” or “immigrants”. (p. 66).

More recently, MacNevin (2016) argued that a paucity of research in general that focuses on the education of refugee background youth in Canada still exists, and that such research is needed to inform future educational practices and policy development. It is thus clear that research specifically focusing on the particular needs of students with refugee backgrounds is urgently required.

In addition to the issues of including both immigrant and students with refugee backgrounds in the same studies, no published work thus far has examined the NL school system and how it supports students with refugee backgrounds through a whole school framework. Several scholars have articulated the importance of schools adopting holistic and whole-school approaches to servicing the needs of students with refugee backgrounds (Arnot and Pinson 2005; Hek 2005; Rutter 2006; Taylor and Sidhu 2012) given that only whole school approaches are able to account for the complexity associated with the social, emotional, and academic needs of these students (Arnot and Pinson 2005). While the aforementioned studies published on resettled refugees in NL cited above do significantly contribute to our understanding of these students and their family's needs, a more comprehensive examination of the whole school environment is needed.

Finally, no studies to date in NL have objectively examined how well students with refugee backgrounds are doing in their new school environments. From a subjective point of view, it is clear that many students with refugee backgrounds face an abundance of hurdles and have to overcome much adversity as they strive to grow and flourish; yet, research in NL (and across the globe it could be argued), has not adequately and objectively examined how well these students are indeed actualizing their potentials compared to their Canadian background peers (i.e., those who were either born in Canada or who were primarily raised in Canada and not from a refugee background). Insights into how these students are faring compared to their peers therefore may provide insights into where supports are most needed in the future to best support them as they integrate into NL and Canadian society.

## 1.2 Overview of the Research

Given that the wellbeing of refugee background children is largely dependent on the successes and failures of the education system in which they belong (Hek 2005), this study sought to explore how the NL education system is supporting the psychological and academic needs of students with refugee backgrounds who are residing in the City of St. John's. This study adopted Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory (SDT) to gain a better understanding of how these students' needs are being met. SDT (Deci and Ryan, 2000) maintains that humans have three innate psychological needs, namely relatedness, competence, and autonomy, which must be satisfied to nurture optimal academic functioning (e.g., learning, motivation, and engagement) and psychological wellbeing. SDT further resides in the dialectical view that social contexts can either foster or impede need satisfaction. In other words, SDT provides a theoretical framework for understanding how protective supports and factors nourish psychological wellbeing and how disadvantaged circumstances deprive individuals of the nutrients they need to flourish. Finally, this study maintains that for students to experience a sense of inclusion at school, all three psychological needs must be satisfied. Thus, for a school or school system to consider itself inclusionary, it must foster supportive social and academic conditions such that the needs of all its students are met.

To better understand how the school system is meeting the psychological needs of refugee students, the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) framework was used as an analytical mapping tool. CSH is a whole-school socioecological based framework that addresses student development and wellbeing in a planned, integrated, and holistic way. It is premised on actions in four distinct, but interconnected components: (1) teaching and



learning; (2) social and physical environments; (3) healthy school policy; and (4) partnerships and services. When all four components are harmonized, students are supported in realizing their academic potential and becoming healthy, productive members of society (JCSH 2010).

The teaching and learning component concentrates on the curricular and non-curricular education of students and the preparation and professional development of teachers. The goal is to provide developmentally appropriate knowledge and experiences that help students develop the resources they need to improve their wellbeing and academic outcomes. The social and physical environment component is concerned with supporting the development of quality relationships among students and between students and staff; promoting the emotional wellbeing of students; and ensuring that the use of physical spaces contributes to healthy development. Healthy school policy refers to the leadership practices, decision-making processes, rules, procedures, and policies at all levels that influence the development of respectful, welcoming, and caring schools. The partnerships and services component is committed to building supportive working relationships between schools, students, their families, and community organizations that focus on building collaborative and integrative efforts to support student development (JCSH 2010).

Finally, to provide a comprehensive and pragmatic overview of how the school system in NL is meeting the needs of students with refugee backgrounds, a convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed. Data were collected from surveys from students from refugee and Canadian backgrounds that measured their school-related basic psychological need satisfaction. Concurrently, interview data were obtained from a

diverse sample of stakeholders linked to the education system, which included students, parents, community service workers, medical and health practitioners, and educators. The researcher also engaged in school related observations and document analysis. All data were then triangulated to provide a comprehensive overview of how the school system was meeting the basic psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds, and accordingly, fostering their academic development, psychological wellbeing, and school inclusion.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

To address the objectives of this study, three research questions were investigated. These were:

- (1) Is there a difference in the sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy felt by students with refugee backgrounds relative to their Canadian background peers?
- (2) How do students with refugee backgrounds perceive their psychological need satisfaction in relation to their school experiences?
- (3) How are aspects of the education system, in terms of school policy, teaching and learning, the social and environmental environment, and school partnerships fostering or thwarting the psychological need satisfaction of students with refugee backgrounds?

### **1.4 Significance of the Research**

This study is significant from multiple perspectives. First, it is the only comprehensive study of the NL education system that has been conducted to understand how schooling is supporting the particular academic, psychological, and inclusionary

needs of students with refugee backgrounds. Secondly, this research has the potential of furthering our awareness of the unique challenges that smaller centres face as they work towards supporting refugee background youths. Likewise, it can further our understanding of how school systems in smaller centres can play a substantial role in supporting these particular students. Thirdly, the adoption of SDT as a theoretical framework to gauge student wellbeing and development moves away from the medicalised approach that still dominates the literature discourse around the needs of students with refugee backgrounds. While ample research has been conducted that has sought to examine differences in emotional (e.g., depression and anxiety), behavioural (e.g., aggressive behaviours) and other psychopathological disturbances (e.g., posttraumatic stress syndrome) between individuals from refugee backgrounds and non-refugee populations (see Fazel et al., 2012 for a recent review) Rutter (2006) maintained that all too often, the problems of students with refugee backgrounds are viewed through a medicalised lens and require a medicalised response while post-migratory issues related to material deprivation, loss of social status and racial marginalization are neglected.

Moreover, there still remains an emphasis on how to best design interventions to treat these *compromised* individuals (see Tyrer & Fazel, 2014 for a recent review). Notwithstanding the recent research (e.g., Stewart, 2011) that has started to unpack the effects of the daily stressors that resettled refugees have to contend with on a daily basis, most studies have lacked a grand theoretical explanation as to why these conditions have a negative effect on wellbeing and developmental outcomes. SDT, with its emphasis on how socio-environmental conditions foster or thwart the psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, does provide a theoretical framework for

understanding of how these conditions affect growth and development. Accordingly, this study can help move policy and research away from a medicalised approach that reinforces the narrative of a people in need of medical treatment and targeted “interventions towards one that understands that it is the fostering of psychological needs through everyday experiences that matters most. Finally, through a comprehensive analysis of the school environment, this study can provide policy makers and educators with insights into the various features of the overall school system that need to be considered and targeted to help ensure that the psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds are being satisfied.

## **CHAPTER 2**

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### **Study Context**

This chapter begins with a brief overview of Canada's refugee program. This information may be useful to those readers who are not familiar with the program since certain aspects become relevant for interpreting the results and discussion sections of this study. Following, an overview of the NL education system is provided with details on the specialized services available to students with refugee backgrounds. Additional aspects of the NL educational system are also described to provide the readers with the necessary background information they will need to further understand and interpret the results of this research.

#### **2.1 Canada's Refugee Program**

The Canadian refugee program is delineated into two parts: (1) the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program (HRP), which is for people who need protection from outside of Canada, and (2) the In-Canada Asylum Program (ICAP), which is for people making a refugee protection claims from within Canada (Government of Canada, 2017a). When refugees enter Canada under the HRP, they are immediately granted permanent residency and are provided with access to a variety of social supports, essential services, and income supports to help them settle.

Under the HRP three types of refugees are admitted for resettlement within Canada. The first are government-assisted refugees (GAR), who are referred to Canada for resettlement by the UNHCR or another referral organization. GARs are entirely

supported by the Government of Canada or the Province of Quebec, which has its own refugee programs. Support is provided for up to a maximum of one year and can include accommodations, clothing, food, and help finding employment and accessing other resettlement assistance programs. The income support that they receive is based on the social assistance rates of the province or territory in which they settle. (Government of Canada, 2017b). GARs are also welcomed at the airport or point of entry, provided with help in finding temporary and later permanent housing and, assistance in getting to know and understand Canadian norms and customs (Government of Canada, 2017a). GARs are also able to avail of the Immigration Loans program, which helps refugees resettle from overseas and pays for the cost of their medical exams abroad, travel documents, and their transportation to Canada. Loans can also be used to cover the cost of rental housing, telephone deposits, and work tools. All loans, plus interest, must be repaid to the government (Government of Canada 2017c). The second group of refugees admitted under the HPR are privately sponsored refugees (PSRs). PSRs have been privately sponsored by a group of people in Canada who have volunteered to help the refugee(s) adjust to life in Canada. The sponsoring groups are responsible for providing financial, social, and emotional support for up to one year. PSR applicants, like GARs, are responsible for the travel costs for themselves and all dependent family members. An immigration loan may be available to refugees who are unable to cover transportation costs up to and including arrival in Canada (Government of Canada, 2017d).

The final group of refugees admitted under the HPR enters Canada through the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program, which matches refugees referred for resettlement by the UNHCR with private sponsors in Canada. The goal is to engage in a

three-way partnership among the Government of Canada, the UNHCR, and private sponsors. Under the BVOR Program, the Government of Canada provides up to six months of income support, while private sponsors provide an additional six months of financial support and up to a year of social and emotional support (Government of Canada, 2017d).

In contrast to the HRP, the ICAP allows individuals to claim asylum at a port of entry to Canada or designated in-land office due to a well-founded fear of persecution if they return to their home countries. Asylum claimants (seekers) are considered different than resettled refugees according to Canadian law. Unlike resettled refugees who have had their cases and urgency vetted overseas, asylum-seeks must prove that they require protection from persecution through a tribunal process that occurs within Canada. Thus, once asylum seekers make a refugee claim they are screened to see if their claim is eligible for consideration. If a claimant is determined to be eligible, he or she is permitted to remain in Canada as a temporary resident and is provided access to social assistance, education, health services, emergency housing, and legal aid until a final decision has been made regarding refugee status. Upon receiving a positive decision on their refugee claim, claimants receive protected person status that includes the full spectrum of federally funded settlement services available to them and they can stay in Canada and apply to become a permanent resident in most cases (Government of Canada, 2017e).

## **2.2 Refugee Resettlement in Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador**

Canada has a long history of resettling refugees and is routinely a global leader with regards to the number of refugees it resettles each year. For instance, in 2014, almost

104,000 individuals submitted applications for resettlement to the UNHCR for resettlement in 30 different countries (UNHCR, 2014a) with the United States (69,505), Canada (15,032), and Australia (4,773) being the countries that resettled the most refugees (UNHCR, 2014b). Between January of 2015 and March of 2019, Canada resettled an additional 127,370 refugees, including 53,355 who were under the age of 18 (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2017).

During the same time period of January of 2015 to March 2019, NL resettled 1,195 refugees with the vast majority (1,130) being resettled in the metropolitan St. John's area (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2017). Eight hundred and fifty-five of these individuals were GARs, while 160 and 115 were PSRs and BVORs respectively. Also, slightly more than half of these individuals (580) were 17 years old or younger when they arrived in St. John's.

### **2.3 Settlement Services for Refugees Resettled in Newfoundland and Labrador**

Upon arrival, refugees are provided with settlement assistance, as mentioned above. They can also avail of services through the Association for New Canadians (ANC), a non-profit, federally and provincially funded organization that reports to the Department of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (ANC, 2016). The ANC delivers a variety of services and programming ranging from settlement and orientation assistance to the provision of translation services and social programming for new immigrants and those from refugee backgrounds. A brief overview of the main services provided to children and youth is provided below.



### **2.3.1 Settlement workers in the schools program**

The Settlement Workers in the Schools Program (SWIS) program assists newly arrived refugee students and their families with their transition into the NL education system. In particular, a SWIS worker is assigned to each new refugee family when they arrive in St. John's and provides school orientation (e.g., how to take the school bus) and registration assistance; facilitation of interpretation services (e.g., during teacher-parent meetings); ongoing educational and advocacy support (e.g., helping students understand post-secondary schooling options); and special programming to enhance children and youths' language learning, cultural awareness, and community engagement (ANC, 2017, 2019).

### **2.3.2 Summer programming**

The ANC provides two summer programs for students from both refugee and immigrant backgrounds. The first is an ESL based educational program for children (ages 5-12). It is an eight-week program and offers daily activities to help participants develop social and language skills. The second program, called the Summer Enrichment Program for Immigrant Youth, is a 4-week program for youth aged 13-21. This program provides students with an opportunity to participate in programming that reinforces school-acquired knowledge. It also helps them prepare for the coming school year and has a particular focus on strengthening the students' math and English skills (ANC, 2019).

### **2.3.3 After-school homework clubs**

The ANC, in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), offers after-school homework clubs in a number of elementary and junior high schools in the CMA. According to the ANC, these clubs provide a structured environment for immigrant students to work on their language skills, avail of homework assistance, and participate in a variety of projects and extracurricular activities. In the only high school with specialized services as mentioned above, the after-school program provides youth with academic assistance one day per week. The students receive assistance from teachers, volunteers, and their peers (e.g., Canadian background students). The ANC notes that the goal of the program is to “enhance the linguistic, academic, and social competencies of refugee and immigrant youth while promoting civic engagement and integration” (ANC, 2019).

### **2.3.4 Lunch time programming**

The ANC organizes lunch time programming through its FUN (Friends of the United Nations) Clubs. FUN clubs are offered in a number of junior high schools in the CMA with the goal of increasing students’ cross-cultural awareness and understanding (ANC, 2019).

### **2.3.5 Youth bridging program**

The Youth Bridging Program (YBP) assists youth and young adults who are in a transitional period in their lives. The program helps individuals develop the necessary skills they need to be leaders in the community and assists them with making informed decisions with regards to their future career and educational goals (e.g., facilitating their

transition to post-secondary education and/or integration into the Canadian labour market) (ANC, 2019).

### **2.3.6 Other programming**

The ANC also offers a youth-led group that helps to facilitate the social transition of refugee and immigrant youth into Canadian society while also supporting their language learning, skills development, sense of empowerment, and community engagement. The program is offered once per month and consists of various educational workshops, recreational activities, and community events.

The ANC also operates an academic tutor program that pairs volunteers with students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 to help them with their schoolwork and an ESL volunteer tutor program that matches new Canadian youth with volunteers to assist the youth with their language development.

## **2.4 Newfoundland and Labrador Education System**

In Canada, the organization, delivery, and assessment of educational outcomes at the elementary and secondary levels are governed at the provincial and territorial levels, which includes 10 provinces and three territories (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2019). In NL, the kindergarten to grade 12 education system falls under the jurisdiction of the provincial government's Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD). The school system is further governed under two school districts; the NLESD, which offers programming in English and French immersion, and the Conseil scolaire francophone provincial de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (CSFP), which

offers French education to families who identify French as their mother tongue. Only one school in the CMA falls under CSFP governance (EECD, 2019d).

#### **2.4.1 Literacy Enrichment and Academic Readiness for Newcomers (LEARN)**

##### **Program**

Curriculum development in NL falls under the administration of the EECD. In 2009, the EECD introduced a bridging program for the province called LEARN to address the numeracy and literacy gaps that many students with refugee backgrounds exhibit due to their lack of formal schooling prior to arriving in NL (Noseworthy, 2014). Based on the LEARN curriculum guides (EECD, 2019b), LEARN-1 consists of two courses, namely LEARN-1 Language Arts: Basic Literacy and LEARN-1 Mathematics, both of which are offered in junior high and high school. The goals of LEARN-1 are:

- (1) To prepare students with the literacy and numeracy skills to be able to integrate successfully into an age-appropriate grade or graduate to LEARN-2.
- (2) To prepare students with the literacy and numeracy skills needed for their day-to-day lives.

LEARN-1 Language Arts: Basic Literacy is considered a non-credit basic literacy course with an emphasis on academic and life skills reading and writing. It is designed to bring students to a transitional reading level. LEARN-1 Mathematics, also a non-credit course, places emphasis on helping students acquire both academic and practical life skills in mathematics and bring a student up to a grade 6 math level (EECD, 2019b).

LEARN-2 consists of four high school academic enabling courses. These are:

LEARN-2 Language Arts, a 110-hour academic enabling course that builds skills and strategies for further high school studies in literature and language arts; LEARN-2 Mathematics, a non-credit course that covers intermediate outcomes and prepares students for high school mathematics; LEARN-2 Social Studies; a 110-hour academic enabling course focused on the development of literacy skills and strategies within the context of Canadian social studies to prepare students for further high school social studies; and LEARN-2 Science, a 110 hour academic enabling course for further high school studies in science. This course focuses on the development of science literacy, skills and strategies within the context of earth science, life science, and physical science. LEARN-2 course may be offered at the upper intermediate level (i.e., junior high school) and at the high school level. LEARN-2 Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science are considered non-credit courses at the intermediate level, but LEARN-2 Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science can be used as alternative credit courses that count towards the required credits students need to graduate from high school. Finally, all LEARN courses are considered to be enabling course and are not offered to any students who have the literacy skills they need to be successful in age-appropriate mainstream classes (EECD, 2019b).

In the CMA of St. John's, there are five schools that offer LEARN courses, all of which are part of the NLESD. Of the five schools, four exist at the junior high (grades 7-9) level and one at the high school (grades 10-12) level. No bridging programs exist at the elementary school (grades K-6) level. It is further important to note that prior to 2016 there were just two schools, one junior high and one high school, that offered LEARN courses. During the 2016-2017 school year, approximately 90 students ranging in age

from 12-21 were enrolled in LEARN courses (Collins et al., 2017). It is also relevant to point out that all students who participate in the LEARN bridging program also attend mainstream classes to some degree during the school day.

#### **2.4.2 ESL curriculum and instruction**

While the LEARN program was specifically designed to provide curriculum to address educational gaps that students have when they arrive in NL (i.e., typically students with refugee backgrounds), ESL programming is offered to any newcomers such as international students, immigrants, and students with refugee backgrounds who need assistance with improving their English fluency to be successful in mainstream classes. According to Collins and colleagues (2017), there were 450 students receiving ESL support from 12 ESL teachers during the 2015-2016 school year, which averages out to be more than 40 students per teacher. Two of the 12 teachers are permanently placed in the same high school that offers the LEARN program while the other 10 are itinerants and are required to travel around the district to service students from a variety of schools (Collins et al., 2017).

#### **2.4.3 Mainstream classes and programming**

In 2009, the EECD moved towards an inclusive education model (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2019c), which defines inclusive education as a philosophy that promotes:

- the right of all students to attend school with their peers and to receive appropriate and quality programming.

- a continuum of supports and services in the most appropriate setting (large group, small group, individualized) respecting the dignity of the child.
- a welcoming school culture where all members of the school community feel they belong, realize their potential, and contribute to the life of the school.
- an atmosphere which respects and values the participation of all members of the school community.
- a school community which celebrates diversity.
- a safe and caring school environment.

In NL schools, and based on the inclusive principals mentioned above, all students, including those with exceptionalities, and regardless of any facet of diversity, are typically placed in the same classroom settings based on age. The EECD (2019c) specifically states:

inclusive education does not mean that every student is required or expected to be in the regular classroom 100% of the time. Some students, whether for medical, academic, social or emotional reasons, need individualized or small group instruction periodically, in order for their needs to be met. (para. 5)

Despite the Department's stance that students are not required to be in mainstream classes all of the time, and that additional supports are provided to ensure each student is included, Collins et al. (2017) found that there was significant concern within the province amongst parents and educators that "all students are being under-served with the current model of inclusion" due to the practices of "one placement for all students, all of the time" (p.11). It was clear from the evidence presented in their report that the current model of inclusion "does not allow for small group or pull-out service, and that all students have to be in the regular classroom all of the time" (p.15). Evidently, students are

more routinely than not being placed in a mainstream classroom without any regard for their specific needs.

#### **2.4.4 School transportation policies**

In NL, students availing of the public education system are typically required to attend their zoned school, which is determined by their residential address. The busing of students is provided only for students who live in the school zone and reside more than 1.6km from the school (EECD, 2019e). However, an alternative school busing policy exists for students under extenuating circumstances (EECD, 2019a). The alternative busing policy states on page one:

Alternate transportation should be considered when:

- 2.1 The student's condition is permanent, and interventions/supports will not allow the student to avail of regular busing, OR
- 2.2 Further education or skill development is required before the student can avail of regular busing, OR
- 2.3 A student is injurious to self, and/or others, OR
- 2.4 A student requires short-term intervention(s) because he/she cannot travel with adaptations/support on regular busing, OR
- 2.5 A student is unable to attend their zoned school due to medical/ extenuating circumstances and has been placed in an approved alternate setting, OR
- 2.6 The parent(s)/guardian(s) has a physical disability which prevents them from accompanying their child (K-6) to school.

The alternative busing policy does not provide students access to schooling outside of their zoned areas other than for medical and behavioural related reasons where the student requires specialized services that are not available within their zone.



## **CHAPTER 3**

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### **Review of the Literature**

This next chapter is dedicated to understanding the various challenges that students with refugee backgrounds typically have to overcome as a result of their displacement, migration, and resettlement. A subsection presents existing knowledge related to the specific challenges that students with refugee backgrounds face upon settling in NL. Finally, the importance of schools, and the broader education system in supporting students with refugee backgrounds as they undergo the processes of acculturation and integration within their new communities will be interwoven within the post-settlement challenges described in this chapter.

#### **3.1 Challenges Facing Students with Refugee Backgrounds**

Children and youth from refugee backgrounds typically experience a diversity of pre-migratory, migratory, and post-migratory challenges and stressors that place them at an enhanced risk of mental health problems relative to their native-born peers (Beiser & Mantini, 2018; Fazel et al. 2012; Henley and Robinson 2011). During the pre-migration and migration periods, many have been subjected to physical and mental trauma and experienced loss on an overwhelming scale; and during the post-migratory settlement stage, they often need to go through a process of sociocultural adaptation whereby they have to build new relationships and establish a fresh sense of belonging. In the process, they are forced to learn new cultural practices, societal norms, and institutional

expectations as they overcome issues of marginalization and discrimination (Beiser & Mantini, 2018; Stewart, 2011).

From an educational perspective, students with refugee backgrounds have often been absent from formal schooling for extended periods of time, and in some cases, they have received little to no formal education at all (Li et al., 2016; Rutter, 2006). Upon their return to school, they often have to surmount significant educational gaps, develop literacy in a new language, and establish new relationship networks; all while dealing with feelings of cultural disorientation and a sense of grief and loss that can impede their academic development (Rutter, 2006; Stewart, 2012). Moreover, their parents are typically not positioned, due to their own language challenges and lack of knowledge about the local education system and social services available, to provide the support and guidance that they typically could if they were residing in their home communities.

Altogether these multiple challenges can be overwhelming, research has shown that when refugee students perceive their new communities as being accepting and safe, they are less likely to experience these issues. This is also the case when they develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to their schools. Furthermore, the achievement of language competence of the new country's language and the ability to integrate into a new society while maintaining a sense of one's cultural identity have also been shown to be protective of psychological wellbeing (Fazel et al. 2012).

### **3.1.2 Pre-migratory and Migratory Issues**

During the pre-migratory phase, many people from refugee backgrounds have witnessed extreme acts of violence; experienced food, water and shelter deprivation; been

separated from their loved ones; and in some cases, even seen them killed. During their migratory flight many are often forced to leave behind most, if not all, of their personal belongings; lose access to their social and economic capital; and have to navigate precarious situations as they seek refuge and endure prolonged and often harsh living conditions in refugee camps where they are vulnerable to other threats such physical and sexual violence, infectious diseases, and malnutrition (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008; Hynes & Cardozo, 2000; Starr, 2011; Stewart, 2011, 2012). The trauma that can ensue from these inflictions has been well documented. For example, reported rates for post-traumatic distress disorder among refugee youth are quite staggering with some estimates being over 50% (Bronstein, I., & Montgomery, 2011). Youth from refugee backgrounds are also more likely to exhibit high levels of anxiety, sleep disturbances, and a range of other internalizing and externalizing issues than non-refugee populations (Fazel et al., 2012; Porter & Haslam, 2005). Porter and Haslam even noted that the magnitude of the consequences associated with the refugee experience remains substantial even when compared to others who have witnessed extreme violence or been displaced by war “attesting to the depth of adversity that refugees experience” (p. 609).

The importance of understanding refugees’ migratory experiences and the residual effects are manyfold. Both Stewart (2011, 2012) and Kovinthan (2016) point out that a particular challenge for students with refugee backgrounds is that many teachers do not have an adequately informed understanding of their complex migratory experiences and that this lack of understanding can lead to complications that undermine students’ wellbeing. Kovinthan used a personal experience to highlight this fact. As a student from a refugee background, she was once asked to complete an assignment in grade six about

*who we are and where we come from.* She elaborated that she was forced to share her story with her classmates and that this experience made her want to “sink into the carpet we sat on during circle time” (p. 146). Kovinthan further noted that too often teachers use an uncritical lens when they attempt to foster multiculturalism that is grounded in the beliefs by many that the migratory experiences of all immigrants are similar and, therefore, benefit from similar exercises that foster diversity and inclusion. In contrast, she noted that this positionality could lead to discriminatory practices and create a sense of “othering” such as she felt when she was forced to share her story.

Others also point out that when teachers are not aware of their students’ history or their cultures, they may misinterpret specific behaviours that can lead to conflict. The simple action of a child not looking into the eyes of a teacher when being spoken to, for instance, may be viewed as disrespectful by the teacher in a Western country and lead to a reprimand. At the same time, the child may very well be confused and upset by the reprimand given that in his or her culture it is deemed rude to look into the eyes of an authority figure. The above case should not be viewed as a hypothetical situation as the researcher has personal experiences with such occurrences. McBrien (2009) contended that teachers need multicultural training to ensure that they know best how to helpfully respond to such incidents.

Another factor that educators need to be aware of is the impact that past traumas can have on these students’ present ability to learn. Trauma in refugee youth has been shown to affect both concentration and impulse control (Thabet, Abed, & Vostanis, 2004). Freire (1990) suggested that trauma experienced by refugees may impair second language acquisition. Other studies examining the links between trauma and learning

have shown that trauma is associated with poorer school performance (Saigh, Mroueh, & Bremner, 1997), lower reading achievement (Delaney-Black et al., 2002), and reduced verbal ability (Saigh, Yasik, Oberfield, Halamandaris, & Bremner, 2006). Recent evidence has also shown that trauma can negatively affect brain structural and functional development, and consequently impair memory processing and executive functioning, both of which are critical processes involved in learning (Carrion & Wong, 2012; Milani, Hoffmann, Fossaluza, Jackowski, & Mello, 2017). Educators need to be aware that many of their students with refugee backgrounds have most likely been exposed to trauma on some level and that this trauma may have an impact on their ability to learn. For instance, this may mean that educators need to provide more guidance to these students than others to help them develop the executive functioning and metacognitive skills they need to succeed.

As with cognitive functioning, trauma can also disrupt one's emotional and behavioural responses (Pynoos, Steinberg, & Goenjian, 1996). Correspondingly, ample research has reported on the emotional and behavioural issues that often arise with students with refugee backgrounds. It is not uncommon for teachers to cite difficulties in dealing with the challenging behaviours and emotions that some students with refugee backgrounds present. Moreover, occurrences that may seem common to most people who have not had the experiences that people from refugee backgrounds have experienced may trigger what would normally be an abnormal or concerning reaction. For instance, McBrien (2009) noted that loud noises, yelling, or even crowded hallways can trigger seemingly exaggerated responses from children with refugee backgrounds. It is thus important for educators to be aware that there is a strong possibility that behavioural and

emotional issues may come up and teachers need to be trained on how to deal with these issues (MacNevin, 2012; McBrien, 2009).

A final issue that educators need to be aware of is the sense of fear and distrust that many refugees develop through their migratory experiences. Stewart's (2011) research highlighted the fact that many refugees living in refugee camps remain in a constant state of fear due to the frequency of attacks on the camps from external groups and violence from other refugees living within the camps. These individuals may also find it difficult to trust others, especial those in positions of authority, given that they have been betrayed by many during their pre-settlement experiences. As a consequence, students may be worrisome about sharing details of their lives that can mean they are not getting the help and assistance they need. As an example, some students from Stewart's research revealed that students often avoided sharing their concerns with teachers, counsellors, psychologists and social workers because they feared they "could be deported if they raised any issue that would cause concern for themselves or their family" (p. 193). Kanu (2008) also found that students have a fear and distrust of authority figures like teachers.

### **3.1.3 Post-migratory challenges**

In 2005, Porter and Haslam argued that despite the historical focus on the acute stressors of war and pre-migratory flight, the contextual post-migratory stressors that individuals from refugee backgrounds must endure, including marginalization, acculturation difficulties, and socioeconomic disadvantages, must also be recognized if we are to better understand how to support the psychosocial development of these

individuals once they have been resettled. Accordingly, much of the research since then has focused on the day-to-day stressors that refugees face during their post-migration lives, and an abundance of stressors have been identified. Moreover, it has been found that these stressors may impact the wellbeing and development of refugee youth as much as, or more than their pre-migratory and migratory experiences (Fazel et al., 2012; Miller & Rasmussen, 2010; Stewart, 2011). In fact, Miller and Rasmussen (2010) pointed out that war exposure accounts for only a small amount of the variance for predicting mental health disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and functional impairment while a growing body of evidence suggests “that it may be the less dramatic but more enduring stressful conditions of everyday life that eventually take the greatest toll on people’s psychological wellbeing” (p. 12). Miller and Rasmussen (2010) also cited Bonanno (2004) and explained that survivors of traumatic events are generally more resilient than clinical studies and case reports tend to suggest, and that with adequate supports and the passing of time, most survivors tend to successfully deal with their trauma. In contrast, chronic daily stressors remain with the passing of time and slowly wear down one’s ability to cope and deal with the significant pressures that they may have to overcome.

Below, two broad categories of post-migratory challenges that youths and their families from refugee backgrounds have to overcome are addressed. These are socio-environmental challenges and educational challenges. Although these challenges are broken down into categories and subcategories, it should be acknowledged that many of the challenges are overlapping and often mediate and moderate other challenges.

### ***3.1.3.1 Socio-environmental challenges***

The literature pertaining to socio-environmental challenges and needs of children and youths and their families from refugee backgrounds reveals numerous complex and systematic issues that impede their integration and adjustment within their new communities and schools (Kanu, 2008; Rutter, 2006; Stewart, 2011). Stewart (2011), using data from participants residing in Winnipeg, Canada, identified a comprehensive list of socio-environmental challenges that students with refugee backgrounds have to overcome: culturally responsive services, parental mental health, economic challenges, gang-related issues and criminal activity, lack of social support and the need for advocates, adjustment to and navigation of available services, and housing. As previously mentioned, it is important for any reader to understand that while Stewart delineated these challenges under particular themes, the themes are interconnected, concomitant, and overlapping in nature. For instance, gang-related and criminal activity issues are often mediated by economic challenges whereby youth are often drawn into these activities as a way of making money due to their financial burdens. Likewise, housing is often provided to newly arrived refugees in areas that have high crime and gang membership rates, which exposes these youth to gang-related and criminal activities (Stewart, 2011). Several socio-environmental challenges faced by youth and their families with refugee backgrounds are described in more detail below, with the reasoning that these issues do not exist in isolation but compound and mediate each other.



### ***3.1.3.2 Financial challenges***

Ample research has shown that financial challenges act as a significant barrier to the social inclusion and academic development of students with refugee backgrounds. In Canada, as previously mentioned, refugees are provided with one year of financial assistance based on social assistance rates once they settle in Canada. However, it has been routinely reported that this level of assistance is not enough to for these families to even cover basic expenses (Shakya et al., 2012; Stewart, 2011), and that low socio-economic status has a negative effect on schooling (Pugh, Every, & Hattam, 2012). Recent studies have reported on the increased responsibilities and burdens that are placed on students with refugee backgrounds as they are often required to become the main caretakers and breadwinners in their families as their parents often struggle to learn the language of the host country and enter the labour market. Accordingly, this increased stress often interferes with their academic and social development, overshadows their educational aspirations, and forces some to leave school altogether to provide for their families (Collins, Fushell, Philpott, & Wakeham, 2017; Shakya et al., 2012; Stewart, 2011, 2012). Likewise, economic challenges have also been linked to refugee youth engaging in criminal activities as a means of accessing easy and quick money (Stewart, 2011).

Another financial constraint that has been reported in Canada is the burden placed upon newly resettled refugees to repay their loans associated with their transportation to Canada. The Government of Canada provides these individuals with a loan to cover the initial cost of airfare and other associated costs such as a medical examination, but they

are required to pay back this debt. For many families, this extra cost means that they often have to forego other essentials such as food, clothing, and basic household items like dishes and furniture (Stewart, 2011). The Refugee Council of Canada (2019a) notes that “these loans undermine refugees’ ability to integrate and to contribute to their full potential in their new home. Refugee youth are forced to work long hours while going to school, or even postpone further education, because of the need to pay back the debt.” To ease the burden of these loans, the Government of Canada made amendments on February 21, 2018 (after data were collected for this research), to the Immigrants Loans Program.

To make loan repayment easier:

- repayment begins 1 year after arrival in Canada (previously it was 30 days),
- new loans are interest free,
- existing loans will have no further accumulation of interest, and
- the repayment period has been extended by 2 years, to reduce the size of monthly installments. (Government of Canada, 2018, para. 4)

It is important to note; however, that according to the Canadian Council for Refugees (2019b) the average loan for a refugee amounted to over \$3000 in 2015, which represents a significant sum for those who are often struggling to meet their basic needs. After the one-year post-arrival period, the many challenges that refugees face during their pre- and post-migration periods can also interfere with their ability to work. For example, refugees often cannot access their credentials from their home institutions because those institutions are destroyed, closed, or unresponsive. Other refugee applicants may be fearful of requesting documents due to fears of persecution or retribution that they or their families may face. Consequently, this creates hardship for applicants applying for higher education, licensure/certification, or professional employment in Canada where many institutions require official documents to be sent directly from the home institution or be

verified by that institution (Loo, 2016). Even when refugees have access to their credentials, local employers are often reluctant to recognize these credentials due to a lack of familiarity. As such, many employers often avoid hiring newcomers due to the risks associated with their unfamiliarity and due to the fact that these individuals also lack local experience (Sumption, 2013). Consequently, refugees have difficulty entering the labour market, and even when they do, they are typically underemployed and forced to take low paying positions that do not alleviate their financial burdens.

From a developmental perspective, financial challenges can impede the integration of youth from refugee backgrounds. From as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, economists such as Adam Smith have argued that the deleterious effects of poverty extend beyond materialistic and economic deprivation, and maintained that any definitions and discussions of poverty must acknowledge that poverty extends to the social realm and often leads to social exclusion whereby impoverished peoples are unable to fully participate in society and avail of the comforts and benefits that are common amongst the majority (Hernandez, 1997; Roosa, Deng, Nair, & Lockhart Burrell, 2005). For instance, while many Canadian background youth often have money to participate in extracurricular related activities such as sports, the arts, or simply going out to the movies or a restaurant during a social gathering, many youths from refugee backgrounds cannot afford to do these things. As such, they are often excluded and marginalized on the basis of their financial status. As a consequence, their exclusion can prevent them from having opportunities to make new friends, acculturate within their new communities, and develop skills that can help them succeed later in life.

Finally, evidence also shows that financial stress can have a negative impact on the psychological wellbeing of resettled refugee children and youth. In particular, a few studies have shown that parental worries about financial problems are associated with an enhanced prevalence of depressive symptoms in youth and lower levels of self-esteem (see Fazel et al., 2012 for a review). Although Fazel and colleagues (2012) did report that conclusions between post-migration socioeconomic status and psychological disorders in children cannot be definitively drawn due to a lack of consensus from the literature they reviewed, it would be remiss to underestimate the overall detrimental effects that low socioeconomic status has on this particular cohort given that it has been well established that prolonged episodes of economic poverty significantly undermines the health and wellbeing of people in general (Purtell & Gershoff, 2016; Reiss, 2013; Samaan, 2000). Sidhu and Taylor (2007) noted that all too often the impact of poverty and unemployment, and the responsibilities of governments to provide *well-resourced* services, are rendered less important than other transitional challenges such as pre-migratory experiences, poor levels of social capital, and refugees' embodied attributes (e.g., language barriers). Through argument, the authors maintained that the lack of importance attributed to poverty and unemployment is grounded in neoliberalism whereby "the success of settlement is reframed as the responsibility of refugee communities and individuals" (p. 289).

### ***3.1.3.3 Lack of social support networks and the challenges of acculturation***

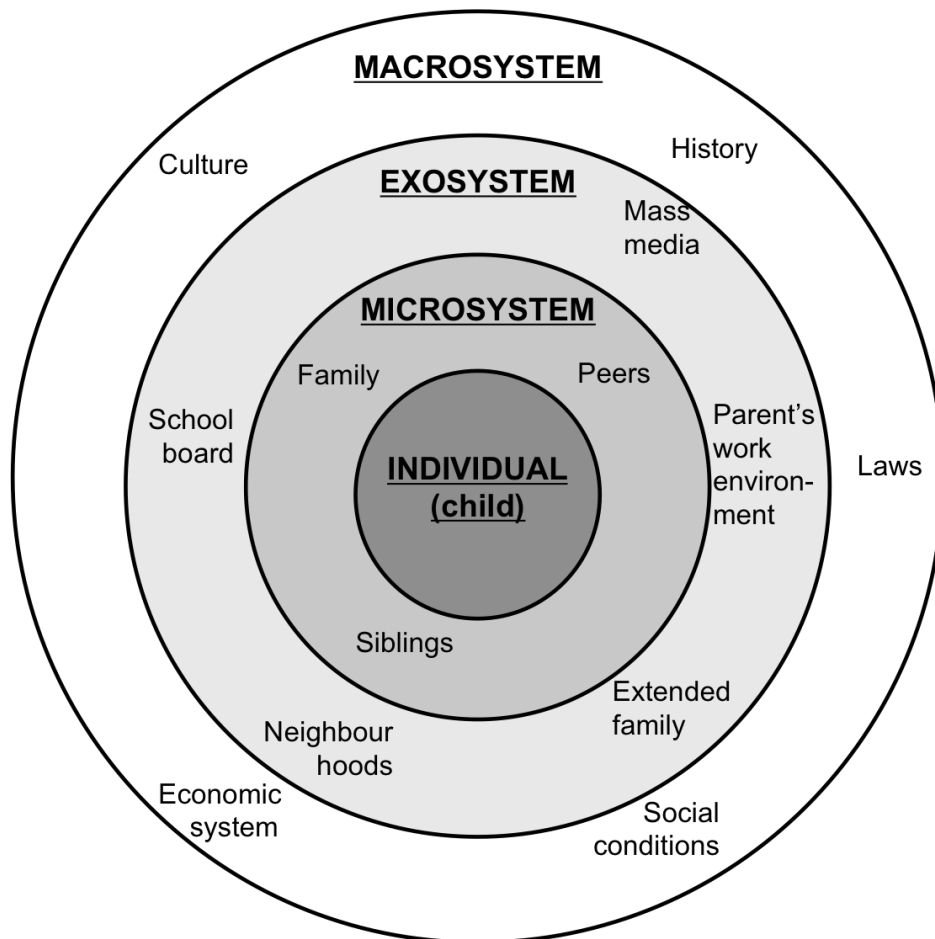
Many scholars (e.g., Akesson, 2018; Li et al., 2016; Stewart, 2011) have adopted Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model (1977, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris,

2006) as a means of investigating and understanding the unique challenges that newly resettled refugees experience. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model, which examines influences through a nested systems approach consisting of the individual's relations with family, friends, school, neighbourhood, community, social norms, and culture provides an exemplary design for understanding how a lack of social support networks are key challenges that resettled refugees have to overcome. Social networks and the accompanying support they provide are widely accepted to positively influence wellbeing, and the importance that these supports in one's life cannot be understated (Berkman & Glass, 2000). This is especially relevant for resettled refugees who are often in need of assistance, guidance, and companionship; all factors that can favourably impact their wellbeing, adjustment, and future development when present (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Fazel et al., 2012; Stewart, 2011, 2012).

#### *3.1.3.3.1 Microsystem*

The first system delineated by Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model is the microsystem, which is comprised of the relationships that an individual has with those closest to them; typically, their families, peers and other caring adults (e.g., teachers, coaches, ministers, etc.). Within this system, Stewart (2011) has argued that smaller and more intimate nanosystems exist which account for the most important and closest relationships an individual has. It is from this system that one would expect the most support.

When we consider these two systems, the nanosystem and microsystem, a robust evidence base clearly demonstrates that the presence of family support, or lack thereof, plays a pivotal role in fostering or undermining the wellbeing and development of



*Figure 3. 1 Bioecological Model.*  
(Adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

resettled refugee youth (e.g., McMichael, Gifford, & Correa-Velez, 2011). For instance, family unity has been shown to be a protective factor that buffers against the experiences of trauma and stressors encountered post-migration, while family separation and loss

places individuals at a greater risk for psychological disturbance (Montgomery, 2005 as cited in Fazel et al., 2012). Moreover, it is important to note that for many resettled youths, a large percentage have lost or been separated from their parents, other family members, and their closest companions. For instance, Stewart (2011) reported in her research that *loneliness* and *loss* were the two most frequently mentioned themes during her interviews with students with refugee backgrounds. Of the 13 students she interviewed, only two indicated that they had a mother and a father present, eight reported that one or both parents had been killed, and three were unsure if their parents or siblings were still alive. Likewise, Correa-Velez and colleagues (2010) reported that 20% of their 97 participants were living in households without a parent and another 29% only had one parent present. Accordingly, many resettled youths have lost significant members of their microsystem, those that would typically provide them with the most social support. A study by Freud & Burlingham in 1943 (as cited in Rutter, 2006) even found that separation from one's parents was more stressful than exposure to bombing, which highlights the effects that such losses in the nano and microsystems can have on refugee children. As such, when refugee youths are resettled, they need to build new relationships within their nano and microsystems and sometimes have to rely on the other more distal systems for support.

While lost family members certainly cannot be replaced, resettled refugee youth can establish new peer relationships as a means of gaining social support. For instance, Stewart (2012) found evidence that the students in her study often provided each other with tangible supports by helping each other find jobs and access food, shelter, and clothing when one individual was going without. These new peer relationships are vital to

the success and wellbeing of these young people. Ample research has shown that when newly arrived refugees quickly establish new peer support groups, they are more likely to experience positive psychological functioning and social adjustment (Fazel et al., 2012; Lustig et al., 2004).

Students also often rely on other micro-level supports to further compensate for their lack of economic capital and informational needs. For example, schools provide students and their families with a variety of supports that go beyond the educational realm. Often students access donations (e.g., clothing and furniture) and obtain important information about their communities, such as how to access health services or join community offered recreational activities, from their schools and teachers (Li, et al., 2016; Stewart, 2012). Also, through school-community partnerships students are able to make connections with other sectors that typically reside in the exosystem (e.g., social agencies or employment centres). Accordingly, Sidhu and colleagues (2012) found that schools which were the most effective in their work with students with refugee backgrounds were the ones that had a leadership team that advocated for these students, worked to promote positive images and discourses of refugees, and formed close partnerships with multiple welfare and community agencies in the process. Consequently, these partnerships can help students develop a sense of community, further access social and economic resources, and foster participation in civic life as contributing members of their new communities (Correa-Velez, 2010).



### *3.1.3.3.2 Mesosystem*

The second major system of the bioecological system is referred to as the mesosystem. This system is comprised of the linkages or connections that exist within the microsystem. For instance, one's family and school both reside in the microsystem while the mesosystem considers the relationship between these two entities. An examination of this system in the literature identifies several issues that need to be addressed to ensure students with refugee backgrounds are best positioned to optimally develop. For example, several issues around parental involvement with schools have been raised. Scholars have highlighted the fact that communication between schools and parents is often hampered by language barriers, which can limit school-parent engagement and restrict parents' ability to gain an understanding of the school system (Li, Doyle et al., 2016; Stewart, 2012). Rutter (2006) also found that both parents and school personnel acknowledged that home-school liaison was a problem and noted that each group tended to blame the other, "acting as antagonists, rather than partners" (p. 169).

Part of the issue may be due to cultural dissonance, which has been reported frequently in different studies. As an example, Kanu (2008) found that the parents of students with refugee backgrounds regularly view their role in their children's education in a different manner than what is expected of them from their children's teachers. Often parents see their role as being "limited to the home front and considered it culturally inappropriate (on their part) to interfere with the role and work of the teachers" (p. 928). Conversely, teachers viewed this hands-off approach as inappropriate. Kanu argued that

clearly more work needs to be done to help both parties engage in dialogue and come to a mutual understanding of what is expected.

Other research has also shown that often parents' low fluency in the language of the resettled country restricts their ability to provide educational, linguistic, and sociocultural support to their children (Pong & Landale, 2012; Shakya et al., 2012). Paradoxically, it is the students who regularly become the ones providing their parents and other family members with additional supports that would usually fall under the purview of the parents. For example, students take on the role of translator and information provider. This can cause issues within the family structure and overall microsystem. Indeed, Stewart (2012) found that schools often rely on the students to provide translation for their parents and argued that "this creates an unequal power structure that complicates the roles between the child and the parents" (p. 181). In some instances, the change in power dynamics can leave some children feeling let down or disenchanted by their parents' inability to provide for them. Consequently, it may result in some youth developing a lack of respect or trust in their parents or other caring adults (Manitoba Education, 2012).

One effective way of facilitating communication and engaging with parents is to have dedicated liaison officers available to provide translation services (Li, Doyle et al., 2016; Li, Que et al., 2016; Pugh et al., 2012). School leaders can also facilitate communication and engagement with parents by eliminating barriers that prevent their involvement. This can include having flexible times to have parent-teacher meetings that take into account the parents' work schedule (often students are living in single parent homes and the parent is working multiple jobs and/or attending ESL or Adult Basic

Education classes); offer child care during school meetings; and provide welcoming information either through print, video, or other sources of technology in a variety of languages to overcome English proficiency issues (Stewart, 2012; Li, Doyle et al., 2016). Finally, school leaders can also be proactive by inviting and encouraging the parents of students with refugee backgrounds to become involved in parent councils and advisory groups so that this cohort of society is better represented in the decision-making processes of the education system (Stewart, 2014).

#### *3.1.3.3.3 Exosystem*

The next system of influence in the bioecological model is the exosystem. The exosystem typically consists of both government (e.g., Department of Education, schoolboards) and non-governmental organizations (e.g., settlement agencies, food banks). Social networks and supports from, and influenced by, the exosystem also have a powerful influence on the wellbeing and development of children and youth from refugee backgrounds as they integrate into their new communities. While not all facets of the exosystem can be covered in this section, an overview of how settlement agencies typically act as the epicenter for connecting newly settled refugees to other elements of the exosystem, and the other systems in many instances, will be provided.

In Canada, settlement agencies tend to be non-profit organizations that seek to foster the successful integration of new Canadians within their resettled communities by offering a suite of services that meet localized needs (e.g., finding housing, offering language classes and translation services, accessing medical services). Settlement agencies also provide an array of material (e.g., donations) and emotional supports to

newcomers, especially those from refugee backgrounds (Burke- Vasilevska, 2014). All of these services and supports are aimed at helping newly arrived refugees to establish relationships with the broader community, become participating members of society, and develop a new sense of belonging within their new communities.

The importance of settlement agencies is supported by the work of numerous scholars. For example, McBrien (2009) pointed out that agencies that deliver extensive and on-going supports (i.e., beyond the first few months of resettlement) provide resettled refugees with venues for companionship, positive identity formation, and the development of self-esteem. Additionally, the material supports provided to the parents of newly settled students can help alleviate financial stress within the family, which can aid their further participation with society. Finally, Li and colleagues (2016) found that a settlement agency in a small Canadian urban centre was essential in helping students with refugee backgrounds integrate into their new communities. For many, the settlement agency acted as a conduit to other resources located within the exosystem. For instance, it helped newcomers access medical treatments, interact with government agencies (e.g., schoolboard), and participate in community programming. As a specific example, the agency assisted more than 100 students in one year fill out applications to join local recreational activities (e.g., sports, music, and arts clubs) through a program that subsidized the costs associated with registration for children and youth in financial need. Not only did this alleviate the financial barriers that would have prevented many of these children and youth from joining these activities, but it allowed them instead to make new friends, learn about their communities, and establish connections and a sense of belonging within their neighborhoods.

Burke-Wood, McGrath and Young (2012) went beyond the role of settlement agencies as a whole and accentuated the importance of the relationships that newly settled refugees build with individual settlement workers, and how these relationships foster their successful integration. They found “refugees lean heavily on the assistance of a settlement worker whose provision of services, information, and advice makes that person an exceptional space of trust and security” (p. 33). According to Burke-Wood and colleagues, there was little in the way of information and services that settlement agencies did not provide for resettled refugees, and that the settlement workers played a key role in allowing these individuals to develop a positive attachment to their new homes. However, they noted that the increased burden being placed on settlement agencies and individual settlement workers “raises concerns about the sustainability of these personalized relationships between refugees and settlement workers” (p. 34).

#### *3.1.3.3.4 Macrosystem*

The outermost system of influence in the bioecological model is the macrosystem, which represents the ideologies, attitudes, and social norms of the culture in which the other systems exist. With this in mind and given that newly settled refugee children and youth often encounter a society that is vastly different than the one from which they were accustomed to, they typically undergo a period of *acculturation*. Acculturation can be defined as the process of cultural and psychological change that occurs when two or more cultural groups and their individual members come into contact (Berry, 2004). For newly settled refugees, this often means they have to overcome many challenges, including learning a new language, adjusting to new customs (e.g., standards of relationships,

communication patterns, dating norms, etc.), and negotiating a balance between new and traditional values (Beiser & Mantini, 2018; Shakya, Khanlou, & Gonsalves, 2010). Research has also shown that the stress associated with acculturation can increase the risk of newcomers experiencing low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and other internalizing problems (Shakya et al., 2010).

The need for children and youth to find a balance between their traditional values and the values of their new communities can also lead to intergenerational conflict. In other words, children and youth are often forced to negotiate between identities as they seek to blend in and form a sense of union and belonging with their new peers while simultaneously working to maintain relationships with their older family members who may be more inclined to hold on to their traditional values (Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2009). As an example, Rutter (2004) found that intergenerational conflict emerged as a theme throughout her research with Congolese refugees who resettled in the UK. From the children's perspectives, they felt that their parents did not understand how children are raised in the UK while the parents often felt that their children were taking advantage of the greater independence that is often afforded to children in the host country. The parents furthermore often felt disempowered because the traditional roles within the family had been upended (i.e., often children had to take a leading role within the family due to the parents' lack of education and ability to speak English). Evidently, the differences in the cultural norms and values from the resettled refugees' origins to their new communities can pose significant challenges that lead to conflict within resettled families. This is most significant since evidence also shows that asynchronous acculturation between parents

and their children is associated with enhanced risk of mental health problems for the children (Phinney & Ong, 2002).

While managing a *bicultural identity* (Akesson, 2018) can be a difficult process for many newcomers, it is important that they are able to maintain a sense of their ethnic identities as they integrate into their new communities, since evidence indicates that an attachment to one's cultural beliefs and supports to maintain those beliefs can promote positive psychological wellbeing (McBrien, 2009; Fazel et al. 2012; Berry 2008). Berry (2005) noted that cultural integration, that is being able to balance a sense of ethnic identity with adaptation into the one's new society, should be viewed as the ideal outcome. He suggested that cultural integration can only occur when people are able to maintain elements of their native cultures while simultaneously participating in the larger social network of their new communities. In support of Berry's stance, research has shown that when adolescents display greater levels of cultural integration as measured by cross-cultural friendships, meaning they have friends from both the dominant ethnic group and their own ethnic group, they are more likely to experience a mental health advantage irrespective of age, ethnicity, and other potential explanatory variables (Bhui, Lenguerrand, Maynard, Stansfeld, & Harding, 2012).

Another significant challenge that resettled refugees often have to overcome revolves around issues related to discrimination, marginalization, and social exclusion. These issues are so ubiquitously mentioned within the literature that they are addressed in just about every research paper that is published on the challenges resettled refugees face. Moreover, discrimination, marginalization, and social exclusion tend to be culturally and systemically embedded phenomena whereby they pervade almost all segments of these

individuals' lives (Khanlou, Koh, & Mill, 2008; Stewart, 2011). Resettled refugees have reported experiencing discrimination in their communities (e.g., Stewart, 2011), at school from their peers and teachers (e.g., McBrien, 2009), and through various government implemented policies and practices that contribute to their social exclusion and marginalization (e.g., Li et al., 2016). For instance, McBrien (2009) reported that students with limited English proficiency were reluctant to ask questions or speak up in mainstream classes as they feared that they would be ridiculed by other students, and even by their teachers in some cases. She also reported that students engaged in avoidance behaviours such as feigning sick to avoid attending school and being subjected to further discrimination. Stewart (2012) also found that discrimination can result when a lack of integration between newcomer students with Canadian background students exists. She argued that schools need to ensure that they are providing ample opportunities for both groups of students to come together so they can develop their social skills and be taught to get along and understand each other.

Research has clearly shown that discrimination, whether perceived or real, can have a powerful negative impact on one's mental wellbeing, sense of belonging, and psychosocial integration (Baker, 2013; Baker et al., 2016; Khanlou et al., 2008; Stewart, 2011). As a case in point, Fazel (2015) reported that the majority of the 40 youth that she interviewed indicated that negative perceptions of refugees and asylum-seekers were harmful to their ability to settle within their schools. Furthermore, they reported that the racism and bullying they experienced in schools challenged their ability to develop a positive self-identity. Research has also shown that perceived ethnic discrimination from



teachers is negatively associated with self-esteem and academic competence (Oxman-Martinez et al., 2012).

Fazel (2015) noted that most young people simply seek a sense of belonging and acceptance as they attempt to integrate into their new schools and communities. This need for social recognition and the opportunity to build trusting relationships is essential to their development and wellbeing; however, it seems that all too often these youths have to overcome issues of discrimination, marginalization, and social exclusion. Schools are positioned to play a central role in helping them overcome these challenges by supporting the students with inclusive programming and a welcoming environment, helping them establish positive relationships, and challenging the negative representations that exist within greater society (Fazel, 2015; Tyrer & Fazel, 2014).

#### **3.1.4 Educational challenges**

The research literature consistently highlights that students with refugee backgrounds and their families place a high level of importance on education once they have resettled (Kanu, 2008; Shakya et al., 2012; Stewart, 2011); yet they often arrive with a set of unique and non-traditional needs that many school jurisdictions are ill-prepared to meet (Block, et al. 2014; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Sidhu et al., 2012; Stewart 2011). Although it is widely accepted that schools act as a stabilizing feature for refugee youth, research has also shown that the inadequacies of these systems, in many cases, are not only hindering their inclusion, but are instead contributing to their exclusion (Stewart, 2011). Moreover, when schools do not meet the needs of students with refugee backgrounds, they all too often succumb to the educational challenges they

face and drop out of school (DeCapua, 2016; Kanu, 2008; Stewart, 2011, 2012; Toohey, K., & Derwing, 2008). This constitutes a major concern given the importance that schooling plays in supporting these students' present and future wellbeing and social participation (Block et al., 2014; Fazel et al., 2012; Tyrer & Fazel, 2014).

The following sections of this chapter will detail many of the challenges that students with refugee backgrounds have to overcome and how schools are either meeting or neglecting their needs. Although these challenges are being subdivided into distinct categories for the ease of discussion, it is once again important to emphasize that each challenge does not exist alone within a vacuum, but rather intersects with other educational and socio-environmental challenges.

#### ***3.1.4.1 Language and literacy barriers***

It could be argued that the most significant educational challenge for many students with refugee backgrounds is their lack of fluency in the language of the resettled country. Students consistently note that they struggle to understand the curriculum being taught, have difficulty asking questions in class, and often feel left out because their inability to communicate prohibits them from participating in many classroom activities (Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2009; Miller, 2009; Shakya et al., 2012; Stewart, 2011). As a consequence, students can often feel isolated, become overwhelmed with negative emotions, and develop low self-esteem and feelings of incompetence (Anderson, 2004; McBrien, 2009).

Stewart (2011) noted that students have to overcome two levels of linguistic barriers when it comes to language acquisition. The first is to develop basic

communication skills, i.e., oral competency, so that they are able to function and participate in society. The second is to develop advanced literacy skills so that they can succeed in upper-level education courses. These two barriers, although linked, fall at ends of the literacy spectrum and it is imperative that the difference between the two be addressed. Research has pointed out that many English as an additional language (EAL) learners quickly become orally conversant in as little as one to two years; however, they typically need in the range of 4-7 years, and sometimes more when they have had limited educational experiences in their first language, to develop native-speaker fluency (Collier, 1989; Demie, 2013; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). The distinction between conversational language proficiency and academic language proficiency (see Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008) is of great significance because in many educational settings it is the students' oral proficiency that is used as a marker to signify they are competent enough to attend mainstream classes with little to no extra assistance (Hakuta et al., 2000; Miller, 2009; Rutter, 2006; Stewart, 2011). Stewart (2011) identified this as a problem and reported that many students who took high-level courses struggled to understand the curriculum and were unsuccessful leaving them disappointed and having to repeat the course, occasionally more than once. Demie (2013) further noted that most EAL students who only have oral proficiency require considerable support to meet the literacy demands of mainstream classroom activities. Without this assistance, the curriculum is simply inaccessible to children with limited fluency (Rutter, 2006).

Compounding the students' lack of linguistic abilities is the fact that many of them have also experienced prolonged episodes of interrupted schooling. This often means that they are not literate in their own native language, which consequently impedes

their ability to master the language of their new country. Research on literacy and language acquisition has consistently shown that when students have well developed literacy skills in their native language, they more easily learn a new language as they are able to transfer meanings and concepts from one language to the other (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1979, 1981a, 2000; Coelho, 2004). The learning strategies (e.g., sound-symbol correspondence) they acquired when learning to read and write in their first language also help foster development as they learn to read and write in a new language (Lucas et al., 2008).

The lack of formal schooling of many newly settled refugees also means that they have not had the opportunity to acquire much of the prerequisite subject content knowledge they need to succeed when placed in mainstream classes with their grade-level peers, which is standard practice in many jurisdictions (DeCapua, 2016; Miller, 2009; Windle & Miller, 2012). This is problematic since “students with interrupted education lack the topic-specific vocabularies of academic subjects, understandings of register and genre, cultural background knowledge to scaffold their understanding and learning strategies to process content” (Miller, 2009, p. 573). Finally, on top of the linguistic challenges and content knowledge challenges, many students had difficulty planning and organizing their work (Dooley, 2009) and applying taken-for-granted academic processes such as “ordering, ranking, and listing; recognising diagrams, graphics, and pictures; and transferring patterns and models” (Matthews, 2008, p.35). In essence, many students with refugee backgrounds have not had the educational opportunities needed to develop a range of literacy, academic, and metacognitive skills that they require to be successful,

and they consequently struggle with many of the unrealistic demands that schools place upon them.

#### ***3.1.4.2 Pedagogical practices and challenges***

While many students have difficulty navigating unfamiliar education systems and overcoming the many challenges, they face to catch up academically with their grade-level peers, their struggles are often exasperated by education systems that are ill-prepared to provide the academic supports they need (Collins et al., 2017; Matthews, 2008; Sidhu et al., 2011; Stewart, 2011). One significant issue is that many educators have not received the appropriate training required to teach students with substantial linguistic and educational gaps (Collins et al., 2017; Kovinthan, 2016; MacNevin, 2012; Stewart, 2014). Given that many of the students stand in need of first-time literacy support, that is they are unable to read or write in any language, teachers need to teach language and literacy alongside content; however, teaching literacy and language skills are typically not in the repertoire of many intermediate and high school level teachers (Dooley, 2009; Sidhu et al., 2011). Fundamentally, many students with refugee backgrounds, regardless of their age, need assistance from teachers who have expertise in teaching primary and elementary curriculum. It is not surprising therefore that without adequate training teachers often do not know how to modify their curricula, instruction, and assessment in ways that would adequately support the learning of students with refugee backgrounds (Kanu, 2008; MacNevin, 2012).

The lack of teacher training with regards to the students' academic needs is one issue, but their misconceptions and sometimes negative attitudes towards students with

refugee backgrounds also serve as additional barriers to student success (Kanu, 2008; Kovinthan, 2016; McBrien, 2009; Rutter, 2006; Stewart, 2012). For instance, Kanu reported that five of eight teachers in her study felt that having students with refugee backgrounds in their classes intensified their work since they now had to take on additional non-academic duties (e.g., teaching them how to dress appropriately for Canadian winters). She further explained that most of these teachers seemed to resent the fact that they had to provide these extra non-academic supports on top of their regular duties. Likewise, Stewart (2012) found that many teachers did not want refugee students in their classes and that their behaviours were often misunderstood. Alluding to teachers' attitudes and behaviours, she noted that students often experience "racism, discrimination, unfair treatment, exclusionary actions, and disrespectful comments" (p.186). Stewart further argues that school leaders need to provide teachers with professional learning opportunities about the social, political, and cultural issues that affect these students since it is their lack of awareness that often contributes to their counterproductive attitudes. Finally, Li and colleagues (2016) found that parents too routinely feel that their children's teachers and school administrators have preconceived assumptions on a range of cultural and religious customs (e.g., appropriate mealtimes), and that these attitudes and beliefs negatively impact their children's school transition and sense of belongingness.

To counter teachers' misperceptions and negative attitudes several scholars have advocated for more pre-service and professional learning opportunities to help teachers develop and execute more appropriate and responsive pedagogy (Collins et al., 2017; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; MacNevin, 2012; Pugh et al., 2012; Villegas, Saiz de La Mora, Martin, & Mills, 2018; Windle & Miller, 2012). Currently, Western educational systems

view students with refugee backgrounds through a deficit model and label them based on “what they don’t have: no or low English language proficiency, no or low literacy skills, significant gaps in subject-area knowledge, and not knowing how to ‘do school’ (DeCapua and Marshall 2011; Suarez-Orozco 2000)” (DeCapua, 2016, p. 226). It is argued that teachers need to move beyond this deficit stance and build pedagogy that acknowledges the resources and prior lived experiences of students with refugee backgrounds as a means of scaffolding their transition to formal education (Alford, 2014; DeCapua, 2016; Dooley, 2009; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016). Dooley cited the work of Ibrahim (1999, 2004) as an example of how the Ontario curriculum is insufficiently relevant, engaging, or interactive for many refugee backgrounds students. It is thus recommended that teachers incorporate more culturally relevant content into their classes to help students build from their prior experiences and knowledge. To do this, teachers must first be provided with opportunities whereby they can develop a deep cultural understanding of their students and how students’ norms, values and beliefs impact their behaviours (Hos, 2014; Pugh et al., 2012).

Research also clearly shows that teachers need more training in how to prepare lessons and scaffold learning for students with refugee backgrounds. For instance, many come from settings that prioritize oral versus written transmission as a means of formulating knowledge and communicating ideas related to the content being taught (Bigelow & Vinogradov, 2011; Windle & Miller, 2012). Thus, considering the emphasis placed on the written word in Western education systems and students with refugee backgrounds’ strengths with oral communication, teachers need to be able to “combine the priorities of both: scaffold the written with the oral until the former becomes easily

accessible for these students” (DeCapua, 2016, p. 232). These necessary changes to classroom practices will only come about if teachers are provided with ESL-based professional learning opportunities and given the resources and time needed to enable pedagogical adaption. This means that schools and the broader school systems need to make these changes a priority (Windle & Miller, 2012).

Another area of concern cited in many jurisdictions is the lack of adequate and proper EAL support available within schools. One of the main issues identified is that EAL teachers are typically trained to provide instruction to people who have literacy skills in their native language (Sidhu et al., 2011; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). Matthews (2008) reminds us that “ESL pedagogy is itself culturally specific and based on teaching European and Asian immigrants from literate backgrounds” (p. 36), and evidence has shown that these pedagogical practices have limited success when used with students with refugee backgrounds with limited schooling (Sidhu et al., 2011; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). All too often, however, EAL learners are all grouped together into one category without any consideration of their prior educational experiences (Miller, 2009; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). As pointed out by Dooley (2009), all EAL students have different competencies and resources that they can use to facilitate additional language learning. Some have advanced code-breaking skills (e.g., knowledge of spelling patterns), for example, while others, such as many students with refugee backgrounds, are being exposed to these skills for the very first time. Dooley further elaborated that in addition to literacy development, EAL teachers working with students with refugee backgrounds also need to focus on helping the students develop these skills and resources to a point where they are able to generate meaning from grade-level texts and function in mainstream classes.



Miller (2009, 2005) depicted dictionary use as an example of how EAL instruction for students with interrupted schooling differs from those with grade-level academic skills in their native language. For instance, she explained that for students with literacy skills, they can easily look up a word they do not recognize in a dictionary and use their prior knowledge to create meaning. Yet, this process is not so simple for students with interrupted schooling for several reasons: (1) they may not be able to read in their native language; (2) the word may be so complex that they have not been exposed to the word in their native language; and (3) many simply do not know how to use a dictionary. Miller (2009) concluded by saying, “It is pointless asking a child who has spent ten years in a Kenyan refugee camp, ‘What is the word for chemical bonds in your language?’” (p. 589)

Moreover, while students with refugee backgrounds require intensive teacher-directed study of grammar, this aspect of pedagogy is often not prioritized (Dooley, 2009). For example, Dooley cited Romaniw (2007) who has criticized teachers for not providing students with refugee backgrounds with the grammatical foundation they need to participate in complex textual meaning. Woods (2009) concurred with the above assessment and noted that schools tend to prioritize language acquisition rather than provide the appropriate programming required to aid literacy competence. Others have argued that due to the high abstraction level of mainstream curriculum in the upper grades, students need to understand the social context of their learning when operating in a second language if they are to grasp the concepts being taught (e.g., Cummins, 1981b; Rutter, 2006; Kanu 2008). Rutter (2006) explained that context can be provided through the use of visual clues, body language, and relating learning to the learner’s prior

experiences; yet she found in her research that much teaching lacked context, and consequently limited students' progress.

The shortage of EAL support (e.g., funding and resources) for students with refugee backgrounds is another routinely identified problem in many schools, especially when students enter mainstream classes (Collins et al., 2017; MacNevin, 2012; Matthews, 2008; Rutter 2006). Several studies have indicated that while students may receive intensive ESL support when they first arrive, this assistance quickly disappears once the students have developed basic oral proficiency (e.g., Due et al., 2015; Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013). Rutter (2006) reported that “children who had achieved survival English rarely received extra support” (p. 148) when in mainstream classes and noted that the limited ESL support provided to students with refugee backgrounds in the UK “appeared discriminatory” (p. 153). Meanwhile, Sidhu and colleagues (2011) research concluded that “ESL funding, particularly for refugee children, falls short of what is required” (p. 96). The lack of support and resources for students as they transition into mainstream classes is consequently viewed by many as one of the greatest barriers to success for students with refugee backgrounds.

#### ***3.1.4.3 Educational and social policy***

What happens in classrooms is often predicated on the policies that regulate and govern the provision of education. It has thus been argued that the contemporary neoliberal policies of many Western nations undermine a commitment to social justice (Reid, 2002) as they tend to be accompanied by reduced public sector funding, increased corporate-style management practices, an overreliance on community-based service

delivery, and the shifting of governmental social responsibilities to that of self-managing autonomous individuals (Sidhu and Taylor 2007; Matthews 2008; Taylor, 2008). These trends place refugee students at a significant disadvantage given the shortage of economic, social, cultural, and political capital they possess relative to other community groups, and resultantly, contribute to their societal and educational marginalization (Reid 2002; Sidhu and Taylor 2007).

The repercussions linked to the reduced or limited funding for education as articulated by the scholars above “limits the possibilities of education for a large number of newly arrived refugee young people” (Woods, 2009, p. 83). In the absence of adequate funding and resources, many schools are forced to rely upon the goodwill of teachers and school administrators to provide the additional supports that students need. For example, Pugh and colleagues (2012) reported one school where a school administrator took on the work of two people (i.e., only one administrator was hired to complete a workload that would typically warrant two positions) so that the funds saved could then be allocated towards providing additional classroom resources. Pugh and colleagues noted that this creativity provides some benefits for the school, but that it is not sustainable or recommended and is suggestive that changes at the macro-policy level need to occur.

Others have also argued that the lack of ESL provision and assistance students receive in mainstream classes is also directly tied to inadequate funding levels (e.g., Matthews, 2008; Sidhu et al., 2011). One concern is that funding is typically allocated based solely on the number of students needing ESL assistance rather than on the specific needs of the students (Due et al., 2015). In other words, the special literary needs of students with refugee backgrounds are often not acknowledged through funding policies

that conflate students with refugee backgrounds with other migrants and label them *all* as ESL learners (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Taylor and Sidhu, 2012). This marginalization due to the absence of targeted policy consequently places them at a significant disadvantage. In the words of Taylor and Sidhu (2012), “the discursive invisibility of refugees in policy and research has worked against their cultural, social, and economic integration” (p. 43).

Stewart’s (2011) research also showed that in Manitoba, Canada a paucity of targeted policies pertaining to the education of students with refugee backgrounds was evident at the government, divisional, and school levels. A participant in her study noted that without central guidance “schools were locally responsible for developing policy, which was usually dependent on ‘the whims of the principals to give it any support’” (p. 89). Overall, Stewart’s research showed that there was no consistency across districts, or even between schools within districts with regards to policy development or implementation. She also noted that the lack of coordinated policies means knowledge is often not retained when schools undergo significant staffing changes, which creates scenarios whereby the schools become more reactive than proactive in how they respond to student needs. She concluded that formal policies, and a coordinated effort to build and implement these policies, are necessary to ensure students can avail of consistent and stable programming.

On another front, Rutter (2006) argued that the current neoliberal emphasis placed on school effectiveness by governments “contributes to the marginalisation of programmes to support refugee children” (p. 148). She highlighted the fact that some schools become reluctant to enact specialized programming and offer holistic approaches for students with refugee backgrounds fearing that they may attract too many of these

students, and consequently, interfere with their efforts at securing high student examination results. The pressures placed on schools to have students perform has also been documented in relation to language policies that have become more restrictive and more centered around improving standardized test scores (Henderson & Ambroso, 2018). For instance, Villegas and colleagues (2018) noted that the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in the United States mandated that all students, including ELLs be included in state testing programs, which resulted in the mainstreaming of many ELLs based on the misconception that English immersion would be the best way to enhance their test scores. This was especially problematic as these students were now being taught by teachers with no preparation on how to adapt their teaching to meet the particular needs of ELL students (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodríguez, 2008 as cited in Villegas et al., 2018).

In contrast to the above findings, Pinson and Arnot (2010) reported on how some local education authorities (LEA) in the UK have adopted holistic approaches to fostering the educational development and wellbeing of students with refugee backgrounds despite a lack of dedicated funding for schools who have admitted these students. The LEAs, using a “counter-hegemonic” (p. 256) approach, systematically gathered data about their students with refugee backgrounds, developed targeted policies, and diverted resources to ensure holistic support systems were put in place to meet these students complex and diverse needs. In essence, the LEAs decided to “take a stand against the ... exclusionary immigration policies and educational agenda which appeared to privilege ‘raising individual achievement’ over and above the development of the whole child” (p. 256). Despite these positive findings, the authors do point out that not all LEAs have adopted

holistic approaches and that the lack of funding for schools and LEAs needs to be addressed.

Looking across jurisdictions, from Canada (e.g., Stewart, 2011) to Australia (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012), to the UK (e.g., Rutter, 2006) and other developed Western nations (e.g., Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013), there tends to be a serious lack of targeted policies to ensure the educational and wellbeing needs of students with refugee backgrounds are being met. When policies do exist, they are often arbitrarily implemented leading to fractured and inadequate programming. Subsequently, the complex educational needs of refugee students, such as their limited literacy skills, are not being acknowledged and are contributing to their marginalization (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007; Taylor and Sidhu, 2012; Stewart, 2011). It is imperative that policy development be prioritized for this cohort of students. If not, we are simply leaving their education to chance (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

### **3.2 Summary**

In 2007, Pinson and Arnot wrote a review essay entitled “Sociology of Education and the Wasteland of Refugee Education Research” in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*. In their essay, they pointed to the “gaping hole” (p. 399) of research that has been conducted on the education of students with refugee backgrounds. Since then, the research focused on this particular cohort has grown substantially and a lot has been learned about the multidimensional and wide-ranging challenges these students face and the supports that need to be in place to foster their academic growth and overall wellbeing. Despite this growing knowledge, the literature also suggests that with the

exception of a few impressive programs (see Block et al., 2014; Pugh et al, 2012; Starr, 2011 for examples) most educational environments have been contributing to the marginalization of students with refugee backgrounds as they are simply failing to provide the necessary supports these students require.

Pinson and Arnot (2007) also stated that “in a way, refugee and asylum-seeking children and their integration represent a litmus test in terms of social inclusion. As the absolute stranger, the asylum-seeking child could tell us something about how we define education and its role in society” (p. 405). Fundamentally, if education systems are to pass this test, then it is imperative that changes are made, and more work is done. While there are no magic bullets that will solve all of the challenges that students with refugee backgrounds have to conquer, schools can start by offering these students the following:

small class sizes; adequate levels of ESL and learning-assistance support; enough educational assistants to provide one-on-one support to the most vulnerable students; counselling services in the school to work with students with emotional and behavioural challenges; money to provide food, school supplies, clothes, and opportunities; and, finally, having the right staff in the right placements. (Starr, 2011, p. 72)

Schools will also need to ensure that adequate supports are put in place to enhance parent involvement and ensure that community and agency-based services are accessible to students by formulating partner-sharing responsibilities. It will be only under these circumstances that we can claim to be providing equitable education opportunities for these students.

## CHAPTER 4

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### **Theoretical Perspective: Self-determination Theory**

#### **4.1 Overview of Self-Determination Theory**

SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci 2002) is an empirically and organismic based macrotheory of human motivation, behavioural regulation, and development that resides in the dialectical view that social conditions can either nurture or impede an individual's growth depending on whether these conditions support or thwart the individual's basic psychological needs to feel a sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. SDT assumes that people by their very nature are self-motivating, curious and eager, and possess an active tendency towards psychological growth and integration in which they develop an ever more elaborated and unified sense of self. However, SDT also posits that this natural tendency is contingent on socio-contextual factors that can either support or thwart its processes (Ryan & Deci, 2002). SDT thus maintains that motivation and regulation are functions of the sociocultural conditions in which individuals find themselves, and it is these conditions that influence not only how people behave, but also how they feel during and after their actions (Deci & Ryan 2000). It should also be noted that according to SDT it is not the environment per se that matters, but rather how the environment functions to support people's basic psychological needs (Vallerand, Pelletier, & Koestner, 2008). In sum, SDT proposes that all humans have an innate, essential, and universal need to feel competent, autonomous, and related to others and that when social conditions satisfy these needs, they support people's inherent activity, foster



motivation, and yield positive psychological and behavioural outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

Another tenet of SDT that differentiates it from other theories of motivation and development (e.g., Bandura, 1996) is the premise that it is not whether people are motivated or the amount of motivation that people have for particular behaviours that are the salient points to consider, but rather it is the quality of the motivation people experience that is most imperative for predicting many of life's important outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). SDT specifically delineates the quality of motivation along a continuum ranging from amotivation to intrinsic motivation with the most central distinction being between the types of motivation that are autonomous in nature and those that are controlled through external contingencies. The concept of psychological needs provides a means of understanding how various societal forces and interpersonal experiences influence the quality of motivation, and subsequent developmental outcomes. As Ryan and Deci (2002, p.6) claimed, "These needs – the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy – provide a basis for categorizing aspects of the environment as supportive or antagonistic to integrated and vital human functioning." Thus, the notion of basic needs provides a critical link within the organismic dialectic and provides the basis for making predictions upon whether social conditions will promote optimal versus suboptimal outcomes in terms of behaviour and development (Ryan & Deci, 2002). It is important to note that when any one of the basic needs is notably thwarted in a given context, optimal functioning and wellbeing are expected to suffer (La Guardia & Patrick, 2008). Moreover, optimal outcomes tend to occur when all three needs are equally satisfied (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006). Ryan and Deci (2000b) further contend that since need

deprivation tends to act as a principal source of human distress and the deterioration of mental health, it is imperative for those working to support mental wellbeing to focus on building social-contextual conditions that foster need satisfaction.

The understanding of the basic needs as being innate, developmentally persistent, and universal in nature (Ryan & Deci, 2002) does not imply that the satisfaction of these needs is unchanging throughout the lifespan or that their satisfaction is expressed in the same manner across cultures. As Ryan and Deci (2000b) explained, need satisfaction is contingent on the internalization and integration of culturally endorsed values and behaviours through which the expression of need satisfaction is likely to differ between cultures that hold different values. This is also the same for developmental periods whereby influences produce variations in the importance of goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). In summary, the internalization and integration of cultural endorsed and developmentally appropriate values and behaviours are theorized to be influenced not only by people's inherent capabilities, but also by the environmental demands, obstacles, and affordances offered within sociocultural contexts. Thus, universal need satisfaction is not counter to the variability in goals and orientations posed by individuals from different cultures or in different developmental periods, but instead suggests that there are similarities in the underlying process within the development and expression of those differences (Ryan & Deci, 2000b).

### **4.1.1 Basic psychological needs**

#### ***4.1.1.1 Competence***

According to SDT, competence refers to people feeling effective in their ongoing interactions within their social environment and having opportunities to perform and express their capabilities (Deci, 1975; Harter, 1978; White, 1959). White (1959) notes that a sense of competence only develops after “prolonged feats of learning” (p. 297) and does not simply evolve through maturation. Ryan and Deci (e.g., 2002) contend that a sense of competence motivates people to seek out challenges that optimally match their capabilities and functions to drive individuals to maintain or enhance their skills. In contrast, if people do not feel competent, they are unlikely to endorse the value of a particular behaviour (e.g., learning) and fully engage in action. Furthermore, competence should not be viewed as one being skillful or having capabilities, but rather as a sense of one’s confidence and effectance when one acts (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In other words, competence is a self-judgment of one’s ability to successfully carry out an intended action to fruition.

#### ***4.1.1.2 Relatedness***

Relatedness is grounded in an individual feeling a sense of belonging with others and caring for and being cared for by those others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Ryan, 1995). People tend to experience a sense of relatedness when they are subjects in satisfying and supportive relationships and when they feel genuinely included, valued, and respected by others (Deci and Ryan 2000). The need for a sense of relatedness is in concordance with people’s predilection to form secure attachments (LaGuardia, Ryan,

Couchman, & Deci, 2000), engage in social-support networks (Ryan & Solky, 1996), and transmit shared knowledge between individuals and from one generation to the next (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Ryan & Deci (2002) noted that a sense of relatedness is not concerned with the attainment of status (e.g., being a member of a particular group) or a certain outcome (e.g., sex), but with individuals feeling they are involved in caring and secure relationships in which they are able to form strong and stable interpersonal bonds.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) stated that a sense of belonging tends to have multiple and strong effects on emotional patterns and cognitive processes and that a lack of secure attachments is associated with a variety of ill effects on adjustment and wellbeing. They further argued that many psychological difficulties are reflected in people's emotional and behavioral reactions to perceived threats to social bonds and that a number of neurotic, maladaptive, and destructive behaviors tend to manifest from people's desperate attempts to establish or maintain relationships when their need to belong is thwarted.

#### ***4.1.1.3 Autonomy***

Autonomy refers to people acting in a volitional manner and with a sense of choice whereby they perceive themselves as the cause or source of their own actions (deCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1985a). According to Ryan and Deci (2002), when individuals experience a sense of autonomy, they “experience their behaviour as an expression of the self, such that, even when actions are influenced by outside sources, the actors concur with those influences, feeling both initiative and value with regard to them” (p. 8). In other words, when people act autonomously, they engage in behaviours that are

self-endorsed and congruent with their values and authentic interests (Schultz & Ryan, 2015). Deci and Ryan (2008a) further stressed that autonomy should not be confused with independence, or individualism (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Independence simply means to function alone and not depend on others; however, people can act volitionally towards an intended goal while at the same time depending on others to help them achieve that goal. In other words, autonomy in SDT means a person is acting volitionally regardless of whether the action occurs under dependent or independent conditions. Likewise, autonomy is not synonymous with individualism, a term that would signal low relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000b) and be in direct contradiction with the theoretical underpinnings of need satisfaction according to SDT. As previously mentioned, need satisfaction is intricately linked to the internalization and integration of culturally endorsed values, thus even those who live in collectivist societies, where individualism is not lauded, can experience a sense of autonomy when they act in a volitional manner that is congruent with their perceived values.

#### **4.1.2 Types of motivation according to SDT**

Deci and Ryan (2008b) reported that many historical and contemporary theories of motivation treat motivation as a unitary concept where the amount of motivation one has is considered the key to understanding behaviour (e.g., Locke & Latham, 1990; Bandura, 1996). In contrast, SDT posits that it is not the amount of motivation, but rather the quality of motivation people experience that is the most important characteristic for predicting and understanding many of life's important outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). As such, SDT has differentiated motivation along a continuum from the least self-

determined form of motivation, amotivation, to the most self-determined form, intrinsic motivation. In all, SDT has identified six different types of motivation which are presented in Figure 4.1. Each is described with a particular emphasize on explaining how the supporting or thwarting of the psychological needs manifests each type.

#### 4.1.2.1 Amotivation

Amotivation, in simplest terms, means that a person does not have any motivation or intent to perform or complete an action. When people are amotivated they may act, but they do so in a perfunctory way (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Ryan (1995) noted that

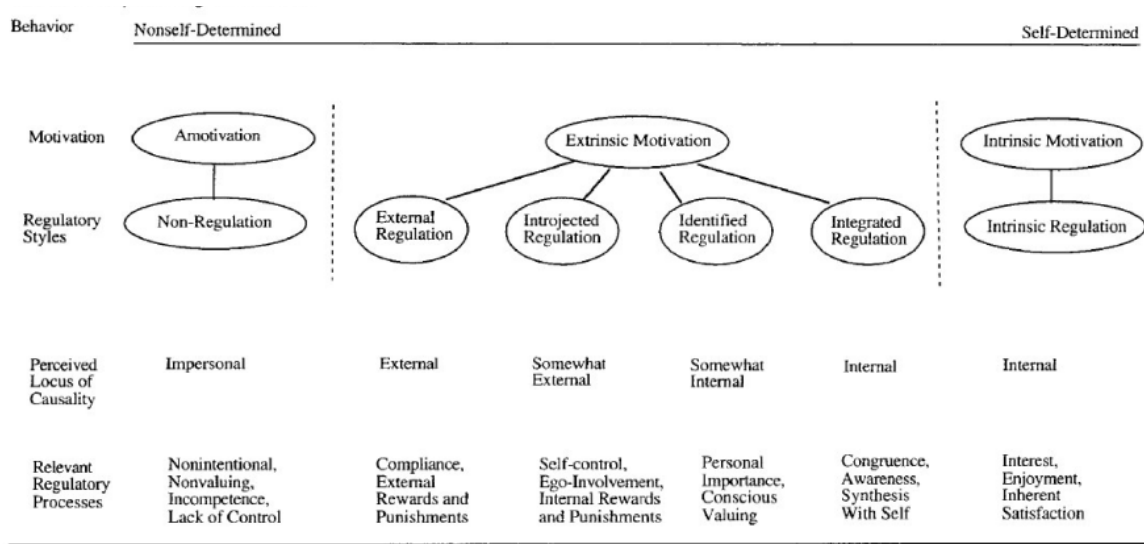


Figure 4. 1 Self-determination continuum showing the types of motivation with their regulatory styles, loci of causality, and corresponding processes

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amotivation is a likely outcome for an individual who does not value an activity. Others, such as Bandura (1986), have argued that amotivation can result from a lack of self-efficacy or competence to complete an action, while additional scholars maintain that a

lack of contingency between a behaviour and expected outcomes can lead to an amotivated state (Seligman, 1975; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992). In other words, the actors may feel a lack of control or autonomy, or experience a sense of helplessness, to influence the outcome in a desired direction. This consequently leads to their amotivated state. According to SDT, amotivation represents the lowest quality of motivation one can experience since the actor does not possess any sense of purpose, has no expectation of reward, nor senses a possibility of influencing a course of events in a beneficial way (Ryan & Deci, 2000b; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992).

Researchers have expanded our understanding of what leads to an amotivated state and identified four subcategories of amotivation (Green-Demers, Legault, Pelletier, and Pelletier, 2008; Legault, Green-Demers, and Pelletier, 2006; Pelletier, Dion, Tucson, and Green-Demers, 1999). Legault and colleagues (2006) proposed that people may become amotivated because they feel they do not have the ability to complete a task (e.g., competence), they do not feel that they can initiate or maintain the effort required to complete a task, they do not value a given task (e.g., the task is incongruent with one's self-expression), and because a task's characteristics are of a non-stimulating nature (e.g., void of interesting or stimulating qualities). In the realm of education, Legault and colleagues (2006) maintained that social supports play a significant role in the forestallment of each subtype of amotivation. Specifically, they argued that autonomy support (e.g., teachers optimizing student opportunities to take initiative and showing respect for their students' opinions), competence support (e.g., teachers providing constructive feedback and transmitting useful information that allows their students to put their learning into practice), and relatedness support (e.g., the establishment of academic

and extracurricular peer support groups) are critical features needed to prevent students from becoming amotivated in school. The above studies provide examples of how need satisfaction enhances student outcomes. Later in the chapter, the importance of need satisfaction for student development and learning is addressed in further detail.

#### ***4.1.2.2 Intrinsic motivation***

While amotivation represents the nethermost extreme on the motivation continuum, intrinsic motivation lies on the opposite end and represents the apex of the continuum. Intrinsic motivation, according to SDT, is defined as “doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence” (Ryan & Deci, 2000a, p.56). That is, when people are intrinsically motivated, they act due to their interest, curiosity, and the inherent enjoyment they receive from the activity itself, not due to contingencies or reinforcement (e.g., punishments or rewards) that are operationally separable from those activities. From this perspective, Deci & Ryan (1980) argued that intrinsic motivation represents the most obvious and natural manifestation of the growth tendency for humans (e.g., from birth onwards people tend to be actively inquisitive and seek out novelty in a quest to learn and understand their worlds), is considered the hallmark of volitional functioning (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013), and aligns with deCharms (1968) perceived internal locus of causality, which holds that initiation and regulation of a behaviour stems from within a person. For instance, reading a book for the sheer pleasure of doing so, or to learn something one finds interesting, are examples of intrinsic motivation. In each case, the reader is choosing to read out of their own volition, not because they have to do it for another sake. Correspondingly, the volitional nature of



intrinsic activity is fully expected to satisfy one's need for autonomy and is therefore considered integral to the development and continuance of these activities (Ryan & Deci, 2002). It is important to highlight that although intrinsic motivation is an inherent propensity that all people possess, its expression exists within the relation between each individual and the activities in which they engage. That is, people are not intrinsically motivated for all activities, and not all people are intrinsically motivated for the same activities (Ryan & Deci, 2000a).

Despite intrinsic motivation being considered a natural human growth tendency, its actualization is nonetheless contingent upon supportive conditions being present (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). As such, a central concern of SDT is gaining perspective around the conditions that either elicit and sustain or undermine and diminish intrinsic motivation. Cognitive Evaluation Theory (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985a), or CET, was presented as a subtheory of SDT to articulate this very issue. CET focuses on the fundamental needs for competence and autonomy and argues that social-contextual occurrences that are conducive towards supporting an individual's sense of competence and autonomy will foster that individual's intrinsic motivation. For instance, research has demonstrated that positive performance feedback, which supports one's sense of competence, is conducive to supporting intrinsic motivation (e.g., Deci, 1971, 1975; Harackiewicz, 1979), while negative feedback has been shown to produce the opposite effect (e.g., Deci & Cascio, 1972). However, for an individual to truly experience intrinsic motivation they must also feel a sense of autonomy with respect to their actions (Ryan & Deci, 2002). This notion has been supported in various studies (see Ryan & Ryan, 2002 for an overview). From a contrasting perspective, autonomy supportive climates tend to enhance intrinsic

motivation (e.g., Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). Moreover, evidence from Deci and Ryan (1985a) lists the provision of choice, opportunities for self-direction, and having one's feelings and opinions acknowledged by significant others as effective ways to foster one's sense of autonomy.

Although social climates can impact one's intrinsic motivation in both positive and negative ways, research has also shown that those who are intrinsically motivated do exhibit a degree of immunity to controlling conditions. For instance, Guay, Boggiano, and Vallerand (2001) were able to show that intrinsic motivation can act as a buffer to the adverse effects of controlling teaching strategies. The authors argued that this is in line with Harter's (1978) model of intrinsic motivation, which holds that intrinsically motivated people do not rely on external approval and goal incentives to perform but are instead driven by self-rewards and a mastery goal orientation (i.e., when people seek to develop their competence by acquiring new skills while paying little attention to their performance in relation to others; Dweck, 1986). Despite these findings, it would be remiss to underestimate the impact that the environment plays in supporting or thwarting one's intrinsic motivation. The evidence clearly demonstrates that even when people exhibit a degree of immunity, they are still susceptible to having their intrinsic motivation undermined if they begin to experience external pressures in a way that inhibits their sense of competence and autonomy.

Despite CET being primarily concerned with the needs for autonomy and competence, the macrotheory of SDT holds that intrinsic motivation is more likely to flourish when people are functioning in contexts where their interpersonal relationships provide them with a sense of security and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). For

example, Frodi, Bridges, and Grolnick (1985) observed that infants exhibit greater exploratory behaviour, an indication of a higher level of intrinsic motivation, when they are securely attached. In contrast, when children experience adults as being cold and uncaring, they tend to exhibit diminished intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Grolnick, 1986). As a case in point, Anderson, Manoogian, and Reznick (1976) reported that children working on an interesting task in the presence of an adult stranger who ignored them and didn't respond to their initiations displayed diminished levels of intrinsic motivation, whereas positive verbal reinforcements from the strangers led to increased intrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000c) pointed out that many intrinsically motivating behaviours can be done in isolation, which suggests that proximal relational supports may not be essential for intrinsic motivation, yet they maintain that in many contexts relatedness support does positively affect its expression. Moreover, although relatedness is sometimes seen as a more distal need compared to autonomy and competence for the expression of intrinsic motivation, it nonetheless can provide people with a sense of security to explore and engage in actions that interest them, even when these activities are done in solitude (Ryan, Curren, and Deci, 2013).

In summary, CET holds that for an individual to be intrinsically motivated they must experience the needs for both competence and autonomy while relatedness support, which sometimes plays a more distal role in the promotion of intrinsic motivation, does seem to be critical during interpersonal-based activities (Ryan & Deci, 2002). However, Ryan and Deci (2000b) also noted that intrinsic motivation stems from an internal locus of control and thus people will only experience intrinsic motivation for activities that are intrinsically interesting and have an appeal of novelty, optimal challenge, or aesthetic

value. In essence, for activities that do not hold such appeal, the principles of CET do not apply because the activities themselves are not intrinsically motivating to begin with. In such cases, they are driven through external contingencies and people's actions are governed in an extrinsically motivating capacity.

#### ***4.1.2.3 Extrinsic motivation***

Extrinsic motivation refers to people acting based on external contingencies or to gain some instrumental benefit (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). For instance, acting to receive a prize or to enhance one's self-image both constitute examples of extrinsically regulated behaviour since the person's actions are being driven through an external locus of causality rather from one's sense of self (Vansteenkiste, Niemiec, & Soenens, 2010). External contingencies are often used to entice, prompt, or sustain behaviour; however, although these contingencies may have a positive short-term impact, evidence suggests that they can also undermine one's autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Consequently, external contingencies tend to be ineffective for the long-term maintenance of behaviours over time since they can negatively impact motivational quality (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Moreover, the undermining of one's autonomy and intrinsic motivation have been shown to adversely affect one's psychological wellbeing (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 2008a) and academic development (e.g., Niemiec & Ryan, 2009).

While extrinsic motivation represents a lower quality of motivation compared to intrinsic motivation, SDT stipulates that the quality of one's extrinsic motivation can vary greatly based on the degree to which a person feels autonomous when acting (Ryan & Deci, 2000a). Accordingly, SDT has identified four types of extrinsic motivation, two of

which, identified regulation and integrated regulation, are considered autonomous or self-determined in nature, and two others, external regulation and introjected regulation, that are considered controlled forms of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

The quality of the four types of extrinsic motivation is reflected in the degree to which an individual internalizes and integrates the value of the behaviour at hand. *Internalization* refers to the process of people taking in the value of a regulation, and *integration* refers to people transforming the regulation in such a way that it emanates from their sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Ryan and Deci (2002) noted, “The more fully a regulation (or the value underlying it) is internalized, the more it becomes part of the integrated self and the more it is the basis for self-determined behaviour” (p. 15).

To further our understanding of how various behaviours become internalized and integrated, a subtheory of SDT, Organismic Integration Theory (OIT) was introduced by Deci & Ryan (1985a). Specifically, OIT details how various contextual factors promote or thwart the internalization and integration of behavioural regulation and proposes a taxonomy of the types of regulation for extrinsic motivation that differ according to the degree to which an individual feels autonomous towards his or her actions. It begins with the assumption that people are naturally disposed to integrate their on-going experiences if they are provided with the nutriments to do so, and thus stipulates that when socio-environmental conditions are supportive of one’s basic psychological needs they facilitate internalization, integration, and the enactment of autonomously regulated behaviours (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). A description of the four types of extrinsic regulation according to SDT is provided below, along with a general overview of how the satisfaction or

thwarting of the psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy manifest the expression of each type.

#### *4.1.2.3.1 External regulation*

Within SDT, externally regulated behaviour represents the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation since people act solely to obtain an external reward (e.g., children doing their homework because they will receive a reward) or to avoid punishment (e.g., doing one's homework so he or she is not punished). These types of behaviours thus represent a form of controlled motivation because they are driven by an externally perceived locus of causality (deCharms, 1968; Ryan & Deci, 2000b). When externally regulated behaviours are dependent upon external contingencies, the behaviours usually halt when the contingencies are removed. Vansteenkiste, Ryan, Deci (2008) provide the following example to highlight this point:

If a boy eats vegetables because his parents reward him with dessert for doing so, he is unlikely to eat them when his parents are away or there is no dessert (a lack of maintenance), or if he goes into a new situation such as summer camp (a lack of transfer). From a SDT standpoint, this failure of generalization results when a regulation has not been internalized (p. 195).

As the above example demonstrates, external regulation is akin to operant conditioning (Skinner, 1971), and behaviours typically only persist when external contingencies are in place.

#### 4.1.2.3.2 *Introjected regulation*

Like external regulation, introjected regulation is also considered a controlled form of regulation; however, unlike external regulation, it has been somewhat internalized (Ryan & Deci 2002). Vansteenkiste and colleagues (2008) note that introjected regulation typically stems from intra-individual pressures where the impetus to act comes from the self. That is, introjected behaviours tend to be performed to avoid feelings of guilt, shame or anxiety, or to boost one's ego, pride or feelings of worth (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). For instance, when people act to out-perform others as a means to enhancing their image or social standing they are acting through introjected regulation. In a similar fashion, using the vegetables example above, the boy may choose to eat vegetables as a way of gaining praise from his parents or demonstrating that he is a good child. The external contingency for introjection is thus centered on promoting one's self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995). In essence, introjection is considered as nonautonomous since people feel pressured to act and it involves a minimal amount of internalization since people take in a control (e.g., ego enhancement), but they do not generate a sense of ownership over the control (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). That is, the behaviour fails to be integrated into one's sense of self and is therefore not considered to be self-determined (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

#### 4.1.2.3.3 *Identified regulation*

Identified regulation, or identification, involves people internalizing a behaviour, and to a certain degree, integrating it into their sense of self because they value its importance and accept it as their own (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). Identification is considered

to be a form of self-determined or autonomous regulation because it operates through an internal locus of causality. As such, when people act, they do so through their own volition and with a sense of autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Furthermore, identification represents a point where people transform an external regulation into self-regulation and therein take ownership of their actions and willingly accept the responsibility needed for regulating their behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). To illustrate, when students willingly study hard because they know it will help them achieve their future goals, they are acting through identified regulation. Likewise, using the vegetables example, if the boy chooses to eat his vegetables because he knows they will help make him healthy, he is acting through identified regulation. In other words, he eats his vegetables because he values the healthy benefits associated with doing so. Although both introjected regulation and identification are regulated through internally imposed contingencies, identification is unlike introjected regulation because people are guided to action by their personal values and self-endorsed commitments. As such, their behaviour becomes almost fully internalized (Vansteenkiste, 2010).

#### 4.1.2.3.4 *Integrated regulation*

Integrated regulation, or integration represents the most autonomous or self-determined form of extrinsic regulation. “Integration occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated into the self” (Ryan and Deci, 2000b, p.73). This means, regulations have been evaluated and brought into coherence with one’s other values, beliefs, and aspects of the self. For instance, teachers who voluntarily engage in professional development because they believe it will improve their teaching are acting through



integration. The act of doing professional development aligns with their sense of self as a teacher and fits within their values of caring about their students. If we consider the vegetables example again, the boy may choose to eat his vegetables because he identifies as an athlete, and eating his vegetables aligns with his goals of being the best athlete possible. He knows that athletes need to be strong and healthy and that eating his vegetables will thus support his athletic development.

It should be noted that although integrated regulation represents the highest level of self-determination on the extrinsic motivation continuum, and is quite similar to intrinsic motivation, it is still driven by an external contingency whereas intrinsic motivation is not. As can be seen in the previous example of teachers voluntarily engaging in professional development, the teachers are doing so because they identify with the value of the external contingency (i.e., improved teaching and student learning) and because the act aligns with their sense of self (i.e., someone who genuinely cares about student learning).

*Facilitation of extrinsic regulation.* As with intrinsic regulation and non-regulation (e.g., amotivation), the expression of the various types of extrinsic regulation is largely influenced through the degree that one's psychological needs are supported or thwarted (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000a). That is, satisfaction of the needs mediates greater internalization and integration while need thwarting obstructs those processes (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Markland & Tobin, 2010). Accordingly, when people have their needs supported, they are more likely to internalize and integrate the value of their actions and act in a self-determined manner (Deci & Ryan, 2008a).

Deci and Ryan (2008a) noted that in many cases extrinsically motivated behaviours are not inherently interesting and that people act in accordance with their relations with significant others. Accordingly, children are more likely to endorse, internalize, and integrate the values and behaviours that their parents, family members, and significant others endorse if a strong sense of relatedness exists. It is hypothesized that individuals act to feel related to their significant others and thus engage in desired behaviours to gain implicit or explicit approval for doing so. Ryan & Deci (2000c) “emphasize that proximal feelings of relatedness are even more important for internalization and integration than for intrinsic motivation, because the desire to belong and feel connected is an absolute contributor to people’s willingness to take in and endorse values” (p. 334). Accordingly, OIT maintains that relatedness support is central to promoting internalization and autonomous forms of extrinsic regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2002). As a case in point, Ryan, Stiller and Lynch (1994) reported that children who indicated that they felt securely attached and cared for by their parents and teachers were more likely to fully internalize regulations for positive school-related behaviours than those who did not feel cared for and attached.

OIT further maintains that competence support is also required for individuals to fully internalize their actions. Ryan and Deci (2002) argued:

If people do not feel competent to perform a target activity, they are unlikely to internalize regulation of the behaviour; in fact, they will likely find an excuse not to do the behavior at all, even in the presence of the significant other (p.19).

Accordingly, OTI theorizes that supports for competence, such as offering optimal challenges and providing effectance feedback, are essential to facilitating internalization (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Finally, the need for autonomy plays a key role in determining which form of extrinsic regulation people will experience; that is, to what degree they will internalize and integrate any given behaviour. OIT stipulates that it is the need for autonomy that determines if the internalization that is promoted by relatedness and competence supports become only partially or more fully integrated. In essence, autonomous forms of extrinsic regulation can only occur when one's autonomy need is satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Ryan and Deci (2002, p. 20) state, "although some internalization may occur without autonomy support, the type of internalization that will result in persistence, flexibility, and vitality – those being the factors that characterize self-determination – will be in evidence to the degree that supports for autonomy are present."

The need for one to feel autonomous is therefore critical because people need to internalize the meaning of a behaviour and align it with their personal goals and values before the behaviour can become integrated. This process is more likely to occur when people act with a sense of choice and volition, and when they do not feel excessive external pressure to think or behave in a particular way (Ryan & Deci 2000b). As such, autonomy acts as the central mediator that allows individuals to transform a value into their own and correspondingly act in a self-determined manner (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

## 4.2 Self-determination and Wellbeing

A robust body of theoretical and empirical evidence has shown that need satisfaction is positively associated with psychological and somatic wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008a; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Ryff, Singer, Love, 2004; Véronneau, Koestner & Abela, 2005). From a psychological perspective, SDT views psychological wellbeing as being *eudaimonic* in nature (Deci & Ryan, 2008c; Ryan & Fredrick, 1997; Ryan, Huta, Deci, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 1998, 2008; Waterman, 1993). In essence, eudaimonia moves beyond understanding wellness from a subject wellbeing or *hedonic* viewpoint that equates wellness with maximizing one's happiness, pleasure, and satisfaction in life (Diener, 1984; Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999) to one that encompasses people living a complete life where they realize their human potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryan et al., 2008). As Deci and Ryan (2008c) argued, "people's reports of being happy (or of being positively affective and satisfied) does not necessarily mean that they are psychologically well" (p. 2). This is not to say that happiness or pleasure do not significantly contribute to psychological wellbeing. In fact, evidence shows that positive affect, psychological health, and optimal functioning are inter-correlated and that experiences can be both hedonic and eudaimonic at the same time (Deci & Ryan, 2008c; King, Hicks, Krull & Del Gaiso, 2006; Ryan et al. 2008). Nonetheless, eudaimonia is conceived as "a way of living", not simply a psychological state or outcome (Ryan et al., 2008, p. 143). Eudaimonia can include feelings of happiness and pleasure but also moves beyond to consider wellbeing as being characteristic of one who is fully functioning and living a good life that embodies a positive sense of vitality, intimacy, health, and

meaning, among others (Ryan, et al., 2008). Consequently, one who engages in meaningful living, actualizes potentials, and is fully functioning will typically experience enduring positive affect as a result (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Finally, although SDT does place an emphasize on eudemonic living as the cornerstone to wellness, it does not exclude hedonic pursuits from a life of thriving. Indeed, Huta and Ryan (2010) conducted a series of studies and concluded that “hedonia and eudaimonia occupy both overlapping and distinct niches within a complete picture of wellbeing, and their combination may be associated with the greatest wellbeing” (p. 735).

Research and theory from an SDT perspective on wellness has been mainly focused on understanding how motives, goals, and regulatory behaviours are associated with people’s satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs for relatedness, competence and autonomy. Specifically, it examines the consequences involved in the pursuit of intrinsic versus extrinsic orientated goals, how autonomous versus controlled behavioural regulation affect wellbeing, the relationship between goal attainment and wellbeing, and how the basic psychological needs relate to wellbeing. Moreover, it is distinctly concerned with exploring and discerning the socio-environmental conditions that foster autonomous regulation, the pursuit of intrinsic aspirations, and satisfaction of the basic psychological needs; all of which are expected to promote Psychosocial wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008c; Ryan et al., 2008).

#### **4.2.1 Goal aspirations, goal attainment, and wellbeing**

One key dimension of SDT focuses on the impact and consequences involved for those who pursue intrinsic versus extrinsic orientated goals and the attainment of those

goals. Extrinsic aspirations, such as wealth attainment or increasing one's popularity, are defined as such because the focus of the goals is placed on external indicators of worth. In contrast, intrinsic aspirations like personal growth, relationship building, and community development are considered intrinsic as they directly satisfy one's basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2008a; Ryan & Kasser, 1996). It is important to make clear that one can engage in an activity for either intrinsic or extrinsic reasons. Just as someone can engage in community development activities (e.g., volunteering) because they inherently derive personal satisfaction from their actions, they can also engage because the act increases their standing within a community. The first instance would be considered an intrinsic aspiration because the activity is being done for personal reasons that emanate from oneself whereas the second scenario would be considered an extrinsic aspiration because the rationale for acting is based on an external contingency (i.e., to enhance one's self-image).

SDT specifically holds that the content of one's aspirations plays a significant role in determining performance and wellbeing outcomes, with intrinsic aspirations being positively associated with both and extrinsically-orientated operating in the opposite direction. Moreover, it is need fulfillment or thwarting that mediates these differential relations (Deci & Ryan, 2008a; Vansteenkiste et al., 2008). The basic psychological needs also act bi-directionally; that is, when people feel their needs are being satisfied, they are more inclined to adopt an autonomous orientation and pursue intrinsic aspirations that are more aligned with their personal values and attitudes (Williams & Deci, 1996).

The adoption of extrinsic goals tends to occur as a compensatory mechanism when psychological needs go unfulfilled. In other words, extrinsic goals act as need

substitutes to compensate for feelings of insecurity (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000c). In support of this, research has shown that when children are raised in homes that do not provide adequate support and nurturance the children are more inclined to value and pursue extrinsic motives (e.g., Thøgersen-Ntoumani, Ntoumanis, & Nikitaras, 2010). By understanding these implications, it is clearer how those who strive for meaningful lives, that is those who value and pursue intrinsic goals over extrinsic goals, tend to exhibit greater psychological wellbeing and development given that intrinsic goals satisfy the one's psychological needs and extrinsic goals tend to interfere with need satisfaction over the long run (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008; Sebire, Standage, & Vansteenkiste, 2009).

#### ***4.2.1.1 Intrinsic versus extrinsic aspirations and wellbeing***

The association between people's aspirations and wellbeing has been examined in numerous studies with findings supporting the notion that those who tend to have intrinsic aspirations rather than extrinsic ones tend to report greater indices of psychosocial wellbeing. For instance, Kasser and Ryan (1993) found that aspirations for self-acceptance, affiliation, and community feeling were positively associated with greater wellbeing and less distress. In contrast, they also found that when aspirations for extrinsic goals (e.g., financial gain) exceed intrinsic motives (e.g., affiliation) people experience less self-actualization and vitality and more depression and anxiety. In a follow up study, Kasser and Ryan (1996) replicated these findings by examining seven life goals, three of which were extrinsic in nature and four that were intrinsically orientated. Results showed that when extrinsic goals were rated as being more important than intrinsic goals,

participants reported more indicators of ill-being, including depression, negative affect, anxiety and physical health symptoms. In comparison, those that placed more value on intrinsic goals were more likely to report indices associated with vitality, self-actualization, and positive affect.

Multiple other studies in different settings have found similar results, which adds to the generalizability that it is intrinsic aspiration and not extrinsic aspirations that contribute to psychosocial wellbeing. Schmuck, Kasser, and Ryan (2000) demonstrated that as in past work in the U.S., German college students who were especially focused on intrinsic goals had high well-being, whereas the reverse was found for those with a focus on extrinsic goals. The same was found in a sample of Singaporean business students where those who had strongly internalized materialistic values also reported lowered self-actualization, vitality and happiness, as well as increased anxiety, physical symptomatology, and unhappiness (Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002). In a nationally representative cross-sectional sample of Hungarians, it was shown that even after controlling for a host of sociodemographic variables (e.g., income levels) intrinsic goals and motives were positively related to subjective wellbeing and meaning of life, whereas extrinsic motives were only slightly positively associated with subjective wellbeing but negatively associated with meaning of life (Martos & Kopp, 2011). These particular findings support SDT's premise that both extrinsic and intrinsic motives can contribute to subjective wellbeing, but it is only intrinsic aspirations that significantly contribute to psychosocial wellbeing. Moreover, Grouzet and colleagues (2005) demonstrated that the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction between goals held consistency across a sample taken from 15 different countries with the two goal types occupying positions at opposite ends of a



circumplex model. The authors concluded that “motivational systems, as they concern goals, involve some commonality across people, regardless of their cultural situation” (p. 813). Ryan et al. (2008) noted that the findings by Grouzet and colleagues are of particular interest because the construct for hedonism fell midway between the opposite extremes of the intrinsic and extrinsic poles. They argued that this is a logical outcome given that hedonic pursuits may be done for their own sake and are thus “worthwhile in terms of a good life” (p.151). They further argued, however, that hedonic pursuits can also be undertaken for extrinsic reasons (e.g., to avoid one’s responsibilities). As such, hedonic goals need to be differentiated to fully understand how they contribute to a good life. Finally, researchers in Spain (Romero, Gómez-Fraguela, & Villar, 2012) explored the links between the domains of the Five-Factor Model of personality (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and aspirations where results showed that intrinsic aspirations are mainly related to positive indicators of well-being and that intrinsic/extrinsic aspirations predict wellbeing beyond the Five Factors. Once again, this study provides support for the generalizability that it is intrinsic aspirations that facilitate the most optimal health outcomes for humans.

#### ***4.2.1.2 Causality orientations of motivation and wellbeing***

Despite SDT’s emphasis on social conditions as the predominant factor that impacts one’s motivational quality, SDT does not discount the influence that a person’s inner resources play in orientating behavioural regulation. In contrast to CET and OIT, which examine motivational dynamics through a socio-contextual lens, causality orientations theory (COT; Deci & Ryan, 1985b), another subtheory of SDT,

acknowledges that latent aspects of people's personalities are integral to understanding how they interpret social experiences and regulate their behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2002). COT thus provides a descriptive account of how people's relatively stable inner resources influence their general motivational orientations towards the social world (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Specifically, COT theorizes that individuals differ in how they orient to the environment concerning information related to their behavioural initiation and regulation. It is further concerned with understanding the extent that people tend to be self-determined across situations and domains (Deci, Ryan 2008b; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010).

In COT, there are three distinct orientations: autonomous, controlled, and impersonal. People high on the autonomous orientation typically regulate their behaviour on the basis of interests and their self-endorsed values, interpret interactions and social conditions as informational and autonomy supportive in nature, and regulate their behaviour in a self-determined manner. Furthermore, they typically engage in behaviours on the basis of interest, challenge, personal growth, and developing relationships that provide meaningful connections. Those who display a tendency towards a controlled orientation in contrast behave in ways that are in accordance with internal and external pressures and have a general tendency to experience social interactions as controlling. The controlled orientation typically leads people to behave through external and introjected forms of regulation. Finally, those who tend to act through an impersonal orientation perceive their life experiences as being out of their control due to feelings of helplessness, ineffectiveness, and apathy, which consequently contributes to high levels of amotivation (Deci, Ryan 2008b; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010).

SDT holds that all people have the propensity to display each of the causality orientations to a certain degree; however, each person has a predominant orientation that is representative of his or her disposition in general (Deci & Ryan 2008b; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). Although these orientations tend to be rather stable, they are malleable and shaped by social experiences. Vansteenkiste and colleagues (2010) referred to the orientations as “surface personality dimensions” (p.126) as opposed to other personality traits such as the Big Five (Asendorph & van Aken, 2003), which are considered core personality traits and remain more stable across one’s lifespan. As such, causality orientations are susceptible to change depending on whether one’s life experiences are fulfilled by the three basic psychological needs. It is argued that it is the amount of need support that one receives that interacts with genetic and biological factors to facilitate the development of one’s predominant predisposition. Specifically, Deci and Ryan (2008b) stated that development of a strong autonomy orientation manifests through ongoing satisfaction of all three needs while a controlled orientation results from some satisfaction for competence and relatedness needs, but autonomy thwarting. Finally, the impersonal orientation develops as a consequence of all three needs not being satisfied.

The importance of need satisfaction becomes evident when you consider that the autonomy orientation has been associated with psychological wellbeing, ego-development, self-esteem, and other positive developmental outcomes. In contrast, the controlled orientation relates to rigid functioning and diminished wellbeing, and the impersonal orientation has been shown to be reliably associated with poor functioning and ill-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 2008b). Autonomy orientated individuals also tend to relate to others with a sense of honesty and openness, whereas those exhibiting a

controlled orientation are more prone to be intolerant, close minded, and behave in manipulative and aggressive ways (Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2008; Hodgins, Liebeskind, & Schwartz, 1996; Moller & Deci, 2009).

Other studies (Hodgins, Yacko, & Gottlieb, 2006) have used priming techniques to activate people's unconscious orientations and further study how they affect behaviour, wellbeing, and performance. The research has shown that autonomy-primed individuals display the least self-serving bias while control-primed people fell in the middle, and impersonally-primed individuals showed the most. Results also showed that autonomy-primed rowers exhibit the least self-handicapping and best performance whereas those who were control-primed fell in the middle, and impersonally-primed individuals showed the most self-handicapping and worst performance. Hodgins, Brown, and Carver (2007) also demonstrated that primed control motivation led to a decrease in implicit self-esteem relative to those who were autonomy primed or received no priming at all. Finally, another set of studies by Levesque and Pelletier (2003) established that motivations can be regulated both consciously and subconsciously and that people who are autonomously primed display greater levels of intrinsic motivation, interest enjoyment, perceived choice, and better performance relative to those who are prime-controlled. The findings from these studies underscore the malleability of people's motivational orientations and point to the importance that situational needs fulfillment plays in regulating behaviour. It is thus plausible that since causality orientations are more malleable than core personality traits, environmental influences can lead to changes in one's orientation depending on whether or not that individual's needs are being routinely met or thwarted. Accordingly, it is vitally important for people in positions of influence (e.g., teachers) to understand that

they may have the power to influence others' causality orientations both in the short and long-term.

#### ***4.2.1.3 Autonomous versus controlled regulation and wellbeing***

Similar research as that by Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) goes beyond goal importance to argue that understanding *why* people are pursuing any particular goal is the salient point to be considered. Carver and Baird (1998) argued this exact notion and pointed to the reasons for pursuing a goal as being more important than the goal itself. In their argument they noted that the intrinsic or extrinsic motives of a given action can differ from person to person. In accordance, they compared the association between self-actualization in people who aspire to gain financial wealth and those that aspire for community involvement (e.g., helping others or making the world a better place). These associations were also measured by Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) who classified financial gain as being extrinsic and community involvement as being intrinsic. However, in Carver and Baird's (1998) study, they argued that goals towards financial gain or community involvement can be either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature and that if one pursues a goal autonomously it should lead to self-actualization, but if they feel controlled in their pursuit then this would thwart self-actualization. Their findings did for the most part support their argument that those that pursue an aspiration for autonomous reasons, whichever the aspiration, are expected to benefit from a wellbeing standpoint.

The argument put forth by Carver and Baird (1998) is in fact in congruence with the underpinnings of SDT. As previously discussed, there are four distinct forms of external regulation in SDT that differ in the extent in which they are autonomously or

externally controlled. Specifically, external and introjected forms of regulation are driven by factors external of the self while identified and integrated regulations tend to be relatively autonomous in nature (Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Moreover, theoretical and empirical evidence demonstrates that the more people feel autonomous in their pursuit of goals, or in other words internalize and integrate their regulations, the more likely they are to experience enhanced health and wellness outcomes (Ryan, Curren, & Deci, 2013). For example, in a series of studies conducted by Ryan, Rigby, and King (1993) it was shown that religious internalization was linked with mental health and wellbeing. Specifically, Ryan and colleagues found that identified religiosity, a form of autonomous regulation that emanates from self-endorsement, was positively associated with enhanced wellbeing outcomes whereas introjected religiosity, a more controlled form of regulation that is theorized to be associated with conflict and pressure, related negatively to those outcomes.

However, another series of studies by Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, and Kasser (2004) demonstrated through within- and between-participant analysis that both what goals people pursue (e.g., whether they strive for extrinsic versus intrinsic goals) and why they pursue them (e.g., whether they autonomously versus externally driven) make significant independent contributions to psychosocial wellbeing. This runs counter to Carver and Baird's (1998) argument that it is mainly why people pursue a goal that accounts for wellbeing outcomes. While evidence supports Carver and Baird (1998) claim that the difference between those that are autonomously versus externally driven is critical to understanding wellbeing, research by Sheldon et al. (2004) consistently showed that both

goal content and goal orientation independently and significantly contribute to wellbeing outcomes.

#### ***4.2.1.4 Goal attainment and wellbeing***

The study of goal attainment is another area of research that supports the notion that both intrinsic aspirations and autonomous regulation are key aspects to enhancing psychosocial wellbeing. In contrast to others who argue that the achievement of any goal, regardless of content, should yield beneficial psychological outcomes (e.g., Bandura, 1989; Locke & Latham, 1990), SDT holds that both goal content and motivational orientation are of paramount importance to understanding whether goal attainment contributes to wellbeing. In other words, SDT holds that “motivated actions, even when efficacious, are not all equally beneficial ... SDT suggests that differences in what goals are pursued and why individuals embrace them predict differences in the motivational, performance, and wellbeing outcomes that result” (Vansteenkiste, Ryan, Deci, 2008, p. 188).

In support of these claims, findings have repeatedly shown that the successful attainment of an extrinsic aspiration is at best associated with limited benefits to wellbeing whereas those who aspire to intrinsic objectives and obtain those goals benefit most (e.g., Kasser, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1999; Ryan, Chirkov, Little, Sheldon, Timoshina, & Deci, 1999; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004). In a study by Nix, Ryan, Manley, and Deci (1999) it was revealed that succeeding in a goal under controlling conditions did enhance happiness, but not vitality. However, the same study showed that success under autonomous

conditions enhanced both. In another study, Kasser and Ryan (2001) found that those who attained their intrinsic goals exhibited a higher quality of interpersonal relationships and markers of wellbeing regardless of whether they attained their extrinsic attainments, while those who reported high extrinsic accomplishments were happy and relationally well only if they had attained intrinsic goals as well. In a longitudinal study that examined the attainment of young adults' life goals, it was shown that the attainment of intrinsic goals fostered psychological wellbeing whereas the attainment of extrinsic goals did not, and in some case was instead associated with markers of ill-being (Niemic, Ryan & Deci, 2009). Moreover, research has even shown that failure to attain a goal for which one is autonomously motivated can nonetheless be positively associated with eudaimonic wellbeing (Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, De Witte, & Deci, 2004). Vansteenkiste, Lens, and colleagues (2004) maintained that in the instance of failure it is those people who are autonomously motivated who are most likely to remain fully functioning, even when they may show outward signs of stress and unhappiness.

### **4.3 Self-determination and Academic development**

SDT, as a macro-theory of human motivation, emotion, and development, is concerned with optimal functioning and takes interest in factors that either facilitate or hinder people's inherent assimilative and growth-orientated processes. As such, Niemic and Ryan (2009) argued that SDT is of much importance within the field of education given that the nurturance of this natural tendency, that is to seek out and learn new things, may represent one of the greatest resources that educators can tap to enhance student development. Whereas other motivational theories often solely concentrate on students'



internal expectations, beliefs, and goals, SDT moves beyond these to understand how learning environments vitalize students' inner motivational resources by examining and describing the sociocultural conditions that support or thwart students' psychological needs as they engage in learning processes (Reeve, 2012; Reeve & Halusic, 2009). In fact, a robust body of evidence suggests that need satisfaction manifests into an array of favourable academic outcomes by fostering internalization and consequently students' autonomous motivation (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). These outcomes include positive school adjustment and less teacher-rated behavioural problems (e.g., Ahmad, Vansteenkiste, Soenens, 2013), higher quality engagement (e.g., Reeve & Tseng, 2011), heightened persistence when studying (Vansteenkiste et al. 2004), enhanced learning for complex tasks that require conceptual and creative processing (e.g., Grolnick & Ryan, 1987), and higher achievement (Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005). Conversely, need thwarting tends to diminish students' autonomous motivation and is associated with more aggressive student behaviour (e.g., Joussemet, Vitaro, Barker, Côté, Nagin, Zoccolillo, & Tremblay, 2008), inhibited emotional regulation (Grolnick, Kurowski, Dunlap, & Hevey, 2000), lower academic self-esteem, the devaluing of school, and higher intentions for dropping out (e.g., Legault et al., 2006). To fully understand how need satisfaction or thwarting affects student outcomes, SDT has primarily focused on how social conditions impact students' motivation and regulate learning behaviours. More recently, research has also explored the role that one's goal contents play in regulating learning behaviours and how social conditions can shape students' goals to enhance motivation, engagement and learning. The following sections will address these issues in broader detail.

### **4.3.1 The psychological needs, student motivation, and regulatory processes**

In line with CET and OIT, research has clearly demonstrated the important influence that autonomous forms of motivation have on the quality of students' engagement and learning (Ryan & Deci, 2019). For instance, when students are intrinsically motivated, they are typically more engaged in learning processes and are more likely to develop deeper conceptual knowledge (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). Likewise, when students have internalized the value and regulation of a learning task they typically perform better (Black & Deci, 2000; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Autonomous forms of motivation and regulatory processes have also been linked to numerous other positive educational outcomes (see Guay, Ratelle & Chanal, 2008 for an overview); however, whether students internalize the value of learning tasks and experience autonomous motivation as they engage in their studies largely depends upon whether they perceive their environments as being need supportive or not.

#### ***4.3.1.1 The need for autonomy***

In an early study by Deci, Schwartz, Sheinman, and Ryan (1981), findings showed that students who were assigned to teachers with an autonomy supportive approach to instruction, relative to those who were judged to be more controlling, displayed greater levels of intrinsic motivation, perceived competence, and self-esteem over time. Since then, numerous studies have drawn attention to the many educational benefits students can experience if they perceive their teachers as being autonomy supportive rather than controlling. These include showing greater interest in their work (Tsai, Kunter, Lüdtke, Trautwein, & Ryan, 2008); acting through a mastery orientation (Ryan & Grolnick,

1986); displaying greater effort and persistence (Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2006); exhibiting more behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Jeon, & Barch, 2004; Skinner, Kindermann, Furrer, 2009; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005), demonstrating higher performance (Black & Deci, 2000; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2005), creativity (Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984), and conceptual learning (Flink, Boggiano, & Barrett, 1990; Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, & Valsiner, 2007); and experiencing greater psychological wellbeing (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001).

Reeve (2009) defined autonomy support in the classroom as “Interpersonal sentiment and behavior teachers provide during instruction to identify, nurture, and develop students’ inner motivational resources (p. 160). In accordance with this definition, Reeve and Jang (2006) identified numerous autonomy supportive behaviours that educators can adopt to foster an autonomous motivational stance within their students. Specifically, they argue that when teachers engaged in behaviours such as listening and responding to students; acknowledging students’ perspectives; providing students with encouragement, positive feedback, and progress enabling hints when they need assistance; praising progress; and offering students a meaningful rationale for why certain actions are beneficial or necessary when choice is constrained, students are more likely to engage in their work in an autonomous manner. Other researchers have also shown that the provision of choice and opportunities for self-initiation facilitate greater internalization and the expression of autonomous regulations in students (Deci et al., 1994; Patall, Dent, Oyer, & Wynn, 2013; Williams & Deci, 1996). Indeed, research suggests that when students find their teachers to be autonomy supportive, they are more likely to become intrinsically motivated or act through autonomous forms of self-

regulation. These findings have been shown at all levels of education (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009, Reeve, 2009) and across cultures (e.g., Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Jang, Reeve, Ryan, & Kim, 2009).

In contrast to autonomy supportive teachers, controlling teachers tend to pressure students to think, feel, and behave in a specific way; ignore students' perspectives; and intrude into students' thoughts, feeling, and actions (Reeve, 2009, p.160). Two categories of controlling behaviour have been identified. The first, referred to as *direct control* or *external control*, is grounded in overtly coercive strategies such as the use of pressure-inducing language (e.g., the use of "have to," or "must") or employing reward and punishment contingencies to illicit particular behaviours. The other, called *indirect control* or *internal control*, relies on more subtle and covert strategies that cause students to place pressures on themselves to regulate their behaviour in a manner that teachers want. For instance, teachers can use conditional regard (i.e., offering attention only when a particular behaviour is expressed) as a form of pressure to control behaviour. In doing so, the teachers are evoking feelings of guilt and shame and appealing to students' sense of self-esteem as a means of getting them to conform to their standards (Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Barber, 1996; Ryan, 1982).

Several studies have provided additional evidence of how different conditions and contexts can undermine one's autonomy. For instance:

deadlines (Amabile, DeJong, & Lepper, 1976), imposed goals (Mossholder, 1980), surveillance (Lepper & Greene, 1975; Plant & Ryan, 1985), competition (Deci, Betley, Kahle, Abrams, & Porac, 1981), and evaluation (Smith, 1975; Ryan, 1982) all decreased intrinsic motivation, presumably because they were experienced as controls. (Ryan & Deci, 2002, p. 12)

While not all of these studies have been conducted in educational settings, they remain relevant to educators as many of the above conditions are often reproduced in classrooms and schools. It is important that educators understand the associated ramifications (e.g., diminished autonomous motivation) and work to ensure student autonomy is respected and not undermined.

The significance that autonomy support plays in fostering student motivation and autonomous regulation cannot be overstated. For one, the expression of intrinsic motivation cannot occur in the absence of a sense of autonomy. That is, an individual *must* feel autonomous in their actions if they are to be intrinsically motivated (Deci et al., 1999). Moreover, experiencing a sense of autonomy is also critical for determining the depth of internalization that will occur when supports for relatedness and competence are in place. Thus, when people feel a sense of relatedness and competence that is accompanied by a sense of autonomy, they may fully internalize their behaviours (i.e., act through integration), but in the absence of a sense of autonomy they can only partially internalize their actions (i.e., act through introjection). According to Ryan & Deci (2002):

although some internalization may occur without autonomy support, the type of internalization that will result in persistence, flexibility, and vitality – those being the factors that characterize self-determination – will be in evidence to the degree that supports for autonomy are present ... internalization is most likely to occur when people experience a sense of choice, volition, and freedom from external demands. (p. 20)

Research examining the role of autonomy in learning, from elementary to professional schools, clearly supports the notion that students learn better when they learn in autonomy supportive environments (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). As such, satisfaction of the psychological need for autonomy is a critical determinant for understanding whether

students excel and flourish in school or simply flounder and fail to maximize their potential.

#### ***4.3.1.2 The need for competence***

It has been long established that a sense of competence facilitates motivation. Many scholars have demonstrated and argued that students who display a sense of confidence, self-efficacy, or competence (all three being considered synonymous) exhibit enhanced motivation and are more willing to engage in challenging tasks (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Schunk, 1985; Wigfield & Eccles, 1994). In terms of intrinsic motivation, CET holds that when people act and feel a sense of competence their intrinsic motivation becomes enhanced whereas if their actions diminish perceived competence intrinsic motivation will decline (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Likewise, a sense of competence promotes the internalization and integration of self-regulated behaviours such that when people feel competent, they are more likely to act in a self-determined manner. In contrast, when perceived competence is negligent people are less likely to internalize and integrate behaviours into their sense of self and act in an autonomous way (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Ryan and Deci (2002) actually argue that in the absence of a sense of competence people are “unlikely to internalize regulation of behavior; in fact, they will likely find an excuse not to do the behavior at all” (p. 19).

Within educational settings, competence support can include the provision of appropriate challenges and on-going opportunities to expand upon and demonstrate one’s capabilities and new skills (Deci and Ryan 2008; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Seifert (2004) noted that if students cannot understand the material they are learning, then they are

unlikely to find the work meaningful and will be more inclined to engage in task avoidance behaviours. In concordance, Legault and colleagues (2006) reported that once students retract their efforts it is reasonably common for them to then engage in undesirable behaviours such as skipping class and being tardy. To prevent such occurrences, it is essential that students are provided with tasks that are neither too challenging nor too easy. Activities that are too challenging lead to anxiety and ultimately disengagement while those that are too easy create boredom and lead to feelings of indifference. Thus, from the point of view of SDT, it is success when engaged with optimally challenging activities that truly facilitates a sense of competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Another important consideration for educators is of the role that feedback plays in building or curtailing students' sense of competence. Positive feedback that reassures students that they are performing well and provides students with information they can utilize to further develop their skills and self-regulate enhances students' sense of competence (e.g., Harackiewicz, 1997). Conversely, feedback that is only critical (i.e., does not provide any informational content on how one can improve) will lead to a diminished sense of competence. "For example, if students are criticized when they attempt a new behavior, they are less likely to persist in their attempts to internalize its regulation or to develop inherent interest for it, presumably because their need for competence gets forestalled" (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006, p. 22). It is important to emphasize that feedback needs to be delivered in an autonomy supportive manner (i.e., it is viewed by the student as informational and not just critical) if it is to enhance motivation. Ryan (1982) and Nix et al. (1999) specifically showed that a sense of

competence will only facilitate intrinsic motivation when a sense of autonomy is also experienced by an individual. Fisher (1978) also reported that a sense of competence in and of itself was not enough to maintain intrinsic motivation. She noted that a sense of personal control (i.e., a sense of autonomy) must also be present for intrinsic motivation to be sustained. Moreover, when people feel the feedback they are receiving is informational in nature, they are more inclined to experience greater satisfaction and enjoyment from their subsequent participation in an activity (Leveque, Zuehlke, Stanek, & Ryan, 2004) and display enhanced interest and persistence (Vansteenkiste & Deci, 2003). Finally, findings by Legault and her colleagues (2006) emphasized the importance that teachers play in instilling a sense of confidence for students. In their analysis to disentangle the effects of three main sources of student support (teachers, friends, and parents) they found that teachers had the greatest effect on students' sense of competence. As such, the authors emphasized the importance that informational feedback from teachers plays in fueling their academic motivation.

#### ***4.3.1.3 The need for relatedness***

As previously mentioned in this chapter, the need for relatedness often serves as distal need when we consider its role on the expression of intrinsic motivation (i.e., a sense of relatedness is not absolutely required for the expression of intrinsic motivation, but it can help facilitate its expression), yet it seems to be a much more critical element when we consider the internalization and integration of particular behaviours and the inclination towards one experiencing autonomous motivation. This is particularly important in the realm of education given that many of the tasks students are required to do are often not



of their own choosing, or based on their inherent interests. Accordingly, it is imperative that positive relationships are fostered in schools as they tend to enhance the quality of student motivation (Furrer & Skinner, 2003; Ryan & Powelson, 1991) and contribute to an array of positive school and developmental outcomes (Anderman, 2002; Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006).

Two critical ways that schools can help students develop a sense of relatedness is to ensure that positive teacher-student relationships are fostered and that students have ample opportunities to connect with other students and build friendships and meaningful relationships. From the teacher-student dynamic, research has shown that when students feel their teachers are caring, nurturing, supportive, and respectful they are more inclined to be intrinsically motivated, express positive school related affect, and achieve higher academic grades (Goodenow, 1993; Roeser Midgley & Urdan, 1996; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). Goodenow (1993) found that teacher support was single largest factor that impacted the interest, importance, and value that students placed on their academic work. The inclination towards higher quality motivation and increased achievement by students may materialize when students feel a sense of relatedness with their teachers because these positive relations, interpreted as a form of support, can provide a secure base from which students can engage in learning without the fear of being judged (Boekaerts, 1993). That is, when students feel a sense of belonging, they tend to also feel more competent and less self-conscious (Roeser, Midgley & Urdan, 1996). Seifert (2004) concurred with Midgley and Urdan reported that teachers who are perceived as being nurturing, supportive and helpful help students develop a sense of confidence and self-determination which leads to learning-oriented behaviours for intrinsically motivated students.

The increased importance that friends play in students' lives as they transition to and move through adolescence has been well documented (e.g., Larson & Richards, 1991); however, Wentzel (2005) noted that peer relationships are often under-recognized as an influential factor that impacts student motivation and academic outcomes in this age group. While, as previously stated, teachers tend to have the most influence on students' academic motivation, peers can also significantly affect educational and developmental outcomes. Accordingly, evidence suggests that students who have positive peer relations, versus those without, tend to be more motivated and engaged at school and experience more positive emotional wellbeing and beliefs about oneself (e.g., Wentzel, 2005; Wentzel & Ramani, 2016). In 2004, Wentzel, Barry, and Caldwell reported that children with friends at school (defined as having at least one reciprocated friend or a number of friends) tend to be more pro-social than their peers without friends present. Moreover, their study showed that the prosocial behaviour was mediated through motivational processes, meaning that the association between friendship and prosocial behaviour was being mediated by the children's pursuit of prosocial goals. More recently, Wentzel, Jablansky, and Scalise (2018) published a meta-analysis examining the evidence linking friendship to academic related outcomes. The authors reported small to moderate effect sizes, which suggest working with a friend during academic tasks, or simply having a friend at school, are both significantly and positively related to a series of cognitive and performance outcomes. Also, student characteristics such as sex, age, or country of origin did not act as significant moderators between these relations suggesting that relatedness is a universal need for all students.

Wentzel and colleagues (2018) note that the plethora of data linking friendship with positive academic outcomes suggests that the link is causal in nature. From the perspective of friends working together they note:

the most straight forward pathway of influence would be one in which collaborative interactions with friends leads directly to the development of cognitive skills. In this case, mutual discussion, perspective taking, and conflict resolution (e.g., Piaget 1965), and modeling and reinforcement of problem-solving behavior (Berndt 1999; Hartup and Stevens 1997) might motivate the development of intellectual problem-solving skills. The affectively positive climate and interpersonal sensitivity that often characterizes interactions among friends (Newcomb and Bagwell 1995; Zajac and Hartup 1997) also is likely to facilitate mutual problem solving. (p. 1257)

In line with the above assertions, other research has also shown that student support groups (e.g., peer-mentoring, school clubs, befriending, etc.) can positively contribute to school morale, student engagement, and academic achievement, while improving the overall quality of life in schools (Cartwright, 2005; Cowie & Wallace, 2000; Topping & Ehly, 1998). With regards to understanding the effects of simply having friends present at school, it is surmised that positive academic outcomes can result from the friends sharing resources and providing each other with instrumental help, such as through direct instruction, guidance, and explanation. Additionally, friends offer each other a source of social acceptance, emotional support, and a sense of safety, all of which can enhance motivation and school engagement as it buffers students from the deleterious effects that can accompany stress and anxiety related to social rejection, loneliness, and fear (Wentzel 2015; Wentzel & Ramani, 2016).

#### ***4.3.1.4 Intrinsic versus extrinsic learning goals***

Along with intrinsic motivation and internalization, SDT holds that the pursuit of intrinsic goals represents the third manifestation of the orgasmic growth tendency (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). In other words, people tend to be inclined to pursue intrinsic goals (e.g., to learn about a topic of personal interest) since it is these goals, rather than extrinsic goals (e.g., getting the highest grade in one's class), that tend to satisfy one's basic psychological needs (Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Ryan et al., 2013). Typically, those with intrinsic aspirations tend to also be autonomously motivated while those with extrinsic aspirations act through controlled motivation; however, evidence has also suggested that both one's motives (i.e., why one acts) and the goals one pursues (i.e., what one wants) are independently associated with wellbeing and adjustment outcomes (Sheldon et al., 2004). For instance, Timmermans, Vansteenkiste, and Lens (2004, as cited in Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) were able to show that extrinsic aspirations were associated with indices of academic maladjustment. Thus, it is important for educators to understand that the goals students have hold relevance towards understanding their academic achievements and that different learning contexts can place more or less emphasis on either intrinsic or extrinsic goals.

On a positive note, research has shown that educators can play a substantial role in orientating students towards having intrinsic aspirations over extrinsic aspirations, which consequently leads to better academic outcomes. Experimental research using goal framing, for example, has demonstrated that intrinsic goal framing versus extrinsic framing leads to deeper level processing, more persistence, and better test performance (Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens,

Soenens, Matos, & Lacante, 2004). Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens et al. (2004) were able to show the importance of intrinsic goals over and above the utility value one places on tasks required to obtain their goals. Within expectancy-value theories (e.g., Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), utility value refers to the degree to which completion of a task is deemed useful or important for achieving one's goals. In other words, people are more motivated to complete tasks when they believe it will help them achieve their goals. This holds for both intrinsic and extrinsic goals. Utility value would also be expected to increase if a task was deemed to be useful for obtaining more than one goal. In contrast, SDT posits that it is the quality of one's goals that matters more than the utility value placed upon a task. This means, even if people place significant value on a task associated with an extrinsic goal, it will not lead to the same quality of motivation that would occur if the goal was intrinsic in nature.

To demonstrate this, Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Soenens et al. (2004) measured and compared academic related outcomes in three participant groups. The first group received an intrinsically framed goal, the second an extrinsically framed goal, and the third received both an intrinsic and extrinsically framed goal. As mentioned, according to value-expectancy theories which take a quantitative approach to understanding motivation, it would be expected that the third group would perform best based on the premise that the double-goal scenario adds utility value to the task. The findings did reveal that the double-goal group experienced less stress, adopted more of a mastery orientated approach to learning, performed better, and demonstrated greater persistence compared to the extrinsic goal group; however, in line with the theoretical underpinnings of SDT, it was the group that only received the intrinsically framed goal that exhibited the

most positive outcomes. The authors concluded “that adding an extrinsic goal to an already present intrinsic goal directs people’s attention away from the learning task to external indicators of worth” (p. 762).

Other studies have confirmed that intrinsically framed versus extrinsically framed goals promote deeper processing and enhance conceptual understanding of learned material, and greater short-term and long-term persistence. These results have been shown to occur across diverse age groups and on a variety of learning tasks (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004; Vansteenkiste, Timmermans, Lens, Soenens, & Broeck, 2008). Moreover, results indicate that teachers can promote intrinsic goals through framing even when they have students who hold an extrinsic goal orientation (Vansteenkiste, Timmermans et al., 2008). Finally, teachers can also facilitate an intrinsic goal orientation by paying attention to their students’ basic psychological needs. Evidence suggests:

over time people exposed to need-supportive contexts may come to endorse intrinsic goals, whereas those exposed to need-thwarting contexts may come to endorse extrinsic goals. Indeed, the pursuit of extrinsic goals may be used to cope with irritation, anxiety, and insecurity associated with need deprivation. (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010, p. 151)

#### **4.4 Summary**

SDT posits that humans are inherently orientated towards actualizing their potentials and capabilities through processes that include intrinsic motivation, social internalization and integration, and connecting with others (Vansteenkiste and Ryan, 2013). These processes, however, do not occur automatically but require supportive environments that facilitate growth and wellbeing through the satisfaction of one’s innate

need to feel a sense of competence, relatedness, and autonomy with respect to his or her on-going worldly interactions. Through its theoretic empirical approach, SDT has indeed shown that the basic psychological needs play a key role in determining wellbeing, and developmental and academic outcomes. As such, the basic psychological needs provide a unifying explanatory mechanism for understanding how social environments can lead to either optimal or impoverished functioning in people since it is the satisfaction of these needs that is required for developing and maintaining intrinsic motivation, facilitating the internalization of extrinsic motivation, fostering intrinsic aspirations, and becoming integrated with respect to one's emotions (Ryan & Deci, 2000c).

## CHAPTER 5

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### Evaluative Framework: Comprehensive School Health

#### 5.1 Origins of the Comprehensive School Health Framework

Early approaches to understanding health and development narrowly focused on one's individual behaviour as the source of health and development disparities and outcomes (Lee, 2009; Lister-Sharp, Chapman, Stewart-Brown, & Sowden, 1999; Rowling & Jeffreys, 2006). Within schools, health promotion mainly consisted of classroom-based health education models that simply focused on the transmission of health messages and knowledge as the primary means of influencing behaviour (Arborelius, E., & Bremberg, 1988; Deschesnes, Couturier, Laberge, & Campeau, 2010; Green, 1985; Simovska, 2012). However, Bronfenbrenner's seminal works, "Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development" in 1977 and *The Ecology of Human Development* in 1979 entrenched a broader approach to understanding human development, health, and wellbeing. Bronfenbrenner (1977) claimed that an understanding of human development can only occur if we focus "on the progressive accommodation, throughout the lifespan, between the growing human organism and the changing environments in which it actually lives and grows" (p. 513). Similarly, a seminal report by Marc Lalonde (1976), entitled *A New Perspective on the Health of Canadians: A Working Document*, has been viewed as one of the founding documents of modern health promotion. Lalonde's report outlined a holistic conceptualization of health which acknowledged health as an outcome of human biology, environment, lifestyle, and health care organization (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health, 2019). Others with more progressive views have also



challenged the traditional educational models that simply sought to disseminate health knowledge as a means to influencing behaviour. For instance, Kickbusch (1981) emphasized the importance of helping people develop competencies on top of building their health knowledge and noted that health education has to not just target behaviours at the individual level but also address the social, political, and environmental influences of health (Young, 2005).

The emergence of ecological models such as Bronfenbrenner's, which is currently called the bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), changed our understanding of how human development occurs. Ecological models assume not only that multiple levels of influence exist but also that they are interactive and cumulative. Stokols (1996) argued that the physical, cultural, and social components of a system all interact and reinforce each other and that their combined influence can affect different individuals in different ways. Today, it is widely accepted that health is determined by an interplay between individual and environmental factors, and most health promotion efforts are encouraged to adopt a social-ecological lens (Golden & Earp, 2012; Kickbusch, 2003; McLeroy, K. R., Bibeau, D., Steckler, A., & Glanz, 1988). In fact, it was Bronfenbrenner's ecological model that provided the groundwork for the development of the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* (WHO, 1986), which in turn provided the impetus for the development of the two most widely accepted and used school health promotion initiatives today, namely the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) framework and the CSH framework (St. Leger, Kolbe, Lee, McCall, & Young, 2007; Kickbusch, 1989; Veugelers, & Schwartz, 2010; Young, 2005).

While the HPS framework originated in Europe during the 1980's the CSH framework originated in North America during roughly the same period (Young, 2005). Since then, the United States has adopted the terms Coordinated School Health and subsequently The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) Model (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019; Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015), but CSH remains the most commonly used term in Canada. Despite the differences in nomenclature, the underlying concepts are similarly based on WHO's conception of a HPS, and they share the same basic goals of advancing student health and achievement by adopting a whole-school approach to health promotion and student development (Bassett-Gunter, Yessis, Manske, & Gleddie, 2015; Young 2005). WHO (2017) defines a HPS as, "...one that constantly strengthens its capacity as a healthy setting for living, learning, and working" (para. 1). The whole school environment, including its individuals and their relations, the physical and social environment and ethos, community connections and partnerships, and policies, are seen as important areas for action if a school is to promote health.

The CSH movement in Canada is currently being led by the Pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health (JCSH), which was established in 2005 and consists of a partnership of 25 Ministries of Health and Education across Canada. The JCSH's stated goal is to bring the combined strengths of the health and education sectors together to enhance the wellness and achievement of children and youth in the school setting (JCSH, 2019a). The broad direction for JCSH may be outlined in three areas:

- (1) Strengthen cooperation among ministries, agencies, departments, and others in support of healthy schools.

- (2) Build the capacity of the health and education sectors to work together more effectively and efficiently.
- (3) Promote understanding of, and support for, the concept and benefits of comprehensive school health. (JCSH, 2019a, para. 4).

## **5.2 Overview of the Comprehensive School Health Framework**

CSH is internationally recognized as a framework for supporting student's academic development while concurrently addressing school health in an intentional, integrative, and holistic manner (JCSH, 2019b). Effective and sustainable “progress depends on a common vision, shared responsibilities and harmonized actions among health, education, and other sectors” (JCSH, 2019c, para. 4). CSH moves beyond what occurs in the classroom to address academic development and wellbeing from a whole-school, socio-ecological perspective and:

- Affirms that physically and emotionally healthy children and youth are more likely to reach their academic potential
- Recognises that the school setting has the potential to positively contribute to students' positive mental health
- Promotes the belief that healthy lifestyle choices positively impact children's and youth's physical health and emotional well-being
- Integrates health into all aspects of school and learning
- Bridges health and education concerns and systems
- Requires the support and collaboration of families, community members, and service providers (Morrison & Peterson, 2013, 2013, p. 23)

CSH considers the actions that are occurring in four distinct yet inter-connected components. These include: (1) the social and physical environment, (2) teaching and learning, (3) healthy school policy, and (4) partnerships and services (JCSH, 2019b).

“When actions in all four components are harmonized, students are supported to realize their full potential as learners – and as healthy and productive members of society” (JCSH, 2019c, para. 5).



Figure 5. 1 Comprehensive school health framework  
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### 5.2.1 The Four Components

This section provides a description of CSH’s four components and how the actions in each are linked to students’ academic development and psychological wellbeing. Additionally, it demonstrates how the CSH framework is intrinsically linked with SDT. In other words, it is argued that when the key components of the CSH framework are in place we should expect students to experience a sense of relatedness,

competence, and autonomy, which would consequently foster their psychological wellbeing and academic development.

#### ***5.2.1.1 The social and physical environment***

According to the JCSH (2019b), the social environment is concerned with the quality of the relationships between and among the occupants of a school, the emotional wellbeing of students, and the relationships and attachments that students have with their families and the wider community. The physical environment consists of the school grounds such as buildings and play spaces and the equipment and resources available both in and around the school. It is concerned with issues related to sanitation, the availability of healthy foods, and air quality.

At the core of the social and physical component is ensuring that students feel safe and respected while they attend school. As a case in point, it is recommended that staff learn students' names as quickly as possible and greet them by name each day (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). Schools are also encouraged to foster a welcoming atmosphere built on the principals of trust, respect, tolerance, cooperation, and empathy (JCSH, 2019d). This means the inclusion of all students regardless of their identity, language and abilities (Freeman, Hussain, & Reid, 2016). When these actions are in place students would be expected to develop a sense of connectedness to their schools and establish a sense of relatedness with their peers and teachers given that school connectedness “refers to the extent to which students perceive that they are accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the educational environment” (Morrison & Peterson, 2013, p. 15).

The component further stresses the importance of including students in decision making processes as a means of enhancing their social, academic, and intellectual engagement (Morrison & Peterson, 2013, 2019d; Veugelers & Schwartz, 2010). Students should also have opportunities to collaborate with their peers to develop solutions to problems they need to overcome. These opportunities help promote students' wellbeing and academic development by supporting their basic psychological needs. Their need for relatedness is supported by having them feel included, their need for autonomy is met by providing them with decision making power, and their sense of competency is enhanced as they are able to use their own strengths to overcome their own problems (Health and Education Research Group, 2010).

The final area of the component that schools need to consider revolves around the use and design of the physical spaces. CSH supports the use of universal design principles for the development and renovations of schools to ensure that accessibility is maximized for all of the diverse members that make up a school community.

Universal design means that rather than designing your facility and services for the average user, you design them for people with a broad range of abilities, ages, reading levels, learning styles, languages, cultures, and other characteristics. Keep in mind that students, staff, faculty, and visitors may have characteristics that are not defined as disabilities but may limit their ability to access physical spaces or information. These people could be short, tall, poor readers, left-handed, or speak a different language. (Burgstahler, 2017, p. 1)

When the principles of universal design are in place, they support equitable access to school facilities and resources and allow every student to participate fully in learning activities (JSCH, 2019d).

### ***5.2.1.2 Teaching and learning***

The teaching and learning component includes the formal and informal learning activities and curriculum through which “students acquire developmentally appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills that contribute to their social and emotional growth and overall psychological well-being” (Morrison & Peterson, 2013, p. 29). It is held that schools need to recognize diversity and embrace culturally relevant practices, adopt strength-focused applications and autonomy supportive practices, use cooperative pedagogical strategies, and focus on students’ social skill development and their sense of competency (Canadian Association for School Health, 2007; Morrison & Peterson, 2013). With regards to positive mental health, the JCSH (Morrison & Peterson, 2013; JCSH 2019d) maintains that schools should strive to meet the following objectives:

- (1) Provide students with an enhanced understanding and appreciation of diversity (e.g., including diverse perspectives during teaching from people with varied backgrounds and utilize multicultural literature as a resource for introducing differing opinions and beliefs).
- (2) Incorporate culturally relevant themes into instructional practices (e.g., invite family or community members to share culturally relevant traditions and practices).
- (3) Offer students opportunities to learn and practice social skills through cooperative learning activities (e.g., providing welcoming spaces to engage students in dialogue with other students, family members and members of the wider community).

- (4) Accommodate individual learning needs and preferences (e.g., adapting to students' prior knowledge and experiences and provide the resources they need to participate in learning activities).
- (5) Support autonomy by minimizing control and listening to and validating student perspectives (e.g., creating opportunities for students to have input into the design of classroom lessons or assignments and linking curriculum to students' interests and preferences).

When these objectives are achieved, students have opportunities to develop a sense of relatedness with their peers and other community members, learn new skills and develop a sense of competence, and experience a sense of autonomy by having their opinions and beliefs respected and validated. These all align with SDT and are expected to promote student success and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

#### ***5.2.1.3 Partnerships and services***

This component focuses on the need for schools to build and sustain strong relationships with students' families and the wider community. At the forefront is the importance placed on schools having sustained contact and communication with students' parents, caregivers, and family. It also emphasizes the value of establishing adult-student mentorship programs, schools partnering with family and youth-serving agencies, and schools engaging in community-wide mobilization activities (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). Samdal and Rowling's (2010) review on the implementation components of HPS stressed the need for intersectoral collaboration between health and education to ensure efficient use of resources and competence. It is argued that each sector brings a level of



expertise that they could share with the other (Allensworth, Wyche, Lawson, & Nicholson, 1995); however, the success of the collaboration is dependent upon the sectors having a shared vision and engaging in shared decision-making processes (Deschesnes et al., 2010; Deschesnes, Martin, & Hill, 2003).

Sustained family contact, a key component of the partnerships and services component, is deemed essential to the promotion of students' wellbeing and academic success since contact fosters positive home-school relationships, builds trust, supports collaborative problem-solving, and allows parents and teachers to make informed decisions on how they can best help each child (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). Schools can facilitate these constructive relationships through a variety of methods. They can engage in positive news phone calls, send periodic postcards with positive news, use email to address concerns or provide parents with updates, create regularly scheduled newsletters so families are informed of what is happening in the school, use daily or weekly exit passes that prompt parents to engage with their children about their school lives, and use weekly work folders that share examples of students' work with their parents and solicit parental feedback (Davis & Yang, 2009).

Positive child and youth development approaches in the partnerships and services component further emphasize a focus on building relationships with caring community members by engaging youth in activities in which they are active participants rather than solely the recipients of services or supports (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). These partnerships provide youth with social supports and enhance the range of opportunities for them to develop new skills and develop resiliency (Morrison & Peterson, 2013; JCSH, 2019c). For example, youth can be provided with opportunities to partner with caring

adult mentors who have had similar experiences or share common interests. They can also be invited to take part in community forums, problem-solving activities, and decision-making processes to provide insights on issues that directly or indirectly affect their lives (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). These partnerships again provide students with opportunities to satisfy their basic psychological needs. Welcoming students into the decision-making process can facilitate the development of belonging and connectedness since it provides students with the opportunity to be actively engaged with others on matters that are meaningful to themselves (Wierenga, 2002; Willms, 2003). Jensen and Simovska (2005) also note that student participation can empower students through the building of their capacities, skills, and knowledge around important issues. From a SDT perspective, when students feel that their input and contributions are sought and valued, they are more likely to exhibit more autonomous motivation, and therefore increased wellbeing and academic engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Finally, schools should be encouraged to develop partnerships so that students can access services directly at school. One example would be to permit health professional and other community organizations to offer programs and services on school grounds before or after regular school hours. Veugelers and Schwartz (2010) note that “allowing access to school facilities after or before school hours increases not only community facility usage, but it also engages health professionals in a meaningful way in the school community” (p. 6). The provision of assessable services can increase student access to an array of programs and assistance students may require as it reduces the burden of travel time for students and can reduce missed schooling opportunities that students may experience if they have to avail of services off campus.

#### ***5.2.1.4 Healthy school policy***

The last component of CSH, healthy school policy, refers to all of the management practices, decision-making processes, rules, regulations, and procedures at all levels that affect “how programs, services, and relationships are negotiated in school and community settings” (Morrison & Peterson, 2013, p. 40). Policies that support student wellbeing and academic success are the foundation of all CSH models and it is essential that when policies are developed that they are tailored to meet school-specific needs (Story et al., 2016; WHO, 1998 as cited in Veugelers & Schwartz, 2010). Story and colleagues (2016) note that each school has specific needs, strengths, and assets and thus requires the autonomy and flexibility to customize action plans in ways that match these unique characteristics. Finally, it is also encouraged that policy development occur through a collaborative process that includes input from students, staff, parents and other stakeholders (Veugelers & Schwartz, 2010), and that policies are documented in writing to ensure priority in terms of facilitation, and resource allocation is adhered to by school leaders and administrators (Samdal & Rowling, 2010).

Positive policy development and implementation starts with strong and effective leadership (Roberts, McLeod, Montemurro, Veugelers, Gleddie, & Storey, 2015; Storey et al., 2016). Educational leaders and administrators are positioned to communicate the importance of promoting students’ positive mental health and to reinforce and model consistent routines and policies (Morrison & Peterson, 2013), and evidence indicates that positive student outcomes are most likely when the principal takes an active leadership role in promoting a whole-school approach to health and student success (Rowling, 2011; Saab, Klinger, & Shulha, 2009). Storey et al. (2016) found that demonstrated leadership

from school principals emerged as one of the most critical features for schools that wish to implement CSH within their schools. They reported, “in order for CSH implementation to be successful to shift the school culture, the principal must be an active member of the implementation team and not purely a passive supporter of other school health champions” (p. 8).

In addition to providing effective leadership, the JCSH (2019d) recommends that school administrators ensure:

- (1) schools have alternatives to zero-tolerance policies to ensure continued school connectedness and restoration,
- (2) schools hold all students and staff accountable for upholding and modeling prosocial behaviours,
- (3) schools have policies to support students’ physical and emotional wellbeing,
- (4) schools accommodate the learning and social needs of all students, including those with exceptionalities,
- (5) all school staff receive professional development related to positive mental health.

At the heart of the policy component lies the responsibility of schools to create safe and caring environments that support the inclusion of all students. Such policies are the “ingredients for realizing a sense of belonging and connectedness among all students, and for supporting their academic development and success” (Morrison & Peterson, 2013, p. 41). Safe and caring schools adopt a wide variety of policies and practices that prevent bullying and facilitate students social and emotional skill development. Safe and caring schools also employ positive behavioural discipline strategies (e.g., the use of restorative justice), avail of peer-helper / mentor approaches, and host consultation forums to seek input from parents and community stakeholders (Morrison & Peterson, 2013). From an

inclusion standpoint, policies need to be enacted to ensure students learn about, appreciate, and celebrate diversity; develop the social skills to work collaboratively and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner; and create spaces so that all students have the chance to participate fully in both co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (Morrison & Peterson, 2013).

One aspect of inclusion that has become central to whole-school approaches to health is the premise that students need to be included in school planning and decision-making processes (Simovska, 2012; St. Leger, et al., 2007; Story et al., 2016). In essence, the inclusion of the target group is considered a basic tenant of health promotion, and consequently, student participation is considered a core element of health promoting schools (Griebler, Rojatz, Simovska, & Forester, 2017; Jensen & Simovska, 2005; Samdal & Rowling, 2010). St. Leger and colleagues (2007) provide numerous examples of where students can be actively involved in the running of their schools. For example, they can play a role in operating their school's food services, deciding on policies and procedures around issues such as bullying, acting as role models and mentors to younger students, and engaging with community groups in a collaborative environment that collectively addresses health issues. Having students play a role in the development of their schools promotes two core values of the HPS framework: equity and democracy (Young, 2005). Recent evidence suggests that a whole school approach that encourages and recognizes the importance of having students participate and take responsibility for shaping policies, practices, and procedures may be the most effective way of achieving positive health and educational outcomes (Samdal & Rowling, 2011; St. Leger, et al., 2007). In fact, Griebler and colleagues (2017) conducted a systematic review on the

effects of student participation in school health promotion and found that participation was associated with increased student “satisfaction, motivation, and ownership, an increase in skills, competencies, and knowledge, personal development, health-related effects and influence on student perspective” (p. 195)

If schools are to be successful in providing a safe and caring environment, it is also essential that educators be provided with the knowledge and skills they need to support students’ positive mental health and academic success. This will require on-going professional learning that starts in the pre-service stage and continues throughout the career span (JCSH, 2019d; Koller & Bertel, 2006). Current research suggests that teachers acknowledge that they have an important role to play when comes to supporting students’ mental wellbeing, but many feel they do not have the knowledge, skills, or confidence to provide the help that students need (Andrews, McCabe, & Wideman-Johnston, 2014; Ekornes, 2015; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). These findings indicate that leadership decisions and policy development regarding teacher preparation is lagging in many jurisdictions and the need “exists for training, strategies, and attention toward supporting teachers faced with students displaying significant behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties” (Reinke et al., 2011, p. 8).

Finally, comprehensive mental health approaches dictate that policies need to be developed in a collaborative and coordinated manner that brings stakeholders from various sectors together. The JCSH (Morrison & Peterson, 2013) specifically address the need of coordinating actions between the education and health sectors, which over time may lead to “common policies for accessing services and supports, and for working together in a more integrative fashion” (p. 44). To establish such coordination however

requires overcoming many obstacles. For instance, Ekornes (2015) found that collaboration between the education and health sectors only seems to occur in times of crisis and is “not orientated towards collaboration at universal intervention levels” (p. 203). Ekornes (2015) also found that too often information flow between the sectors was unidirectional, i.e., moving from the education sector to the health sector when students needed to avail of mental health services. “Thus, teachers often felt ‘left in the dark’ after interventions or treatment were initiated, making it difficult for them to follow-up with students through the day-to day routine” (p. 201). The problem of information exchange was routinely attributed to the issue of patient confidentiality. The lack of coordination and communication between the sectors also means teachers are often unaware of many of the resources that have been produced or are available within the health sector (Andrews, McCabe, & Wideman-Johnston, 2014). These are all issues that could be alleviated if the sectors worked more closely together and developed shared policies.

### **5.3 Summary**

CSH maintains that health and education are interdependent and that “healthy learners are better learners, and better educated individuals are healthier” (JCSH, 2019b, p. 1). It is premised on a whole-school, ecological approach to student health and academic success that asserts that coordinated actions in four distinct, yet interconnected components provide the most promising means of supporting student wellbeing and academic development. From a psychosocial perspective, students need to be front and centre of any school health promotion efforts whereby they have opportunities to develop a sense of autonomy (e.g., through shared decision making), develop and display their

competence (e.g., through their active participation in curricular and extra-curricular activities), and build a sense of relatedness with the other members of their school community (e.g., through their inclusion and the development of caring and respectful relationships). When actions in the four components are in sync and support students' psychological needs, we can then expect them to prosper and maximize their potential (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

While the CSH framework and other whole school approaches provide guidance on how schools can act to enhance student success and wellbeing, this study has adopted the framework as an analytic tool to see how actions in the four components can explain students' basic psychological need satisfaction. The process through which this analysis was completed is described in detail in the methods chapter of this report.



## CHAPTER 6

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### Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used for this research. The first section provides an overview of the research design and the researcher's role in the study. The second section provides details on the specific methods used to plan the study and collect and analyze the data. The third section addresses issues related to ethical considerations, and the final section covers the limitations of the study.

#### 6.1 Research Design: Mixed Methods

A mixed methods research (MMR) design was adopted for this study. MMR has been referred to as the “third methodological movement” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003, p. 5), the “third research paradigm” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14), and the “third research approach” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). At the simplest level, MMR is commonly understood as research where both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in combination with each other to address a research problem. However, many definitions of MMR have emerged over the recent past that incorporate aspects related to methods and research processes, philosophical points of view, and research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). One of the most prominent definitions comes from a seminal article written by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) who invited many of the leading scholars in MMR to provide a definition of MMR based on the scholars' perspectives. Based on their analysis of the 19 responses the authors came up with the following definition:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches

(e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p. 123)

More recently, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) provided a definition based on a set of six core characteristics. Paraphrased, these include: (1) collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data that are based on a study's research questions; (2) mixing or integrating the two forms of data concurrently, sequentially or by embedding one set of data into the other; (3) providing priority to both sets of data based on the research objectives; (4) using the above procedures in a single study or program of inquiry; (5) framing the procedure through a philosophical worldview and theoretical lens; and (6) combining the procedures into a specific research design that directs the planning and actions of the study (p. 5).

The growth and evolution of mixed methods research (MMR) has steadily increased over the past couple of decades. While some would argue that MMR has existed from at least Aristotelian times (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), others argue that MMR in the educational and social science fields began the 1930s (e.g., Sieber, 1973 as cited in Creswell and Guetterman, 2019). From then, it became more common to collect more than one type of data and to use multiple methods to investigate phenomena. However, it was in the 1970s that the integration and merging of data became more common and the acceptance of mixed methods as an emergent research paradigm started to take hold (e.g., Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Greene, 2008). This acceptance did not come about without detractors. The main issue of concern was "whether quantitative and qualitative research could be combined because each approach drew upon different philosophical assumptions" (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 547). This worldview-

method argument, also known as the *incompatibility thesis* (see Howe, 1988), persisted through the 1980s and early 1990s, but has since largely dissipated (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Ivankova, 2015). Ivankova (2015) points to 2003 as being a seminal year for MMR as this was when Sage published the first edition of the *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, which consequently solidified MMR as the third research paradigm (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Along similar lines, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) claimed that MMR has a long history in research practice; however, they noted that its obscurity was a result of methodologists not keeping pace with what was actually being practiced in the real world. They stated, “It is now time that all researchers and research methodologists formally recognize the third paradigm and begin systematically writing about it and using it” (p. 22). On the history of MMR, Ivankova (2015) has argued that while the age of the paradigm is not of great importance, “it is important that it is rightfully recognized as an effective and advantageous approach to research” (p. 14).

To highlight the growing acceptance and proliferation of MMR, a 2010 study by Ivankova & Kawamura found that MMR was being used in 70 different disciplines of study. One reason for its increasing popularity relates to the complexity involved in understanding social phenomena. This complexity necessitates that researchers adopt methods that can explore research problems from various points of view to gain a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Ivankova, 2015; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2008). Greene (2007) noted that MMR allows researchers to “participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple ways of making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be

valued and cherished (p. 20). In essence, MMR permits researchers to address research problems more comprehensively than qualitative and quantitative methods do when applied alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

A commonly cited strength of MMR is that both qualitative and quantitative methods have strengths and weaknesses and that by combining the two paradigms we gain the strengths of each while minimizing their individual weaknesses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For instance, quantitative methods typically lack the ability to provide a strong understanding of the contextual and situational aspects of a social phenomenon whereas qualitative methods are more suited to understanding these influences. Conversely, qualitative methods are viewed by some as being too subjective, clouded in bias, and non-generalizable while quantitative methods are not. The strength and utility of MMR thus exists in the fact that it can be both confirmatory and exploratory in nature at the same time and thus address a series of verification questions within a single study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Accordingly, MMR has the capacity to bring both qualitative and quantitative data together in a synergetic fashion to gain a more comprehensive view of complex problems and issues in which mono-method approaches cannot accomplish alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Padgett, 2009).

The proliferation of MMR has been accompanied by the development of an array of different mixed method designs that “have multiplied over the years (Creswell, 2015 p. 58). For instance, Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) provide a detailed list of 15 mixed methods design classifications that have been put forth by leading scholars since 1989.

MMR designs play a significant role in determining how researchers approach the research process, that is, the design “guides researchers’ decisions related to collecting, analyzing, and integrating quantitative and qualitative data to provide answers to the posed research questions” (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016, p., 107). When choosing a MMR design, researchers need to identify a design that matches the study’s problem, objectives, and research questions. They also need to consider the level of interaction that will occur between the strands of data, determine the priority of the strands, establish whether the strands of data will be collected sequential or simultaneously, and decide how and where the data will be mixed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) detailed six major mixed methods designs that are widely used in the field: (1) the convergent parallel design, (2) the explanatory sequential design, (3) the exploratory sequential design, (4) the embedded design, (5) the transformative design, and (6) the multiphase design. The classifications put forth by researchers, such as those by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), are important as they help researchers establish the correct direction needed to conduct their work and they detail the logic through which interpretation of the results occurs (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009); however, the complexity associated with social science research often means that no classification system will be able to capture all of the possible ways that MMR can be conducted (Greene, 2007). Others similarly note that the designs are continuously evolving (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2009) and that the major designs often serve as prototypes that can be implemented in various ways (Creswell et al., 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For instance, Creswell and colleagues (2011) detail how an embedded design is often a slight variation of a convergent or sequential design. In

essence, researchers may be required to combine elements of designs in such ways to best answer the study's research questions; however, in doing so, it is important that the researchers be explicit in explaining why they are using a selected design and how the design has been fully implemented to address the study's research questions (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011).

### **6.1.1 Philosophical assumptions of mixed methods research**

Like all research methodologies, mixed methods are grounded within philosophical assumptions, which can be defined as a set of shared beliefs, assumptions, and values that guide inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) use the term *worldview* to represent these assumptions and note that it is synonymous with Kuhn's (1962) notion of a *paradigm*, which holds that scientific inquiry is dependent on a network of intertwined and shared theoretical and methodological beliefs and practices that influence how a researcher selects, studies, and interprets phenomena.

While quantitative methods are typically associated with postpositivist worldviews that generates knowledge claims based on determinism, reductionism, measurement, and theory verification, and qualitative methods do so through a constructivist and interpretivist worldview that is more centred around contextual understanding and theory generation through the use of multiple participant meanings and social and historical construction (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson & Grey, 2010), mixed methods is most commonly associated with a pragmatic worldview where researchers place primary importance on the research questions over the methods, focus on the consequences of the research, and use multiple methods of data collection to

address an issue under study. As such, mixed methods are considered pluralistic, problem centred, and orientated towards real-world practice (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004; see Table 1, p. 18) outlined 22 tenets of pragmatism based on the overlapping ideas of three prominent pragmatists; Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952). Based on this composite, Johnson and Grey (2010) listed seven core principals of pragmatism. These include:

- (1) Rejection of dichotomous either-or thinking
- (2) Knowledge comes from person-environmental interaction
- (3) Knowledge is both constructed and resulting from empirical discovery
- (4) Adopts ontological pluralism
- (5) Holds an epistemological position that there are multiple ways of knowing and that researchers should make “warranted assertions” rather than unvarying Truth
- (6) Views theories as serving an instrumental purpose
- (7) Incorporates values directly into inquiry and endorses equality, freedom, and democracy. (p. 88)

Elaborating on these principals, Johnson & Grey (2010) note that MMR “takes an antidualistic stance called *synechism*” (p. 71) whereby the world is viewed in terms of continua rather than binaries. Based on the tenants of pragmatism, MMR rejects the view that knowledge can only be either objectively or subjectively known and that all knowledge exists somewhere on a continuum between the two. Pragmatism also holds that the human world consists of many and multiple realities where both objective and subjective knowledge are valued. With this in mind, the focus of a mixed methods study is on the consequences of the research with a primary importance placed on the objectives of the study rather than on the methods used. Thus, mixed methods studies that take a

pragmatic stance are “pluralistic and oriented toward ‘what works’ and practice” (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011, p. 41).

Luck, Jackson, and Usher (2006) have argued that one methodology that is well suited to a mixed methods approach is case study. They noted that “case study has broad research application and epistemological, ontological, and methodological flexibility ... within which any methods appropriate to investigating a research area can be applied” (p. 103). For this study, a mixed methods case study design was adopted to address the study’s research questions. Below an overview of mixed method case study will be provided along with a rationale for its selection as the design.

### **6.1.2 Mixed method case study**

A case study is an intensive exploration of a bounded system (Creswell & Poth, 2018) that stresses developmental factors in relation to the environment (Flyvbjerg, 2011). “*Bounded* means that the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place or some physical boundaries” (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019, p. 477, italics in original). The bounded system is delineated via a description of the locale, culture, group processes, or institution (Stake, 2005). Yin (2003) has described a case study as enabling a holistic and contextually embedded understanding of real-life events while Stake (2005) has argued that a case study has the ability provide rich descriptions of a phenomenon while connecting complex situations and events to theoretical abstractions. The case study approach uses a variety of data sources to ensure that the issue under investigation is explored through a “variety of lenses which allows multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544).



One of the defining features of a case study is that it has to be neither qualitative nor quantitative - it can be both. Accordingly, “case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied. By whatever methods, we choose to study the case” (Stake, 2003, p. 134). Direct observation, participant observation, interviews from structured to unstructured, document analysis, artifacts, researcher descriptions, surveys, and questionnaires are all considered to be legitimate sources of data in case study research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003, 2014). Like the pragmatic stance of MMR, the methods used during case study research are selected in relation to the case and the research questions being addressed (Luck et al., 2006). Accordingly, the use of such diverse data collection methods means that narrative, textual, and numerical data will be generated and supports the contention that researchers “can congruently argue the rigour of utilising multiple methods in their case study research” (Luck et al., 2006, p. 106). In support of this assertion, Yin (2014) noted that case study research requires the researcher to collect a variety of data sources and that some case study designs de facto represent MMR.

Within case study research, there are several important considerations that researchers need to make. Yin (2014) listed five components of the research design that need to be addressed: (1) the research questions, (2) its proposition, if any, (3) the unit of analysis, also known as the case, (4) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) the criteria for interpreting the data. With regards to the study’s research questions, Yin noted that case studies are particularly suited to answering *how* and *why* questions. It is important to note that Yin was being explicit about qualitative case studies and little is mentioned regarding question formation for mixed methods case studies. For the propositions, Yin equated these to some preconceived purpose for conducting the study.

In other words, the researcher needs to provide a rationale for the research and this rationale provides the research with direction and helps identify the relevant information to be collected. With respect to the third component, the case, Yin noted that it has to be clearly defined. The case is considered the main subject of a case study – “usually a concrete entity such as a person, organization, community, program, practice, or institution” (p. 273). The researchers also must define the boundaries of the case. For instance, if a group of people make up your case you have to identify who is included in and who is not included in the group. You also need to identify specifics related to the geographical area and specific time boundaries, that is, the beginning and ending of the case study. The fourth component is concerned with linking your data to your propositions and “foreshadows the data analysis steps of your study” (p. 35). The propositions help the researcher plan the study and define how the data will be analyzed. The fifth and final component concerns the steps that researchers need to take to ensure their analyses are valid and reliable. Yin noted that one important technique with qualitative data is to ensure alternative explanations are considered when interpreting the results. In Yin’s words, “The more rivals that have been addressed and rejected, the stronger will be your findings” (p. 36).

While a case study investigates one bounded system, or a single case, a multiple case study examines two or more cases. Although these cases may be quite similar, such as two or more schools in the same school district, each would also have its own unique and complex features to differentiate it from the other cases (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Thus, multiple case studies permit researchers to understand phenomena in relation to the differences and similarities between the cases (Stake 1995). Likewise, Yin (2003) notes

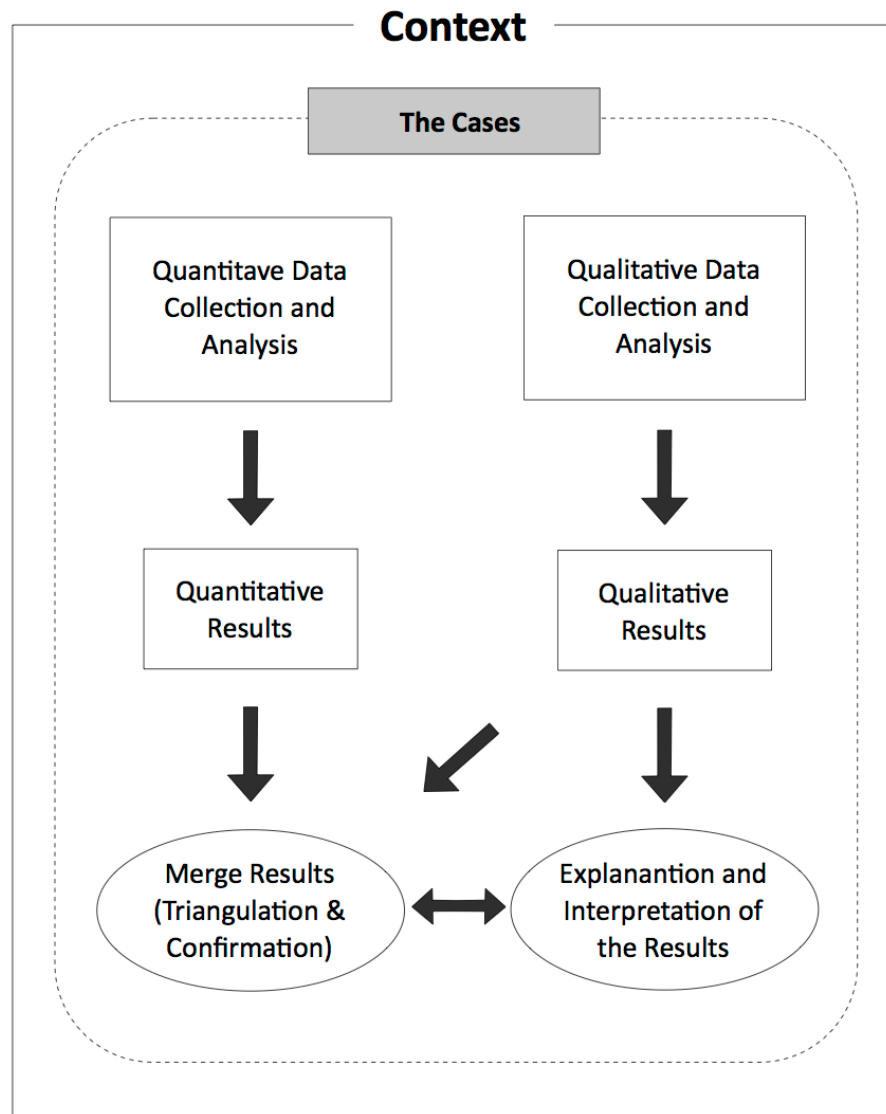
that multiple case studies enable researchers to gain insights on a phenomenon through investigation within each case and through examination across cases. Accordingly, multiple case studies are often viewed as being more reliable than single case studies as they allow researchers to gain a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Stake, 2006).

Within MMR, Creswell and Plano Clarke (2011) designated mixed method case studies as a hybrid design or variant of an embedded design. With a traditional embedded design, the researcher collects both qualitative and quantitative data and embeds one source of the data within the other, that is, one data set acts as the primary source of data and the other as a secondary source to support the primary source. In the instance of a mixed methods case study, the researchers embed both quantitative and qualitative data within the traditional case study design whereby the case “becomes the placeholder for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data” (p. 95). Both sources of data are used to examine the case where no primacy has to be given to either stream of data. One benefit of the embedded design is that the streams of data can be combined to answer particular questions or used independently to answer different questions related to the same phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011).

Figure 6.1 provides a visual representation of the mixed methods multiple case study used for this research. The outermost rectangle represents the broader contextual conditions (e.g., the dominant culture of a city) that need to be considered and described to make sense of the cases that exist within it, that is, how these conditions may affect the cases under investigation. The inner rectangle with the dotted lines represents each case within a bounded system, namely schools where the students with refugee backgrounds

attend. The dotted lines are meant to signify that the boundaries of any bounded system may be fuzzy at best since boundaries are often difficult to definitively define (Yin, 2014). Within the cases, the quantitative and qualitative data are embedded (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011). The quantitative data served to address this study's first research question. The qualitative data served two interconnected purposes. First, it acted as a triangulation source for the quantitative data and addressed the study's first and second research questions; and second, it operated to address the "how" question that Yin (2014, p. 29) alluded to as the central focus of a case study. In essence, the qualitative data addressed the study's third research question by providing insights into how the context of the study, as analyzed through the CSH framework, may have impacted the students' basic psychological needs. Within the cases, equal status was afforded to both the quantitative and qualitative strands of data as they both were equally necessary to understand the phenomenon under investigation – the fostering or thwarting of the basic psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds. With regards to the timing of data collection and analysis, the qualitative and quantitative data were gathered simultaneously. Analysis of the strands first occurred separately, and then analyzed together to draw inferences and answer the study's research questions.

A mixed methods multiple case study was thus adopted by the researcher as it was deemed that the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data was necessary to gather a more completed and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Not only was it important to measure students' psychological need



**Figure 6.1** Diagram of the mixed methods case study research design used for this study.

satisfaction (relative to their Canadian background peers), but it was also important to understand these results. The qualitative data served to allow triangulation and explanation. A multiple case study methodology was adopted because the researcher was able to compare and contrast findings across sites to gain a better understanding of how

various contextual conditions may impact student psychosocial wellbeing and academic development. In all, the adoption of a mixed methods multiple case study provided the researcher with the best approach to answering the study's research questions.

### **6.1.3 The researcher's role in the research**

The adoption of SDT as the guiding theory for this research is a testament to my post-positive beliefs. SDT holds that there are *universal* basic psychological needs that all people must satisfy (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). The claim of universality for SDT insinuates that the theory holds over time and space and is objective knowledge. Despite my post-positive beliefs, I also believe that multiple realities exist, that is, there is a real world that we continue to try and understand and other realities that can only be understood through our socially constructed experiences. Accordingly, every person exists within two realities; one that they cannot objectively understand to its fullest extent, and another that they have socially constructed. I further believe that both realities simultaneously exist, and that in fact, the commonalities and differences between the two fluctuate over time. In other words, one reality remains stable, while our constructed reality is forever shifting based on our life experiences. The shifting of our constructed reality means that it either becomes more aligned with the stable reality or that they drift further apart.

With the above stated, I attempted to maintain a level of objectivity, based on my post-positive beliefs, to best understand the phenomena under investigation and orientate the finds towards an objective reality. In doing so, I tried to remain unbiased and allow the data to tell the story; however, I acknowledge that my ideology, values, and previous experience inevitably became intertwined with the findings. For example, I had

previously conducted research that involved some of the same participants, and my experiences with these participants more than likely shaped the direction of this present study. As a specific example, due to my prior knowledge, I was able to probe particular issues during the present study when they arose during interviews. If I had not had this prior knowledge, then I may not have probed some participants' responses in the way I did, and the results of this study could possibly have been altered.

I also acknowledge that my experiences during the course of this study may have impacted my interpretation of the data. For instance, some schools were much more welcoming to me than others. These experiences would no doubt affect how I interpreted the data gathered from the various sites. Being aware of this, I did try to be conscientious of this fact and attempt to look at all of the data from multiple angles. I also used a series of validity checks (see Section 6.2.4) to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

## **6.2 Research Methods**

### **6.2.1 Participants**

#### **6.2.1.1 Student participants**

Purposeful criterion sampling (Patton, 2015) was employed to recruit students with refugee backgrounds for this study. A total of 47 students, including 25 students with refugee backgrounds ranging from 12 to 20 ( $\mu = 16.60$ ) years of age, and 22 Canadian background students ranging from 12 to 19 ( $\mu = 15.36$ ) years of age participated in this study. Thirty of the students were attending high school (18 with a refugee background) and 17 were attending junior high (7 with a refugee background). Twenty-seven of the participants were male (14 with a refugee background) and 20 were female (11 with a

refugee background). All of the students with refugee backgrounds, except two, had been in Canada for a minimum of one year to ensure their English proficiency was adequate to participate in this study. The two that had been in the country for less than one year had a level of English proficiency that allowed them to participate in the study (i.e., they could understand the survey questions and participate in extended conversation). Table 6.1 provides demographic details for the students with refugee backgrounds.

**Table 6. 1**

List of student participants from refugee backgrounds

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Grade	Years in Canada
Szofia	18	Female	12	Unknown
Soso*	15	Female	8	1
Arman*	15	Female	8	1
Jenni	15	Female	9	1
Demi*	15	Female	9	3
Joseline*	14	Female	9	1
Helen	14	Female	9	1
Anjal*	16	Female	9	4
Meri	16	Female	10	1
Etu*	18	Male	10	1
Abdu*	17	Male	10	2
GTR*	16	Male	11	10
Ainalsaba	19	Female	12	13
Mohamad	18	Male	12	1
Ibrahimaless	19	Male	12	1
Ayu	16	Male	11	2
Hanna	17	Female	11	6
Natu	17	Male	11	1
Sami	17	Male	12	2
Hamdi*	17	Male	10	2
Fikru*	20	Male	12	1
Yooni	18	Male	12	3
Ranad*	17	Male	11	3
Imran	16	Male	10	3
Ahmed	15	Male	10	2

\* Indicates the student participated in an interview



The countries of origin of the students with refugee backgrounds in not provided in Table 6.1 since there are students who participated that could possibly be identified if this information was provided. However, of the students with refugee backgrounds, 12 were born in Africa, seven in the Middle East, three in Europe, one in Asia, and two did not disclose where they were born.

The Canadian background students were included as a comparison group to gain a better understanding of the refugee students' scores on the questionnaire used in this study. No Canadian background students participated in interviews. For the Canadian background students, 20 were born in Canada and of these, 18 identified as being White. Two others reported that they were mixed race where one parent identified as White and the other as being from a different racial background. The specific backgrounds of these two students are being withheld to protect their identities. Two others were naturalized Canadian students who were born in the Middle East but primarily raised from very early ages in other native-English speaking countries before immigrating to Canada.

#### **6.2.1.2 Adult participants**

The adult participants were purposefully recruited based on their backgrounds of interacting with students with refugee backgrounds and their abilities to provide rich information on the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2019; Patton, 2015). The adult participant group consisted of 11 classroom teachers and guidance counselors, six school-level and district-level administrators, one parent, four community service workers, and one language acquisition expert. All adult participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity. When possible, the researcher will provide

additional details on the participants; however, in some cases these details need to be withheld to protect the participants' identities. Additionally, in some instances the data shared are attributed to particular participants using the pseudonym; however, at other times the data are only attributed to a 'teacher' or 'administrator', for example, as it was deemed necessary to take further steps to protect the participants' identities. Table 6.2 provides an overview of the participants including their positions and their assigned pseudonyms.

**Table 6. 2**

List of adult participants

Participant Name (Pseudonym)	Participant's Position
Mr. Walsh	High School Teacher
Ms. Wallace	Junior High School Teacher
Ms. William	School Administration
Mr. Rideout	High School Teacher
Ms. O'Neil	Junior High Teacher
Mr. Snow	District Administration
Ms. Simms	District Administration
Ms. Gallant	Junior High School Teacher
Mr. Smith	District Administration
Ms. Pretty	Junior High School Teacher
Ms. Sullivan	High School Teacher
Mr. Fleet	School Administration
Ms. Arnold	Junior High School Teacher
Ms. Jones	High School Teacher
Ms. Ball	Junior High School Teacher
Mr. Knox	Junior High School Teacher
Mr. Wells	School Administration
Mr. McDonald	Community Service Worker
Ms. Hall	Community Service Worker
Mr. Hines	Community Service Worker
Ms. Matthews	Community Service Worker
Ms. Tong	Community Service Worker
Mr. Furaha	Parent

### **6.2.2 Recruitment procedures**

The participants for this study were recruited in the Metro St. John's region in NL during the 2016-2017 school year. All of the educators, students, and their parents were affiliated with the NLESD. Once permission from the district was received to conduct this research, the researcher contacted five school administrators via email and in-person to seek permission to conduct the research with students and educators affiliated with their schools. Four of the schools agreed to participate and one declined. This included one high school and three junior high schools. A few teachers who were under district administration (e.g., ESL itinerants) and taught at all four junior high schools were also included in this study when permission was granted from a district Senior Education Officer. Section 6.2.2.1 provides a brief description of the four schools included in this study.

Purposeful sampling procedures were used to recruit educators, administrators, and other school personnel who have had direct interaction with or knowledge pertaining to the education and schooling of students with refugee backgrounds. Emails were sent directly to the individuals asking if they would be willing to participate. A recruitment letter was attached to the email (see Appendix F). Once individuals indicated that they were willing to participate in the study a time was set up to meet and they were provided with an informed consent form (see Appendix, D).

The students were recruited with the help of some educators in the schools who had decided to participate in the study. In three schools, educators helped the researcher plan a lunchtime recruiting session whereby the researcher went to the school and explained the purpose of the study to those who attended the session. After the

explanation, the students were invited to participate in the study. Those that expressed interest were given recruitment letters (see Appendix G) and consent forms (see Appendix E) and all students who were under the age of 19 were told that in order to participate they would need to get parental consent. Once consent was obtained, the participants were enrolled in the study. It should be mentioned that several of the student participants had attended multiple schools in the NLESD prior to their recruitment and shared details of their experiences in those schools during their interviews. This included the junior high school that was invited to participate in this study but declined. Thus, some of the data presented in this study pertain to those experiences and align with the NLESD being considered a boundary of the case.

The researcher also purposefully recruited other adults who were not directly affiliated with the NLESD but worked closely with students with refugee backgrounds in some capacity (e.g., employees of community-based organizations). When necessary, permission was obtained from the organization to interview these participants. These participants were also either recruited via email or in person using the study's recruitment letter. When an individual expressed willingness to participate, a consent form was provided. After consent was obtained, the individual was enrolled in the study.

#### ***6.2.2.1 Schools involved in the study***

Here a brief overview of the schools involved in this study is provided. Each school is identified using a pseudonym and the descriptions are based on the 2016-2017 school year.

- (1) *Haywood High School*: Haywood High School is a grade 10-12 public school that has an enrollment of approximately 1000 students. It could be considered the most diverse school in the province as the student body comprises individuals from over 50 different nationalities. It is the only high school in the St. John's region that offers specific programming for students with interrupted schooling, and approximately 55 students with refugee backgrounds attend the school. The school has two guidance counselors, one LEARN teacher, and two permanent full-time ESL teachers.
- (2) *Everton Junior High School (2016-2017)*: Everton Junior High School is a grade 7-9 school that has a student population of approximately 400 students. The school has a fairly diverse student population and hosts the largest number of students with refugee backgrounds of the four junior high schools (approximately 25-30 as the numbers fluctuate during the year). It has one LEARN teacher, one half-time instructional resource teacher (i.e., a teacher with a special education degree) who is dedicated to assisting students with refugee backgrounds in mainstream classes, and one guidance counselor. ESL instruction is provided through district school board itinerants.
- (3) *Glendale Junior High School (2016-2017)*: Glendale Junior High School is a grade 7-9 school with approximately 483 students. Glendale has fewer than five students with refugee backgrounds. The school has one half-time LEARN teacher and one full-time guidance counselor. The LEARN program was implemented part-way through the school year. ESL instruction is provided through district school board itinerants.

(4) *Silver Creek Junior High*: Silver Creek Junior High is a grade 7-9 school and has a population of approximately 700 students. There are students attending the school from approximately 30 different countries making it one of the more diverse schools in the province. The LEARN program had approximately 10 students and there was one full-time and one part-time guidance counselors, and one part-time LEARN teacher. ESL instruction is provided through district school board itinerants.

### **6.2.3 Data collection and analysis**

#### **6.2.3.1 Student questionnaire**

Quantitative data were obtained on students' feelings of school relatedness, academic competence, and school related autonomy using an adapted survey. Measures of student relatedness (four items, e.g., I really like the other students in my school), teacher relatedness (four items, e.g., The teachers in my school care about me.) and autonomy (five items, e.g., I feel free to express my opinions and beliefs at school) were adapted from the *Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale* (Deci and Ryan 2000; Gagné 2003). The internal consistency of the adapted student relatedness construct was  $\alpha = 0.82$ , and for the adapted teacher relatedness it was  $\alpha = 0.80$ . The internal consistency of the adapted autonomy construct was  $\alpha = 0.77$ .

Measures of academic competence were adapted from the *Perceived Competence Scale* (PCS), a short, four-item questionnaire. Items (e.g., I feel confident when doing my schoolwork) on the PCS are typically written to be specific to the relevant behavior or

domain being studied (Williams, and Deci 1996; Williams, Freedman and Deci 1998). The internal consistency of the adapted competence construct was  $\alpha = 0.80$ .

All questions on the questionnaire were based on a Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). Lower scores represent greater levels of need satisfaction. The researcher was present during survey completion to answer any questions the participants had. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25.0 (IBM, 2020) and 2x2 ANOVAs were conducted to see if there were differences between the means of the two independent groups. Significance levels were set at  $p\text{-value} < .05$ . A copy of the questionnaire is available in Appendix H.

#### **6.2.3.2 Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all of the adult participants and 12 of the students with refugee backgrounds. While all students with refugee background who completed the survey were invited to do interviews, only 12 consented and participated in this part of the study. Overall, at least one student from four different schools completed an interview (see section 6.2.2 for clarification regarding some students having attended multiple schools with the 2016-2017 school year). The adult interviews were typically 45-50 minutes in duration and the student interviews were approximately 20-30 minutes in length. All interviews were conducted at a location chosen by the participants. This was important as it is best to conduct interviews in environments where the participant feels safe and comfortable. Wilkinson, Bouma and Carland (2016) noted that interviews are more productive when this is the case. The

interview protocols for the students and adult interview protocols are available in Appendices I and J respectively.

A few of the interviews with the adults did not follow the interview protocol since the protocols were designed for those who worked directly in or with the schools or school district. For instance, one interview with one parent could be best described as open conversation that was audio recorded. The researcher spoke with the parent for over one and a half hours wherein the parent shared their perspectives with regards to their children's education in NL. The researcher allowed the parent to speak openly and asked probing questions when he was interested in gathering specific data. In another instance, the researcher interviewed an expert on language acquisition and asked the expert specific questions related to this topic (e.g., What would be the benefits of placing students with limited English fluency in mainstream classrooms?).

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher reproducing all spoken words and sounds (e.g., laughter), including hesitations, verbal emphasis, and emotional responses (Braun & Clarke, 2012). MAXQDA software was used to store, sort, and analyze the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). The data were then coded using deductive codes and broader themes that were established based on the study's specific research questions, theoretical foundation, and evaluative framework. In addition, inductive codes and themes were established using Braun and Clark's (2006) analytical framework. Braun and Clarke (2012) noted that coding and analysis often involves using both inductive and deductive approaches "as we always bring something to the data when we analyze it, and we rarely *completely* ignore semantic content of the data when we code for a particular theoretical construct" (p. 58, italics in original).



Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the researcher first familiarized himself with the data through repeated readings while searching for meaning. Second, the researcher generated inductive codes based on semantic and latent meanings and grouped them into meaningful units. Next, some codes were added to the broader deductive themes and additional inductive themes were generated. Finally, the themes were reviewed to ensure coherent patterns existed and that the themes accurately reflected the meanings evident in the data set as a whole.

### ***6.2.3.3 Observations and field notes***

The researcher spent approximately 100 hours in the schools observing LEARN and mainstream classes and extracurricular activities, attending field trips, and tutoring students as a volunteer. Flick (1998) differentiates observers as belonging somewhere on a continuum with regards to several different dimensions. For instance, the observer can take the role of non-participant or participant observer, engage in systematic or non-systematic observation, and conduct observations in a natural environment or an artificial one.

For this study, the researcher was mainly engaged in non-systematic observation (i.e., there was no observation protocol used), generally acted as a participant observer, (i.e., he was mainly engaged in school related activities while he was observing), and all of the observations were conducted in the natural environment. For instance, the researcher volunteered at two of the schools involved in this study. This period of volunteering allowed the researcher to develop a sense of the schools' atmospheres while gathering contextually detailed data. The researcher also witnessed natural behaviours

during these periods that he recorded and reflected upon later (e.g., avoidance behaviors). The researcher also engaged in casual interactions with the students while attending field trips and being present during lunch time activities (some activities were organized and at other times the students and teachers were just hanging out). This gave the researcher opportunities to engage in conversation with the students and educators on a casual level and observe their behaviours outside of the formal classroom.

To document these observations, both descriptive and reflective field notes were generated after the researcher left the research site. These notes allowed the researcher to record specific events and activities and his personal thoughts (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Several times the researcher followed up with a participant at a later date to better understand an observed action or situation. The field notes served as an additional source of data to provide insights into the phenomena under investigation and acted as a triangulation source for the other data gathered during this study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

#### **6.2.3.4 Document analysis**

When researchers observe an action or speak with a participant, they are gathering first-hand knowledge. Documents, in contrast, are generally considered a secondary source because they are a record of information that does not come from direct observation or contact with the people who generated them. When researchers engage in text or document analysis, they are attempting to extract meaning, context, or perspectives from the text (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

The researcher searched the Internet to find government, school district, and school level policy and curriculum documents. These included documents related to demographics, inclusive education, school transportation policies, and curriculum guides. The analysis of these documents served to provide a greater understanding of the local environment, school system, and the programming offered to students with refugee backgrounds. The documents served three main purposes. First, it helped the researcher develop interview questions. Second, the documents allowed the researcher to provide context to the study. Finally, the documents were used to cross-reference the congruency between institutional policy and real-world practices (Bowen 2009).

#### **6.2.4 Reliability and validity**

Establishing the validity and reliability of a study are the benchmarks of quality research. Within quantitative research, validity refers to the extent that the results are representative of the phenomena being studied, and reliability refers to the extent that the research data collection tools would yield similar results if used in similar situations (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). While the terms validity and reliability have been used in qualitative research, they have been an issue of contention for many researchers (e.g., Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Accordingly, reliability is often not even a consideration for qualitative studies on whether the data is creditable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A search of “The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) showed that term reliability isn’t even mentioned in the index. Similarly, in most methodology textbooks the commentary on reliability tends to be exclusively associated

with quantitative research. However, there are exceptions. Yin (2014) described reliability for a case study as the need to document the procedures used in a case study such that they can be replicated by future researchers. He recommends that researchers undertake two activities to ensure reliability: (1) make use of a case study protocol and (2) develop a case study database.

#### ***6.2.4.1 Reliability in quantitative research***

Researchers can use a variety of procedures to establish the reliability of measures used during research. For this study, a cross-sectional survey design using a continuous scale (e.g., strongly agree to strongly disagree) was embedded within the case study. One of the most common ways of determining reliability for this design is to calculate an alpha coefficient, which is also known as Cronbach's alpha and is a measure of internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha is used under the assumption that the instrument has multiple items measuring the same construct. Consistency is achieved when the respondent provides a similar response to all of the questions related to the construct being measured (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Values for Cronbach's alpha range from 0-1, and as a general rule, a value of .70 and above shows good consistency, while .80 and above show a high level of consistency, and .90 and above demonstrates a very high level of consistency. For comparing groups, a value of 0.7-0.8 is considered satisfactory, however higher scores of .90 and up are generally required for clinical applications (Bland & Altman, 1997). Furthermore, when an instrument measures multiple constructs using the same instrument, an alpha coefficient should be calculated for each construct. In other words, alpha should be reported for each construct rather than for the entire

instrument to avoid inflating the alpha value through the inclusion of a larger set of items (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The alpha values for each of the survey constructs measured in this study is provided in section 4.2.3.1. All values exceeded the 0.7 threshold for group comparisons and verifies the reliability of the survey instrument used for this study.

One final comment on the relationship between reliability and validity needs to be addressed. While both represent different evaluation criteria and are measured using different procedures, an important relationship exists between them. That is, an instrument cannot be considered valid unless it is considered reliable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Confirming the reliability of an instrument is thus an essential step needed to confirm whether or not it can be deemed valid.

#### ***6.2.4.2 Validity in quantitative research***

In quantitative research, there are three main types of validity: (1) content validity, (2) construct validity, and (3) criterion validity. Content validity is the extent to which an instrument accurately measures all aspects of the construct. Face validity is a subset of content validity wherein experts in the field are asked to review a measure to determine if content validity exists. Construct validity is a determination of whether the instrument is measuring what it was intended to measure, and criterion validity measures the extent to which an instrument is related to other instruments that measure the same variables (Heale & Twycross, 2015). When researchers develop new instruments to be used in a study, it is imperative that they take significant steps to strengthen their validity. This can include having experts review the instrument for content validity and using statistical methods such as exploratory factor analysis to establish construct validity. Another choice

that researchers have is to use an instrument that has already undergone extensive testing and has been widely used in the field. For this study, as is described in section 6.2.3.1, the researcher used items from two well established and highly used surveys, the *Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale* (Deci and Ryan 2000; Gagné 2003) and the *Perceived Competence Scale* (Williams, and Deci 1996; Williams, Freedman and Deci 1998), to increase the validity of the study.

Two other forms of validity that quantitative researchers are interested in are internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to “the validity of inferences about whether observed covariation between A (the presumed treatment) and B (the presumed outcome) reflects a causal reform A to B as those variables were manipulated or measured” (Shadish et al., 2002, p. 38). It is only with carefully planned experimental and quasi-experimental designs that researchers can draw internally valid conclusions regarding cause-and-effect relationships. External validity is “the validity of inferences about whether the cause-effect relationship holds over variation in persons, settings, treatment variables, and measurements” (Shadish et al., 2002, p. 38). In other words, external validity is concerned with the generalizability of the findings.

#### **6.2.4.3 *Validity in qualitative research***

Because qualitative data and their interpretation are subjective in nature, assessing the validity of the findings requires a different set of procedures than those that are used in quantitative research (Ivankova, 2015). A commonly used and cited method for establishing validity in qualitative research is to assess the trustworthiness (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985) of the findings. Trustworthiness is established through a set of procedures that address the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study.

Credibility refers to the confidence one has in the *accuracy* of the findings and represents one of the most important aspects of establishing trustworthiness. Transferability refers to the degree that the findings have applicability in other contexts. Transferability is achieved through the use of thick and rich description that allows consumers of researchers to draw comparisons between the findings of studies examining similar phenomena but conducted in different contexts. Dependability refers to the extent that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. Dependability addresses the methodological rigor of a study and is highly associated with credibility given sound methodological procedures support the authenticity of a study's finding. Finally, confirmability is akin to the neutrality or objectivity of a study held by quantitative researchers; however, qualitative researchers prefer the term confirmability since it place emphasis on the data and not on the objectivity of the researcher. Essentially, it is the extent that the findings of a study are confirmable and have been shaped by the quality of the respondents' inputs and not researcher bias.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified several techniques that can be employed to enhance trustworthiness (see Ivankova, 2015, p. 266 for a summary list of strategies and their descriptions). While it would be ideal to implement all of the listed strategies in a single study, it is often not realistic to do so. Accordingly, researchers can use different combinations of the strategies, depending on time, resources, access to study participants, and other study considerations to support the trustworthiness of their findings (Ivankova, 2015). For this study, the following strategies were employed:

- (1) Member checks: Lincoln and Guba (1985) described member checks as the most important technique for establishing credibility. Member checking involves having the study's participants review the data they provided (e.g., their interview transcripts) and verify the accuracy of the data and the researcher's interpretations. For this study, the researcher sent a transcribed copy of each participant's interview to them and gave them an opportunity to verify the contents of the interview and to clarify or make changes to the answers they provided. Two adult participants asked that some responses be modified, and one adult participant asked that a portion of the interview be deleted. After feedback was obtained from transcripts, a summarized report of the study and its results and interpretations was generated and emailed to the participants to elicit their feedback. No one asked that it be changed or amended in any way, and three participants responded with positive feedback, that is, they agreed with the interpretations.
- (2) Triangulation: Triangulation involves using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding. In other words, researchers can avail of different methods, different participants, and different sites, as examples, to cross-reference findings and uncover convergence or divergence. For this study, its mixed methods design and use of multiple data sources allowed the researcher to triangulate findings. For instance, the study's questionnaire and interview protocol had overlapping questions that inquired about the same phenomena under investigation. Also, documents analysis was used to verify some of the claims made by the participants. Another aspect that allowed triangulation was the fact



that multiple sites (i.e., schools) were involved in the study, which allowed the researcher to cross-reference finding across the sites.

- (3) Prolonged engagement: Prolonged engagement refers to the researcher spending sufficient time in the field to learn about the culture, social setting, or phenomena of interest. This involves spending adequate time observing various aspects of a setting, speaking with a range of people, and developing trusting relationships with members of the culture. For this study, the researcher had prior experience volunteering in two of the schools included in this study. This allowed him to build trust with many of the student participants in this study. It also allowed him to establish positive relationships with a number of educators who then acted as *gatekeepers* to the research sites. According to Creswell and Guetterman (2019) and Cricco-Lizza (2007), building positive relationships with the participants helps to ensure the most accurate information is being disclosed for the research. In fact, Lipson (1991) has claimed that “The best data grows out of relationships in which informants trust the researcher” (p. 77). During the course of the research, the researcher spent more than a hundred hours working with many of the student participants and some of the educators. This included formal (e.g., assisting students with classroom work and accompanying them on school field trips) and informal interactions (chatting with students and educators during lunch hour).
- (4) Thick and rich description: Thick description is described by Lincoln and Guba as a method establishing the transferability of the findings. By describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail and the context of the study, one can begin to

evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn are transferable to other contexts. For this study, the researcher provided detailed information about the case, its participants, and the overall context of the study. These details should allow consumers to judge whether the findings have applicable value in other contexts.

- (5) Researcher reflexivity: Researcher reflexivity refers to researchers clarifying how their values, beliefs, assumptions, and philosophical orientation may have come into play during the research process. The researcher's positions have been addressed in section 6.1.3 of this chapter.

Building on Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for establishing trustworthiness and arguing that causal explanation is not incompatible with an interpretivist or constructivist stance, Maxwell (2004b) proposed three groups of strategies that qualitative researchers could use to understand causal relationships. He stated:

First, there are strategies that are generally associated with quantitative or variance approaches but that are nonetheless legitimate and feasible for developing and accessing causal claims in qualitative research. Second, there are strategies based on the direct observation or indirect identification of causal processes. Third, there are strategies that are useful in developing alternative explanations of the results and deciding between these. (p. 251)

For instance, Maxwell (2004b) proposed that qualitative researchers can use interventions whereby the use of a control group is not necessary. Central to understanding the causal relationship is the researcher's detailed account of any change processes that are observed. He also advocates for the use of comparison as can be conducted with multi-case or multi-site studies. Furthermore, the use of such techniques as intensive, long-term involvement, thick and rich description, negative case analysis, and searching from

discrepant evidence, as examples, can contribute to causal understandings. In essence, “adequate causal explanations in the social sciences depend on the in-depth understanding of meanings, contexts, and processes that qualitative research can provide” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 655).

#### **6.2.4.4 *Validity in mixed methods***

Due to the contemporary infancy of MMR, the view of what constitutes validity in MMR remains somewhat tenuous. For instance, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) suggested the term *legitimation* be used as a substitute for the word validity within mixed methods. They relate legitimation as being integral to all aspect of the research process - “by validity we mean that a research study, its parts, the conclusions drawn, and the applications based on it can be of high or low quality (p. 48). In contrast, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) have placed more emphasis on design quality and interpretive vigour used during the research process.

Creswell and Plano Clarke (2011) define validity in mixed methods “as employing strategies to address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging and connecting of quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination” (p. 239). They noted that although inferences can be generated from each strand of data collected, when the researcher connects the strands, he or she is engaging in making what is called meta-inferences. This means, for example, when qualitative data is used to explain a strand of quantitative data the researcher needs to consider if the qualitative data provides a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation than the

quantitative results. To increase the validity of a mixed methods study, the scholars recommend a number of techniques on top of the techniques that are advocated for both qualitative and quantitative research. A full list of potential threats on the merging and connecting of data have been identified by Creswell and Plano Clarke (2011, 240-243). For the purposes of this study, the strategies employed are described below.

- (1) The same students interviewed were the same students who completed the study survey.
- (2) Both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered contributed to answering the study's research questions (see Figure 6.1).
- (3) Ample participant quotes were provided to support the qualitative data.
- (4) An attempt to resolve any divergent results was made.
- (5) Each mixed methods question was addressed in the study.
- (6) Equal weight was provided to the quantitative and qualitative data, which matched the study's design.
- (7) The results of the study are intended to advocate through a social science lens, that is, they are to promote equity.
- (8) It was specified how each strand of data would be used in the study.

## **6.3 Research Ethics**

### **6.3.1 Research approval**

This project was reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Appendix A). Permission to conduct this study was also obtained from the NLESD (Appendix B).

Finally, permission was granted from the ANC to include staff from their organization in this research (Appendix C).

### **6.3.2 Informed consent**

Data were collected based on the principles of informed consent. As part of the informed consent process, all participants were notified in writing about the purpose of the study, the benefits of the study, their role in the study, that their participation was voluntary, and that they had the choice of withdrawing from the study up until a clearly stated end date. After this date, participants could no longer withdraw the data that they had voluntarily provided through their participation. Additionally, the participants were informed about any potential risks that may occur as a result of their participation (Creswell, 2008; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Participants did not receive any incentives for their participation and all participants provided written consent for their participation.

### **6.3.3 Participant anonymity**

To ensure the anonymity of the study's participants, adequate steps were taken to protect their identities. These steps are in line with Tri-council's policy statement regarding ethical conduct for research involving humans, which states that published documents must remove any identifying information that may compromise the privacy and confidentiality of research participants (Government of Canada, 2018). First, all participants are identified using pseudonyms. The student participants were given the option of choosing their own pseudonym, which many did. The researcher chose a pseudonym for those students who did not choose their own. The researcher also assigned

pseudonyms for all of the adult participants in this study. Due to the sensitive nature of the research and information shared by many of the educators and community service worker participants in this study and coupled with the small size of St. John's where many individuals are well known and easily identifiable, the researcher also decided to randomly assign each educator and service worker a gender as a means of further protecting identities. Even with these protections, the researcher made it clear to the participants that he could not guarantee anonymity.

#### **6.3.4 Risks to the participants**

Many former refugees have experienced stressful episodes and challenges in their lives and there was the potential that during the interview process that some of the interview questions asked to the students could have trigger adverse memories. Although the purpose of this study was not to focus on past negative experiences, there was a possibility that the students may voluntarily talk about such episodes and could have experienced upsetting emotional and psychological feelings. To prevent any emotional and psychological risks the students were told prior to the interview that they were entitled to share only information that they felt comfortable sharing and that if they did not feel comfortable answering a question that they could just respond that they did not want to answer the question. They were also told that they had the right to end the interview at any time. Also, should the researcher have noticed that a student was experiencing emotional or psychological stress a plan was in place to refer the student to a school counsellor if the student wished to talk to someone.

There were social risks associated with this study. St. John's is a relatively small city where it is often difficult to conceal an individual's identity. This was especially true for many of the teachers, school staff, and community workers who were interviewed because often there are only a limited number of people working in particular positions (e.g., there were only five LEARN teachers in the district at the time of this study). To protect these individuals from being identified they were provided with pseudonyms to be used in all publicly disseminated reports. Also, the study's results and discussion are presented, whenever possible, in a generalized form rather than attributed to specific individuals. Finally, the participants were given a chance to review their interview transcripts and revise or remove any statements they made during interviews.

#### **6.4 Study Limitations**

There are a few limitations related to this study that need to be addressed since they threaten its validity. The limitations are described below along with an explanation of how the researcher attempted to minimize them when possible.

One limitation of the quantitative strand of this study was the overall sample size used. The sample size was relatively small, which reduces the power of the test and consequently increases the chances of making a Type II errors (Shadish et al., 2002). Although Type II errors are not considered as important as Type I errors, they are still of concern. The small sample size also limited the ability of the researcher to conduct more advance statistical procedures to account for any possible covariates that could have influenced the results (e.g., number of years living in St. John's and/or Canada). The use of a larger sample would have negated these limitations.

From a qualitative standpoint, the researcher considered himself to be that of an *outsider* (Merriam, 2009) to the case. For instance, the researcher had never worked within the NLESD or EECD in any capacity which meant that he had limited prior knowledge with regards to some of the contextual conditions of the case (e.g., the process of identifying students with special needs) that arose during the research process. This lack of insider knowledge meant that the researcher often had difficulty generating meaning from some of the data. To overcome this deficit, however, the researcher used a couple of strategies to assist with meaning making. One was to conduct follow up interviews with particular participants to clarify any non-understandings, and the second was to consult with other insiders whom the researcher personally knew but were not a part of this study. These checks and balances can be seen as a form of peer debriefing whereby the researcher relied on individuals outside the study to review aspects of the research to uncover any taken for granted assumptions or perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



## CHAPTER 7

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### Results: Students' Basic Psychological Needs

This chapter provides insights into the first two research questions of this study. Findings are presented in four different sections, each of which explores the study's research questions in relation to student competence, student relatedness, teacher-relatedness, and autonomy. For the quantitative analyses, twenty-five students with refugee backgrounds (7 junior high school students and 18 high school students) and 22 of their Canadian background peers (10 junior high school students and 12 high school students) completed the study questionnaire. Missing data was determined to be missing completely at random (MCAR) through analysis with Little's MCAR test (Chi-square = 321.83,  $df = 303$ ,  $\alpha = .22$ ). Missing data values were subsequently generated using Expectation Maximization.

2x2 factorial ANOVAs were conducted to examine the relationship of status (i.e., students with refugee backgrounds and Canadian background students) and school level (i.e., junior high and high school) on students' psychological needs. Residual analyses were conducted to test for the assumptions of the two-way ANOVAs. Outliers were assessed by inspection of a boxplot, normality was assessed using Shapiro-Wilk's normality test for each cell of the design, and homogeneity of variances were assessed by Levene's test. All outliers were retained for the analyses since it was determined that the responses were legitimate, and their exclusion would not substantially alter the outcomes of the tests. All means and standard deviations are provided in Table 7.1.

**Table 7. 1**

Means and Standard Deviations for Study Variables

Variable	Refugee Background Students		Canadian Background Students	
	M	SD	M	SD
Competence				
Junior High School	3.54	1.00	1.63	0.91
High School	3.35	1.14	1.90	0.87
Autonomy				
Junior High School	4.07	1.21	3.43	1.40
High School	3.63	1.65	4.15	1.55
Teacher Relatedness				
Junior High School	2.64	1.61	2.30	1.41
High School	2.74	1.23	2.60	1.14
Student Relatedness				
Junior High School	4.32	1.00	2.10	1.10
High School	2.90	1.59	2.31	1.01

Note. Higher scores indicate a lower level of need satisfaction. M = mean; SD = standard deviation

Next, using the words of the students and other qualitative data sources, an interpretative overview of the perceived need satisfaction of the students with refugee backgrounds in relation to their schooling experiences is provided. The qualitative data served as sources of triangulation to corroborate the quantitative data. Finally, the merging and mixing of all of data was used to provide a wholistic understanding of students' need satisfaction.

## 7.1 Competence

For competence, one outlier was detected from the survey responses. Normality was violated for one cell of the design (Canadian background junior high students;  $p =$

.004); however, ANOVAs are robust to this violation and non-normality does not affect type I error rates substantially (Maxwell & Delaney, 2004; Shadish et al., 2002). There was homogeneity of variances ( $p = .72$ ). The interaction effect between status and school level on competence was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 43) = 0.54$ ,  $p = .47$ , partial  $\eta = .01$ . Therefore, an analysis of the main effect for status was performed, which indicated that it was statistically significant,  $F(1, 43) = 28.94$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta = .40$ . Pairwise comparisons revealed a mean difference of 1.68 (95% CI 1.05 to 2.31),  $p < .001$  between refugee background and Canadian background students. The main effect for school level was not significant,  $F(1, 43) = 0.02$ ,  $p = .89$ , partial  $\eta < .01$ . with a mean difference of 0.04 (95% CI -0.59 to 0.67),  $p = .89$  between junior high and high school students with refugee backgrounds.

One of the reoccurring themes that emerged from the qualitative data was that students often faced adversity when they were placed in mainstream classes when they first arrived in NL. Students noted that they had difficulty understanding their teachers, following the curriculum, participating in the classroom activities, and completing assigned work. As an example, Abdul, a current high school student who arrived in Canada as a junior high school student, talked a little about his junior high experience. He also made a comparison between his current situation and past situation.

**Abdu:** [In junior high] I went to the regular classes but didn't understand anything. I just sit there and do nothing.

**Researcher:** You just sat there and did nothing?

**Abdu:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** How did that make you feel?

**Abdu:** Like I didn't speak English, so I was just sitting and watching.

**Researcher:** Okay. How did you feel inside?

**Abdu:** Yeah, like, it's not good. We are supposed to stay in the LEARN class and learn about the subject before we take – like, like what we are doing now with [the high school LEARN teacher]. Like we take a science and social studies with him.

**Researcher:** So, you think it is better here?

**Abdu:** Yeah.

From the conversation, you can see that Abdu was immediately placed in science and social studies mainstream classes while in junior high since the junior high system does not provide these classes through the LEARN curriculum. In contrast, the high school LEARN curriculum does include these subjects and Abdu felt that this was better for him. A similar experience was described by Anjal. Anjal arrived in Canada during elementary school and was placed in a mainstream grade six class since there is no LEARN curriculum for elementary schooling. In describing her experience, she also noted how lost she felt and the difficulty she had in asking for help.

**Anjal:** Like, first time I came I didn't know how to sit or do... [Hesitation]

**Researcher:** How did you feel?

**Anjal:** So nervous, how to say for help. I just sit and so quiet and when the teacher came and ask, "Do you need some help?" I don't know what to say. I just say 'umm'.

Demi, who arrived in Canada three years ago, also talked about the differences she experienced in her LEARN class versus the mainstream classes. It is evident from the following exchange that some mainstream teachers were providing her with tasks beyond

her capabilities while her LEARN teacher was able to scaffold the learning tasks to meet her needs.

**Demi:** Some teachers don't understand your problem, but she [her LEARN teacher] do anything to help you.

**Researcher:** Like what kind of problem?

**Demi:** Like if you have work that you can't do, she will be understanding, and she will give you something easier and then give you the hard one. In the other classes, if everyone has to do it you have to do it.

Many of the students also highlighted language barriers as an impediment when they were placed in mainstream classes. Etu remarked, "Even when the teachers speak slowly, I think it is fast and I don't understand. Like, you can speak 100 words and I can only take 20 words." Other students expressed the same sentiment. Etu stated, "Science is too difficult. I can't understand the teacher because he speaks too fast." and Fikru commented, "The teachers talk too fast, and I can't understand. It's hard for me to explain and use English in test." Anjal, who has now been in NL for four years, noted that English still remains a difficulty. When asked, what is your biggest challenge now as a student she responded, "Like, learning English. Because sometimes we don't understand, like sometimes people speak so fast that we don't understand. One final example highlights the long-term challenge associated with language ability. GTR, a high school student who came to Canada over ten years, went through the elementary and junior high systems in NL and talked about his early struggles and how language still impacts his academics. He said:

**GTR:** I didn't do all of my work in class because I didn't know how to do it and I was stressed out. And they would think that I just didn't want to do it, but it was hard for me to read the sheets and answer the questions.

**Researcher:** Was it related to your English ability?

**GTR:** Yeah, my reading and writing.

**Researcher:** So, even in JH you had some difficulties with English?

**GTR:** Yes, I still do now a little bit, but I am getting through it.

Another theme that emerged from the data was that many students require a lot of additional support to complete their classroom work and assignments. For instance, two junior high school students, Demi and Anjal, indicated that they attended an after-school tutoring program called *Raise the Grade* that is offered by the St. John's Boys and Girls Club to get the help they needed to complete school assignments. In the high school, many of the students attend an after-school tutoring program, which is located on the school grounds and sponsored by the ANC (e.g., they provide pizza for the group and bus passes for those students that need them to get home). Usually, two teachers are there to provide support and a number of other students volunteer to help students in need. The researcher also volunteered for the program for approximately six months.

From the researcher's various observations, the students' needs for additional academic support was evident. For instance, on multiple occasions, the researcher witnessed former LEARN students, that is, students who were now fully mainstreamed, come to one of the junior high LEARN teachers asking for help with their assignments. Often, it was because they could not fully understand the directions of the assignment or figure out what they were expected to do. The issue of language was also evident in the after-school tutoring program. As the researcher was working with various students, he

noticed that many of their issues stemmed from the fact that they simply did not have an extensive enough vocabulary to decipher the academic language being used.

During an additional incident, the researcher accompanied a grade eight LEARN student to a mainstream math class. Although the student was considered a LEARN student, it was deemed that his math proficiency was adequate enough to attend mainstream math classes. For this particular class the teacher was reviewing a math assignment by going through each question step-by-step. The researcher noticed that the student he was accompanying had only completed three of the 25 questions on the assignment. The researcher asked the student why he had not completed the assignment and the student responded, “I don’t understand.” For the remainder of class, the researcher worked with the student on the assignment questions. It was evident that the student had some understanding for the simpler questions but could not complete the more difficult questions without assistance. It also took the student a long time to process the questions and work out a solution. Without the researcher’s assistance during this class, it is more than likely that the student would not have completed much more of the assignment. There was only one teacher in the classroom, and she stood at the front of the class for the length of the period solving the questions one by one. There was very little interaction between the teacher and the students, and the LEARN student simply did not have the English language capacity or math skills needed to follow along.

An exchange during an interview with one high school student exemplifies the impact that a lack of support can have on students’ motivation to complete their work. That is, if they do not feel competent, they are more than likely to withdraw than engage.

**Researcher:** What’s the biggest challenge for you as a student?

**Hamdi:** To finish high school.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Hamdi:** For me, because I don't study a lot. When I want to do something, I give up. All the time I give up.

**Researcher:** Why do you give up?

**Hamdi:** Because when you don't have support I give up.

**Researcher:** But don't your teachers support you?

**Hamdi:** Yes, but when I am by myself, I give up. And like my parents, they cannot help me because they don't speak English.

The researcher also witnessed several students who engaged in avoidance behaviours to refrain from attending mainstream classes. For instance, they would plead with the LEARN teacher to stay in the LEARN classroom once a period had finished and were now required to move on to a mainstream class. Some would also try and buy as much time as possible, for example, by pretending that they had forgotten a book or needed to go to their locker before they could go to class.

## 7.2 Student-relatedness

The analysis of student relatedness from the student surveys detected five outliers and there was a violation of normality for one cell of the design (Canadian background high school students;  $p = .046$ ). There was homogeneity of variances ( $p = .13$ ). A statistically significant interaction between status and school level,  $F(1, 43) = 6.97$ ,  $p = .047$ , partial  $\eta = .09$ , was detected. Therefore, analysis of simple main effects for student relatedness was performed with statistical significance receiving Bonferroni adjustment



and being accepted at the  $p < .025$  level. There was a statistically significant difference in mean student relatedness scores between refugee background high school students compared to refugee background junior high school students,  $F(1, 43) = 6.11, p = .02$ , partial  $\eta = .12$ , with the high school students reporting more student relatedness. The mean difference was 1.42 (95%CI, 0.26 to 2.58). No statistically significant difference was found between the junior high and high school Canadian background students,  $F(1, 43) = 0.19, p = .70$ , partial  $\eta < .01$ . The mean difference was 0.21 (95%CI, -0.90 to 1.33),  $p = .70$ .

Additionally, there was a statistically significant difference in mean student relatedness scores between junior high students with refugee backgrounds and junior high Canadian background students,  $F(1, 43) = 12.24, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta = .12$ , with the students with refugee backgrounds reporting less student relatedness. The mean difference was 2.22 (95%CI, 0.94 to 3.5),  $p < .001$ . In contrast, no statistically significant difference was found when comparing high school students with refugee backgrounds and Canadian background students,  $F(1, 43) = 1.51, p < .27$ , partial  $\eta = .03$ . The mean difference was 0.59 (95%CI, -0.38 to 1.60),  $p < .27$ .

One major theme that emerged from the qualitative data that supports the quantitative analyses is that the high school students seem to be socially more connected to their school and report more student relatedness. Abdu, who attended one of the junior high schools and was now attending the high school, commented that he has many more friends at school now than he did when he was in junior high. He also noted the

difference in culture and how the high school tended to be more welcoming and safer.

These thoughts are expressed in the following exchange with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Do you have a lot of friends in this school?

**Abdu:** A lot.

**Researcher:** Do you have more friends here at this school than Everton?

**Abdu:** Yes, I only had 4 in Everton, but here I have more than 20.

**Researcher:** Why do you think that is?

**Abdu:** Because there was not a lot of newcomers from country and stuff. It is better than Everton. Like in Everton many people talk bad about you and say bad words to you.

**Researcher:** Did you tell anyone about it?

**Abdu:** We talked one day with the principal in the office. We talked to them one time.

**Researcher:** And what did they do?

**Abdu:** She said like she talk to them and they not talk to us anymore.

**Researcher:** And did the problems stop?

**Abdu:** There was some people that call us the 'N' word you know.

**Researcher:** Yes, but did it stop.

**Abdu:** That was the last month in Everton.

**Researcher:** Do you feel safe at this school?

**Abdu:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** You never have any worries?

**Abdu:** No.

**Researcher:** Have you ever had any bad experiences here at this school?

**Abdu:** No, just at the other school.

**Researcher:** Did you have many bad experiences, like where people were calling you names, and you got into fights?

**Abdu:** It happened twice, but it happened a lot to my friends.

Several of the other students who attended both junior high but are now high school students shared Abdu's sentiment. They all said that they preferred Haywood High School over their previous school, Everton Junior High. They noted that they had more friends and that all of the students were "friendlier".

An exchange with Fikru also highlighted the positive culture that existed in the high school, and even though he had yet to make any Canadian born friends, he felt welcome.

**Researcher:** Do you have many friends here at this school?

**Fikru:** Yeah. I have lots of friends.

**Researcher:** Do you have any Canadian born friends?

**Fikru:** No, sir. I don't. But we play together or do something together, but they are not really my friend.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Fikru:** Because when I come, I don't speak English and I am shy or something.

**Researcher:** Are the Canadian born kids friendly in school.

**Fikru:** Yeah, they are nice. But like, last year I had gym and there was nobody like black people. Just I was black people. They all play together, no problem.

**Researcher:** So, you felt included. They included you in the activities.

**Fikru:** Yeah, no problem.

**Researcher:** Did you feel different because of the colour of your skin?

**Fikru:** No. They look at me as the same as white people.

Although Fikru noted that he felt accepted despite his minority status, other students explicitly stated that their ethnicity and lack of English proficiency were barriers to building relationships. Here is an excerpt from the transcribed interview with Soso about attending mainstream classes:

**Researcher:** How are your other classes when you are not in LEARN? Do you like those classes?

**Soso:** No, when I am there, I feel shy. I feel like I am not Canadian, I feel bad. Like all the guys and girls, they are Canadian, but I am different.

**Researcher:** Do the other students talk to you in the other classes?

**Soso:** Some girls.

Later in the conversation, she mentioned, “I don’t like school because I don’t have friends, like I don’t have a best friend.” It is important to note that Soso had previously attended two other junior high schools during the 2016-2017 school year, Everton and another school. While at Everton she mentioned that she had lots of foreign friends (i.e., students not originally from NL) and that was why she loved the school. In her current school, she was just one of a small group of students with refugee backgrounds and she seemed to feel rather isolated and alone.

Etu and Demi also made references to the fact that their sense of relatedness extends mostly to other students with foreign backgrounds. Demi, who is Black, mentioned she had “lots of friends, but with people like you (the researcher is a White

Canadian of European ancestry) a few, but people like me I have lots of them. Likewise, Etu, who is also Black, said that he knew Canadian born individuals from church, but he did not consider them exactly to be friends. The following dialogue provides his point of view:

**Researcher:** Do you have any Canadian born friends?

**Etu:** Yeah, but not in school. In church. But, you know, we can sit and talk with them, but the relationship is not the same you know.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Etu:** Why I say this is because I can go to Ranad's house, Randa can come to my house and we can take lunch together in the same place, but I never take lunch with White people.

Later in the conversation, the researcher asked Etu about the Canadian born students in his class. Like Fikru, he acknowledged that the students are welcoming and helpful during classes (e.g., they will help him understand some words he does not understand), but it is also evident from the totality of his interview that integration and relatedness is limited to short interactions and that deep and meaningful relationships with the Canadian born students do not exist. The researcher's observations corroborate these finds as well. In particular, he noticed that the LEARN students, and some other ethnic immigrants, tend to congregate together during lunch periods and recess. There seems to be limited mixing between the groups. This was not always the case, but rather the norm. In the high school, there also seemed to be larger groups of students hanging out together while in the junior high where the researcher spent much of his time the students typically attached themselves to smaller groups consisting of three or four students.

### 7.3 Teacher-relatedness

For teacher relatedness two outliers were detected from the student survey results and the assumption of normality was violated for one cell of the design (Canadian background junior high students;  $p = 0.03$ ). There was homogeneity of variances ( $p = .87$ ). The interaction effect between status and school level on teacher relatedness was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 43) = 0.07, p = .80$ , partial  $\eta < .01$ . The main effect for status was performed, which was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 43) = 0.35, p = .59$ , partial  $\eta = .01$ . The main effect for school level was also not significant,  $F(1, 43) = 0.25, p = .62$ , partial  $\eta = .01$ .

From the qualitative data, with the exception of a few instances, the students had very nice things to say about their teachers and their relationships with them. The students talked about how they felt comfortable approaching their teachers for help, how the teachers treated them with kindness, and how the teachers understood their needs. Below are a few of the example responses to questions the researcher asked them about their teachers and whether they thought they were caring and/or welcoming.

Everyone is so sweet and nice. And in my country, they are always hitting people. (Anjal)

Yeah, all my teachers, the gym teachers and my art teacher are very nice. (Abdu)

Here is very good because many people help you. Here they give me extra time to do things because it is not my language. (Fikru)

Because when I come here [LEARN teacher], he teach us very good. He don't leave us until we understand. (Hamdi)

Many of the other students made comparisons between their current teachers and the teachers they had in their home countries and mentioned that one of positives in Canada

is that the teachers do not hit students. For example, Arman said, “The teachers here are good. They don’t hit you.” In total, four students mentioned hitting as a common discipline practice used in their native countries and felt that it was good that the teachers in Canada did not hit students.

It became particularly evident through the student interviews and researcher’s observations that the LEARN teachers took on a particularly important role in the lives of the vast majority of the students with refugee backgrounds, whether they were enrolled in the LEARN program or not. When the researcher asked the students about whom they could go to in their school for advice or help the LEARN teachers were almost always named. Some students did make negative comments about a few of their other teachers; however, the researcher only identified one negative comment directed towards a LEARN teacher. The following dialogue the researcher had with two students highlights how most of the students felt about the LEARN teachers in their schools:

**Demi:** I feel comfortable with her.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Demi:** Because I feel like...

**Joseline:** [Teacher Name] is nice and we feel comfortable with her. If you have a problem, she will help you. And she gives good advice. Yeah.

**Demi:** Yeah, she was like my first teacher and I am not in her class anymore, but she is my favorite teacher. She taught me a lot.

**Researcher** [question directed towards Joseline]: Why do you like her so much, because you have never had her as a teacher?

**Joseline:** Because the day I come for my orientation she was the one that was happy to see us, and I like her.

**Researcher:** Is she different than the other teachers?

**Demi:** Yeah, she is. Very different.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Demi:** [Teacher Name], some teachers don't understand your problem, but she do anything to help you.

While volunteering in one of junior high schools, there were several occasions when the researcher witnessed former LEARN students who had since moved on to high school return to visit the junior high LEARN teacher. They were genuinely happy to visit the teacher, chat, and share their on-going lives with the teacher. It was evident from their expressions (e.g., smiles) and interactions (e.g., a warm embrace) that the students really valued the relationship that they had built with this particular teacher.

The students also talked highly about their relationships with the adults from the ANC (i.e., the SWIS workers and Youth Engagement Officer) who worked in the schools. In the junior high schools, the SWIS workers and Youth Engagement Officer, with the help of a few teachers, established Friendly United Nations (FUN) clubs that offered lunchtime activities for students once a week. Many of the LEARN students attended, and as a result they established caring relationships with the ANC personnel. In one of the junior high schools, the SWIS worker also had an office. On the days that he visited the school during lunch it was common to see the students hanging out there. It was obviously a place that the students felt comfortable. During an interview the researcher had with Demi, who was now in her third year at Everton Junior High, she even mentioned that she thought the SWIS worker was the school's guidance counselor and was the person you go to if you have any problems or need help.



Despite the importance of the SWIS workers, one of the big differences between the junior high schools and the high school is that the high school SWIS worker is permanently stationed in the school and present almost every day. In contrast, the junior high SWIS workers (there were two during the 2016-2017 school year) are responsible for many schools, including some elementary schools, and thus have a limited presence in each of the junior high schools. This difference was noted by Abdu when the researcher asked why the high school SWIS worker was so popular with the students (the question was prompted on the researcher's observations and from the numerous times the SWIS worker's name came up in previous interviews).

**Abdu:** Because he helps us a lot. And like this year, he took us to school and showed us our classes and where we go.

**Researcher:** You also had a SWIS worker in BR. Is there any difference between here and there?

**Abdu:** Yes, we had [SWIS worker's name] and [Youth Engagement Officer's name], but they were only there one or two times a week.

**Researcher:** So, [SWIS worker's name] is here more.

**Abdu:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** Is that better?

**Abdu:** Yeah, because we can get more help, like if we have questions every day.

The high school SWIS worker also had an office in the school and the researcher noticed that during most lunch breaks (some days the SWIS worker worked outside of the school) his office was full of students. This included students with refugee backgrounds, immigrant students and a few Canadian born students. In the office there was a couch where students would sit and chat and a large table with chairs where students would

often play games (e.g., card games). Even on the days when the SWIS worker was off-site, the students would congregate by his office. It was certainly a focal point of the school for many of the students with refugee backgrounds where relationships between students, and between the students and the SWIS worker, were fostered. It is also worth noting that the researcher often noticed that it was the male students that tended to congregate in the SWIS workers office. While female students sometimes dropped in for a few minutes, the males would spend a lot of their time there and interact as a large group.

The researcher also noticed that many of the high school students also established strong relationships with the school's two ESL teachers. One of the ESL teachers usually kept her classroom open during lunch breaks and this provided another place for students to congregate and mingle. Many of the students also came to get some extra help with their schoolwork. She also dedicated one of her prep periods to offering extra assistance to the students. The other ESL teacher established a diversity dancing club in school and provided a lot of her time to the students. During the student interviews, both teachers were highly spoken of and the students indicated that they were adults they could approach to seek help and guidance.

One surprising finding for the researcher was the lack of engagement by most of the junior high schools' guidance counselors. The level of engagement of one school's guidance counselor came up during an interview with a teacher. She stated:

I would say, if you ask them who their guidance counsellor is, they would say what is a guidance counsellor. If you showed them her face or you brought her in, not one of those kids could tell you who she is, what she does, or what her name is. They may have seen her, they will probably say, oh yes, we saw this Ms., but like we don't know who she is.

As further support, the following exchange occurred with another teacher at the same school:

**Teacher:** I feel that if we had more personnel in the building it would be great, in terms of additional LEARN teachers and IRTs and I don't know if there are any policies around guidance counselors, but if there was someone here that could talk to them about their mental health or whatever issue they need addressed.

**Researcher:** Why, you do have a guidance counselor, no?

**Teacher:** We do have a guidance counselor, but um, to my knowledge I don't think any of the students have ever spoken to the guidance counselor.

**Researcher:** Why do you think that is?

**Teacher:** Again, I just think it's someone they are not familiar with; it's not someone they feel comfortable with. Like there is one student in particular who is really struggling with their mental health and it wasn't until we spoke with the parent that we got a full understanding of the situation, um, so myself and that teacher had to come up with some outside resources to help that student, whereas, if there was something in the school that could support that student it would be fabulous.

Based on the teachers' claims, the researcher decided to ask a few students at that school some questions related to their school counselor. The following is an exchange that occurred between the researcher and two students:

**Researcher:** Do you know who your school's guidance counselor is?

**Joseline:** Yeah, but I don't know her name.

**Demi:** Who?

**Joseline:** The one, she came to math class.

**Demi:** Ms. Wallace [pseudonym]?

**Joseline:** No, in the math class. She helped you one day.

**Demi:** That women. Is that her? Is she the school counselor?

**Joseline:** Yeah.

**Demi:** I didn't know that we had a school counselor.

**Researcher:** You didn't know?

**Demi:** I didn't know. Is she like a volunteer or something?

**Researcher:** No, she works here to help students if they have problems or need advice.

**Demi:** I thought that was [SWIS worker].

Here is an exchange with another student who was also attending the same school and who has been a student there for three years:

**Researcher:** Do you know who the guidance counselor is in your school?

**Anjal:** What does that mean?

**Researcher:** The guidance counselor is a person who helps and advises students if they need it?

**Anjal:** Oh.

The students' perspectives seem to confirm the teachers' claims that their school guidance counselors tend to have little involvement with the students with refugee backgrounds.

The researcher also spoke with teachers at other schools about the engagement of their schools' guidance counselors (note: no guidance counselors from the junior high schools accepted an invitation to participate in this study). Their responses were similar with the teacher specifying that they have very little to no contact with the students with refugee backgrounds. One teacher stated, "They are not really involved. I let them know what is going on, and um, but they don't know these students very well ... the students are doing well, but when I need help, I do seek them out. But they haven't been

proactive.” A teacher from another school had the following conversation with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Are you in touch with the school’s guidance counselor much?

**Teacher:** I am part of the special services team, which includes all of the IRTs, and we have meetings, but since I have been here, I think we have had two meetings. And to be honest, I don’t think she knows my students’ names. Well, I don’t really talk to her. If I had an issue, I feel like I could go talk to her and I think she would deal with it, but I have really not had a reason to go and talk to her because so far, my students have been – like I haven’t had any big concerns.

**Researcher:** Do you think it would have been nice to have the GC come in a talk to the students?

**Teacher:** I think it would be very nice and I think she should know their names and I think she should come in and see them on somewhat of a regular basis just so that she knows their names and that they know that they could talk to her if needed and if they knew who she was and her reason for being here.

In contrast to the junior high schools, the high school guidance counselor was earnestly involved in the lives of the students with refugee backgrounds. He was mentioned by the students as someone they could approach for help and guidance. As previously mentioned, the guidance counselor was also involved with the international club - meaning he had frequent contact with many of the students. The guidance counselor also works with many of the students to host an annual diversity assembly at the school and has in the past worked with students to create a performance that addresses racism and promotes multiculturalism. The involvement of the high school guidance counselor is addressed further in Chapters 8 and 9.

#### **7.4 Autonomy**

For autonomy, no outliers were detected, residuals were normally distributed ( $p > .05$ ), and there was homogeneity of variances ( $p = .77$ ). The interaction effect between

status and school level on autonomy was not statistically significant,  $F(1, 43) = 1.53, p = .22$ , partial  $\eta = .03$ . An analysis of main effects indicated neither status,  $F(1, 43) = 0.02, p = .90$ , partial  $\eta < .01$ , nor school level,  $F(1, 43) = 0.09, p = .77$ , partial  $\eta < .01$ , were statistically significant.

One aspect of autonomy is that individuals feel like they can be themselves when they are in any particular environment (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003). The qualitative data concerning this aspect of student autonomy, as provided by the students, was mixed. Whereas some students felt that they could be themselves and that the other students and teachers accepted them for who they are, others did not share similar views. For instance, some of the students were afraid to speak during class or share their thoughts and opinions because they were afraid the other students would make fun of them. In Demi's case, she said:

I don't really feel comfortable talking with people like you. Like, my English is a little different than them so maybe they will laugh or not hang out with me, I don't know. But I am starting to feel more comfortable around them.

Soso shared a similar sentiment during her interview, but she was referring to when she speaks her native language. She said, "They are not mean, but I know that when I speak my language [they] sit down behind me and laughing. I know it." In both instances, there is an underlying current of the students not feeling accepted for being who they truly are. As a consequence, it limits their engagement with others and prevents them from having a voice whereby they could freely share their opinions and thoughts.

A few other students mentioned that they were often bullied because they did not speak English or because they dressed differently. Abdu mentioned that when he was in

junior high school the Canadian students would follow him and say “bad words” to him.

GTR also talked a little about his past and stated:

I got bullied because my skin was dark ... people would say things to me, and I didn't understand. Later when I understood they were saying bad things to me I would say stuff back and we would get in fights. They would make fun of the way I was dressed and stuff ... you know!

Hamdi also shared stories of being bullied and noted that he often felt he was treated differently by many of his teachers because he did not speak English and was from Africa. The above examples paint a picture of the students feeling unwelcome due to who they were as individuals. All three students were now in high school and when asked if they felt the situation was better in their current school, they all agreed.

During an interview with Demi and Joseline (they were interviewed together), the researcher was inquiring about whether they felt their cultures were accepted by the other students in their school. Although the students did not share much, it was their body language and gestures that did most of the talking. Here is the exchange:

**Researcher:** Do you think people accept you and your culture?

**Joseline:** No, but you might not know what someone is thinking about you.

**Researcher:** Has anyone ever said anything bad to you?

**Joseline:** No. [Hesitation]

**Demi:** [Giggle, sideways glance at Joseline]

**Researcher:** Well, I see your face (Demi's) and you look like something is on your mind.

[Hesitation – Demi shaking her head side to side]

**Researcher:** That's okay, you don't have to share if you don't want to.

At this point in the interview, the researcher turned to another topic as he did not want to pressure the students even though he had a strong feeling that there was more to be told. Joseline's "No" was enough to suspect that they felt their cultures were not accepted by the Canadian background students.

Another aspect of autonomy support involves giving people a say in their lives. SDT holds that giving students choices is one way to give them this voice (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné, 2003). When the students were asked about having choices, it was evident that this support was not at all prevalent. Anjal gave this response to the researcher's question asking if student's have any choice with regards to their assignments or schoolwork: "No, I think we have to do what the teacher tell us. Choice, no, never happen." As another example, Demi mentioned that in the mainstream classes, "if everyone has to do it, you have to do it." She was referring to fact that no exceptions were made for students, which was in contrast to her experiences in LEARN where the teacher gave the students some leeway to make choices or to work on a task that was more appropriate for them. In support of Demi's remarks, the researcher noticed that the LEARN teacher did provide the students with choices. For instance, when it came to reading work, they were allowed to pick out the books they wanted to read. The teacher also had students working on large group projects whereby the students could volunteer to complete certain tasks. This allowed them to decide how they wished to contribute to the overall project.

In contrast to Demi and Anjal's remarks, the researcher did observe instances where students were afforded opportunities for choice in mainstream classes. One example involved a relatively new high school student who had come from Sudan.



During an after-school homework club session, the researcher noticed that the student was building a model of a traditional Sudanese home. Through casual conversation about the model the researcher learned that it was being constructed as an assignment for her Newfoundland and Labrador Studies class. The assignment required students to build a model of traditional NL fishing stage; however, her teacher gave her the opportunity/choice to build a model based on her cultural knowledge.

Abdu provided a different example of autonomy that related to his experiences in junior high and high school. The researcher asked him if there was anything he could have changed when he was in junior high, what would it be? He noted that in junior high there were more rules around what students could wear versus in high school. As an example, he said, “[In junior high] I couldn’t wear a hat or a hoodie, and I would change that.” For Abdu, it was important that he had the freedom to express himself through his choice of clothing.

Many of the schools’ educators also had some important input that allows for a deeper understanding of students’ sense of autonomy. One high school educator put it accordingly, “I believe that student voice here is very small in general.” With regard to choices in the curriculum, he stated, “There is not a whole lot of choice and once the general assessment is done [when students with refugee backgrounds first arrive] their courses are pretty much laid out. But that applies pretty much to every student. It is kind of prescriptive.” Another teacher had a similar view. She said:

Not having much choice - that is just part of junior high. Like, I feel that when I was a student there were more options available on what we could take and now the courses are set for them and there is probably not as much choice as they would like. Um, within the ESL classes and LEARN classes we are able to be flexible and when the students ask us questions, we are able to adapt to their

needs, but in the regular classes they can't be as flexible because they have a certain curriculum that they have to cover. (Junior High ESL teacher).

In the high school, another teacher talked about the voice that is afforded to all students in the school. She said:

I don't think we do any more or less for the refugee students than any other student in the school. The school is very responsive to student concerns. For example, we collaborated with the student council on developing our new scheduling format in the school when we changed to a semester system because many of the students expressed concerns about the pending changes. So, the students are very free when talking to their teachers about things that don't work, and the school is pretty responsive to the students' concerns. Our new Canadian students are invited to be involved in the student newspaper, every assembly is open, and they are very involved in music at the school and have a say in what songs are performed. They permeate the school and are involved like the Canadian born students are. One area of concern may be that some teachers may not be enlightened about particular students' backgrounds and not understand X or Y, or they might misunderstand a student's intentions or performance. But generally, I feel they are awarded the same voice as all other students.

From the educators' statements and the data from the students, it appears that student autonomy supports remain limited within schools. It also appears that this may be the case for all students.

## **7.5 Summary**

This chapter has presented findings from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered during this study with regards to students with refugee backgrounds' psychological need satisfaction. The quantitative data showed that students with refugee backgrounds felt significantly less competent than their Canadian background peers. The quantitative findings are supported by the qualitative data. The students mainly talked about two main barriers that would have a negative influence on their sense of competence. These were consequential language barriers and being placed in mainstream

classes whereby the curriculum was beyond their capability. It also became evident that even after several years of schooling, many students with refugee backgrounds still require substantial assistance, to which many were not receiving. Both the quantitative and qualitative support the notion that both female and male students in all grades lack a sense of academic competence.

In terms of teacher-relatedness, the qualitative data showed that the students for the most part had a positive view of their teachers. They reported their teachers as being welcoming, kind, and supportive. This was particularly reported for the LEARN teachers with whom the students had built valued relationships. There were some students that reported negative experiences; however, most of these experiences tended to be from earlier years. The quantitative data are in line with the qualitative data as the results on the questionnaire indicated that the students had rather positive views of their teachers.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data provide a coherent view of student-relatedness. Both sets of data indicate that it is the students with refugee backgrounds in the junior high system that have the lowest level of student-relatedness. From the qualitative data gathered, the high school students with refugee backgrounds reported that they felt more connected to and accepted by the other students in the school. This sentiment was also shared by several of the students who had previously attended junior high school in NL but were now high school students. From their perspectives, the high school tended to be more accepting and welcoming overall compared to their previous schools.

Finally, a close examination of the quantitative findings reveals that a sense of autonomy, from a descriptive standpoint, ranked as the least satisfied need by both

students with refugee backgrounds and the Canadian background students, and no significant difference was detected between the groups. A few students did provide examples of why they would be lacking a sense of autonomy, but the qualitative data provided by the students was not quite rich enough to comprehensively understand why this need seemed to score so low. The educators did provide some additional insights that do add to the understanding, however. From their perspective, schools are rather prescriptive and do not offer students an abundance of choice or a say with regards to how schools are run.

## CHAPTER 8

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### **Results: Comprehensive School Health Analysis**

This chapter addresses the third research question of this study. Using the CSH framework as a mapping tool, insights into how the EECD, NLESD, and its schools may be promoting or thwarting the basic psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds are explored through an interpretive lens. Although each component is examined separately, they are interactional with reciprocal relationships existing between them. This means that while some data have been examined in relation to one component, the data could have possibly been included within another. When needed, these interactions will be elaborated on. The qualitative data also provide some clarity around why students with refugee backgrounds tend to feel less competent than their peers, why the refugee background high school students tend to show greater student-relatedness than the junior high students with refugee backgrounds, and why male students with refugee backgrounds tend to feel more student-relatedness and a greater sense of autonomy compared to their female counterparts.

#### **8.1 The Teaching and Learning Component**

Several main themes were identified in the teaching and learning component as factors that could impact students with refugee backgrounds' psychological need satisfaction. These centered on the availability of specialized programming, attendance in mainstream classes, teacher preparedness, and educators' understanding of refugee

students' academic and social needs. Similar to the components, these themes are interwoven and reciprocally related with each other.

### **8.1.1 The LEARN Program**

Several educators indicated the importance of having the LEARN program to facilitate students' transition to mainstream classes. A clear belief emerged that without a bridging program these students would not be afforded appropriate opportunities to succeed. One teacher noted that the LEARN program has been as a "saviour" for students with refugee backgrounds since it was implemented in 2009. He added:

Before the LEARN program, we were floundering and doing a huge disservice to students. We would put new students in mainstream classes who had little to no education in their first language even. So, they were in courses like Canadian history, yet they hadn't even learned to read. So, the number that would graduate was abysmal. We are making progress, but we still have a way to go. (Mr. Walsh)

Other teachers concurred and had this to say:

The LEARN program provides them with a sense of empowerment because it meets them where they are and brings them to where they need to be. It's much more appropriate than putting them in an age-appropriate setting, which may just lead to frustration. The difference in how it enhances their sense of empowerment is huge. I think a lot of teachers try to adjust their teaching in mainstream classes to accommodate the students' needs. They do it as much as possible, but for some courses they are restricted because the courses have public exams, and they need to get that material covered. (Mr. Rideout)

I consider it essential and based on what we have seen in the past a lot of other educators in the building see it as essential because these students just can't succeed in the mainstream educational program without some sort of bridging program. Without this program they just don't succeed. Haywood has a lot of previous experience where students didn't have the program and they just floundered for a few years and finally ended up dropping out. Um, in that sense it's essential and if they want to succeed, they need to come here to graduate. (Mr. Rideout)

So, when I first started here there was no targeted program for students with educational gaps and there was only one teacher for the 70 or so students that we

had, which is similar to the number we have now. So, they would be out in mainstream math classes even though they may not have done any math for the past 4 to 5 years. The school did a lot even then but having the LEARN courses that allows them to achieve credits has resulted in huge changes in the graduation rate. (Ms. Sullivan)

The above quotes highlight the importance of the LEARN program for fostering students' academic capabilities and helping them develop a sense of competence. Without the LEARN program, students were not meeting with success and many simply dropped out of school, a sure indicator of amotivation. However, the LEARN program is providing the students with an opportunity to succeed, which Mr. Rideout described as "empowering". These findings also corroborate the students' feelings as described in Chapter 7. As Abdu pointed out, the LEARN program is important "because you can catch up on the material." Abdu further noted that now that he has gone through two years of the LEARN program, he feels ready to move on to the mainstream curriculum. The following is an exchange with Abdu that shows that he feels competent and ready to move forward:

**Researcher:** Do you have any difficulties with your courses here?

**Abdu:** No, maybe next year because I go into regular classes next year.

**Researcher:** Are you nervous about going to the regular classes?

**Abdu:** No, I'm not.

**Researcher:** How do you find the LEARN classes?

**Abdu:** They are easy.

**Researcher:** So, you think you're ready to go to the other classes?

**Abdu:** Yeah.

Another teacher, Ms. O’Neal, who spends time with the LEARN students in both the LEARN classes and mainstream classes, saw the LEARN classes as being a place where students felt comfortable and could be themselves. Her following comment highlights the importance of the LEARN program for supporting students’ basic psychological needs:

I think it is a safe haven for the students; it’s like their anchor in the school. Um, it’s a place where they are able to be themselves and talk with their friends. And I feel like in that classroom they are more likely to take risks with their language learning, whereas I don’t see that in the [mainstream] classes. You know, it can be intimidating to be in a classroom of 22 or 23 other English-speaking students, no doubt. I do feel it is essential. I don’t feel like they would have received the basic fundamentals out in the regular classroom.

Ms. O’Neal’s belief was mirrored by another LEARN teacher. She stated:

I feel like if they can come to my classroom then they can be themselves because I have seen them with me and I have seen them outside of the classroom and they just don’t act the same way. Just like the other day, when a student did a presentation in art, and she knows her teacher, but she was just so shy and nervous and timid. But I could have asked her that question and she would have come up with something right away. So, she knows this teacher and she is comfortable, but it was a whole situation where there were a lot of kids and stuff and she wasn’t comfortable.

Another educator, Mr. Walsh, talked about how the LEARN program provides the students with an environment where they feel they belong. He said, “The LEARN program in general is good in the sense that it offers them a place that they belong. They have a sense of community, so that’s really important just being comfortable in the environment.”

Overall, the vast majority of the educators viewed the LEARN program as essential since it provided the students with refugee backgrounds with a safe environment where they were able to be themselves, express their opinions, demonstrate their learning,



and socialize with other students. In essence, the LEARN classrooms fostered their basic psychological needs and provided a space that supported their wellbeing and academic development.

Although there was much praise for the LEARN program, many educators also expressed concerns about its limited availability. Issues included not offering LEARN in elementary schools; only offering LEARN language arts and math at the junior high level; and pushing students out into mainstream classes before they are ready due to a lack of LEARN space. These concerns are articulated through the following quotes:

The junior high students have a LEARN program, but many of the students are not in the program that need to be. There is only one level of LEARN and there are a number of students that are not eligible because they may be reading at a grade 3 level and other LEARN students are much weaker than that; so, they are placed in mainstream classes where they can't fully participate. (Ms. Ball)

I don't think they get what they should; they deserve more. We should be giving them LEARN science and social studies like in high school. I don't know why they have to wait until high school. It's not fair. If we could catch them up now the easier high school would be. There should also be LEARN in elementary schools. It's insane that students in grade six sit in class and don't get what they need. (Ms. Gallant)

I do think that it would be beneficial to have the science and social studies LEARN programming because again with the academic language there is a huge gap. Now, there are some students that find that environment fine, but there are others that find it very overwhelming. (Ms. Pretty)

Absolutely, they cannot fully participate in [mainstream] classrooms. Um, the junior high students have a LEARN program, but many of the students are not in the LEARN program that may need to be. There is only one level of LEARN and I have a number of students that are not eligible for LEARN because they may be reading at a grade 3 level or late grade 2 and maybe the students in LEARN are much weaker than that, so they are placed in mainstream classes and don't have the opportunity to be in the LEARN class. So, we have some students who have been in elementary for a short period and have learned how to read at a basic level and when they enter junior high, they are placed in the regular classroom. (Ms. Ball).

I think there needs to be a LEARN program in elementary because a child in grade five or six and you are a child who is just learning the alphabet and you have these children sitting in a regular classroom for hours and hours where everything is going over your head is very discouraging. The other alternative would be to have more ESL teachers so that the children can have more time because I call my refugee students ESL+ because many have gaps in their education, some have experienced trauma, and this affects their learning. And some are totally non-educated, but they sometimes have skills that the other children don't have, but the classroom teachers in most schools are so busy with the various challenges they have in their classes that they literally don't have the time to devote to these children and they often get left out. (Ms. Wallace)

### **8.1.2 Mainstream classes**

In addition to the strong belief that more LEARN programming was needed, there was a strong consensus from the educators that many of the students were being placed in mainstream classes without the necessary supports available to facilitate their active participation and academic growth. Teachers particularly noted how language difficulties often impede their participation, emphasized the lack of ESL support the students receive, and mentioned the lack of attention that is provided to the students with refugee backgrounds in general. The following quotes provide an overview of the teachers' beliefs and observations.

I do believe that they need ESL support during mainstream classes. They need ESL and mainstream content, but the problem is that we never give them both. When they get out in mainstream classes no one is focused on language at all. So, they don't make the connections between what they learned in ESL and what they are seeing in their courses. They need help making those links. And there is no one to help them because the mainstream teachers don't know the links. (Ms. Sullivan)

It's the language barrier. Sometimes they are being asked to do things that they don't really understand, so it looks like they are non-compliant. But really, they have no concept. Like one class for example, there are at least six LEARN students in that class and the teacher is teaching to the other 22 students, and that is fine, but the LEARN students are lost. (Ms. O'Neal)

The main issue is when they move out into mainstream classes to get credits, like when they take nutrition or Newfoundland studies and those courses, they don't have the supports in those classes that they have in the LEARN classes, so the teacher is just left to deal with the language barrier themselves and they probably don't have any training in ESL. So that is a difficulty sometimes. (Mr. Fleet)

Many of the students learn conversational English quite quickly, but it is the academic language that causes the main issues. And I think without appropriate ESL support – if they are working with a classroom teacher that doesn't have experience with second language learners, they may not recognize that conversational language is very different from academic language. So, there are students in my class who have been here for only six months and you can easily have a conversation with them, and they are interacting with peers and they are participating in things, but if they go sit down to read or write or do science or social studies then they don't have the language or skill set for that. (Ms. Pretty)

And a lot of the teachers, even the ones who care about the LEARN kids, feel badly that they are not fulfilling their needs. Instead of putting them in small groups or with a buddy to do simple things like showing this kid how to log into his computer, what they tend to do is put all the LEARN students together and all the Canadian students together, so they just [hesitation] and in the past when I had opportunities of going in there [mainstream classes] the LEARN kids are just sitting there, like being totally ignored. You know, just sort of being down from a galaxy far away. (Ms. Arnold)

Ms. Arnold also expressed concern about the students' wellbeing when they are included in mainstream classes without the necessary supports. She stated, "When these students are forced to go to classes that they don't have the language and skills to attend, it diminishes their sense of self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-respect. They feel stupid. They feel like they can't do the work." Ms. Arnold's observations were also corroborated by several other participants. A SWIS worker, for example, talked about how the students' "frustration is holding them back" when they are placed in mainstream classes that are beyond their capabilities, and another teacher, Ms. Ball, mentioned the negative effects she sees when students are required to complete mainstream tests and exams and receive failing grades in the "20s and 30s" (note: grades are scored out of 100

and a pass is typically a score of 50 or above). She noted, “For some of them they are motivated to get better, but for a lot of them it is frustrating. I think that is another issue that needs to be looked at.” Finally, Ms. Wallace also expressed the same sentiment. She stated:

I think this feeling of being inadequate is a big issue. The older they get the bigger the issue is. Not being able to keep up and not understanding what is going on in the classroom is very frustrating for them. And I think the feelings of inadequacy and frustration enters their lives rather quickly, and it can be a downward spiral from there.

Even when the students seem to be making excellent progress with their oral language abilities, Mr. Hines remarked that they are keenly aware of their lack of literacy skills and how this impacts them when they attend mainstream classes. He provided the following insights:

**Mr. Hines:** Language is the biggest challenge right away, but this can last for a number of years. One big misconception is that these students have perfect English, when in fact what they have is attuned social or conversational English, but their writing and literacy skills are not as developed as you hope. So, you see students demonstrate intelligence when they speak, and some of them have developed exceptional oral communication skills, but if they were asked to sit down and write an essay, they would experience a lot of difficulty.

**Researcher:** Do you think students are aware of this?

**Mr. Hines:** Yes, I see it all the time. They are extremely aware of it and perhaps overestimate their shortcomings and underestimate their competencies. I often complement my students on how their English is improving and they will respond, ‘No sir, no, my English is not good, it’s not good.’ A lot of them question themselves. You do see it affect their perceived self-esteem.

Ms. Arnold also talked about the difference between the ‘theoretical’ supports students with refugee backgrounds receive and what is actually happening in the real world. She noted that although extra supports are available to the LEARN students in

some mainstream classes through instructional resource teachers (IRT), that is, teachers who typically have special education degrees, the reality was that the IRT was often too preoccupied with other school related issues to provide the support the students with refugee backgrounds need. The following dialogue between the researcher and Ms. Arnold shows Ms. Arnold's concern regarding the IRT support that students receive during mainstream classes:

**Researcher:** Ok, why do you say theoretical?

**Ms. Arnold:** Because by her own admission, she spends very little of her time with the LEARN students. And this has been a chronic problem when it comes to that additional part of a unit, to support LEARN. Because by and large, I can tell you for a fact it's functioned to support other people in this building, other students in the building. So, it is basically other kids being serviced, or other teachers being given service on the backs of the LEARN students. So, the time that is allotted for them is diverted to other students.

**Researcher:** Who is diverting it?

**Ms. Arnold:** Usually it's an administrative decision.

**Researcher:** But this person [the IRT] has been slotted to work only with the LEARN students?

**Ms. Arnold:** That's theoretically why they are hired. Their title is .5 LEARN IRT. So, during one cycle, on paper, 0.5 of their time is spent in a room with LEARN students, either in their mainstream classes or during LEARN periods. That's on paper. Because how it plays out in reality is that when they go into those classes with LEARN students that are mainstreamed, because they are the IRT, they have to satisfy the greatest needs ... so, it's the kids who are throwing things, or the kids who are violent, or the kids who have a behavioural management plan who are getting the time and attention and the LEARN students are essentially being ignored.

When the researcher actually spoke with the IRT that Ms. Arnold was referring to, the IRT confirmed that she is often required to attend to other pressing needs within the mainstream classes and that this does take away from the time she should be dedicating to

the LEARN students. She identified the high needs of the school in general and the pressure this puts not only on her, but other teachers as well. This was a reoccurring theme that emerged throughout her interview and was summed up by her final comment:

I don't know if it is possible, but I think some consideration should be given to which schools the students are placed. Um, relating back to the issue that I said earlier, when these students come, they really have a lot of needs and they deserve to have time spent with them. I just feel placing them in a school with some many other needs, incredibly high needs – I wouldn't say at a disadvantage – but it kind of does put them at a disadvantage because if you are in a classroom and you are dealing with 14 students who are behaviourally challenged, it is kind of hard to give those students [the LEARN students] the extra support or encouragement or build a relationship with them. Do you know what I mean? I guess if there was just some consideration as to where these students are being placed. (Ms. O'Neal)

While Ms. O'Neal identified her school as being a “high needs” school, teachers from all of the other schools included in this study also identified the difficulties of attending to the needs of LEARN students when they are placed in mainstream classes. For instance, Ms. Gallant from a different junior high school noted:

So, sometimes you have classes with 25 or more students, and they have a lot of needs - some with learning needs, some with behavioural needs, and then there is just one teacher. I just find that the LEARN students are brought to the classroom and put in a desk and then they are just sitting there all day. Like, teachers help when they can, but it can be very difficult to give them the attention and focus they require. Sometimes it takes longer to explain something, and you try to do it, but then you have other students who are causing problems and it may be more pertinent if it is a safety issue or something like that. That is just the reality of being in a regular classroom and I just find that LEARN students don't get the attention.

Additionally, Mr. Knox, a mainstream math teacher at another junior high school provided this perspective:

**Mr. Knox:** Because of the inclusion model that we are following in a lot of cases up to 25% to 30% of our class could be on special services, and even with an IRT there is still not enough time to spend with these kids with learning needs. And then you add these extra LEARN students who can't even speak the same language and the time restricted academic course becomes affected. If I was to

sum it up in a sentence, a lot of teachers spend 90% of their time on 10% of the kids. So, the addition of these kids has just increased the stress on the classroom teachers, and I have to be honest, it's not a good situation, it's just not good.

**Researcher:** So, do feel these students interfering with the learning that is going on in the class for the other students?

**Mr. Knox:** Absolutely. First, the transition phase – the protocol for bringing in these LEARN students in my opinion is way too fast. The transition phase is not working. Here is why – these kids are coming into a building where they don't understand the rules, they don't understand the culture, and that puts a strain on the teacher who is trying to create a learning environment for everybody. But when a teacher feels like they can't help they feel deflated. I feel that every day. I know that I am not doing justice for some of these kids.

**Researcher:** So, teachers just don't have time to provide the support these students need, even with an IRT?

**Mr. Knox:** Yeah, even the IRTs are starting to feel the stress of having to put extra time into supporting these students. There are times now when an assessment piece can take up two or three lessons because of language barriers and behavioral issues ... To me right now, if you weight the pros and the cons, the cons are outweighing the pros in an overwhelming manner. Given the inclusion model that we are trying to follow this seems like just a further burden and everyone is suffering, from the teachers to the students. For example, I can't remember the last time I had an opportunity to challenge the academically strong students in my class. There just isn't time. This brings up another issue. You would be surprised to hear how many parents have said to me that their children are going into French immersion, even though they hate French, because the parents are trying to put them in an environment without so many needs in a class.

Despite the concerns expressed by the vast majority of the educators, a lot of them also talked about the importance of having the students included within the regular mainstream classes. They pointed to the importance of providing them with a sense of belonging, opportunities to socialize, and the importance of having the students exposed to the English language. Below are some comments made by various educators about the importance and benefits of including students in mainstream classes.

I think that it is very easy for the LEARN class to become a little microcosm, which is not what I think is best for them ... I do think regular class is important because if we want them to, you know the whole goal of this program is that they will not need the LEARN program anymore. So, I don't want them to need the LEARN program, I want them to participate to the best of their ability and understand how it works, and how to get on Google classroom and how to modify things and ask for help and to identify ways to talk to their teachers and say, 'I don't understand this,' and to look at timelines and deadlines. And I think we can really make that work if we provide the appropriate levels of support, which we don't have for in-class, but... (Ms. Pretty)

It's also nice for our kids to work with them and see them in their classes. You don't just want them walking around in a small group. It's good to give them a chance to get to know them and interact with them and it is great for our kids and it's great for them. There is nothing better than practicing English with kids your own age. (Mr. Wells)

We also try and get students involved in mainstream classes so that they have a chance to interact with the Canadian students, both those born here and immigrants, right from the get-go. (Mr. Hines)

I wouldn't want them to be with me all of the time. I think it is important for them to be in regular classes because it is important for them to integrate with the other students. (Ms. Gallant)

Their LEARN classroom is very small, I think it's nice for them and also nice for the other children to have them integrated and to have them included. Um, and at their grade level it is nice to see what the other students are doing at that grade level and what they can aim towards if they are not there yet ... a lot of the times you may learn from the kids you are sitting with and the communication that happens during recess and at lunch and that kind of thing, um, so I think to learn a language they have to be thrown in there. If they are in their LEARN class, they may default to their first language. (Ms. Williams)

Although there was a strong belief that the students should be somewhat involved in mainstream classes, the issue of more supports being needed to successfully integrate the LEARN students in these classes repeatedly came up. The educators' views also correspond with the views of the students as detailed in Chapter 7 to a certain extent. It was evident that the students encountered many difficulties when they were placed in mainstream classes during the early periods of their resettlement, and that some of these



difficulties lasted for years. The students also talked about the need for more support during their mainstream classes, which mirrors the views of the educators. One student had this to say when the researcher asked him to identify one thing that he would change to making school better:

**GTR:** I would have two teachers in classes?

**Researcher:** Why?

**GTR:** Because some students might need help like I do. I think you need two teachers for support.

Despite there being strong agreement that the students with refugee backgrounds need more support between most of the students and the educators, the educators' views did however depart from the students' views in a couple of ways. First, the students often described their experiences as being isolated and alone, which goes against some of the educators' beliefs that the students need opportunities to socialize and learn from the other students, and that this will occur if they are placed in the mainstream classes. Also, the students tend to show a strong preference for being in the LEARN classes over the mainstream classes, especially when they first resettle. The students see the LEARN classes as a place when they can actually learn and be surrounded with people they know.

### **8.1.3 ESL instruction**

The amount of ESL instruction students receive was also identified as a contentious issue for many of the educators. In general, most felt that the students were not receiving enough ESL support and that this lack of support was hindering their abilities to function in mainstream classes and develop the sophisticated literacy skills

they need to succeed in the future. Ms. Sullivan made this point clear during her interview. She stated:

I feel strongly about making this point - unless you are willing and able to invest resources in language instruction across the curriculum then it is a disaster. If you don't have mainstream teachers who know how to recognize and teach around issues related to language, and you don't have access to ESL courses that make the links between academic language [short pause] – there has been a general trend towards shifting language instruction into mainstream classes, like incorporating language instruction into mainstream classes – so there's a lot of this misunderstanding of how language is learned and how much awareness is need to develop strong language skills, and there is an underestimation across the curriculum of the language skills that are needed to succeed. So, we are getting students who graduate and end up attending the Collage of the North Atlantic, for example, and they can't do the program because the language skills needed are too high. Or they go on to university and they are just overwhelmed. This is the biggest tragedy for me – when these students graduate, they think they are equipped, but when they get to their post-secondary programs, they realize they are not. (Ms. Sullivan)

Another teacher, Ms. Arnold, describe the amount of ESL instruction the students receive at the junior high level as being “inadequate”. She noted that the LEARN students in her school are scheduled to receive two 45-minute ESL classes over a seven-day cycle. The Researcher asked several ESL teachers about the amount of ESL instruction they provide to the LEARN students and received varying responses. One noted that she tries to provide “three periods per cycle, or about two hours per week”, while another said that it varies and can range from one to three periods per cycle. Another teacher mentioned that almost four months into the school year a few of her students could not even name their ESL teacher and she found it “astounding that there is so little contact that they don't even have a connection or an understanding of who this teacher is.”

In response to a question of whether or not students are receiving enough ESL support, an ESL teacher said, “They need the whole morning with ESL and LEARN –

two teachers working in partnership in the classroom.” Here the teacher is not talking about one morning per cycle, but every morning during the entire cycle. The discrepancy between what the students receive and what the educator feels they need is rather large. As was noted in Chapter 7, many of the junior high school students also mentioned that they needed additional ESL supports, including students who were no longer in the LEARN program. For instance, Demi, who had long since finished the LEARN program, noted that she still requires ESL support and that she is not receiving enough. Here is her exchange with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Do you take ESL classes?

**Demi:** Yes.

**Researcher:** How often do you have ESL?

**Demi:** One in one week.

**Researcher:** Do you think you need more help with ESL?

**Demi:** We do. Like 2 or 3 classes a week.

When the researcher spoke with some administrator at the NLESD, they noted that there is no policy around how much ESL instruction students receive and that the amount a student receives is based on consultation between the district and individual teachers. The district personnel also mentioned that there is a total of 11 itinerants for the province with two of the 11 permanently based at Haywood High School. The other nine teachers travel from school to school to provide one-on-one or small group instruction. During interviews for this study, district personnel claimed that each of the nine traveling itinerants are responsible for 30-35 students; however, these numbers do not match up

with a provincially sanctioned report that was completed in the same year that data for this study was gathered. The report by Collins et al. (2017) found that the teacher to student ratio exceeded 40 students per teacher and spend “as little as two hours per cycle with students” (p. 90).

As mentioned, Haywood High School has two full-time ESL teachers, and thus all of the LEARN students receive one period of ESL instruction per day (note: a school day consists of four periods per day at Haywood High School). Also, the ESL classes are considered credit courses whereas ESL is not considered a course at the junior high level. This means that the curriculum is more prescribed than it is at the junior high level. The teachers at the high school felt that providing one period of ESL per day was adequate given that all of the LEARN students were also enrolled in one or two periods of the LEARN program every day as well. One issue identified at the high school was that several teachers felt the ESL class sizes were too large to meet the needs of students with refugee backgrounds. For instance, Mr. Rideout noted, “Class sizes tend to be kind of large. We have a lot of international students here at the school and they take up a lot of ESL spaces. So, the class sizes are more than what would be ideal for these students, for sure.”

#### **8.1.4 Teaching resources**

Another major issue that surfaced during the interviews with the educators was the lack of teaching and learning resources that are available to the LEARN, ESL, and mainstream teachers. For instance, according to several of the participants, neither the EECD nor the NLESD provides any textbooks or resources to the ESL teachers. The

participants also identified a lack of appropriate resources and resources in general for the LEARN teachers and the need to develop supplementary resources for mainstream teachers. When the topic of resources was brought up during one interview with a teacher, she became visibly agitated. The following excerpt demonstrates the teacher's dissatisfaction and frustration:

**Researcher:** What would you need to make your teaching better and your job easier?

**Teacher:** Well, books. Right now, there are no resources for ESL at all.

**Researcher:** There are no resources?

**Teacher:** Apparently there are none. This goes right down through the system from high school to elementary. Oh, you are hitting a nerve right now. I have to be careful what I say. So, here is the situation. We had authorized resources just like every other subject, but about four years ago the authorized list for the ESL classes were wiped clean and we are being told that there are no resources.

The teacher went on to explain that the situation was a “a bit of a crisis” since teachers are “being told that they have to teach without any resources.” Another teacher shared an almost identical answer to a similar question. This is the exchange that occurred between that teacher and the researcher:

**Researcher:** What are some challenges that you face as a teacher and what are some ways that you could be better supported?

**Teacher:** Resources.

**Researcher:** What kind?

**Teacher:** Books.

**Researcher:** Can you not approach the district and get the books you need?

**Teacher:** No.

**Researcher:** Why don't you think you have those resources?

[Hesitation by the teacher]

**Researcher:** You don't have to answer if you don't want to.

**Teacher:** Do you want an honest answer? [Laughter]

**Researcher:** That's all I want, but if it puts you in an awkward position...

**Teacher:** I don't know how the money gets distributed, right, but there is not a lot of money there for K-12, but I would like there to be books like every other department gets books. Like, if you need science books you get science books. So, books would be nice, being able to order books would be nice.

Several teacher participants in this study corroborated the above teachers' views and talked about how they spend much of their own time and money creating learning materials and buying resources such as computer apps for their students. One teacher said that the situation is at a point that she is being forced to "recycle" partially used workbooks from her previous students for her current students. As she sarcastically put it, "Nothing like refugee products for refugee kids, right!" She also estimated that 30% of the supplies she has in her classroom (e.g., learning materials such as play money) were supplied and paid for by herself, and that another 30% had been "scavenged from other people and places the best as [she] could." Along similar lines, another teacher had this to say:

When I first started, all the furniture, except the desks, so all of the organizational furniture, it all came from my shed. Even the maps on the wall are my personal resources. I did get a little money to buy thing for the classroom, but we had no textbooks, no workbooks, no consumable books.

The teacher did go on to explain that she had recently received some math textbooks and consumable books from the district, and that she was able to purchase a few dictionaries and other small supplies using her school's budget, but she finished by saying, "So yeah, resources are a challenge!"

Another issue that arose was the lack of "appropriate" materials for the LEARN students. A few of the teachers talked about the fact that they need to develop their own materials so that they can have learning resources that match not only the academic level of their students, but also their maturity level. One teacher stated:

It's a challenge because many of the books that are at their reading level are designed for children. So, giving them to teenagers almost feels like you are insulting them. These students already feel that they are behind on many levels, so giving them resources that are designed for children I don't think is appropriate. So, most of the material I use I have made up myself. I don't use a lot of the prescribed materials because I just find that they are too juvenile. A lot of the subject matter is just not appropriate for teenagers.

Another teacher also shared the following:

So basically, what I have resorted to is if I want to teach about a particular topic such as Canadian Thanksgiving, I basically stay up all night and create my own booklet that I can photocopy and staple together, and then they have their little books, written by [Teacher's Name] and illustrations by Google, you know, whatever!

It was evident when talking with the teachers that there was a lot of frustration on their part with regards to the lack of resources available to facilitate student learning. The teachers felt that this was having a negative impact on the students, and on themselves. Several mentioned that the time required to create their own resources was personally taxing and that it took away from time they could spend with students either after school or during their planning periods, for example. Others simply saw it as an injustice to the students. As one teacher put it, it would be nice for the students to be able to say "Hey

this is *my* book, this is *my* workbook’, rather than me giving them a piece of paper that I copied or a little booklet that I copied.”

### **8.1.5 Educator training and preparedness**

Teachers’ training and preparedness to meet the specific needs of students with refugee backgrounds frequently came up during the researcher’s interviews with the educator participants and a few of the community service workers. The opinions of the participants varied; however, a few important themes did emerge. One theme centred on the lack of training, preparedness, and awareness by many of the regular classroom teachers and the upper-level administrators at the district and departmental levels. The comments were not directed with ill-intent or in a derogatory manner, but more so to highlight the fact that many of these educators have little knowledge of or experience working with this particular cohort of students. Accordingly, many felt that this lack of awareness was negatively affecting the academic development and wellbeing of the students with refugee backgrounds. As an example, Ms. O’Neal, who had just recently started working with this cohort responded to the researcher’s question, “How could schools better support these students in mainstream classes?” by stating:

I think if teachers had more of an understanding and education on refugee students, even myself for example. I know if I could have had some experience, or training, or PD the beginning of the year wouldn’t have been such a struggle for me. Um, so more education and an appreciation of what these students are coming here with.

Another teacher also talked about the need for more professional development for all teachers and educators. He said:

Every teacher in this school should be having some cultural-sensitivity or cultural diversity workshops. We have done some at the school level where we have had



people come in a speak with the teachers, but it's because the school's admin has taken the initiative to do it because of the school's demographics. But there hasn't been anything specifically from the department or district, and there should be because we are not the only school that has refugee students. Like my wife teaches out at [another school] and they have international students and refugee students. The numbers may be smaller, but we have these students in classroom all over the province. It certainly would not go astray to have those types of professional development. And not just for teachers, but for all employees working in the school system.

This teacher went on to provide an example of how professional development could help combat racism in schools. He noted, "As an example, a teacher... when a student went to class late, was of Asian descent, born here, and was asked upon entry if they could speak English." He further explained:

Teachers make mistakes, um, will often make assumptions that can upset and bother a student. So, there is always a need for cultural sensitivity and being aware of different cultures and religions so that you don't make the big faux paw, even if you have positive intentions. Um, you know just being up on what's relevant, what's new, what's ok to say and what's not. It happens every year. I mean, our school is unique in that we are quite diverse. You know, students and faculty will say that they are proud to belong to a richly diverse school and it's something to be proud of. Yet there are issues of racism in our school, absolutely. They're subtle, um, but it just goes to ignorance rather than...

Other teachers with ample experience working with students with refugee backgrounds also provided insights into the challenges that many mainstream teachers have to overcome to meet students with refugee backgrounds' needs. One teacher provided the following insights:

I also know from my own experience that it's hard to know what you don't know. It's really hard for someone who doesn't have a lot of experience with that group to understand many of the issues. You grow up in a society with norms and expectations, so it's hard to move beyond those. For example, it's hard to know what areas these students may encounter issues or that they may be missing things that you would expect someone their age to understand. So, I think they understand that they have gaps and may have issues with language, but I don't think they understand enough to be able to modify assessment or ... they may have too many preconceived ideas of what people at a particular age should know

or be able to do. For example, I remember once I was showing Canada to a student on a globe and they were wondering if Canada was the whole ball and that another globe nearby was their country. They didn't know what a globe was. They figured every country had its own ball. They didn't realize that the world was a sphere. This was a very smart kid, but he didn't have basic knowledge about the earth. So, it took experiences like that for me to realize that you can't take anything for granted.

Another teacher shared her experience of talking to a mainstream teacher to depict some teachers' lack of awareness. She said:

For example, a teacher came to me and said, "Oh man, that kid came to me and didn't even know what an iceberg was." And I am thinking, "Yeah, he doesn't even know what ice is." Then I took out my assessment, and the teacher was like, "Wow, I didn't realize that the student was that weak." So, the teachers don't realize, some of the students have been here a while, six or eight months and they can talk, but they can't write 'cat' or 'dog'. So, they cannot read, and they cannot write, but they are in these academic classes. It is important for me to educate the teachers on these issues.

Some of the participants also talked about how a lack of understanding and awareness on the part of some teachers often leads to students being treated unfairly. For instance, one shared his thoughts through the following example:

Yes, um, it's like a child who always says 'no'. The teacher asks the child to do something, and the student says 'no'. The teacher asks a question, and the student says 'no'. The teacher is then complaining because the child always says 'no'. He doesn't listen to me, he always says 'no'. That is a fair complaint, but another thing that the teacher could say is 'no' is the first word he learned. That's a good thing. At least he said a word. That's amazing. So, the teacher may complain to the parent, as that is his or her perspective. Another perspective is, "Oh, he just learned a word and giving the parent a high-five. So, this is the difference, right. It absolutely depends on the teacher and how they understand the child. (Community Service Worker)

This above statement from the community service worker reflects other stories that were shared with the researcher about how there are times when some teachers misunderstand students' actions such that it leads to the student getting in trouble. They also shared stories of students being suspended from school because of their behaviours,

and while they understand that the students' behaviours are sometimes wrong, they feel certain zero tolerance policies fail to take these students' histories and backgrounds into consideration. Several students also shared similar stories about how they feel they were treated unfairly because they often lacked the English language capacity to explain themselves or to defend their position. Some of these stories were shared in Chapter 7. A teacher with a lot of experience working with students with refugee backgrounds also felt that there was often a lack of understanding on the part of some other teachers. She shared the story of a student who was experiencing trouble at school because the teachers felt that she was being difficult in their classes and acting out. She explained that this particular student had attended three different schools since the beginning of the year due to a change in school policy (i.e., the addition of the LEARN program at four additional junior high schools) and the changes in environment had taken a toll on the child, especially since she was removed from one school where she had previously established a large group of friends. The teacher noted:

Like when she was crying every day about coming to school and being very hard to get along with; there is so much more to that than simply a teenager just being difficult ... when she was acting like this, yes part of it may be that it's part of her personality and her age, but it's not just that. And I didn't get a sense that one of her teachers understood that ... I am around the other teachers and I listen, and I find that sometimes teachers are not aware of what happened in these children's lives before they arrived here. All they know is that they are in their class and now they have another student, and this student won't stop talking in another language and it's really distracting. And I think, yes, I understand that it can be very frustrating, but I think if people had an understanding of their situation or where they came from, they wouldn't be so quick to judge them, and maybe they wouldn't have such high expectations for them to come in and listen as if their past didn't happen ... I feel like some teachers are not aware of their needs. I think professional development would be valuable across St. John's. Not just like for LEARN teachers and ESL teachers, but for all teachers.

A final issue that arose through the interviews with the educators was that many felt the teaching and learning environment was being negatively impacted since there was a lack of ESL and LEARN leadership at the district and departmental levels. Several teachers noted that this has been the case now for several years and that the individuals tasked with providing ESL and LEARN oversight changes often. The constant turnover means that the ESL and LEARN departments rarely have someone in place who has the experience or know-how to ensure that students' needs are adequately met. As one teacher put it:

The problem is that it is always an add-on, there is a fairly high rate of turnover and it gets shifted around from person to person. I bet you that many ESL teachers and people at the district level don't know who is responsible for ESL – that they can't name them. So, a big issue is that you are always dealing with someone who is not familiar with ESL, who is not familiar with the issues around ESL.

Another teacher expressed a similar sentiment. She stated:

Having someone who is dedicated to ESL in the district would be beneficial and is something that is lacking. Because the people who are managing the ESL program, to no fault of their own, have no ESL training. It is what it is. But I think with the numbers we have now and the issues we have and are experiencing means that we should have someone who is dedicated to these students. So right now, there is a lack of understanding around some of the issues that I have already addressed, and I think there needs to be someone in the district with the skill set to more readily address these issues.

A third teacher talked about the same problem, but in reference to the LEARN program.

She said:

And you need someone familiar with the LEARN position. Often the person who is making these decisions doesn't have the experience. Not that they are not intelligent people, but this is a very specific group of people with specific needs that people need experience behind them to make the appropriate decisions. And we don't have anyone who is in that position right now.

In talking with three administrators at the district level, the researcher found that there was no program specialist assigned to ESL or LEARN programming with ESL or LEARN teaching experience, and that ESL programming was being administered within the French Programs division.

Several other teachers felt that the current hiring and placement practices for LEARN and ESL teachers were also flawed due to the lack of appropriate leadership at the district and departmental levels and a misunderstanding of the needs of LEARN students by many district-level administrators and some school-level administrators. The teachers cited a poor understanding of language and literacy acquisition for this cohort of students as being the most significant issue. For instance, a number of teachers declared that they could not comprehend how former French immersion teachers with no prior ESL or LEARN experience were being hired for ESL openings in the district over teachers who had degrees in ESL and years of teaching experience with students with refugee backgrounds. The same issue was broached by a few teachers when it came to the hiring of LEARN teachers with no ESL teaching experience. The researcher, based on the respondents' interviews, inquired about this situation with the administrators he interviewed at the NLESD. The administrators acknowledged that in many cases students with refugee backgrounds need additional literacy and numeracy support and expressed a deep appreciation for the complex needs of these students, but when asked about the differences in teaching French immersion and ESL one administrator noted that French immersion and ESL both fall under second language education and that "there are fundamentals of second language teaching that are fundamental to teaching any second language" and that "the pedagogy is the same" for French and English second language

teaching. The administrators also mentioned that unfortunately only a few teachers who apply for ESL positions have specific qualifications in ESL teaching, so they tend to look for and hire teachers with secondary language teaching qualifications.

The feelings and beliefs from several of the NLESD teachers tended to diverge to a certain degree from the perspective offered by some of the district personnel. Mostly, the teachers identified big differences between teaching ESL and teaching French immersion and talked about how hiring practices need to reflect these differences. As one educator stated:

So, the goal of French language instruction is not integration into a French language society where you are a contributing tax-paying citizen. It's nice if that happens, but that's not the goal of the program. French language instruction in Newfoundland takes place in a foreign language setting as oppose to a second language setting. So, the foreign language and the second language settings have different goals. The repercussions of failure are higher in a second language setting. The French language student has the option of working and exiting using their first language whereas the second language students don't have that option. They can't opt out. So, success is imperative for these students; its critical. Plus, in French language instruction you are teaching French. In ESL you have to be concerned with teaching more than that. You have to teach all about culture and society and health. You have to do it all. Whereas in French language instruction, you are dealing with Canadian students. So, if you are only thinking of ESL as language instruction like French language instruction you are missing things. For example, at the district level they removed the workbooks for some elementary classes because they believe the students need to focus more on the students' oral skills. That would be the total opposite for our students. They pick up oral skills quickly because they have function in English all day anyway. What our students need is writing, and more writing practice will not be to the detriment of their oral development. So, if we are making decisions for ESL based on the needs of French students, we are going to miss these important differences. So, the process and goals are completely different.

Another teacher had the following to say:

I feel our qualifications as ESL teachers with specific ESL training is not valued or understood. Now the people that are making these decisions are doing the best that they can, but they don't have all of the information because we don't have an ESL department in this province, and we don't have one in our school board. It's a

huge gap. That is not to criticize those people; they are working hard, but there is a lack of understanding. It's a lack of understanding of what is going on and what the needs are. ESL training is very valuable. It's not the same as French immersion ... French immersion students are learning a language, but their teacher speaks their first language, and their teachers can communicate with their parents. The students are not coming from a culture into a new environment, and um, and when you are dealing with refugee students often parents are not able to provide the support that many French immersion parents are able to provide and usually your French immersion students are the most able students, and they tend to have the most parent support at home. Not to say that our LEARN students and ESL students are not great students; it's just that they are a very different student population.

The teacher went on to explain that she knows that she has been over-looked for several full-time permanent positions since there are no policies that stipulate that teachers who teach ESL have to have ESL qualifications. Accordingly, other teachers who have more seniority within their union are given the positions even if it means they do not have any prior ESL experience.

A similar issue was raised by another teacher who also talked about the importance of hiring teachers who have had prior experience working with students with refugee backgrounds. She also talked about the problem of having people with the most seniority being placed in open positions despite them not having what she considers the proper qualifications. The teacher stated:

Like it is quite a complex thing to teach someone how to read. And if you are not trained in that, I can't see how you think you can do it. Like, if you are a grade seven French immersion teacher, I don't see how you much feel like you have that knowledge. I don't know how that person gets hired as an ESL teacher. And then knowing about their culture - there are already people who know and have the proper education, and they are being overlooked. I don't know how it is able to happen, but it is happening and that is not right. The cultural aspect is so important and overlooked ... having some understanding of culture is so important to start with. Like, I had a teacher who said to me, "You know I could do this. I think I would like it." And I wanted to say, 'Well that's all well and good, but there are actually people out there that don't just kind of like it. They live it and know it and read it in their free time for something to do. And that they

are really the people who should be getting these jobs. Not just the people who have their time in and feel like I can do that. So, that not really what's best for the kids.

The researcher did identify two former French Immersion teachers who had transferred (i.e., applied for and were hired) into ESL itinerant roles in the recent past. The researcher researched out to both teachers and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study to provide their perspectives; however, both teachers declined to participate.

With respect to the LEARN program, the researcher also identified two new teachers who had been hired for the 2016-2017 school year that did not have ESL backgrounds or experience working with students with refugee backgrounds. Further probing suggested that IRT training was prioritized over ESL training and multicultural experience in the hiring process. One of the two LEARN teachers was interviewed as a part of this study and mentioned that when she applied for the position it was solely advertised as an IRT position and that there was no indication provided in the advertisement that the position would be working with students with refugee backgrounds. Through her own admission, this left her struggling to meet the unique needs of her students. Several participants also alluded to the difficulties they have witnessed by having teachers in positions working with students with refugee background when they had little experience or training to understand and meet these students' needs. A district level administrator also mentioned that he was aware that some teachers were struggling given the challenges associated with meeting the unique needs of this diverse cohort of students. He went on to emphasize that "you need to be a specially skilled teacher to do that" and noted:



Someone with an understanding of second language acquisition is critical to these kids, to understanding where they are and making the plan to where they need to be. That requires a lot of understanding because you are not just dealing with academics but someone who – they come from different households and different expectations ... so, it requires a great understanding of multicultural students and nationalities and how they interact with each other in that environment, in that LEARN environment, but also how they interact with the kids from Newfoundland. It's a lot of situations that you have to be able to accommodate and understand and react to and move forward.

Finally, the following conversation with two students, who had since moved to another school, provided some insights into the challenging learning environment that teachers need to be equipped to handle in an effective manner:

**Researcher:** And when you were at [School Name], how was it? Was it a good school?

**Soso:** Yes, but all the time there be fighting. The Ms. will be crying.

**Researcher:** Who was crying?

**Soso:** The Ms.

**Arman:** The teacher. The boys always fighting.

**Researcher:** There was a lot of trouble at the beginning of the year?

**Soso:** Yeah!

**Arman:** Yeah!

**Researcher:** How did that make you feel?

**Arman:** So sad. I feel sad because if they [are] fighting all the time I can't understand anything or study.

**Soso:** Cry.

**Researcher:** You were crying?

**Soso:** No, the teacher because she don't do anything because it's new like this.

The students' description seems to corroborate the findings that some teachers were struggling and the administrator's belief that you need teachers that have the experience and training to manage the particularly high needs of this student cohort.

## **8.2 The Social and Physical Environment**

This section of the paper provides insights into the social and physical environment and how aspects of the environment may be supporting or thwarting the students with refugee backgrounds' basic psychological needs. It covers issues related to the school and classroom climate, students physical and emotional safety, and the use of physical spaces. Several subthemes emerged with the results showing that the social and physical environments of each of the schools differed in several ways. However, notable differences between the environment of Haywood High School and the junior high schools were detected and are articulated below. Furthermore, significant overlap with some issues addressed in the teaching and learning component are addressed.

### **8.2.1 School and classroom climate**

When examining the school and classroom environment several subthemes emerged. These included the extent to which the schools acknowledged and celebrated diversity and how the schools fostered the integration, inclusion, and engagement of students. Issues related to acceptance and racism are also reported.

#### ***8.2.1.1 Acknowledging and celebrating diversity***

It became evident from the researcher's analysis that all of the schools were making efforts to acknowledge and celebrate diversity to a certain degree; however, Haywood high school stood out due to a number of factors. First and foremost, Haywood

High School has a long history of serving multicultural students and takes pride in its diverse student body. During the course of this study, students from over 55 different nationalities were attending the school, a point of pride that is displayed on a large digital sign in the school's parking lot. The diverse student body of the school is also acknowledged as a strength of the school on its website, which states, "The inclusion of the English as Second Language population in our student body provides an increased international perspective enabling many students to develop an understanding of the importance of international communication and collaboration."

Haywood High School also places a lot of emphasis on celebrating the school's diversity through a series of student led events. For instance, the school's International Club helps organize a school-wide diversity assembly and is involved with coordinating other smaller events throughout the year. The SWIS worker at the school noted:

The International Club is made up of students from everywhere, refugee students, immigrants, Canadian born kids, everyone. Just last week we had a social where we put flags all around the school and we had international foods and invitations were personally sent to the newest students in the school. And they come together and celebrate, give out prizes, and stuff like that. This school is very proud of its diversity and actually advertises the number of countries that students come from. And all of the students seem to be proud of that diversity. The students from here, the new students, it's a great thing. The International Club also has potlucks throughout the year, and they invite all of the teachers. Um, we have a diversity assembly with a flag ceremony. So, it really does promote pride in where you come from. Also, students get to show off their traditional fashions and cultural aspects too.

The researcher attended the school's diversity assembly, which started with student representatives from each nation represented in the school entering from the back of the school auditorium and marching to the front stage while waving their home country's flag. The assembly also included speeches from students and a variety of traditional

singing and dancing performances. From the researcher's perspective, it was evident that a lot of work and effort from the students and school staff went into making the assembly a success. It was also evident that the students were proud to have a chance to share their traditions and to have their cultures acknowledged. During one of the International Club's assembly planning meetings, the researcher also saw how the students were taking on leadership roles. One of their main concerns was also to ensure that every nation within the school was represented at the assembly. The students thus went from class to class within the school to make sure that no student was left out.

The school's guidance counselor also talked about the collaboration that occurred between the International Club and the student council as an example of how the school is dedicated to supporting its diverse student body. He said:

Last year there was a joint project between student council and the International Club for spirit week. Spirit week had an international focus, so all the games played were internationally focused. Cultural awareness was a major theme, and there was a large potluck of internationally themed foods at the end.

The guidance counselor also commented on the benefits associated with him being involved with the International Club as a mentor. He noted:

My exposure with them has increased since I created the International Club. So, the International Club has certainly exposed me to the New Canadians more because generally I would only see a student if they were self-referred or referred by a teacher or parent. Um, and the students I tend to see are the students who come to me now because of their familiarity with me from the International Club.

Evidently, the guidance counselor's involvement with the International Club has allowed him to establish trusting relationships with many of the students with refugee backgrounds. As noted in Chapter 7, several of the student participants in this study did identify the school's guidance counselor as someone they trusted and could go to for help.

The researcher also witnessed the guidance counselor informally interacting with many of the students with refugee backgrounds within the school. Even during the researchers' interview with the guidance counselor, several of the students with refugee backgrounds dropped by his office to seek advice or to make appointments to see him.

Several of the junior high schools also have acknowledged and celebrated diversity within their schools through various initiatives. Mr. Smith used one junior high school as an example. He noted:

When you go into the school, the first thing that you notice on the right-hand side is pictures of the kids – a whole section devoted to the kids with their pictures and the countries represented in the school and bios and stuff. So, I think it's important that right away they are valued.

Mr. Smith also noted that the school has welcome signs written in multiple languages on the LEARN classroom door. An administrator from Silver Creek Junior High mentioned that their school held a flag ceremony during their Thanksgiving Day assembly to acknowledge all of the different ethnic backgrounds of the school's student body. Additionally, each of the junior high schools also has a FUN club that meets once a week and provides a space for students of all nationalities to mingle and engage in extracurricular activities. Each of the junior high schools has also hosted a potluck in their classrooms and the students invited their parents and other teachers from the school to join them for the occasion. The main difference between Haywood High School and the junior high schools; however, seems to be that celebrating diversity is embedded within the overall culture of the high school whereas in the junior high schools the celebrations tend to be isolated events and the schools rely on small tokenisms to acknowledge diversity. In other words, within the junior high schools there does not seem to be a

coordinated effort to acknowledge and celebrate diversity as is seen at Haywood High School.

#### ***8.2.1.2 Integration, inclusion, and student engagement***

As with celebrating and acknowledging diversity, all of the schools were making efforts to promote the integration, inclusion, and engagement of their students with refugee backgrounds. One of the main avenues for doing so was establishing extracurricular activities and providing opportunities for the students to become involved in school related groups. What stood out again however, was the number of opportunities that were afforded to the high school students versus the junior high school students. For instance, in reference to the high school students, Ms. Sullivan noted that the students are involved with most aspects of the school. She said:

Our new Canadian students are invited to be involved in the student newspaper, every assembly is open, they are very involved in music at the school and have a say in what songs [are performed]. They permeate the school and are involved like the Canadian born students are ... There's also a diversity dance club, an ESL student representative on student council – so there two students from the ESL classes who are elected to represent the ESL students on council. Also, a lot of the ESL students work as mentors and peer-tutors with the newer ESL students. There is also a new art initiative. There is also a conversation class held at lunchtime where Canadian born students and International Baccalaureate students act as conversation partners.

Building on Ms. Sullivan's response, the researcher was informed by the school's guidance counselor that a school-level policy was made to ensure that there were ESL student representatives on school council. Based on their past experience, it was noticed that rarely were any ESL students elected when they had to run in a general election. Thus, the school decided that two ESL students would be elected based solely on the votes that they received from other ESL students to ensure that they were given a voice

on council. It is also important to note that the two spaces are not solely for students with refugee backgrounds, but for any student that was enrolled in ESL classes. The educators in the school did nonetheless note that there has been ESL representatives on council from refugee backgrounds in the past and that currently one of the representatives was a refugee background student.

Again, building on Ms. Sullivan's statement, the school's SWIS worker talked about the significance of the conversation clubs to building a sense of relatedness between the students. He mentioned:

We have recently started a new initiative – a conversation circle on Mondays after school, and there is also one that is student led that happens during lunch, which is awesome because you have all of these students, many of whom may be from another country, but immigrated to Canada a long time ago, and others are Canadian born, and they come and meet with the newer students and they talk about all sorts of things. So that interaction between the Canadian born and newcomer students helps develop an understanding between interpersonal dynamics.

Likewise, Ms. Jones talked about the benefits of having a diversity dance club, which she referred to as the DDC. She noted:

Um, well they love to dance, one student was really interested in getting it on the go, so I said, 'Why not.' Like every year the guidance counselor handles the diversity assembly, but there is also the dance component of it, so I said I will handle that, so this year we just decided that we would call it something and ah, so it's really good. They love to dance and it's a good outlet for them. I have a lot of students where they love to dance; it's a big part of their culture. It's a good stress reliever, it doesn't require any language, um, so it is a good outlet for them because language learning is intense, and I think it's a good chance for them to relax a bit.

Mr. Walsh also talked about the importance that many of the extra-curricular activities and school's partnerships play in supporting the students with refugee backgrounds' basic psychological needs. He explained:

**Mr. Walsh:** We collaborate with the ANC, provide afterschool supports like the homework club and peer-peer tutoring, and access to a conversation club which is new this year. So, there are those types of things that allow students quicker access to being able to function in the school. There has always been a huge gap in their sense of belonging and competency – being able to believe that I have something to contribute as well. The International Club has really shifted to be that for students as well. Not just for refugee students, but for new Canadians as well. Because there has never been a voice for them to feel empowered; that they have a voice and can contribute something. So, what started off as an orientation program for new Canadians has morphed into what we call the International Club. It has three focuses: cultural awareness, diversity, and orientation for new Canadians. Um, the students that are involved run the show. They are the ones that take the leadership roles and pull things off. They do the socials, the potlucks, the assemblies, the awareness sessions – they do all of that.

**Researcher:** Do you think they take a sense of pride from that?

**Mr. Walsh:** Immense, immense sense of pride! We have students that are on the periphery in their first year and they are just watching and seeing how things go. And then the next year they get more involved; and the following year they take on leadership roles and they feel a sense that they are contributing ... So, it's about fostering that bridge so that they can move from just feeling like they are using or absorbing to a feeling that they are contributing. And once that happens, it allows them to feel that I matter now right. I have seen that in the International Club where refugee students have taken on leadership roles and their confidence just shoots through the roof. So, providing opportunities for that is our job, because they will always rise to the occasion and we just need to provide the opportunities and believe in them.

In talking with the students and educators, the researcher also found out that there were several other clubs, such as the after-school soccer, badminton, and art clubs that helped ensure the high school students with refugee backgrounds were socially engaged at school. The students particularly noted that they appreciated the variety of opportunities available as it allowed them to be with others and make friends. For instance, during an interview with Hamdi after school, he mentioned that he was currently enrolled in art class, but that he felt he was not good at art. Once the interview ended, the researcher noticed that Hamdi seemed in a rush to leave. The researcher inquired why



he was in such a rush. Hamdi replied that he was missing art club. In response the researcher asked, “why are you in art club when you said you are not good at art.” He responded, “all of my friends are there.” So even though Hamdi did not feel he was good at art, he was inclined to attend the art club for the social aspects it provided.

In contrast to the number of engagement opportunities available in the high school, the junior high schools did not offer nearly the same amount. This does not mean that there were no opportunities, just that they were limited in comparison. As mentioned, the junior high schools all established FUN clubs, and intramurals were offered at lunchtime in some of the schools. The students mentioned that there were also various sports and activity clubs available; however, many of the students seemed to be much less engaged in these activities than the high school students. The perspectives on student engagement in extracurricular activities of one junior high LEARN teacher were expressed through the following exchange with the researcher:

**LEARN Teacher:** I know there are some clubs, but it is so hard to get them integrated into clubs sometimes because clubs just go. I have taken them to a few clubs here and they are not participating. They are just sitting there.

**Researcher:** The other students don’t try to include them?

**LEARN Teacher:** Not really!

**Researcher:** Is there any kind of buddy-buddy or mentor system here in the school?

**LEARN Teacher:** Not in this school.

**Researcher:** Do you think this would benefit them?

**LEARN Teacher:** Yeah, like a one-on-one kind of thing because then they would have a relationship with one person, and I think would be beneficial. We tried the FUN club, and a few girls came, but it just didn’t work.

**Researcher:** It didn't work?

**LEARN Teacher:** Not for the purpose. My whole purpose was that they would talk to the other students and then they would talk to them when they got out there. I asked my students why they didn't talk to the other students when they came to FUN club and they said, "Because when we go out there, they don't talk to us." I don't think that they are deliberately not talking to them, but it's just that [hesitation] I really want them to become integrated in the school, but it is going very, very slowly.

The researcher also spoke with a couple of junior high LEARN teachers who expressed their concerns regarding the isolation some of their LEARN students face during lunch and recess breaks. One of the teachers said:

They stay together, and it is something that I struggle with. Like, should I push them and make them go out and tell them no, you can't stay in the classroom during lunch, you have to go out and do something at lunch. Because if they do come in here there is no chance for them to interact with the other kids. But I have seen them out there and they are not interacting with the other kids. So, I feel like it kind of gives them a break because if you are in a class and it's an hour of English sometimes a break from that is nice and comforting and they know there is a place they can go that is comforting. So, I have struggled with that. I asked them, and they said, "We want to be here." But I do constantly tell them to try and make friends, but I don't push them. So, if they want to come in here, I am going to let them come in here, but I don't always think that's the best for their social integration.

The other teacher also struggled with the same situation. She mentioned:

There are a couple of days per week where I lock them out during lunch and recess and they are out in the corridors, but they do have a tendency to come back and hang out with peers from this group, or with some other Arabic speaking students in the school. And they gravitate together during lunch and recess ... I wouldn't say that they have friends besides their LEARN friends in their classes that they communicate with after school or on the weekends. Also, they have only been in this school for a short period of time, so it does take a while. So, they are meeting people, but they do tend to stick together.

Many of the educators identified several reasons why the students tend to remain somewhat isolated. One was due to financial constraints. Several teachers noted that

many of the students simply cannot afford to pay for some of the materials or equipment required to participate in some activities. Ms. Ball noted, for example, that often the Students with refugee backgrounds cannot attend school fieldtrips due to their lack of resources. She used ice skating and attending theatrical performances as examples. She mentioned:

The LEARN kids have to go bowling while the other students go skating. They don't have skates and helmets and stuff. They just don't have the resources. And like the musical Grease is coming up and so any students who want to attend were told that they have to bring in thirteen dollars by such and such date. And I was like, there is no way the LEARN kids will be able to afford that.

On a positive note, Ms. Ball and another teacher did organize a bake sale whereby the LEARN students made and sold some of their traditional sweets to raise money so that they could attend the musical Ms. Ball emphasized that this presented a great opportunity for the LEARN students to share their cultures with the other students in their school.

Another aspect raised by many of the adult participants was a lack of transportation options available to the students with refugee backgrounds. They mentioned that many of the students need to take the school bus home after school because they live too far from the school to walk home, so staying for afterschool activities was not an option. Ms. Arnold provided the following statement:

Because transportation is an issue for a lot of kids, it's really like a very elite student population that gets involved in extra curriculum activities. They tend to be the kids whose parents are willing to come and pick them up after whatever or drive them wherever.

Ms. Pretty also mentioned that several of her students were unable to attend after-school activities due to transportation issues and several students noted that they do not attend

some after-school programs because of transportation related issues. For instance, Anjal mentioned that she initially joined an after-school dance club at her school but had to quit after one month because her lack of transportation became an issue.

Transportation was also identified as an issue for many of the high school students. Mr. Rideout mentioned that demand for some of the school's facilities after school is quite high and this often means that some after-school programming occurs later in the evening hours. This represented a significant obstacle for some of the students with refugee backgrounds because many of them lived far outside the school zone and thus relied on public transportation to get to and from school. Thus, if school programming was not scheduled immediately after school many of the students would not attend activities since it was not feasible to travel home and then return again to school. In response to this issue, the school adopted an unofficial scheduling policy to help alleviate the problem. Mr. Rideout explained:

The school has now basically designated the gym for the soccer club one day a week right after school ends. It wasn't always this way, but they have now decided that it will be because of transportation issues. They [the students] don't mind taking the bus home after soccer, but if we are slotted in for the gym later in the evening, then it is difficult for these kids. They can't leave school and go home and then come back to school later. For some of these students a one-way trip is more than an hour. So, it has become unofficial school policy that we get the first timeslot after school.

The researcher also noticed that any student who attended the high-school's after-school homework club also received a free bus pass. The researcher approached one of the teachers who lead the homework club and inquired about the bus passes. It was explained that while some of the students already had monthly bus passes because they lived outside of the school zone, some of the other students who lived within the zone

would not be able to attend if there was no alternative given to the school bus option. Essentially, the students lived too far from the school to walk and if they did not take the school bus, they would not have a safe way home. Understanding the need for alternative options, funding was provided through the local settlement agency to ensure that the students could attend the after-school homework club and still have a safe way home.

The researcher also observed during his attendance at the after-school homework club that the club served two purposes. Obviously, the first was to provide academic assistance to the students. However, it also seemed that the club provided the students with another opportunity to socialize and belong. During each club meeting, most of the students were working on school assignments or homework, but there were always several other students who attended simply to hang out with their friends. Others would work for a short period and then they would mingle with other students and they could be seen laughing and joking around. In all, the importance of being able to attend the club was two-fold. It allowed the students to academically grow, and it provided them with a safe place to develop relationships and be with their friends.

Another emergent issue that seemed to have an impact on the students' inclusion and school engagement at the junior high level revolved around the lack of a coordinated team effort within the schools. As was previously mentioned, none of the junior high schools had permanent ESL teachers and two of the schools only had part-time LEARN teachers. As a result, the LEARN teachers seemed to be solely burdened with ensuring that the students with refugee backgrounds' needs were being met. One teacher explained:

Sometimes I feel like I am the only one who is responsible for them. But I am not because I only have them 50% of the time. But sometimes that is the perception. I don't always feel that the classroom teacher includes them like the other students. I understand that they can't do everything, but at least do something.

One other teacher also made reference to how most of the other teachers in her school see the LEARN students as being her responsibility. She said, "It's like you can take care of that and handle that. They are your students." She also mentioned that while the school has an ESL teacher who can be there to support the students, "but I have never met him." Another teacher explained that currently she is just so overwhelmed with responsibilities that the time she can commit to the students for non-academic activities is limited. She noted:

Like right now, I do a 106 minutes of duty every 7 days, and first when I came in this building, I was told, no duties for that teacher because she has too much work to do. And I would say, since I first came in the building my work has probably - I am doing one and a half to two times more work and now I have 106 minutes of duty on top of everything else. So, there are fewer extra-curricular activities at lunch, and quite often they have to be at lunch because so many of our population is bused.

The researchers' inquiries regarding the engagement of the junior high schools' guidance counselors also revealed that they tended to rather be unengaged with the students with refugee backgrounds. Most of the teachers have said that they feel confident that they could approach their schools' guidance counselors for assistance if needed, but that the guidance counselors tended to be uninvolved for the most part. Furthermore, while the researcher was attending junior high in-school and out-of-school extracurricular activities and field trips he had never met any other adults than the LEARN teachers and SWIS workers with one exception. To clarify, the researcher attended over a dozen FUN

club gatherings and just once did he see in attendance another teacher other than the LEARN teacher.

In contrast to the junior high schools, there were multiple adults facilitating in-school and after-school programming activities for the students with refugee backgrounds. Due to the fact that there were two permanent ESL teachers, a permanent SWIS worker, a full-time LEARN teacher, and a part-time IRT teacher working in coordination with each other, the students were afforded multiple opportunities for engagement whereby they could have their basic psychological needs met, especially their need for relatedness. This is possibly why the high school students reported a significantly higher sense of relatedness compared to their junior high counterparts. The opportunities to engage with others and to feel a sense of belonging would be expected to support their relatedness need.

### **8.2.2 Physical and emotional safety**

Throughout this study, it became clear that the vast majority of refugee background high school students tended to find their schools as being generally safe and welcoming. The belief that the schools provided a safe environment was also shared by the educators, community workers attached to the schools, and the sole parent who participated in this study. The belief that the schools were generally safe environments, however, did not mean that issues related to emotional and physical safety did not arise. As was discussed in Chapter 7, a few of the students from the junior high system mentioned that they experienced instances of bullying and aggression. A few other student participants who are now in high school also mentioned that they felt there was

much more fighting and aggression when they attended junior high in comparison to their current school, Haywood High School. Again, this does not mean that instances of micro-aggressions and racism were not reported or observed at the high school; just that the students tended to report Haywood High School as being more welcoming overall. In fact, none of the high school students reported any instances of aggression, discrimination, or racism in their interviews when asked. However, several of the adult participants did provide details on some issues that had arisen in the high school and how the school tried to address those issues. The following conversation with the school's guidance counselors provided the following insights:

**Guidance Counselor:** You know, students and faculty will say that they are proud to belong to a richly diverse school, and it's something to be proud of. Yet there are issues of racism in our school, absolutely. They're subtle, um but it just goes to ignorance ... things like a black student being asked by other students if they could touch their hair. Um, does it feel wiry, is your hair hard. Things that you just wouldn't ask any student but feel it's ok because of how they present physically. Subtleties like that, there is no ill intent, but certainly can be very hurtful. You know, just bringing that to the forefront, I have had students refer to the second floor as immigrant alley. So, things like that you know. Um, it would be nice, you know, to address those things.

**Researcher:** Is the school doing anything to address those issues with the students?

**Guidance Counselor:** Um, not necessarily. I don't think there is anything being done about it. There are very few instances of blatant racist behaviours. I spoke to a group core of students in the International Club last year who were concerned about racism in our school. We did create a performance to address these issues – in a humorous way as to not be preachy, but to get the point across that these things are not cool to say or to do. That was the first time in my time here that we have addressed racism. We have always celebrated the diversity and been very positive. We talk about cultural awareness and the positives around that, and the celebration of diversity. Those are the main focuses. We have never really focused on racism, the negative side of a multicultural school. Last year was the first time that we focused on racism and it was brought to me by the students, and they felt like they had to say something. So, this year we are going to be focusing on - one



of the activities is about addressing racism. We are planning something in the International Club for the International Day of Antiracism, and it's a UN date. So that will be the first time we have done that. The school doesn't do anything about it specifically because - ah, I don't see it as a big issue for our school. But I know it is there. There are undercurrents of it everywhere you go. Um, our school is no exception, but I guess it is more noted in our school because we have students who experience it. I was very grateful that they felt comfortable enough to come up to me and say we need to do something about this. People aren't getting beaten up or insulted, or anything that overt and visible but it's there. And we need to bring it to the forefront so that people are aware that it still needs to be addressed.

**Researcher:** So last year you had a little production.

**Guidance Counselor:** Yeah, it was at the yearend assembly. The students met and talked about some of the racism that they had encountered and then they scripted it and then revamped it because we had to approach it in a certain manner because some of the students were very angry and wanted to kind of lash back a little bit. Um, so we sat together as a group and said we will get better results and more of an impact if we approach it a different way. They agreed, and they did it. It was funny, and it was poignant. And it was very well received, and we are going to build upon that this year. We are still going to be doing other stuff around cultural awareness and diversity, but we are going to add something about racism as well.

The above conversation pointed to a few aspects that should be further addressed.

First, is the fact that racism, whether overt or covert, existed within the high school and it was having a negative impact on some of the students. As the guidance counselor mentioned, some of the students with refugee backgrounds "were very angry" about the racist behaviour that they had witnessed. A second aspect is that the school was using informal curriculum as means of addressing an important barrier to students developing a sense of relatedness. A third aspect is that the school was now working to address these issues in a manner that allowed the students to take ownership of the problem and work towards a solution. It was the students who brought up the problem and it was them, with guidance from the counselor, that were working on a performance to educate the other

students in their school. As such, the students were provided with an opportunity to have their voices heard and to have a say in how things should be handled. In essence, their sense of autonomy was being supported.

Another educator at the high school, an ESL teacher, also mentioned that she had recently noticed some friction within the school occurring between various groups of new Canadian students. To address the issue, she then incorporated aspects related to respect and acceptance into her lessons. The following is an excerpt from her conversation with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Have you noticed any instances of bullying, teasing or inappropriate behaviour?

**ESL Teacher:** You know, this term I am noticing some tension between some of my Syrian and African students, and I am not sure where that is coming from, whether it's discriminatory or whether it's what they have just gone through. Um, so I am working through that now. I don't know where the lack of respect is coming from or why it's happening.

**Researcher:** Have you addressed the issue?

**ESL Teacher:** Oh, we have. We have.

**Researcher:** How?

**ESL Teacher:** We talked about respect and I had the principle come down and talk about the policies of the school, um just in terms of throwing eraser at somebody kicking somebody. So, we just had to shut that down just from a policy perspective and then we just talked about respect and Googled the words in their language and discussed it and talked about expectation – we expect respect no matter what your background is. We walked through a lesson on that, and it has calmed down. I think it is important to nab it right away so that they see that you don't have any favoritism towards anybody – that there is a baseline here – it's respect and that they have to respect each other. Now over the years we have had a few issues, but for the most part it has been okay, right. You know, they all seem to have friends and they come together. Like the Syrians, they have come together, and I just spoke to the parents and they said they seem happy. Like the

girls, they have formed a nice little group and they support each other; and I find the ESL students do come together as a group.

The conversation with the ESL teacher, like the previous conversation with the school's guidance counselor, revealed a few key points that should be elaborated upon. One, it showed how the building of relatedness can be incorporated into a school's formal curriculum. By directly teaching aspects of respect and the valuing of others the teacher was possibly helping the students develop a sense of relatedness with one and other. The conversation also revealed that racism is not solely perpetrated against newcomers by native-born Canadians. Sometimes, it stems from racial divides that exist between newcomers from different countries, and other times from different ethnic groups that have resettled from the same country. In fact, the prevalence of racism or aggressive behaviour perpetrated against newcomers by other newcomers came up several times during the course of this study. The final outcome revealed by the teacher was that despite some issues, generally the students in the high school have established a strong sense of belonging and relatedness with their peers. This aspect has been supported by the findings from the students and from the other adult participants in this study. The high school's SWIS worker summed up this finding with the following quote:

With regards to the non-curriculum goals of schooling we have to consider how they are doing as individuals. Do they feel safe, do they feel like going to that place, do they buy-in to the institution and the society they belong? So here we see that. For example, on days where we typically have lots of absenteeism, like the day before holidays start, all of our refugee students attend. They love coming to school and I think a big part of that is their large peer network. That in itself is a very important area where we are having success. They feel that they belong here, that this is their school.

### 8.2.3 Use of physical spaces

The third aspect of the social and physical component concerns the use of a school's physical spaces. In general, there were not too many discriminating differences noted between any of the schools. They tend to have the same general physical features and provide students with safe and accessible accommodations. The only significant differences have already been discussed and they relate more to policy than to the actual physical structures of the schools. The first is that the Haywood High School's SWIS worker had a dedicated office where the students could spend time and mingle with friends on an almost daily basis during their lunch and recess breaks. His permanent presence in the school also provided the teachers and administrators with additional supports. The SWIS worker noted:

Just the fact that I have an office in that school speaks to their valuing of the diversity and supporting diversity. I mean, I work with every teacher there and very closely with the administration and it's just like I am a staff member. I feel like I am a member of their staff even though I am not. They will reach out to us if they need some advice on how to tackle certain issues and we always confer with each other to make sure students are integrating comfortably and that alone speaks a lot about the school.

It should be noted that the junior high schools also provided the SWIS workers with office space; however, it was the permanent presence of the SWIS worker in the school that made the significant difference. The importance of having the SWIS worker present was noted by several teachers, the students, and even the SWIS workers themselves. As mentioned in Chapter 7, the students in one junior high school, the only junior high school that actually offered specialized services for student from refugee backgrounds during the previous years prior to this study, noticed that the SWIS worker

allocated to their school was not around nearly as much now that he was required to service several additional schools. A teacher at the school also commented on the difference she observed. The following was her exchange with the researcher:

**Teacher:** The SWIS workers, because the SWIS workers are in six or seven schools - don't quote me on that because sometimes it shifts, sometimes it is less, sometimes it is more - he used to, the SWIS worker used to have regular hours [here]. But since the big influx of Syrians and that very little hiring has occurred to accommodate the change, all of the SWIS workers have essentially more on their plate, so...

**Researcher:** They are not around as much.

**Teacher:** No, and they can't be.

**Researcher:** And do you think the students notice that; does it make a difference to them?

**Teacher:** Yeah, it absolutely does because they, I think, feel less welcome. For example, during lunch in the past, the SWIS worker tried to be in his office and there was really like a social event with lots of students hanging out in the SWIS worker's office eating lunch or, just you know, playing chess, just being together. They felt warm and welcome, you know.

**Researcher:** It was a safe place for them to be.

**Teacher:** Exactly.

Another aspect of the high school that supported the students was how the classrooms of the ESL teachers and LEARN teacher and the office of one of the school's guidance counselors were all located within close proximity to each other. This set-up allowed the teachers to interact with each other and to work more closely as a team to support the students with refugee backgrounds. As the guidance counselor explained:

It certainly doesn't hurt that my office is situated next door to the LEARN classroom. So, I am in and out of that classroom a lot and they see my face a lot more. I am also familiar with the LEARN teacher and therefore get to be seen more by the refugee students, right.

From the guidance counselor's perspective, just to be seen by the students was important. His close proximity to the students also facilitated engagement with the students with refugee backgrounds and help them develop trusting relationships with the guidance counselor. In contrast, the LEARN classrooms in a few of the junior high schools seemed to operate in segregation and there seemed to be little interaction between the LEARN teachers and the ESL teachers and guidance counselors, as was discussed earlier in this report. One ESL teacher provided this perspective on how being an itinerant affects her ability to teach due to the lack of adequate physical space within schools. She said:

Like right now I don't have a room in the school. So, when I go into a school, I am given a list of classrooms that are not in use during the period that I am there, but when I go to the class the teacher who has that class is usually there doing prep and she may be working on the classroom computer so that means I don't have access to the computer. Also, that teacher probably doesn't want me there because they are trying to work, so I am often in the cafeteria.

Without a permanent base in the schools, the ESL teachers are also limited from working closely with the LEARN teacher and guidance counselors of the school. This limited interaction inhibits the teachers' ability to co-ordinate lessons and work as a unified team to meet the needs of the students with refugee backgrounds.

### **8.3 Partnerships and Services**

This section of the paper provides perspectives on school-based partnerships with key stakeholders such as the students' families, non-government agencies, and other community stakeholders, and how these partnerships and the services they provide may be impacting the psychological wellbeing and academic development of students with refugee backgrounds. The section is further broken into two subsections. The first explores a few key partnerships that were identified with non-governmental and other

community-based stakeholders and the second explores the communication and engagement of students' families. Finally, only long-term and sustainable partnerships were considered for this section.

### **8.3.1 Key partnerships with non-governmental and other community-based stakeholders**

The most important partnership identified by almost every participant exists between the schools and the local settlement agency, the ANC. In particular, there is the SWIS Program, which assists students with refugee backgrounds and their families transition into their new surroundings and school. In particular, a SWIS worker is assigned to each new family when they arrive in NL. The SWIS workers provide school orientation and registration assistance; interpretation services; ongoing educational and advocacy support; and specialized programming to enhance children and youths' language learning, cultural awareness, community engagement, and physical activity.

All participant educators and administrators spoke highly of this program and accentuated its importance to the success of the students with refugee backgrounds. The teachers specifically noted that the SWIS workers operate as an important gateway to opening communication channels with the students' parents and caregivers. The availability of interpretation services provided by the ANC also facilitated communication between the schools and parents, and the presence of the SWIS workers in the schools provided the students with an additional caring adult who can offer them with guidance and assistance on a number of topics (e.g., how to make a doctor's appointment). The SWIS workers also linked students with refugee backgrounds to other programs, such as the Recreation Experiences and Leisure (REAL) program. The REAL

program provides recreation and leisure opportunities to children and youth in financial need, which has allowed many students with refugee backgrounds to play sports or join a recreational group and participate in their wider communities. One of the LEARN teachers noted that every one of her students was now participating in a community-based group with support that they received from the REAL program.

The SWIS workers have also helped students access afterschool tutoring through a program called Roger's Raising the Grade offered at the St. John's Boys and Girls Club. The privately sponsored program provides students with transportation to and from the Boys and Girls Club and access to one-on-one tutoring in fully equipped education rooms. Although the program is open to all students who wish to receive tutoring, a community worker from the club indicated that the vast majority of students attending are students with refugee backgrounds. She also expressed worry that the private funding that has enabled this program to flourish is about to come to an end and there is no guarantee that funding would be extended. This is quite relevant given that one of the LEARN teachers mentioned she depends on this program to assist her students since they are not receiving the extra help that they need at school. She specifically stated, "I am depending on Roger's Raising the Grade to salvage these kids because the school system doesn't have the time, resources, commitment, or even the interest in saving these kids." This powerful statement by the teacher is reflective of the frustration that she and other teachers expressed towards the inadequacy of the services provided to students with refugee backgrounds by the school system.

Although the SWIS partnership was deemed an essential service, some issues did arise. For one, it became evident that the SWIS workers were often approached by



students to help them with their schoolwork, a task that does not fall under the preview of their responsibilities. This finding is also indicative of the lack of teaching support available to the students. Also, there can be issues related to power imbalances since the SWIS workers are not official members of the school system and are therefore not privy to all relevant information pertaining to student issues. This sometimes means the SWIS workers can be caught between pleasing all parties, which negatively impacts their ability to advocate for students with refugee backgrounds. For instance, some have witnessed certain school practices that they deemed to be detrimental to the wellbeing of the students, yet they felt powerless to intervene. Finally, the SWIS workers are not trained educators, nor do they have the specialized training that guidance counselors have in dealing with issues related to mental health and student development, but they are often called upon to give advice that may go beyond their expertise. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of engagement on the part of some of the guidance counselors in the schools. Furthermore, some students simply go to the SWIS workers for guidance because it is easier given that the guidance counselors are over-burdened with work and it can sometimes take days for a student to get an appointment.

One other key partnership that was identified existed between the NL school system and an organization called Sharing Our Cultures Inc. Sharing Our Cultures is a non-profit organization whose mission “is to connect culturally diverse school youth, foster belonging and acceptance among all school children, be relevant within the schools and province, and contribute towards an inclusive and cohesive society” (Sharing our Cultures, 2019). One of the biggest events that Sharing our Cultures hosts takes place annually at the Rooms, a museum in St. John’s, and involves high school students from

diverse backgrounds setting up booths and displays and acting as cultural presenters and performers to a public audience and hundreds of grade-six students who attend as an educational field experience. To prepare for the event, the high school students participate in weekly activities that help them enhance their language and literacy proficiency, develop public speaking and engagement skills, and acquire project planning experience. While the event is open to a variety of high school students who wish to partake, it was identified as an important extracurricular opportunity for many of the high school students with refugee backgrounds. For instance, Haywood High School's guidance counselor noted, "It allows students to share things that are unique about themselves and it gives them a voice and empowers them." Likewise, the school's SWIS worker said:

Sharing our Cultures is another [extracurricular activity]. So naturally - student success – you probably see some correlation with the amount of extracurricular activities they are involved in. Um, I think Sharing our Cultures is a great gateway for that. Just the other day they did a little mini expo, and I went around and encouraged students to attend. Because of that they feel empowered because they get to share things about their culture, which also fosters some pride for them. And this program kind of gets them used to attending things at lunch or after school and they tend to then move out into other activities.

While the adult participants focused mainly on the empowerment aspects of the program, two of the students who participated in Sharing our Cultures highlighted the importance it plays for helping them develop skills while also being able to take pride in their cultures. This was their conversation with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Are there any other things you like about the school, such as programs, etc.?

**Randi:** This school I like it. They have lots of programs.

**Researcher:** Like what?

**Etu:** Sharing our Cultures, which makes you practice teaching you know. Practice makes perfect.

**Researcher:** Do you mean like presenting?

**Etu:** Yeah, presenting. I am sharing about my culture and good things about my culture.

**Researcher:** Okay, and you are also learning how to present?

**Etu:** Yes.

**Randi:** Yes.

Building on a reoccurring theme in this study was the fact that Sharing our Cultures was only available to the high school students with refugee backgrounds. While many elementary students do have an opportunity to attend the final event and interact with the presenters, only high school students are able to volunteer and join the program as presenters. This means that it is only them who are able to avail of the weekly workshops and training activities and benefit from such opportunities, which may contribute to their psychological need satisfaction. For instance, Etu expressed how he got to share his culture and as such may have felt valued as a person, which can foster one's sense of relatedness with others. Also, working on a yearlong project with others with a shared goal can also foster a sense of relatedness. The project also allows students to create presentations based on their own decisions. This decision-making power would be expected to foster students' sense of autonomy. For Etu, this meant sharing the "good things" about his culture.

### 8.3.2 Family communication and engagement

Communication and engagement with students' parents or guardians due to their limited English ability was identified as being a significant challenge by several of the study's adult participants. Some of the teachers elaborated and explained that this lack of communication often means they are not aware of certain student issues or needs and that can inhibit their ability to address these needs and foster their students' development. Ms. Pretty had the following to say:

The children are the ones that I mainly communicate with if parents have questions, or I communicate through email. So generally, there is not a lot of communication ... also, it's important to have an idea of what is happening in these children's lives. So, without that communication with the parents I sometimes don't know what is going on in that child's life and some of them bring those issues to school and I am not aware of them. Some will share with me and some will not. So that can be a challenge.

Ms. Wallace also provided the following example to illustrate the negative ramifications that can result from poor communication between parents and the school system. She further highlighted how parents' limited ability to communicate in English also places them at a significant disadvantage from a social justice perspective. She said:

The parents of many of these children are unable to speak for their children's rights and they just get left out. I have seen it. I have seen it so much. Like, there was this one child who came, and the teacher was like, "I don't know what to do, I don't know what to do." And it took three years to discover that this child had almost died from cerebral malaria. It came down to a case where the right questions were not asked when the child was first assessed. So, finally it was discovered that the child had suffered brain damage. So that child is finally getting the support that is needed that any child with brain damage would get. But it took all those years to get those supports in place. But too often there is no one to fight for these individuals' rights and it makes me so angry ... and I think that it would be very beneficial for the school board to talk to the parents on a regular basis as it might give them some insight into what the students need; because nobody has ever asked the parents what they think. But, if they would only ask, they could get some important information, or even if they listened to the ANC, which seems to

have become a closed door now. Whereas in the past they would listen to these SWIS workers who are working closely with these families and they hear what the families are saying, and they can bring this information to the school board ... but I think this lack of communication is creating a lot of negative feelings in the grassroots.

Other teachers also shared stories of how communication from the schools tends to lack consideration of the language needs of parents. For instance, Ms. O'Neal recited her observations from the school's curriculum night, an evening when parents are invited to their children's schools at the beginning of the year to learn, for instance, about school routines and expectations and the curricular goals for that year. She said:

I know that on the curriculum night – I was so pleased because a lot of the parents showed up, but unfortunately the presentation was all English and so fast paced that a lot of them left during the presentation. So, it would have been nice if they could have gone somewhere else and get the same presentation that was interpreted. So, I can only imagine how they would have felt, yeah.

Ms. Arnold provided another example to show how little consideration is made to accommodate parental needs and how this can lead to issues of stress and worry. She explained:

The school sends out Center Voice, the automated computer school-to-home dialling program, which no refugee parent understands unless they are highly educated; and since I've been in this position, I will tell you precisely that only one parent has been capable of understanding the Center Voice in English. So, for example, if a kid is marked absent, you will pick up the phone and it'll say "this is a phone call from [school name] Junior High. To excuse this absence, please call the school or provide a note. Thank you." Those are the kinds of messages they get and quite often they will call the SWIS worker, and they are like "ah what the hell happened?" And then the SWIS worker calls me in a panic, you know. So, usually after the initial phone call the family goes into this like spasm of panic and worry and concern to complete and total "it's just something from the school" and then they just hang up because they can't understand.

While the four above examples from the teachers indicate that more needs to be done to facilitate communication between the schools and parents, a number of positive

practices were also reported. For instance, two of the LEARN teachers hosted their own meet and greets for the parents that involved having a potluck in the LEARN classroom during lunch and inviting the students' other teachers to drop by for an introduction. Several of the teachers also go above their normal responsibilities to ensure they maintain some contact with the parents. For instance, the high school ESL teachers and LEARN and some of the junior high school ESL teachers and LEARN teachers visit the ANC's LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians) school to conduct parent-teacher interviews. The teachers are also accompanied by the SWIS workers and interpreters to facilitate dialogue. As one teacher explained that it was important for the teachers to make the effort of visiting the LINC school because of the burdens that many of the parents have to deal with on a daily basis. The following was a part of her conversation with the researcher:

**Ms. Sullivan:** I really like that we go to the LINC school during parent-teacher meetings.

**Researcher:** So that works well?

**Ms. Sullivan:** Well yes, because if we didn't, we would never see them.

**Researcher:** They wouldn't come here?

**Ms. Sullivan:** Most of these parents are going home after their own day at school to three or four or more children and they are trying to live, so it can be a burden for them to come to us. So, we take an afternoon and go to the LINC school because we will see many of the parents there.

Another teacher also relayed a similar message. She said:

We just met with the parents at the ANC for parent-teacher interviews. I find it excellent. Some people – I remember the person at the District who hired me, and they mentioned that perhaps I should bring them here. And I thought, no, I find that it really works there and find that everyone is there. We don't have to worry

about transport and getting them all in and many of them don't speak a lot of English, so the ANC helps with having translation. If they have young children, they are there in the daycare, whereas if they came in the night, they don't have to make all of those arrangements. I don't think we are enabling them – you know what, if we can offer them that support – it's easier for us as a team to go there and see everybody. It's invaluable and it's the most humbling experience you could ever imagine. It's excellent to be able to sit down with these parents and get to feel for the family. It's excellent. (Ms. Arnold)

One of the SWIS workers also acknowledged the benefits of having the teachers travel to the LINC school, but he did mention one drawback. Since it is usually the newest Canadians that attend the language school, some of the other parents who have been in Canada for longer periods of time may no longer be attending the school and are thus unavailable to meet. He did however mention that in such cases he makes an effort to facilitate contact between the teachers and the parents and sets up individual meetings if they are requested or required.

Despite the praise placed upon the SWIS workers for facilitating communication between parents and school staff, some issues regarding this reliance were raised. One participant, who was not a SWIS worker mentioned:

I think the SWIS workers can speak better to this than me because I am not a SWIS worker, but I would rank communication low just because the parents are only speaking through [SWIS worker names]. Not that that is a bad thing. It is part of a SWIS worker's job, but sometimes it can get confusing when the parents are only speaking to them. The parents might assume that they are the teachers because they have never seen the face of a teacher. I think there has to be a direct connection between the parent and the teacher. I think teachers need to make the parents feel responsible and engaged.

One of the SWIS workers also agreed that this is sometimes the case and pointed to a few additional problems around the situation. He said:

We feel it is important for the parents to get to know the school. For example, what if there is an emergency. The parents need to know where to come to get their child. Also, it is important to let the parents know that they have a

responsibility to build that relationship and to also let them know that they are welcome in the school.

The overreliance on the SWIS workers was also noted to occur mainly by school personnel who were not attached to the LEARN or ESL departments. This problem was exasperated by the fact that it was only the LEARN and ESL teachers that went to the LINC school to meet with the students' parent, meaning the parents had very little or no contact with their children's other teachers. Finally, it was further noted that when the SWIS workers are called upon to facilitate communication or pass along information, it is usually because a problem has occurred. In contrast, the flow of positive information was reported to be minimal. As an example, one SWIS worker said, "And as [another participant] mentioned, we are the only ones who pass along the bad news. So, it's like every time we call a parent, it's like, 'Problem. Another school problem.' I don't want to be that person."

While some very positive partnerships and promising practices were noted within this section, it is evident that some issues need to be addressed. It is clear that many more opportunities are afforded to the high school students, which may explain why they report a greater sense of student-relatedness compared to their junior high school counterparts. The lack of communication in some cases may also negatively affect the students' social, emotional, and academic development. Opportunities to communicate with parents may allow teachers to learn about their students' strengths and interests, which can then be leveraged to meet the students' basic psychological needs. For instance, if one is aware that a student has an interest in art, efforts could be made to have the student join an art club where he or she can make friends and develop their talents. Also, the passing along



of positive information, rather than only communicating when a problem arises, may also help foster the students' basic psychological needs. As a case in point, acknowledging a student's progress may help him or her feel more competent and thus more motivated to continue learning.

## **8.4 Policy**

Many policy related issues were raised during the course of this study that could impact students' basic psychological needs. These issues broadly fall under the preview of leadership support, inclusion policies, and student assessment. Each is addressed individually; however, there is significant overlap between the issues that will be discussed. Furthermore, many of the issues have already been discussed extensively in previous sections of this study and will therefore only a brief overview will be provided. A final section will deal with transportation policy issues, a subject that arose multiple times during the course of this study.

### **8.4.1 Leadership support**

The CSH framework holds that student development and wellbeing is directly linked to the level of leadership support provided by school and district level administrators (JCSH, 2013); however, as was discussed in section 8.1.5 of this chapter, some teachers noted that the supports needed were not present, especially at the district level. One key aspect was that there were no individuals at the NLESD or EECD who had an extensive background on the educational needs of students with refugee backgrounds. Accordingly, the teachers in this study felt this was having a negative impact on teaching and learning. Many examples of this were provided in section 8.1.5, but a couple of other

examples are provided here. For instance, one ESL teacher noted that the district recently started to take more control over the student allotment assigned to each ESL teacher and was doing so without considering the needs of the individual students. She mentioned:

I think they are trying to micromanage everything now, which has deteriorated the system. Whereas before it was managed by the ESL teachers because they had a better understanding of the workload distribution and needs of the children. So now it seems to be more of a numbers game. So, if you've got 15 kids in a school and nine of those are kids of parents doing graduate degrees at MUN, you've got a very different workload than someone who has 15 kids that are refugees. So, when the board makes the decisions, they don't consider these issues. So, they are basing workload on the basis of equal numbers, not on an equitable workload per se.

In a similar example, another teacher noted that district level policies were now limiting her autonomy to make decisions based on the best needs of the children. She mentioned that in the past she had more freedom to pull students out of mainstream classes and offer them direct instruction. However, now she was being told by her principal that she could no longer do this and that students were required to attend mandatory mainstream classes. She explained:

In the past, the placement decisions, the scheduling decisions, were decisions that were most appropriate for that particular child; whereas in the last year and a half, they are fulfilling some kind of fantastical world of misunderstanding when it comes to language acquisition for refugee students and newcomers to Canada.

The teacher also mentioned that when she tried to make the case that some of the students needed more direct instruction and could not function in the mainstream classes her principal replied, "They will just have to learn through osmosis." This unfortunate statement demonstrates the level of misunderstanding that stems from some of the school system's leaders who are in policymaking and policy-enforcing positions.

The researcher also noted that a few district and school level administrators tended to conflate the needs of students with refugee backgrounds with those of traditional second language learners (i.e., students who have age-appropriate literacy in their first language), even when they had acknowledged that students with refugee backgrounds require first-time literacy support. As an example, one district leader mentioned:

And we know through French immersion, for example, that when students live in that language environment, they eventually learn the language and then they can learn other things in that language ... so, um, these students through immersion do eventually pick up the language and then they can learn the subject material in that language.

Two other school level administrators also provided similar sentiments which were shared in section 8.1.2. of this chapter. For instance, Ms. William's noted that mainstream classes are probably not the best environment for students with refugee backgrounds to learn English, yet she also shared notions that "to learn a language they have to be thrown in there" and "if they are in their LEARN class, they may default to their first language." Likewise, another administrator mentioned, "there is nothing better than practicing English with a kid your own age" when referring to one of the reasons the students with refugee backgrounds were placed in mainstream classes.

In contrast to the views expressed above, an expert on language acquisition that the researcher interviewed for this study, Dr. Rose, had the following to say about students with refugee backgrounds with limited English proficiency attending mainstream classes. The following is his exchange with the researcher:

**Dr. Rose:** Assuming that people don't have functional abilities to get by in English, spoken or written, it makes absolutely, and I emphasize, absolutely no sense to get them to take classes in geography or anything else where the medium of instruction is not available to them. So, the only thing that a refugee without skills would get from taking a course in, let's say geography, would be exposure

to English. As far as the subject matter to be learned it is just a complete waste of time. It's a waste of time because you can't learn things through a language that you don't understand. So, the only thing that you would get from that is exposure to English, but you won't acquire any knowledge on the intended subject.

**Researcher:** So, would that exposure to English be beneficial to their learning of English?

**Dr. Rose:** It's not detrimental, but it is not optimal because the focus is elsewhere. So, if I was to illustrate an ideal situation, these people should be taken under the wing of a caring organization and just be exposed to English in a place where they have to listen to English and interact in English every day for, I am going to say approximately a year. Their focus should be on that and only on that until they acquire the foundation, they need to tackle academic material outside of the language.

**Researcher:** You mentioned earlier that it is just too cognitively challenging to learn anything in an academic setting if you can't speak the language. Can you explain?

**Dr. Rose:** Let's say you are a refugee kid, and you don't speak English, and you are taking geography... and then comes the examination and the written answers about things that you couldn't learn, or at least not learn properly, and then you are expected to produce an answer. The number of hurdles there are just incredible. Yes, we want those kids to feel like they are treated normally, but we should not also lose sight of the fact that these kids have their own background and to introduce a temporal buffer zone with very special care would streamline their integration into Canadian society and the institutions that maintain that society.

It is clear from Dr. Rose's assessment that being immersed in mainstream classes does little to help these learn subject matter, and that the benefits immersion in mainstream classes for language acquisition are limited. In support of Dr. Rose's contention, several of the student participants in this study confirmed that their inclusion in mainstream classes placed them in situations where they could not understand anything and made them feel alienated and frustrated.

The lack of specialized leadership was also noted as a problem when it came to the hiring of appropriately credentialed staff, as was outlined in detail in section 8.1.5 of this chapter. It was noted that this often meant that some teachers were being placed in positions wherein they lacked the necessary skills and experience to effectively meet the needs of their students with refugee backgrounds. For instance, it was noted that in some situations there was a lot of aggressive behaviour due to the teachers being unable to maintain control within the LEARN classes. One teacher also reported that she felt overwhelmed and unprepared when she was first hired. She noted that she applied for the role because it was advertised as an IRT position and it was only after she was offered the job that she was informed that she would be mainly working with students with refugee backgrounds. She further noted that she had no ESL training or prior experience teaching students with refugee backgrounds with the exception of one university course related to cultural issues in counseling. The researcher also interviewed several other teachers who felt they were often overlooked for these positions despite having ESL degrees and years of experience working with immigrant and refugee students. They noted that their experience was not taken into consideration for a couple of reasons. One was that much of their teaching experience was from jurisdictions outside of the NLESD, and they were thus excluded based on seniority. Others felt that their experience was simply not valued since some district and school leaders were not aware of the essential skills needed to successfully respond to the specific needs of students with refugee backgrounds. In speaking with district level staff, it seemed there was a lack of policy that established standards with regards to the qualifications teachers need to be hired for LEARN or ESL positions.

Many of the ESL and LEARN educators also noted that the lack of leadership at the NLESD and EECD left them without adequate resources to meet their students' needs. Section 8.1.4 of this chapter provided a detailed overview of the teachers' perspectives and how the lack of resources were impacting their ability to meet their students' academic needs. In summary, however, the teachers felt that a dedicated leader was necessary to ensure that adequate and age-appropriate resources were made available to the teachers and students.

On a positive side, the vast majority of the LEARN and ESL teachers said that they were receiving excellent support from their school-level administrators. They noted that their administrators often deferred to them to make appropriate decisions for their students. For example, although students were required to attend mainstream classes during the majority of their day due to the current inclusion policy which is addressed in further detail in the proceeding section of this chapter, their administrators allowed them to pull students out if they felt it was in the best interests of their students. For instance, one teacher had the following to say:

In this school I think I have a wonderful administration and I am thankful that they are very supportive, and they trust me, and they trust my decisions. Like, I wanted to take them on a field trip, and they were going to miss many of their other classes, but the administration said no problem. If you think that is the best thing for them, by all means go ahead.

Another teacher said that she feels she has full autonomy to make the proper decisions for her students and that her school's administration has been nothing but supportive since she was hired earlier in the year.

### 8.4.2 Inclusive education policy

The EECD has established a policy of inclusive education within the K-12 education system in NL. Accordingly, students with refugee backgrounds, regardless of their literacy levels and English language capabilities, are routinely included in mainstream classes and required to complete the proscribed curriculum of those classes. As has been discussed extensively in this report, the inclusive policy has led many to suggest, including teachers, community workers, the parent participant, and the students themselves, that the learning and social needs of many students with refugee backgrounds are not being met as a consequence. To refresh, the teachers noted a lack of resources to meet the students' needs while they were in mainstream classes and the students indicated that they felt isolated and incapable of completing the curriculum. In contrast, several school and district level administrators defended the inclusion policy and suggested that the system is meeting the needs of the students with refugee backgrounds. As an example, during a joint interview with two district administrators, this is what the administrators had to say:

**Researcher:** What are some of the ways that you include refugee students in mainstream classes? What are some of the strategies?

**Administrator A:** Well, we follow inclusion with all of our students. You know, that is one of our approaches in schools. Um, so there has been a lot of professional development on that, inclusion in schools ... where all schools have had training on inclusion, um, and there is a handbook that has been distributed to all schools.

**Administrator B:** And we have lots of people at our disposal to work with teachers at the school level to work with refugee students. We have special education teachers, guidance counselors. At the district level we have our psychologists and other district staff. So, the challenges that refugee students may have, it doesn't fall all on the classroom teacher and the ESL teacher. We have

lots of different professionals that can consult and work with our students when necessary.

When speaking with the teachers and school level administrators, they did acknowledge that over the past few years there has been quite a bit of professional development on inclusive education; yet they also noted that very little has been focused on the inclusion of students with refugee backgrounds with interrupted schooling. As was noted in section 8.1.5, several of the teachers talked about the need for more professional development, and one teacher who was just hired to specifically work with the students with refugee backgrounds in her school mentioned that she has not had any training whatsoever related to teaching these students. Moreover, a school-level administrator noted that very little professional development had been offered from the EECD or NLESD for mainstream teachers. This was his conversation with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Do you know of any professional development that has been offered to the teachers with regards to how to include them in their classes or help them overcome some of the challenges that the students face?

**Administrator:** Not that I am aware of. I know our LEARN teacher has taken some courses, but as far as I know our mainstream teachers have not.

**Researcher:** Is that something that you think teachers could use?

**Administrator:** Most definitely, yes, in this school for sure.

In addition to the lack of professional development, and in contrast to the administrators' views that ample support is being provided to the students with refugee backgrounds, this study has already pointed out that in most cases with the exception of the high school, it is the LEARN teachers who take on the brunt of the responsibilities for the students with refugee backgrounds. As indicated, the guidance counselors in the



junior high schools do not seem to be actively engaged in the lives of the students with refugee backgrounds, and the special education teachers (i.e., IRTs) were often too busy with other pressing matters in their schools such that it limited the amount of time and support they could provide the students. Finally, one other educator noted that to no fault of their own, most mainstream teachers would not have a thorough understanding of the needs of most of the students with refugee backgrounds in their school and that they tend to have so many other issues to deal with that they simply cannot give the students the attention they need. This is what he said:

**Researcher:** Do you think mainstream teachers appreciate these challenges?

**Educator:** Absolutely not [chuckle], not at all. The understanding might occur at some point, but I don't think it's because they don't want to learn... it's because they don't have the time. They don't have the time for the specialized needs that are in their class, for the kids with needs, the kids with special needs, the kids with learning disabilities ... there're just so many expectations on the teachers in regular classrooms. For many, until it is drawn to their attention, they are not cognizant of what that student coming into the class knowing or not knowing. And to no fault of their own because if you have a class of 30+ students and you're pressured to meet the curriculum outcomes – that's your job – and sometimes all of these subtleties that come with each individual child often get overlooked.

The educator's assessment was also confirmed by a mainstream teacher who said, "My only concern is that when these kids first arrive to us, we don't know anything about their background when it comes to their academic level."

Later in the interview with the two district level administrators mentioned above, the researcher also inquired about the inclusion policy and whether this was best way of ensuring the students with refugee backgrounds' language development. This was the exchange:

**Researcher:** With regards to language development, do you see the benefit of having students tend mainstream classes with all of their peers or would it be better to see the program change in a way that focuses more on language development first, when they first arrive?

**Administrator B:** That is an on-going debate [laughter]. I guess that we recognize as educators – well we know, the one thing that we know is that ESL students and refugee students have to feel comfortable in their environment before any learning is going to occur. So, there is a camp that would say that it may be helpful to have them together somewhere first to give them a chance to learn the basics and to provide them with some basics in literacy and numeracy, and then move them into the system. But we also have a philosophy of attending your neighbourhood school and being a part of your community and become familiar with those people in your community and school as soon as possible, and then learning from your peers. So that is what we are doing now. Yeah.

**Administrator A:** Yeah, I think our schools do a very good job of coordinating those things at the school level. We want kids to be with their peers with appropriate programming. That is always our default - neighbourhood schools, with your peers and appropriate programming and we think our schools, ESL teachers, classroom teachers and other professionals at the schools do a great job. We do a good job of making them feel comfortable.

Once again, a contrast between how the administrators view what is happening in the schools and what was reported by the teachers and students becomes evident. Several of the students noted that they did not feel comfortable in mainstream classes, especially early on when they first arrived. In fact, several mentioned their loneliness, isolation, and frustration related to not being able interact with the other students and to understand what was happening during class. It was also evident that many preferred being in the LEARN environment and engaged in avoidance behaviours as a means of staying away from the mainstream classes.

Another issue related to the inclusive education policy that arose during this study was the inconsistency that was being practiced within the junior high schools. For instance, in some of the schools, the students were required to attend particularly

demanding mainstream classes, such as science and social studies, while in other schools the students were being pulled out of these classes and placed in less rigorous classes. Overall, a consistent and coherent educational plan for the students with refugee backgrounds did not seem to be in place. For example, in one of the junior high schools, it seemed that the students with refugee backgrounds were being placed in particular classes without a defined purpose. This is what a teacher in the school said about the students' schedules:

**Teacher:** They do French, but they don't do science. There is a LEARN science and LEARN social studies that is not in junior high that needs to be in junior high because there is no reason why my students can't be doing social studies. I try and work that into my language arts, but it is really hard when you have to do so much language instruction and cover the math curriculum. But I think they need to have it because they are so quick to catch on to things if it was presented to them, they would be able to do that. If they could replace some of the other courses they are doing with LEARN science and social studies, it would be beneficial. Like, they do home economics twice. I don't love their schedule to be completely honest. I am new to LEARN and maybe there are some scheduling issues, but I am not really happy with their schedule.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Teacher:** They have classes with grade eights, grade sevens, grade nines, so they are not always seeing the same kids either. I feel like if they could at least keep seeing the same kids then they may be able to identify with the other students more.

**Researcher:** So, do you think they are just being placed into whatever class is available?

**Teacher:** Yeah, but the thing is I didn't make the schedule and maybe that's the way it had to be. So, I am not criticizing any one person for setting it up like this because I am new to LEARN. But I don't like their schedule. I don't like that they have home economics twice and tech twice because I don't see the benefit of them having it twice. Like I know if you do something more than once it is helpful because you get more out of it.

**Researcher:** So, they are repeated two classes each week?

**Teacher:** Yeah, like they were supposed to do home economic and then switch to tech, but they did two home economics classes and are now doing two tech classes. So, they didn't switch when the other students did. So, they are in two classes with different students, and they have two different teachers for the same class.

The conversation with the teacher revealed a couple of aspects that need to be considered. The first relates to the fact that although a LEARN program for science and social studies exists, it is not being offered to the junior high school students. Also, it seems these students are being placed in some mainstream classes for the sake of convenience and to make it seem as if they are being included, which does not match the defined purpose of inclusive education whereby students are included in classes with their peers *and* receive appropriate programming with a continuum of supports they need to succeed (EECD, 2019c). The second aspect relates to the students being slotted with students from grades seven, eight, and nine. This means the students are being shuffled from class to class rather than being consistently placed in classes with their age-related peers. This consequently reduces the time they could have to form meaningful relationships with those peers and can negatively impact their sense of student relatedness within their school.

A final issue related to inclusive education was also broached by several educators and a few of the community service workers working in the schools. They noted a policy change that was just recently implemented whereby the LEARN students are now assigned to different homerooms (note: a homeroom is a classroom where students gather at the beginning of the day to have attendance taken and to receive school related announcements) throughout the school as a way of enhancing their integration into their

schools. This is a change from past years where all of the LEARN students would attend the same homeroom and have the LEARN teacher as their homeroom teacher. Some of the teachers and community workers noted several problems that they have since identified due to this change in policy. A couple of teachers have mentioned, for instance, that the change means that many of the students with refugee backgrounds may not be receiving all of the information they need because they cannot understand the announcements that are provided to the students. The community workers also noted that the change means that they now have difficulty accessing all of the students for important announcements specifically related to them. As an example, one individual said:

So now it's harder for us to reach them. Like before, we knew they would all be in homeroom and we could just run upstairs and talk to them all at once. It's now really difficult to get messages out to these students when they are in multiple homerooms.

Some of the participants also mention the social impact it was having on the students' sense of relatedness. One of the community workers noted that she understood that the schools were trying to enhance the students' inclusion by having them included in mainstream homerooms, but she also noted the need for these students to also feel that they "belong to a group" as they do when they are with their other LEARN peers. She said, "They used to be in one homeroom, which provided them with a sense of comfort I think, for sure. Now they are dispersed into a bunch of homerooms." She also noted that one student told her at the beginning of the year that her homeroom teacher "doesn't even know my name, the teacher doesn't even know that I am here."

Another teacher shared her views of how the students were adapting to the new policy. She said:

**Teacher:** The students who were used to being in the LEARN homeroom struggled in September.

**Researcher:** Why?

**Teacher:** Just because they were used to being in the LEARN classroom and being with that small group of people and knowing the teacher. Like, their homeroom teacher is not necessarily their teacher for any particular courses. So, I guess it was just their familiarity with the LEARN teacher and it was just kind of nerve wrecking for them in September.

Another teacher shared the following:

**Teacher:** The LEARN program, when it was originally put in, was fantastic because they were integrated into the other classes individually as they were able to participate in a given subject. And they had the homeroom atmosphere of the LEARN class and that has now changed, and I see that it has had a detrimental impact on the kids because being in the regular homeroom has caused a lot of them to act out whereas if they were in the LEARN homeroom a lot of that stuff went away because they were in a situation where they were all in the same boat.

**Researcher:** Can you give me an example of what you are seeing?

**Teacher:** Everybody wants to have some attention and they can't get that through academic success, so they just do silly things and there is a lack of understanding on the part of other teachers who don't interact with them very much, and they come down on them really hard for stuff that I would ignore because I understand where they are coming from. It doesn't mean that the behaviour is good, but some of them have spent a lot of time in the office when really, they should have just been told, 'behave your age.'

**Teacher:** Do you think they may be acting out through avoidance behaviour, as we talked about before?

**Teacher:** Yes, definitely. And I think a lot of this depends on the individual and the personality of the child. It's really, really important to get to know the children as people so that you can address behaviours and having them in the LEARN homeroom gives the LEARN teacher the opportunity to know and then the LEARN teacher can communicate the children's needs to the other teachers and that way you can build a network of support for these children rather than attack on these children when they misbehave.

**Teacher:** Why do you think this is happening with the other teachers?

**Teacher:** Because sometimes they only see them when they pop in to have the registrar done and then they may not encounter them in an academic way at all.

In contrast to many of the views delineated above, other participants, including some who also reported negative issues, expressed support for the inclusive education policy as it pertained to mainstreaming students and placing them in regular homerooms. A district level administrator shared the following views:

What [we] try to do is include them in subjects where the academic expectations are not overly rigorous, and I think it is important for kids to feel like I am just like everyone else here. You have to be careful, but I think it gives these students a sense that I can learn like everyone else. And the skills you get from the experience of sitting in a class like everyone else and listening to the teacher, talking to students, working on assignments together, I think it is very transferable to the LEARN classroom and the academic expectations.

Two of the LEARN teachers (for the following section they are referred to as Teacher A and Teacher B instead of using their pseudonyms to protect their identities) also shared their views. The following is what they had to say:

I very happy that they have 50% without me. The other 50% is not so bad because I wouldn't want them to be with me all of the time. I think it is important for them to be in regular classes because it is important for them to integrate with the other students. I don't feel like they are totally on their own, but I am here in this building so much more than I am technically supposed to be. So, if I was only here for the periods that they had me I would be concerned at lunchtime, at recess time and when they are out in their other classes. I can constantly check in with them and I am constantly checking in with them. (LEARN Teacher A)

I think that it is very easy for the LEARN class to become a little microcosm, which is not what I think is best for them. I think it is important for them to have a place where they can go and feel a little more comfortable and have a break from all of the pressures associated with being in a new environment. So, this class is a little bit like home. They come here usually during recess and lunchtime and sometimes they don't; they will participate in other school activities. I do think regular class is important because if we want them to, you know the whole goal of this program is that they will not need me anymore. So, I don't want them to need the LEARN program, so I want them to participate to the best of their ability and understand how it works, and how to get on Google classroom and how to modify things and ask for help and to identify ways to talk to their teachers

and say, ‘I don’t understand this,’ and to look at timelines and deadlines. And I think we can really make that work if we provide the appropriate levels of support, which we don’t have for in-class, but... (LEARN Teacher B).

The same two LEARN teachers also supported the inclusion of students with refugee backgrounds in regular homerooms. Teacher B said:

For me I think the homeroom should be with their peers and I think there are ways to make sure that – there are gaps because they are not going to get all of the oral information that comes through announcements, they are not going to read the newsletters – so here the person that prints the newsletter bring me a copy for each student and we go through the newsletter together. So, there is a lot of information that gets conveyed that the kids do miss, but as long as I am keeping up with what’s going on I can keep them on track. Some teachers are very proactive and tell me what’s happening, and can you check on that, and some are not. But I think it is important to be in that homeroom. That’s their class, they are a part of that class.

Teacher A shared a similar view. She said:

Now I know [another LEARN teacher] has problems with her students being in a regular homeroom, but she has a whole bunch and I only have [a few]. Like, I still have teachers telling me, um, like they are ordering shirts or selling tickets, and teachers come and tell me about it and ask me. Like, I am just trying to promote that they are in the classroom like everyone else, but I only have [a few], so I can keep track of them very easily. I feel like [the other LEARN] over there, with so many kids, that it would be very beneficial for her to have them in her homeroom. It’s not so much of an issue for me.

### **8.4.3 Student assessment**

This section of the study looks at issues related to student assessment and school and class placement. The first topic concerns how students are first assessed when they arrive in Canada and the second looks at their school, grade, and course placement. The third topic examines policies concerning students’ special needs, and the final topic relates to how students are academically assessed while at school. Links between these



assessment policies and practices and students' basic psychological needs are correspondingly explored.

#### ***8.4.3.1 Assessment at intake***

One policy that has recently changed within the school district is how students with refugee backgrounds are assessed when they first arrive. According to several teachers, in the past, the ANC would contact the individual schools and notify them that a new student had arrived. Then a meeting with the LEARN teacher, student, his or her parent(s), the SWIS worker, a translator if needed, and possibly the school's principal and ESL teacher(s). During the meeting, the teachers would try and learn as much about the family and the child's educational background as they could. Later, the LEARN teacher would do an assessment to understand the child's education level and capabilities and then make decisions regarding grade and class placement, that is, whether they should be enrolled in LEARN, and whether or not they were proficient enough to participate in some less strenuous mainstream classes. District personnel confirmed that the intake assessment process had recently been changed such that the assessments were now conducted by program specialists who worked at the district level. Below is the conversation the researcher had with two of the district's administrators:

**Researcher:** Have you ever worked with the ANC or been in contact with them?

**Administrator A:** Yeah, we have a great relationship with the ANC. At least we think we do. In terms of the students who come, they provide any background information they have, they – through their staff – are out in the schools a bit. So yeah, in my two years on this file we have had a great relationship with them.

**Administrator B:** And with regards to last year where we had a large influx of students at one time - so we have developed a process where they inform us of the intake and we have more information...

**Administrator A:** Yeah, we have formalized an intake process last winter when many of the Syrians came in in a short time.

**Administrator B:** Prior to that they would just go directly to the school and provide that info there, but now we have access to it as well.

**Administrator A:** And we see it as positive.

**Researcher:** When they first arrive, and they need to be assessed for language competencies and possible educational gaps... so that happens at the district level if I am correct?

**Administrator B:** Yes.

**Researcher:** And who is responsible, if you don't mind me asking?

**Administrator B:** So, I guess in the 7-12 level the LEARN teachers would do that.

**Researcher:** So, it is the LEARN teachers that actually do the assessment.

**Administrator B:** Well, that has evolved a little bit. Initially they did, but as of last year we have had ...

**Administrator A:** Some of our district staff is involved.

**Administrator B:** Program specialists.

**Researcher:** Program specialists. Do you know which specialists are involved?

**Administrator B:** English language arts and mathematics. One of those is also responsible for social studies. But what I understand about those assessments is the focus is on English and mathematics. So, the focus is on whether these students would benefit from being in the LEARN program.

**Researcher:** And do these individuals... are they trained in doing assessments?

**Administrator B:** Well, they are specialists in their background, and they are using what the LEARN teachers had originally developed to use to determine if the students need LEARN.

While the district noted that they think this is a better system, a few teachers with ample experience working with students with refugee backgrounds tended to feel the new system was not working quite as well, mainly due to a lack of communication between the relevant stakeholders. Here are what three teachers had to say. The first, an ESL teacher, noted:

**Teacher:** Before, when a child was coming there was a meeting that takes place at the school with the family and the child and an interrupter if necessary, the principal, the guidance counselor, the ESL teacher, and you meet and discuss, and you find out about the child's educational background and then you make decisions based on that meeting. And when that is done it eliminates a lot of the problems that can occur in the future. And those meeting were based on some bad experiences in the past and you improve upon your mistakes and the system that you are using and with the changes that occurred with the school board they have decided that we don't know anything about that now.

**Researcher:** What is the process now?

**Teacher:** The kid turns up at the door and comes on in. Some schools – this is one other thing that worries me is that there is no consistency in the system – so some schools have had ESL students coming for a long period of time where the administration sees the value of this kind of system, but there are other schools and other situations where they just turn up and in they come, and we find out that we have all kinds of problems here. And the lack of communication with the relevant parties. So, if you are not communicating with the ANC, the ESL teachers, the parents, etc., etc., when decisions are made at the board and the child just shows up at the school things have been missed.

The second teacher, a LEARN teacher, shared a similar experience of not receiving relevant information and commented on the communication problems she believes exist between the district and teachers. She said:

**Teacher** So, in the past, my approach has always been to work with the family and the child and sometimes with the SWIS team, depending on what knowledge they can bring... usually its quite beneficial to placement and scheduling and decisions. But that is all sort of taken away from me now. It's all done at the district level. So instead of students arriving in Canada, and four weeks later starting school, now they arrive and sometimes they wait months to start school. And then they show up and quite often I don't know if they are coming, don't

know anything about them. I get these cryptic emails about what their placement should be. I ask direct questions to what grade level they are, what placement do they have, and usually the response is no response [chuckle from the teacher]. Teachers and administrators should read their emails and respond?

The third teacher, an ESL teacher, also noted that she was not receiving any assessments from the district.

**Researcher:** Are you involved in assessing the LEARN kids?

**Teacher:** No, this year with so many Syrians coming in, someone else did the assessments. They are given an assessment at the board to see if they are eligible for LEARN.

**Researcher:** Are you given the assessments from the board?

**Teacher:** No.

#### ***8.4.3.2 School and course placement***

This section explores policies related to students with refugee backgrounds' school, grade, and program placement. For instance, it was discovered that all students with refugee backgrounds at the junior high level are enrolled in core French courses. For context, all junior high school students are required to take core French courses, so this policy applies to the students with refugee backgrounds as well. One has to question the rationale behind this policy as it relates to students with refugee backgrounds given that the vast majority are already in a situation where they have to acquire another additional language, namely English, to function in society. According, one has to ask what are the benefits of learning French, and is learning French the best use of instructional time for these students? The researcher posed these questions to Dr. Rose for his expert opinion. He responded:

I would suggest that for the first year, until the basic skills are acquired, I don't see the point of introducing another language. I would put this in the same category as geography such that the focus the first year should be on English. And given that language is the most complicated thing that our brains ever have to compute in our lives, you know, there is nothing more challenging than language cognitively speaking, so that places the bar really, really high to say that you have to learn both English and French from the get-go. Now, I would argue that after the first year of learning, French can actually be beneficial based on the fact that it is a cultural part of Canada and that learning languages is very beneficial for our brain development. I do think learning French at a later point is important just based on the Canadian context, but in the first year it is like climbing two walls at once and it just can't be justified.

In contrast to the placement of students in core French classes when they do not speak any or very little English and French, there are quite a few students with refugee backgrounds that do speak French and have been educated in French, yet they are not being enrolled in French immersion classes or placed in the CSFP school district. One teacher noted that she had several students who she feels would have been better off if they were enrolled in French immersion. This was her conversation with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Correct me if I am wrong, but did you mention in a previous conversation that there were some students that were actually fluent in French, yet they were not allowed to enroll in French immersion classes because the classes were too full?

**Teacher:** There were students in the past that I felt would be most appropriately placed in French immersion, and yeah, that was the reason.

**Researcher:** But they weren't placed in French immersion, so they were, again, placed in an English learning environment.

**Researcher:** Yeah.

The above teacher also noted that these students are enthusiastic to attend the one core French class they have to take and that they flourish in that environment. In contrast, she noted that for the students with no French connection or background, the core French classes are just "too overwhelming."

While the researcher was interviewing a high school refugee background student, he discovered that the student had completed grades K-11 in French prior to his arrival in St. John's. The researcher inquired as to why the student was not enrolled in French immersion or the CSFP school district. Below is his exchange with the researcher:

**Researcher:** Etu, can you tell me a little about yourself, like, your age, where you are from, and how long you have been here?

**Etu:** I am 18 and I am from Congo, and I have been here 8 month.

**Researcher:** So, you were born in Congo...

**Etu:** I was born in Tanzania. My parents are from Congo. I was born in a refugee camp. And I came from there to Canada.

**Researcher:** Okay, so you were born in the refugee camp. Can I ask you if you went to school while you were living in the camp?

**Etu:** Yeah, I did.

**Researcher:** And what grade did you complete?

**Etu:** Grade 11 in French program.

**Researcher:** So, you went to school in French?

**Etu:** Yeah.

**Researcher:** Are you fluent in French?

**Etu:** Yeah, I speak French better than English.

**Researcher:** Why then are you attending an English school?

**Etu:** Because there are no French programs.

**Researcher:** So, there are no French immersion programs available to you?

**Etu:** I asked next year to take French.

**Researcher:** So, you asked to take French immersion next year.

**Etu:** Yeah, to do a French course.

**Researcher:** Etu, do you know what French immersion is?

**Etu:** No.

**Researcher:** It's when you study all of your subjects in French. Science is in French, math is in French, etc. No one told you that you could study these courses in French.

**Etu:** No one told me that. You are the first one.

Etu is an example of how some students are not being properly assessed at intake, and thus not being placed in the most optimal educational environment that would allow them to satisfy their basic psychological needs. If Etu had been placed in French immersion, it would most likely allow him to feel more competent when he was completing his schoolwork. It would also allow him to more easily interact with his fellow peers and develop a sense of relatedness. Moreover, because Etu was placed in an English language program, he was told that it would take three to four years for him to graduate. In contrast, this time could have been significantly reduced had he been offered the option of completing his secondary studies in a French immersion program, or by enrolling him in the CSFP school district.

One other issue that arose regarding course placement was the burden that a full course load places on newly arrived students with refugee backgrounds. Several educators noted that having students operate in a language they were just learning all day was very taxing and that they felt school policies should be amended to reduce their course and workloads. Below are the opinions and observations of several educators:

But what we really need is for them to have the option to take a reduced course load, so they have more time to deal with the workload from those courses. And

we don't have that right now for this group. Their needs are unique. Like we have a math help centre in school, but they can't just go there and work through problems and ask a question every now and again. They need direct instruction on what that material is, on how to process it and deal with it. What questions are going to be asked and what answers will be expected - that sort of thing, right. That's one area that we are failing them, so that's a big challenge ... I think a full course load is more detrimental than beneficial. It would be better to provide them with one less course and give them a period to attend a class where they can work on their other courses and they have a staff member present to provide guidance and assistance when they need it. Now we are doing a lot of good things. We are doing the best that we can with the resources that we have. (Mr. Rideout)

And I think they also get overburdened with operating in a foreign language for the whole day. That is a big stress on the brain, and I don't think there is a good understanding of that. And they are not given any downtime to operate in their own language or just to have some literal downtime. And I think the feelings of inadequacy and frustration enters their lives rather quickly and it can be a downward spiral from there. (Ms. Wallace)

I think the students have a hard time getting used to being in school all day and listening to English all day. Their language ability is certainly one of the biggest issues for them because so many of them are eager to learn, but they have a lot of issues with English and having to sit in the classroom all day in such courses as social studies and science, which is very challenging for them. (Ms. Ball)

Yeah, but this year the students, and again, it's reflective of the fact that the vast majority of them... this is their first year in Canada. And at the end of the morning, they are like, losing it. They cannot concentrate for more than a nano second, right? (Ms. Arnold)

These educators' opinions and observation also fall in line with Dr. Rose's

assessment on the needs of these students. He said:

It can't be all formal instruction, 5 or 6 hours of formal instruction. Every brain would explode there. But um, I would say go for immersion in the language and that means go play in English, go watch movies in English, read cartoons where the images provide a lot of the context of the stories. And you have to consider students' attention span and their ability to process the information, so I would say formal education in the morning when the brain is most able to deal with the linguistic input, and then in the afternoon more practical activities like physical education and other activities and where ideally, they are intermixed with native speakers of English. This is where sports come into the picture or any cultural



bound activity and contact with native speakers. But just forget about other academic topics would be my opinion.

Based on the opinions and observations of the participants, when new students with refugee backgrounds arrive policies should be in place to emphasize the need for a slower transition into the school system. Policies should also consider the cognitive demands placed on these students and focus more on linguistic development rather than the acquisition of content knowledge. Finally, students need to be placed in educational environments where their strengths can be drawn upon. Thus, during intake it is essential that a student's background is fully explored, and their strengths are identified. This should help foster the students' sense of competence and build a sense of relatedness with their peers.

#### ***8.4.3.2 Assessment of special needs***

The primarily mono-linguistic and cultural homogeneity of St. John's creates an environment whereby a lack of trained professionals and assessment tools exist to administer culturally and linguistically valid mental health and special needs assessments for many students with refugee backgrounds. A district level administrator noted:

That is a challenge within the Student Support Services realm. They have a series of things they use when they do assessments, but I guess in these cases they do it with the knowledge that a child may not understand, number one, what they are saying but also that the visuals may not be suitable. So, I guess they know they have to interpret with caution.

The lack of trained professionals and appropriate resources was thus identified as a barrier to getting some students with refugee backgrounds the extra assistance they require from student support services. One educator noted that the only way that a student with limited English proficiency could be evaluated is to work with the student for at least

one year, and then based on experience make a judgement as to whether the student is progressing at a rate compared to what would be expected. However, even if the student is deemed to be not progressing at the expected rate, there still exists the issue of identifying the underlying problem; and without a formal diagnosis, accommodations are typically not provided.

Another educator argued that a policy needs to be enacted whereby students with little to no education can automatically avail of student support services. He said:

We have students that struggle, and we cannot determine if this is an issue because of a lack of education, or because English is their second language, or because it is a learning difficulty. There are no assessment tools available to differentiate between these issues. But in order for students to access these services then there has to be a diagnosed learning disability, or language disorder, or language delay, and we can't tease that apart from the other issues. And because of that these students will continue to flounder because they don't meet the requirements for special supports. We shouldn't have to assess them. Up to grade three, any student can access supports because of developmental reasons, because you are not going to diagnose a student in grade one because they may just be developmentally a little bit behind. But when we have a student who is in grade 7 or 10, there is no access to support even though we can't definitively make a diagnosis. And I don't think we should have to. The student is coming in with, we know, the inability to access curriculum. It's not a lack of intelligence; it's just a lack of exposure to education. We should be providing those accommodations to allow them to access the curriculum. There are so much more that we could be doing, but we just are not resourced enough to do it. So, that is the next logical step... to bypass all of the requirements for accommodations. If the student is identified as a new Canadian with gaps in education, then there is no reason why they shouldn't be able to access supports. It should just be automatic.

Two other participants in this study also shared the difficulty they have with getting students properly assessed and how a lack of assessment is having a detrimental effect on some students. They shared the experience of one student they are currently working with as an example. The following is their exchange with the researcher:

**Participant A:** I think this student needs a side-by-side, and since he moved to a new school that has not happened. He needs that side-by-side, and I do not know

why that has not happened. He is continuously suspended, which is really unfortunate, and I feel really sad about the situation.

**Researcher:** Do you know what the problem is?

**Participant A:** Unfortunately, it's really hard to diagnose because of language, because of cultural barriers. We see lots of people that have complicated learning disabilities or health issues and those are hard enough to diagnose for people that were born and raised here.

**Participant B:** So, specialists here may not have perspectives on the cultural differences that cause issues in testing.

**Participant A:** Like even the words tidy and neat can have totally different meanings across cultures.

**Researcher:** So, is that something we need, specialists that have knowledge of various cultures and languages?

**Participant A:** Big time!

**Participant B:** Oh, yes!

**Participant A:** Like, I think of that child that needs a side-by-side, and there is definitely more going on. And I am at a loss! How do we get him tested?

**Researcher:** And the solution now is to suspend him?

**Participant A:** I hate that, I hate that! Like, what was it? He was suspended in the first week or the second week. I can't believe it.

While the solution to assessing the special needs of students with refugee backgrounds with interrupted education and limited English (or French) proficiency is complicated in a highly homogenous environment such as St. John's, these students could definitely benefit from having a policy in place that ensures they have easy, if not, automatic access to student support services. The sooner these students receive the extra supports they need to access the curriculum, the more likely they will successfully progress through their education and have their basic psychological needs satisfied.

#### 8.4.4 Transportation

The most common policy issue broached during this study centered on the inadequacy of transportation provided for students with refugee backgrounds. Despite the district's claim that they have a policy of having students attend their neighbourhood schools (see section 8.4.2), there is only one high school and four junior high schools in the CMA that provide specialized services for students with refugee backgrounds. However, many students do not live within these schools' catchment zones and are therefore not eligible for the EECD bussing that services each school. This means they rely upon public transportation to get to and from school if they wish to avail of the LEARN program. Several participants noted that this places an unfair financial burden on these students and their families who are already laboring under economic hardship. For example, this is what one educator had to say:

**Educator:** Housing, adequate housing is always a problem. So, many of our students often end up living well outside of the school's catchment area. And of course, this is a centralized education program specifically for these students, so if they want the best education that they can get in the city they kind of have to come here.

**Researcher:** Is the LEARN program considered an essential program?

**Educator:** Um, I consider it essential and based on what we have seen in the past, a lot of other educators in the building see it as essential because these students just can't succeed in the mainstream educational program without some sort of bridging program. Without this program they just don't succeed. This school has a lot of previous experience where students didn't have the program and they just floundered for a few years and finally ended up dropping out. Um, in that sense it's essential, and if they want to succeed, they need to come here to graduate. So, housing is related to transportation because if they are outside the catchment zone, they have to take the city bus, and that is not provided for them. So, even though it is an essential service in a centralized location, they are not provided with transportation to get to the service. So, that is a big challenge, especially for families with more than one or two kids. It ends up being a huge expense. Yet,

they are so determined that they make do. Should they have to? No! They should be able to use that money to put food on the table or buy clothing. So, they absorb that cost and deal with it.

The matter of whether the LEARN program was considered an essential service for students with refugee backgrounds with interrupted schooling, and its link to the provision of transportation services, was an issue that came up during several interviews. A district level administrator shared his opinion that the LEARN program is essential, but he also noted that since these students are not deemed to be special needs students, they are not provided with transportation. The following is his exchange with the researcher:

**Administrator:** And [transportation] is an issue, no doubt. I do feel that we are in a much better place now with LEARN than we were before because we have four [junior high] sites and not just one. But transportation is a... and what's the solution. You look for funding. I don't know if there is any federal funding available for these kids, you know.

**Researcher:** So, if I can put a comparison to you, if you have a child that has special needs that requires transportation to get to school...

**Administrator:** They get it.

**Researcher:** They get it. So why are these children not being provided with transportation?

**Administrator:** Well special needs, when you say special needs, we are talking children with behaviour and developmental needs. LEARN are not developmentally delayed. These are just kids that have special learning needs, but they are not defined as special needs children.

**Researcher:** However, would you consider the LEARN program and essential program for these students?

**Administrator:** Yes.

**Researcher:** So, in other words, given that it is an essential program they need to get to that school.

**Administrator:** Right, so in order to do that I think that's a Department of Education decision. That is where that would need to come from. It would be because the Dept. of Ed. would have to say that these kids need special transportation because their needs are special.

The issue of adding the LEARN program to three additional junior high schools during the 2016-2017 school year also raises issues related to social justice and equity. While several of the school district personnel described this expansion as a sign of their commitment to these students, and their desire to have students attend their neighbourhood schools, a teacher noted that the reality was that the decision to expand only occurred after some highly influential private sponsors, that is, people who sponsored a few refugee families' admittance to Canada, exerted political pressure on the EECD and NLESD for change. This claim by the teacher was backed up by a senior district administrator during an interview with the researcher. This was their exchange:

**Researcher:** I am curious to know why, at the beginning of the year, there were two schools designated to have LEARN, and then around October two other schools were added. What was the impetus for that?

**Administrator:** Transportation.

**Researcher:** So, it was transportation?

**Administrator:** I can only tell you from my dealings with the ... it looked like we had so many kids, we had some kids getting on the bus at 6:20 in the morning and taking two transfers to get to school. You know, that's just horrendous for someone who is just 11 or 12 years old. And so, there was pressure put on the district from the support, from the, ah, the people who brought them in.

**Researcher:** Their sponsors?

**Administrator:** Their sponsors. They had something to do with it, just political pressure. I'm not going to beat around the bush about it ... You know, I would like to see more. I would love to see a LEARN teacher in every school. But given the fiscal reality that we have today, uh, I am not sure that is going to happen. But we certainly want to help people. That is what we are here for.

The fact that the decision to offer more LEARN programming only came about through the political pressure of influential private sponsors accentuates the level of inequity that exists between those from a refugee background and other Canadian background families. These refugee families tend not to have any political power or influence and calls by advocates to address the transportation were ignored for years. For instance, one teacher noted:

Well, the transportation issues. You know, I have written my people at the board office numerous times, the ANC has addressed the issue, and others have raised this issue. But for some reason it just never made it up the ladder. So, just recently I was told that hey, the Minister of Education just found out that this is an issue. Yet, we have been trying to address it for years. And as of yet the situation still hasn't changed.

To further emphasize the inequity faced by many students with refugee backgrounds, consider that there is only one CSFP French language school in the CMA, just as there is only one high school that offers the LEARN program. However, the French school has ten busses for approximately 180 students and provides transportation to students living as far as 40km from the school. One has to question why one group of students would be afforded such rights while the other is not.

The extra burden placed on the students with refugee backgrounds may also impact their psychological needs. As was previously mentioned in section 8.2.1.2, the inadequacy of transportation can negatively affect these students' integration and school engagement and restrict their opportunities to have their needs fulfilled. The financial burden can also restrict these students' ability to participate in school and community-based activities that may require some sort of financial commitment.

## **CHAPTER 9**

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### **Discussion**

This study sought to gain a better understanding of how the NL school system was meeting the psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds. It started by comparing the self-reported psychological need scores of students with refugee backgrounds with their Canadian background peers. Additional questions were answered to see if there were any differences between male and female students with refugee backgrounds and between high school and junior high school students with refugee backgrounds. Next, the student participants' qualitative data were examined to triangulate and understand the quantitative results. Finally, the school system was analyzed using the CSH framework to further understand and explain any differences and similarities found between the groups. This chapter thus provides an overview of the merged findings and discusses these findings in relation to our current understanding of students with refugee backgrounds' academic and psychosocial needs. Also, recommendations for future practices are shared based on the key findings of this study. Finally, suggestions for future research are provided.

### **9.1 Overview of the Findings**

#### **9.1.1 Student competence**

It is not surprising that the students with refugee backgrounds tended to feel much less competent than their grade-level peers given the literacy and language barriers they have to overcome (Kanu, 2008; McBrien, 2009; Miller, 2009; Shakya et al., 2012;



Stewart, 2011). However, one has to ask if the reason these students report feeling significantly less competent is because they are routinely being placed in environments that are unsuitable for their academic ability. The qualitative data from this study support this notion and demonstrate that students are all too often placed in classes that leave them struggling and unable to cope with unrealistic demands. Moreover, these unreasonable expectations are exacerbated by a lack of adequate teaching supports, instructional resources, and sometimes, insufficiently prepared teachers. Similar findings have also been reported in other high-income nations (Dooley 2009; Due et al. 2015; Nilsson and Axelsson 2013) and begs the question of why these students continue to be placed in environments that set them up for failure.

In reviewing the definition of competence, that is, people experience a sense of competence when they feel they are performing effectively and have opportunities to demonstrate and express their capabilities (Deci, 1975), it becomes clear that many of the students with refugee backgrounds in this study were being placed in environments whereby they could not perform effectively, nor demonstrate and express their capabilities. It is thus not surprising that many of the students described their experiences as frustrating and engaged in avoidance behaviours to limit their exposure to these environments. The difference between the students' levels of motivation and engagement when they were in mainstream classes compared to LEARN environment is also telling. It is clear that they felt much more secure and confident when they were in the LEARN environment than when placed in mainstream classes. In their LEARN classes, the students were provided with opportunities to engage in learning activities whereby they could succeed. Their levels of motivation and engagement in the LEARN environment

were thus high when compared to their attendance in mainstream classes, which correspondingly aligns with the tenets of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

This study also revealed that the inclusion of these students in mainstream classes tends to be supported through questionable reasoning. The expressed belief by many educators that these students would benefit by learning from their peers, and that it would be beneficial to their language development, does not hold up when we consider prior research. For instance, when students have experienced prolonged periods of interrupted schooling, they have not built up the prerequisite knowledge they need to process the complex nature of the material being covered in mainstream classes, even with guided assistance (DeCapua, 2016; Miller, 2009; Windle & Miller, 2012). Cognitive-developmental theorists, such as Jean Piaget, would argue that it is erroneous to hurry students beyond their current capabilities, and that doing so only fails to nurture their potential and creates an environment of stress (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2013). Likewise, placing students in environments that require them to operate beyond what Lev Vygotsky termed the zone of proximal development, “are of no benefit whatsoever” to student development (McDevitt & Ormond, 2013, p. 219).

From a linguistic perspective, mainstreaming students with refugee backgrounds also does little to foster their English language development. Junior high and high school level courses are not concerned with the development of students’ linguistic capabilities, and accordingly, the focus of the instruction is elsewhere. Additionally, most junior high and high school teachers are not trained to provide first-time language and literacy support (Dooley, 2009; Kovinthan, 2016; MacNevin, 2012; Sidhu et al., 2011; Stewart, 2014), meaning that even when students develop oral proficiency, they will require

substantial support from other trained professionals when attending mainstream classes. Unfortunately, it was reported in this study that adequate supports in the mainstream classes are often not being provided.

The above findings thus question the utility of the inclusive education policy in NL as it relates to students with refugee backgrounds. Instead, it is highly recommended that the school system ensures that the LEARN science and social studies courses are made available for all students with refugee backgrounds with limited or interrupted schooling. It is not sufficient to only provide these courses at the high school level. Providing these additional courses should help scaffold the students' learning and allow them to engage with curriculum in a manner whereby they can succeed. This, corresponding, should help foster their sense of competence and academic motivation and engagement (Bandura, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Reeve & Tseng, 2011). From a developmental perspective, it also makes little sense to wait until the students reach high school to provide early intervention. The LEARN program should be extended in junior high and, based on the opinions of many of the educators that took part in this study, also be made available to students in the elementary grades. In line with their opinions, research clearly shows that earlier interventions lead to better long-term outcomes (e.g., Stanovich 1986). Students should not be left struggling for one or more years before they begin receiving the specialized help they need. It is critical to intervene as soon as possible to prevent these students from falling further behind.

In a similar fashion, ESL supports were reported to be under-resourced in this study, meaning the students with refugee backgrounds were not receiving the adequate assistance they need. This finding is in line with a recent report on the status of the NL

education system which found that ESL teachers in the province were handling a caseload of more than 40 students each. This equated to students receiving approximately two hours of ESL instruction per week (Collins et al., 2017). As Dr. Rose pointed out, language is the medium through which learning occurs, and without this medium, learning simply cannot happen. Given the importance that language plays in learning, not to mention all other aspect of life, ESL instruction for students with refugee backgrounds should be a priority, and two or three hours of instruction per week is inadequate. For instance, Miles and Bailey-McKenna (2016) note that newcomer students with refugee backgrounds:

require intentional daily instruction in English. Within this, students require explicit instruction in the *functions* (the purposes for which the language is used) and *forms* (the vocabulary [emphasis added] and grammatical features of the language to accomplish those purposes) of English, with ample opportunities to develop fluency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Dutro & Moran, 2003).

Furthermore, basing the number of ESL teachers hired on the number of ESL students in a given jurisdiction is also not prudent. As many of the educators in this study mentioned, the needs of students with refugee backgrounds are not the same as the needs of ESL students who have been educated in their first language. Yet, like other jurisdictions (e.g., Due et al., 2015; Sidhu et al., 2011), it seems they are equated as the same and the funding allocated for ESL services is being based on a set number of students rather than on the specific needs of students.

School systems also need to ensure there is an adequate leadership structure in place with appropriately trained staff members available to meet the unique needs of students with refugee backgrounds. This includes recruiting specialized administrators

and teachers with substantial multicultural experience and expertise in ESL instruction and early literacy and numeracy pedagogy. It is also imperative to provide mainstream teachers with systematic and on-going professional development to assist them in developing the skills they need to include transitioning refugee students into their classes. Research has shown that mainstream teachers are often not prepared to provide adequate instruction for refugee students (Dooley 2009; Pugh et al. 2012; Stewart, 2011), however Pugh and colleagues (2012) were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of having teachers engage in reflective inquiry sessions on a regular basis as a method of improving refugee background student outcomes. Likewise, it is also imperative that guidance counselors receive specific training to help them better meet the needs of students with refugee backgrounds. The findings from this study showed a near complete lack of engagement on the part of the schools' guidance counselors with the exception of Haywood High School. As Stewart (2014) noted, guidance counselors are well-placed to advocate on behalf of students with refugee backgrounds and ensure they are being provided with the supports they need. Accordingly, Stewart (2014) has argued that professional development is essential for helping guidance counselors recognize and address inequality in schools.

One of the key premises of this report was that for schools and school systems to consider themselves as providing inclusive environments was that they had to ensure they were meeting the basic psychological needs of all of their students. Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the case when it comes to students with refugee backgrounds given their lack of academic competence. It seems that many of these schools' policies and practices impede students from receiving the appropriate and quality programming they

need to feel competent, which runs counter to the EECD's inclusive education policy (2019a). Moreover, many students tend to feel excluded since they are unable to fully participate in learning experiences. This prohibits them from maximizing their academic potential and creates an environment that thwarts their sense of belonging.

### **9.1.2 Student relatedness**

The quantitative findings on relatedness tended to be more nuanced than the findings for the other constructs. For instance, the quantitative results showed that there was no significant difference on student relatedness between the high school students with refugee backgrounds and their high school Canadian background peers. However, the junior high students with refugee backgrounds did report less student relatedness than their Canadian background junior high peers and the high school students with refugee backgrounds. Several factors can help explain these results, including the observed differences that existed between the high school and the junior high schools in general.

One of the biggest differences between the high school and the junior high schools was that it had a much more diverse student body than any of the junior high schools. Also, it went to great lengths to celebrate diversity and there was an array of supports that did not exist in any of the junior high schools. Each of these factors likely contributed to the students feeling more related to their peers. To begin, the large presence of diverse students may have created an environment where the students with refugee backgrounds may have found it easier to identify with other students in their school. Their shared experiences with a large number of students could help expediate the building of social networks and contribute to wellbeing given that these networks tend to provide

newcomers with guidance, assistance and companionship (Berkman & Glass, 2000; Fazel et al., 2012; Stewart, 2011). Also, due to the high level of student diversity within Haywood High School, the school placed a high degree of importance on celebrating that diversity. These celebrations can help the students feel valued and help them develop a sense of belonging within their school. Furthermore, these celebrations and their associated acknowledgements of acceptance can be considered essential for the students' acculturation since maintaining a connection with one's culture has been shown to promote positive psychological wellbeing (McBrien, 2009; Fazel et al. 2012; Berry 2008).

The high school students also reported much less bullying, aggression and overt instances of racism in the high school. While research has shown that bullying and aggression tend to be more prevalent in junior high schools in general (e.g., Pellegrini & Long, 2002), the accepting nature of the high school, its efforts to promote diversity, and its willingness to involve students in combating racism when it was identified as a problem cannot be discounted as a reason the high school students felt more related to the other students in their school compared to the junior high students with refugee backgrounds. Several of the high school students who were interviewed for this study were first year high school students who had just come up through the junior high system. In their words, they felt that the high school was much more welcoming and friendly.

It was also noted throughout this study that the students with refugee backgrounds benefited from having a *team* of professionals constantly present in their school who were dedicated to providing them with the supports they needed. One way this dedication possibly affected the students' sense of relatedness with their peers was the fact that the

team worked collectively together to ensure there were ample opportunities for the students to be engaged in the various aspects of their school. This included developing culturally appropriate programming, working with the students to organize clubs and activities that matched their interests, and creating a variety of safe spaces where the students could gather and foster personal relationships.

In contrast to Haywood High School, many of the junior high students with refugee backgrounds often reported that they felt alone and different from the other students in their schools. The junior high schools, in general, did not have a cohesive team working on behalf of the students, but instead had only their LEARN teacher, and sometimes their ESL teacher, to provide the additional supports they needed. Also, these schools typically do not share the same large multicultural student body as the high school does and there were few culturally orientated programs available to the students that acknowledged and celebrated their diversity. These qualitative differences may help explain why the high school students with refugee backgrounds tend to feel much more related to the other students in their school than the junior high students with refugee backgrounds.

From an inclusionary perspective, again, much more could be done to create school environments that facilitate student belonging and relatedness, especially at the junior high school level. As the EECD's inclusive school policy (2019a) dictates, schools need to provide welcoming and caring environments that promote and celebrate diversity. As was seen in Haywood High school, teachers and educational leaders can play an important role in establishing the conditions needed to foster relatedness between students.



### **9.1.3 Teacher relatedness**

No significant differences on teacher relatedness were detected in the quantitative analysis, and the qualitative data indicated that the students had generally positive relationships with their teachers. The students felt they could approach their teachers for help and guidance and several commented on their teachers' caring and understanding nature. This was a significant finding given that other researchers have reported the existence of poor relationships between students with refugee backgrounds and their teachers (McBrien, 2009; Stewart, 2011). This did not seem to be the case here in this study.

The one difference that was revealed by the qualitative data was that the high school students tended to name a variety of adults in their school with whom they could approach for help and assistance. In contrast, it was the LEARN teachers who were mainly acknowledged by the junior high students. This finding should not be interpreted as anything negative against the other teachers in the junior high schools, but rather an indication of the important and special role that the LEARN teachers play in the lives of the junior high students. It is also reflective of the pressures that can be placed on the LEARN teachers and their need for additional supports. Accordingly, it would be beneficial if the junior high schools' guidance counselors took a more active approach to interacting with the junior high students with refugee backgrounds. This could alleviate some of the burden that was being placed on the LEARN teachers and additionally provide the students with another level of support. Likewise, it would also be beneficial to have permanent ESL teachers stationed in the schools attended by students with refugee

backgrounds. At the high school level, the ESL teachers played a vital role in helping the students establish extracurricular club and activities. It was these opportunities that allowed the students to build relationships with each other and develop a sense of school belonging and student relatedness.

#### **9.1.4 Student autonomy**

There was no significant difference reported between the students with refugee backgrounds and their Canadian background peers with regard to sense of autonomy. There was also no significant difference detected between the high school and junior high students with refugee backgrounds. From a purely descriptive standpoint, all of the student groups seemed to report relatively low levels of student autonomy compared to the other basic psychological needs. That is, their answers skewed more towards the thwarting end of the Likert scale questions on autonomy than the other needs. While this was only an observation and a direct comparison between the needs was not performed in this study, it does provide some valuable insight as it seems that this is a need that is not being satisfied for the vast majority of students, regardless of their background and grade level.

These findings related to the junior high school students may not be all that unexpected given that the students in general tended to have little choice when it came to how they were schooled. As some of the educators mentioned, schools in general tend to be very prescriptive, and students are rarely provided opportunities to participate in the decision-making processes regarding the academic tasks they are assigned. Furthermore, they are not regularly, if at all, consulted on issues of school governance or the

development of school regulations and policies. This lack of choice and involvement would consequently be expected to thwart their sense of autonomy (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998). Previous research on students' sense of autonomy also indicates that students typically experience a decline in their sense of autonomy as they enter their adolescent years of schooling (e.g., Eccles, Lord, & Midgley, 1991; Way, Reddy, & Rhodes, 2007). It would thus be expected that the junior high school students would report relatively low levels of autonomy.

Much less research has been published on the transition from junior high to high school, and the effect of this transition on students' sense of autonomy remains a little more unclear. For instance, Sheldon, Abad, and Omoile (2009), using Indian and Nigerian samples, found that students' sense of autonomy continued to decline into high school. However, others have reported that students' sense of autonomy begins to stabilize or increase in the later years of school. Gillet, Vallerand, and Lafrenière (2011) conducted a cross-sectional study of students aged 9-17 and found that students' self-determined motivation decreased from ages 9-12, then stabilized until age 15, and finally started to increase from that point on. Moreover, they showed that these changes were associated with students' perceptions of teacher autonomy support. Additionally, Diseth and Samdal (2014) reported that students in high school (referred to as upper secondary school in their study) reported feeling significantly more autonomy support compared to junior high school students (referred to as lower secondary school).

Despite the mixed findings that have looked at high school students' sense of autonomy, for this study, it was a little more unexpected that there was no difference found between the junior high and high school students with refugee backgrounds based

upon the qualitative data that were gathered. For instance, one obvious difference between the high school and the junior high schools was that the high school students with refugee backgrounds tended to spend much more of their time with specialized teachers who were more aware of their needs and provided them with more options and choices related to their work. The high school students also had opportunities to choose different classes, which was not the case for junior high school students where all courses are prescribed. However, it may be that the students with refugee backgrounds limited English proficiency prevented them from pursuing some courses that they wished to take, and when in the classes they did take, they may also have felt limited in their abilities to share and express their opinions and ideas.

Another factor that would be expected to support the high school students' sense of autonomy is that the school has designated positions on student council for students who are enrolled in ESL classes, which would provide them with an opportunity to have their voices heard. However, the seats on council were open to all ESL students and thus the students with refugee backgrounds may not have actually had representation on the council.

There also seemed to be other opportunities available in the high school that would have positively impacted the high school students' sense of autonomy. As previously noted in results section, the high school students were given an opportunity to work as a group and come up with a solution to confront racism in their school when *they* identified it as a problem. Moreover, the students had multiple opportunities to share their cultures and plan diversity celebrations (e.g., Sharing our Cultures; Winter Carnival; Diversity Assemblies). Accordingly, one would expect that these opportunities to engage

in activities that were personally meaningful, and to have their values and beliefs acknowledged, would enhance their sense of autonomy given that autonomy is directly tied to feeling in harmony with one's sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2002).

Finally, providing an explanation as to why no differences were detected between the students with refugee backgrounds and the Canadian background students in general would only be speculative since the qualitative data did not provide any consistent themes to suggest possible explanations. It is possible that since schooling in general tends to be rather controlling, according to the educators interviewed for this study, all students then feel controlled to a large extent. It could be possible also that despite one's background, there are some students that would feel more or less autonomous. For example, just as some students with refugee backgrounds may not feel free to share their opinions and ideas at school, it is likely that many Canadian background students may also not feel comfortable sharing their ideas and opinions. To the researcher's knowledge, there is also no research that has specifically looked at students with refugee backgrounds' sense of autonomy, making inferences difficult. Future research should specifically target the understanding of this basic psychological need for students with refugee backgrounds given its vital importance to academic development and wellbeing.

## **9.2 Recommendations**

The findings from this study have identified both positive practices that tend to satisfy the basic psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds and practices that can be changed or added to better meet their needs. This section provides some recommendations for change based on these findings. The section is sub-divided

according to the four components of the CSH framework; however, some of the recommendations, in line with the CSH framework, may pertain to more than one component.

### **9.2.1 Social and physical environment**

A focal point of this study has been the comparison of the high school environment compared to the junior high school environments and how these environments may be impacting the students with refugee backgrounds' psychological needs. While no differences with regard to their sense of competence, autonomy, or teacher relatedness were detected, the results did point to a significant and large difference when it came to the students' need for student relatedness. This study identified the large population of diverse students in the high school compared to the junior high schools, the welcoming and celebratory nature of the high school, the dedicated team of professionals present in the high school, and the ample opportunities for the students in the high school to build relationships as key aspects that likely contributed to the difference found. This does not suggest that the junior high schools did not have caring and supportive adults or that the schools were not welcoming, but rather it highlights how Haywood High School was excelling when it came to these facets. As a comparison, two of the junior high schools have a very small cohort of students with refugee backgrounds, only part-time LEARN teachers, ESL teachers who may drop into their school once or twice a week, and guidance counselors who are largely not engaged in the lives of the students with refugee backgrounds. In other words, the support

networks that are needed to foster student relatedness were much less existent than was the case in the high school.

Considering the differences between the high school and the junior high schools outlined above, and the demographics of a small city such as St. John's, one has to then ask; would it be better to have the students spread out in small cohorts and attending their neighbourhood schools, or would it be better to have larger cohorts of students attend one or two centralized schools? The evidence tends to suggest the latter. For instance, research has shown that having people around with similar backgrounds and shared experiences helps them develop a sense of belonging (Beirens et al. 2007). Also, having schools with larger numbers of students with refugee backgrounds also allow resources to be pooled and may be more conducive to providing a team-orientated approach to service provision, as was seen in the high school in this study. As DeCapua (2016) has highlighted, "one teacher or two teachers on their own cannot necessarily remedy all of the issues [students with refugee backgrounds] confront" (p. 230).

It is thus recommended that the NLESD adopt the high school model for junior high school students. This would mean, that all students with refugee backgrounds who require the LEARN program would attend the same school or, if high enough numbers permit, they could be split between two schools. This would allow the school district to pool resources, ensure full-time ESL and LEARN teachers are allocated accordingly, and appoint dedicated guidance counselors to specifically support these students. Having a strong network of adult support may thus help facilitate a school and learning environment that is conducive to fostering student relatedness. Moreover, the large

population of diverse student in one or two schools may also foster a sense of relatedness for the students as was seen in the high school.

### **9.2.2 School policy**

It is strongly recommended that the department of education amend its transportation policy such that transportation is provided to all students that live outside of their LEARN schools' bus zones but need to attend those schools to avail of the LEARN program. One way to do this is to automatically designate students with refugee backgrounds with interrupted schooling as having exceptionality status. This would help ensure that they are provided with transportation to school in the same manner as other students with special needs are when alternative forms of transportation are required. For instance, the Alternative Transportation Policy (EECD, 2019a) states, "alternate transportation services ensure that students with a physical disability, medical needs or legal requirement can receive transportation to and from their zoned school or in extenuating circumstances, an approved alternate site." This policy could be amended to specifically include students that need to attend alternative sites due to programming needs, such as students with refugee backgrounds that require the LEARN program.

Along similar lines, it is also recommended that all LEARN students automatically be identified as having exceptionalities based on their history of interrupted schooling and underdeveloped literacy. Currently, interrupted schooling that results in underdeveloped literacy is not identified as an exceptionality by the EECD (2020). Amending the exceptionalities policy to include interrupted schooling as an exceptionality would thus help ensure that students could avail of additional supports that



they may need (e.g., having regular access to an instructional resource teacher or a teaching assistant) right from the first day they are enrolled in school.

### **9.2.3 Teaching and learning**

The strongly held belief that refugees background students need to be immediately integrated into mainstream classes so that they feel like everyone else needs to be challenged. The findings from this research are in line with those of Stewart (2011) who noted, “for far too long the majority of the educational community has had a taken-for-granted notion that refugee students should be treated just like everyone else and that they should readily assimilate into our classrooms and schools” (p. 8). Evidence from this study suggests that the immediate inclusion of many students with refugee backgrounds into mainstream classes may be the wrong course of action. Students with refugee backgrounds need time to adjust and become confident within their surroundings. Furthermore, when there are opportunities to be with other students who have shared experiences and similar needs they tend to be more socially and academically engaged. It is paramount for educators to be cognizant of the fact that many students with refugee backgrounds will need a period of adjustment where they can build their academic and linguistic skills, develop a sense of belonging, and feel that they are accepted and welcome in their new communities. Allowing students this time will simply enhance their transition to mainstream programming at a later date when they are ready. This transition period can also shelter them from many of the anxieties that they currently face when they are suddenly thrust into situations where they are unable to cope and perform. This is not to suggest that refugee students should be excluded from mainstream students. There

are a multitude of ways that schools can encourage social and academic engagement between all students; however, simply placing students in courses where they cannot adequately participate not only hinders their academic and psychological growth, but also spawns exclusion on many levels.

It is further recommended that the LEARN program be expanded such that the LEARN science and social studies curriculum is available to any junior high school student who needs it. Based on the insights provided by many of the educators in this study, it is also recommended that the LEARN program be made available to students in elementary school as well. An additional issue of consideration is the fact that very little professional development has been offered or administered to mainstream teachers on how they can provide inclusive classrooms for students with refugee backgrounds. Since most mainstream teachers at the junior and high school levels have limited training in early literacy pedagogy and second language acquisition (Dooley 2009; Sidhu et al. 2011), professional development in this area certainly should be prioritized, especially in schools with large numbers of students with refugee backgrounds.

Finally, it recommended that the amount of ESL instruction offered to students with refugee backgrounds be enhanced. Several of the junior high school students indicated that they felt they were not receiving enough ESL support, a finding that corroborates the recommendations of Collins and colleagues (2017) who authored *The Premier's Task Force on Improving Educational Outcomes: Now Is the Time*. As previously mentioned in section 9.2.1, this could be achieved by ensuring schools that have large populations of students with refugee backgrounds are allocated full-time ESL teachers.

#### **9.2.4 Partnerships and services**

Finally, it is recommended that the EECD and NLESD hire educational specialists who have the specialized knowledge to oversee the education of students with refugee backgrounds. These individuals are needed to ensure that the ESL and LEARN teachers have the resources they need to provide adequate instruction to their pupils. Moreover, they can act as informed advocates for the students, ensure that consistent and well-structured curriculum and educational plans are in place across the various schools that house students with refugee backgrounds, and assist in the development of necessary procedures and policies (e.g., in-take assessment and special need assessment protocols) to ensure all students from refugee backgrounds are receiving the supports that best suit their individual needs. The specialist can also work across the various policy making and service providing levels to ensure adequate policies are in place to support the academic development and wellbeing of students with refugee backgrounds. As an example, the specialist could work with the various levels of governance to ensure that school transportation policies reflect the exceptional needs of students with refugee backgrounds.

### **9.3 Future Research**

One of the limitations of this study was the sample size used during the quantitative analyses. It would thus be beneficial to replicate this study with a larger sample to verify the findings. A larger sample would also permit more detailed analyses to account for covariates and interactions. For instance, how does the length of time spent in a new country affect one's basic psychological needs. Likewise, a longitudinal study would also help provide insights into this question. By gaining an understanding of

students with refugee backgrounds transition over time, as it relates to their psychological needs, educators would be better positioned to develop educational plans for this cohort. It is further recommended that research be conducted to compare the psychological needs of students with refugee backgrounds across jurisdictions. Accordingly, follow up research on these educational environments can provide insights into the environmental factors that may be supporting or thwarting these students' psychological needs across jurisdictions. The lessons learned from this research would also allow educational leaders to improve educational programming for these students.

Finally, the integration of students with refugee backgrounds is likely influenced to a large degree on the actions and beliefs of the other students in their schools. As such, the collection of qualitative data from students without refugee backgrounds could provide insights into how schools could better support the students with refugee backgrounds. It may also provide information to explain any difference reported between the groups in relation to psychological need satisfaction.

#### **9.4 Closing Remarks**

In closing, this research has sought to understanding how the NL education system is supporting students with refugee backgrounds' academic and psychosocial wellbeing through the satisfaction of the basic psychological needs. It has pointed out various strengths and weaknesses in the system and how these may be impacting need satisfaction. In the future, educational systems would be well advised to place the psychological needs at the centre of all educational practices and policy development. Educational leaders need to ask such questions as – *how will this policy affect our*

*students' psychological needs? or, what resources do we need to facilitate their need satisfaction?* - since it is only when students' have their needs satisfied that we can expect them to become motivated and fully engaged within their school environments. From a wellbeing perspective, Sheldon (2012) has noted that "all forms of mental health are ultimately supported by, and arise from, psychological need satisfaction" (p. 101). This reinforces the need to place students' need satisfaction at the centre of their educational experiences.

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## Appendix A: Ethics Approval



### Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7  
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca  
[www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr](http://www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr)

ICEHR Number:	<b>20170449-ED</b>
Approval Period:	August 10, 2016 – August 31, 2017
Funding Source:	N/A
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Tim Seifert Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	<i>Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis</i>

August 10, 2016

Mr. Keith Power  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Power:

Thank you for your correspondence of August 9, 2016 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project.

The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to August 31, 2017. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

If you need to make changes during the course of the project, which may raise ethical concerns, please submit an amendment request, with a description of these changes, via your Researcher Portal account for the Committee's consideration.

Additionally, the *TCPS2* requires that you submit an annual update to the ICEHR before August 31, 2017 to request renewal of your clearance, if you plan to continue the project, or closure when the project no longer requires contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated.

Annual updates and amendment requests can be submitted from your Researcher Portal account by clicking the *Applications (Submitted – Post Review)* quick link on your Portal homepage.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Kelly Blidook, Ph.D.  
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on  
Ethics in Human Research

KB/lw

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Tim Seifert, Faculty of Education  
Associate Dean, Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education

## Appendix B: School District Approval Letter



Office of the Senior Education Officer (Human Resources)  
Deborah Toope (709) 758-2391

Chairperson: Milton Peach  
CEO/Director of Education: Darrin Pike

### Research Approval Conditions

Research Title & Investigator(s): Keith Power - Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing

Your request to conduct this research is NOT approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Your request to conduct research in our district is approved subject to the conditions/requirements checked below:

1. A list of selected schools must be forwarded to my office before the research can begin.
  - 1a. The list of targeted schools has been received ☒
2. Final approval to conduct this study will rest with the principal of each targeted school and the targeted group of teachers/students/parents where applicable. ☒
3. Conducting the research will in no way negatively impact instructional time for students and teachers. ☒
4. Conducting this research must not put any burden of responsibility on our school administrators or other staff unless they specifically agree to it. Such agreement must not negatively impact instructional time. ☒
5. Participation in the study will be voluntary and participants will be able to opt out at any time without prejudice. This must be clearly communicated to the participants at the outset. ☒
6. For students under 19 years of age, the researcher(s) must secure parental consent and confirm such consent with the principal before the research proceeds. Students 19 years of age and older must provide their own consent. Regardless of age, youth must be clearly informed from the outset that they may refuse to participate, even if their parents consented to their participation. ☒
7. Anonymity of participants must be ensured. ☒
8. Before the research project can begin, it must receive final approval from your university's Research Ethics Committee and a copy of this approval must be sent to the Senior Education Officer (HR) as per the contact information listed below.
  - 8a. Ethics Committee approval letter has been received ☒
  - 8b. Not applicable ☐
9. Given the inherent potential risk in this research project that some participants may relive a traumatic experience which can cause emotional or psychological stress, counseling services and other appropriate supports must be available during and subsequent to the data collection process. Researchers are responsible for providing such supports. This service will not be provided by the NLESD. ☒
10. A copy of the research findings and resulting papers/reports must be directed to the Senior Education Officer (HR) and to the regional Assistant Directors of Education (Programs) where applicable. ☒
11. Research results must be made available to the schools involved and the individual participants who request them. ☒
12. The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District takes no responsibility in conducting this research, and will not be held liable for any negative impacts relating to this research effort. The full responsibility to organize & conduct this research rests with the researcher(s). ☒

Recommended by: Deborah Toope  
Deborah Toope, Senior Education Officer

Date: Oct. 17/16

Signature of Approval: [Signature]  
Anthony Stack, Associate Director of Education

Date: Oct. 17/16

Signature of Compliance: [Signature]  
Researcher

Date: Oct 18/16.

A signed copy of this form MUST be returned to the address below and to the target schools before research can begin:

Attention: Senior Education Officer (HR)  
Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, suite 601, Atlantic Place  
215 Water Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 6C9



## Appendix C: ANC Research Approval

**Power, Keith Bernard** <kbp201@mun.ca>

Oct 20, 2016, 6:19 PM

to Jamie

Hi Dr. Baker,

I am just following up on my request to approach personnel from the ANC to be included in my doctoral study. I was just wondering if you have had time to review my request. Thanks, and have a great day,

Keith Power  
PhD Candidate  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University  
709-330-2430

**Jamie Baker** <jbaker@nfld.net>

Oct 21, 2016, 11:15 AM

to swiscoordinator, me

Hi Keith:

Yes, we did. It has been approved and (name removed), SWIS Coordinator, had agreed to touch base with you. I thought she had already made contact but perhaps she has not had the opportunity to do so yet as it is an extremely busy time for her division. I have cced her on this as a reminder.

Cheers, and good luck with the research,  
Jamie

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form (Adult Participants)



### Informed Consent Form

(Adult Participants)

**Research Project Title:** *Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis*

**Researcher:**

Keith Power (PhD Candidate)  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University  
Email: [kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca)  
Phone: 709-330-2430

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Tim Seifert  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University  
Email: [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca)  
Phone: 709- 864-8648

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled *Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis*.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, **Keith Power**, if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research study. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw (please refer to the

withdrawal procedure below) from the research there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

**Introduction:**

I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. As part of my doctoral work I am conducting a study that examines how schools and the school system support the wellbeing and academic development of refugee student's. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tim Seifert.

**Purpose of the study:**

The purpose of this study is to examine the school system and the programs and services available to refugee students to better understand how they impact their wellbeing and academic development.

**What you will do in this study:**

If you agree to participate in this study you will be interviewed. During the interview you will be asked questions about school related issues such as school programs and services and teaching and learning as they relate to supporting refugee students.

For your information, during this study I will be observing students during school related activities and functions. During these functions I may take some photographs. If you are present during these functions I will not include you in any photographs unless you consent to your picture being taken. There is a section below where you can indicate if you agree or do not agree to have your picture taken.

**Length of time:**

The length of the interviews will be approximately 45-60 minutes.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

If you wish to withdraw from the study you may use the above contact information to do so any time **on or before May 1, 2017**. You do not need to explain why. All data collected relevant to you will be destroyed if you decide to withdraw. There will be no consequences for your withdrawal. Please note the last day to withdraw from the study will be **May 1, 2017**.

**Possible benefits**

By participating in this study you can help improve educational programs and circumstances for teachers, school administrators, and students. For instance, teachers and administrators may gain new insights into the needs of students, which can inform their future teaching and student guidance practices. The findings from this study could also influence school policy and the development and support of programs that facilitate student wellbeing and academic success.

**Possible risks**

There are no apparent risks for you to participate. However, it is possible that you may feel stress while talking about some of the programs and challenges you have

encountered. For example, some individuals feel emotional (angry, frustrated, or sad) when they share personal stories that have affected them or someone close to them. However, please know that if you feel uncomfortable at any point during the interview and you wish to discontinue, it will be stopped right away. If you wish to confide in a counsellor, the researcher will help connect you with one through the Association for Psychology Newfoundland and Labrador (APNL). The APNL provides an on-line service to help connect individuals requiring counselling with registered psychologists in the province.

Another risk associated with this study is the possibility that you could be personally identified because of the information you share. For example, there are a limited number of individuals that work in the province with refugees in particular areas (for example, settlement workers and specialized teachers). Under these circumstances other people may be able to identify you through the information you shared. Furthermore, if someone is able to identify you based on what you said it could lead to unintended circumstances. For example, if a work colleague or superior becomes aware of something that you shared during the interview, and he or she disagrees with what you said, it could negatively affect your relationship with that individual. To avoid you from being identified however, the researcher will protect your privacy, keep information confidential and avoid using any direct data that can be used to identify you.

### **Confidentiality**

Your identity will be protected during and after the research. The researcher will use a code name for you in transcripts, notes, reports, presentations, and publications. Only the researcher will have access to the data where you can be identified. No identifying data collected will be shared with any other person. Any information that would identify you will be disguised before the results of the study are released.

### **Anonymity**

Your identity will be protected during and after the study. Your real name will not be used in any publications or presentations. Any identifying information regarding your characteristics, physical appearance, etc., will be removed. Please note that every effort will be made to keep your involvement in this study confidential if you wish to participate anonymously, but it cannot be 100% guaranteed.

### **Recording of data**

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and direct quotes from you may be used to support research findings or to explain a point. A typed copy of the interview will be provided to you and you will have the chance to review your comments and delete/change any of the comments that you do not want included. This transcript will be provided to you at least two weeks prior to the final withdrawal date, which is May 1, 2017.

### **Storage of data**

All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the investigator or stored on a computer and back up drive that will be password protected. All files and notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research requires that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years.

### **Reporting of results**

Data collected will be published in a doctoral thesis and journal articles and presented at conferences and workshops. The thesis will be publically available at the QEII Library. The researcher may use direct quotes from you without revealing your real identify. In most cases, the researcher will report the data in a summarized form.

### **Sharing of results with participants**

All participants will receive emails with web links to all publicly accessible presentations, reports, published papers, etc., that result from this project.

### **Questions**

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact Keith Power at 709-330-2430 or [kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca) or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

### **Consent: Your signature on this form means that:**

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that any data collected from you up to the point of your withdrawal will be destroyed.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

I agree to be audio-recorded during the interview.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the use of quotations.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to being photographed during school related functions if I am present.

☐ Yes ☐ No

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like to review my interview transcript once it is completed.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like a copy of any reports or presentations that result from this study to be forwarded to me.

☐ Yes ☐ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

**Researcher's Signature**

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Students Under 19 Years of Age)



### Informed Consent Form

(Parent/Guardian, for students under the age of 19)

**Research Project Title:** *Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis*

#### Researcher:

Keith Power (PhD Candidate)  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University  
Email: [kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca)  
Phone: 709-330-2430

#### Supervisor:

Dr. Tim Seifert  
Faculty of Education  
Memorial University  
Email: [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca)  
Phone: 709-864-8648

Your child is invited to take part in a research project entitled *Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis*.

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your child's participation will involve. It also describes your child's right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish for your child to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, **Keith Power**, if you have any questions about the study or for more information not included here before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether your child takes part in this research study. If you choose not to include your child in this research or if you decide to withdraw your child from the research (**please refer to the withdrawal procedure below**), there will be no negative consequences for you or your child, now or in the future.

### **Introduction**

I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. As part of my doctoral work I am conducting a study that examines how your child's school and the school system support the wellbeing and academic development of refugee students. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Tim Seifert.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to examine your child's school and the programs and services available at your child's school to better understand how they impact refugee students' wellbeing and academic development.

### **What your child will do in this study**

If you agree for your child to participate in this study he/she will be asked to complete a 20-minute survey that measures aspects of his or her wellbeing and feelings about school. A few examples questions are as follows: 1) *My teachers answer my questions and help me when needed.* 2) *I feel safe in my school.* 3) *My school is accepting of other people's cultures.* Please note that the primary researcher will have access to your child's responses on the survey, however the researcher will not share these responses with any other person who can identify your child. Your child may also be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. The interview takes about 30-40 minutes to complete and your child will be asked questions about the following: the programs and services available to your child at school, his or her feelings and opinions about school, and how we can improve school services and programs to support students' wellbeing and academic achievement.

During the study I will also be observing students in their classrooms as they do their schoolwork and I will be taking observational notes that will help me understand how engaged the students are as they complete their work. Observations may also occur during school programming (e.g., during school festivals) to gain a better understanding of the school's culture and atmosphere. During observation periods I may also take photographs as a data source. I will only take pictures that include your child if you agree to him/her being photographed. There is a section below where you can indicate if you consent to your child's picture being taken. Even if you do not want to have your child's photograph taken he or she is still welcome to complete the other portions of this study (i.e., the survey and interview). Please note that even if you do not wish for your child to participate in any aspect of this study I will still be present in their classes to take observational notes, however I will not include them in my observational notes or this study's findings.

Furthermore, if you decide that you do not want your child to participate in this study he/she will not be asked to complete any of the tasks mentioned above. It is important to note that if your child does not participate in this study it will not negatively affect your child in any way. He/she will still receive the same instruction and services as the other



students in his/her class and school and non-participation will not negatively impact your child's evaluation or affect his/her teacher's impression of your child.

### **Length of time**

Your child will be asked to complete one survey. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. Also, if your child is selected for the interview part of this study he/she will be interviewed once. The interview will last about 30 - 40 minutes and will be conducted in your child's school during non-teaching hours (e.g., at lunch time or after school). If your child is selected to do an interview I will ask him/her if he/she wants to be interviewed. If he/she does not want to do the interview that is okay and he/she will not have to do it. There will be no repercussions if your child does not want to be interviewed.

### **Withdrawal from the study**

If you wish to withdraw your child from this study you may use the above contact information to do so anytime before the final withdrawal date. You do not need to explain why. All data collected from your child will be destroyed if you decide to withdraw. There will be no consequences for withdrawing your child. Withdrawal will not affect his/her grades or any school services he/she normally receives. Please note that the last day for withdrawal is **May 1, 2017**.

### **Possible benefits**

By participating in this study your child can help improve educational programs and circumstances for teachers, school administrators, and students. For instance, teachers and administrators may gain new insights into the needs of students, which can inform their future teaching and student guidance practices. The findings from this study could also influence school policy and the development and support of programs that facilitate student wellbeing and academic success. Students also benefit from having their opinions heard and valued.

### **Possible risks**

Although the purpose of this study is not to focus on past negative experiences there is a possibility that the students may voluntarily talk about past stressful episodes or challenges they have experienced and they may thus experience emotional and psychological feelings that could upset them. To prevent any emotional and psychological risks the students will be told prior to the interview that they are entitled to share only information that they feel comfortable sharing and that if they do not feel comfortable answering a question that they can just say that they do not want to answer that question. They will also be told that they have the right to stop the interview at any time if they wish. Also, if your child experiences stress and would like to speak with a school counsellor an appointment will be arranged.

### **Confidentiality**

Your child's identity will be protected during and after the research. A code name for your child will be used in any transcripts, notes, reports, presentations, and publications

that arise from this study. Only the principal investigator will have access to your child's identity and it will not be shared with anyone.

### **Anonymity**

During this study the researcher will be collecting personally identifiable information from the participants such as their names, ages and gender, for example. This information will only be used by the researcher to help understand the overall data collected during this study, however the researcher will not use your child's real name in any publications, reports, or presentations. Any identifying information regarding your child's characteristics, physical appearance, etc. will be removed from any presentations or publications. Please note that no data for your child will be collected if you decide you do not want your child to participate in this study.

### **Recording of data**

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded and direct words from your child may be used to support research findings or to explain a point. You will have the chance to review your child's comments after his or her interview and delete any of his/her comments that you do not want included. A copy of the interview transcript will be sent to you for your final approval no later than two weeks prior to the final study withdrawal data (May 1, 2017). It is encouraged that parents/guardians review the transcript with their children to ensure that both the parents/guardians and the participant are satisfied with the information provided.

### **Storage of data**

All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the office of the investigator or stored on a computer and back-up drive that will be password protected. All files and notes will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study. Memorial University policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research requires that data be kept for a minimum of 5 years.

### **Reporting of results**

Data collected will be published in a doctoral thesis and journal articles and presented at conferences and workshops. The thesis will be publically available at the QEII Library. The researcher may use direct quotes from your child without identifying him/her if you consent. In most cases however, the researcher will report the data in a summarized form.

### **Sharing of results with participants**

All participants will receive emails with web links to all publicly accessible presentations, reports, published papers, etc., that result from this project.

### **Questions**

You are welcome to ask questions at any time during your child's participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study before making a decision about your child's participation in this study, please contact Keith Power at 709-330-2430 or [kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca) or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861 or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648.

**Consent:**

**I give permission to my child (whose name is) \_\_\_\_\_ to participate in the research study.**

**Please note, even if you consent to your child participating in this study, he or she has the right to decline participation. I will ask your child if he or she wants to participate and if he or she states that they do not want to participate I will not include them in this study. Also, if you would like to review a transcript of your child's interview, if they participate in the interview, it is your right to do so.**

**Your signature on this form means that:**

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what your child will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw your child from the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect your child now or in the future.
- You understand that any data collected from your child up to the point of the withdrawal date will be destroyed if you request.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researcher from his professional responsibilities.

**I give permission for my child to complete the survey.**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**I allow my child to be audio-recorded during the interview.**

☐ Yes ☐ No

**I agree to the use of direct quotations from my child.**

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to my child being observed during school programming and classroom activities.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to my child being photographed during school observations.

☐ Yes ☐ No

A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like to review my child's interview transcript once it is completed.

☐ Yes ☐ No

I would like a copy of any reports or presentations that result from this study to be forwarded to me.

☐ Yes ☐ No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of parent/guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email (for receiving research report)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

**Researcher's Signature**

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix F: Adult Recruitment Letter



### Adult Information & Recruitment Letter

Date

Dear (Insert Name):

My name is Keith Power and I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. As part of my doctoral research I am conducting a study under the supervision of Dr. Tim Seifert called *Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis*. The purpose of this study is to examine the school system and the programs and services available to refugee students to better understand how they impact their wellbeing and academic development. I am sending you this letter to ask if you would be willing to be a participant in my study.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed. During the interview you will be asked questions about school related issues, such as school programs and services as they relate to supporting refugee students. A typical interview lasts for approximately 45 minutes. By participating in this study, you can help improve educational programs and circumstances for teachers, school administrators, and students. For instance, teachers and administrators may gain new insights into the needs of students, which can inform their future teaching and student guidance practices. The findings from this study could also influence school policy and the development and support of programs that facilitate student wellbeing and academic success.

If you have any questions or require any further information please feel free to contact the principal researcher, Keith Power, at 709-330-2430 or [kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca) or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648. **If you wish to be a participant in this study, you can contact me using the contact information provided and we can proceed with scheduling an interview.**

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861 or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648.

Respectfully yours,  
Keith Power  
PhD Candidate  
Memorial University  
Faculty of Education

## Appendix G: Student/Parent Recruitment Letter



### Student & Parent/Guardian Information & Recruitment Letter

*Insert Date Here*

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Keith Power and I am a doctoral student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. As part of my doctoral research I am conducting a study under the supervision of Dr. Tim Seifert called *Supporting the Self-determined Academic and Psychosocial Wellbeing of Refugee Students: A Comprehensive School Health Analysis*. The purpose of this study is to examine your child's school and the programs and services available at your child's school to better understand how they impact refugee student's wellbeing and academic development. I am sending you this letter because I am asking for your permission to include your child as a participant in this study.

If you agree for your child to participate in this study, he/she will be asked to complete a 20-minute survey that measures aspects of his or her wellbeing and feelings about school. A few examples questions are as follows. 1) *My teachers answer my questions and help me when needed.* 2) *I feel safe in my school.* 3) *My school is accepting of other people's cultures.* Your child may also be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. The interview takes about 30-40 minutes to complete and your child will be asked questions about the following: the programs and services available to your child at school, his or her feelings and opinions about school, and how we can improve school services and programs to support students' wellbeing and academic achievement.

During the study I will also be observing students in their classrooms as they do their schoolwork and I will be taking observational notes that will help me understand how engaged the students are as they complete their work. Observations may also occur during school programming (e.g., during school festivals) to gain a better understanding of the school's culture and atmosphere. Please note that even if you do not wish for your child to participate in this study I will still be present in their classes to take observational

notes, however I will not include your child in my observational notes or this study's findings.

Furthermore, if you decide that you do not want your child to participate in this study he/she will not be asked to complete any of the tasks mentioned above. It is important to note that if your child does not participate in this study it will not negatively affect your child in any way. He/she will still receive the same instruction and services as the other students in his/her class and school and non-participation will not negatively impact your child's evaluation or affect his/her teacher's impression of your child.

If you agree to allow your child to be a part of this study, you can complete the consent form that your child has brought home. It provides a full description of the study and outlines your child's rights as a participant. If you have any questions or require any further information please feel free to contact the principal researcher, Keith Power, at 709-330-2430 or [kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca) or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861 or the researcher's supervisor, Dr. Tim Seifert, at [tseifert@mun.ca](mailto:tseifert@mun.ca) or 709-864-8648.

Respectfully yours,

Keith Power  
PhD Candidate  
Memorial University  
Faculty of Education  
709-330-2430  
[kbp201@mun.ca](mailto:kbp201@mun.ca)

## Appendix H: Student Questionnaire

Student Code Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle the correct response.**

I was born in Canada	Yes	No
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I am a Canadian Immigrant                      Yes                      No

I am a Canadian Refugee Yes No

If you are a Canadian immigrant or refugee when did you come to Canada?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**This questionnaire contains items that are related to your feelings and experience related to your school. Please read the statements and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each one. Your answers are confidential (only the researcher will see your answers and he will not share them with any other person). Please be honest with your responses and note that you are free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer.**

1. I really like the other students in my school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

2. I do not feel confident when doing my schoolwork.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

3. I get along well with my teachers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree



4. I feel free to express my opinions and beliefs at school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

5. I have many friends in my school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

6. The teachers and adults in my school care about me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

7. In school I am able to complete most of my schoolwork without assistance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

8. My teachers take the time to get to know me.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

9. I feel confident that I can get good grades in school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

10. I feel that the other students in my school accept me for the person I am.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

11. I feel included in school and class activities.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

12. If I need help, I can approach the adults in my school for assistance.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

13. I think I will be successful (get a good job) in the future.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

14. I sometimes have the opportunity to choose what type of projects or assignments that I want to do?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

15. There are lots of opportunities in my school to work with other students and to solve problems on our own.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

16. My school is accepting of people's differences (e.g., culture, sexual orientation).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

17. Students in my school have a say in the development of school policies and rules.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree			Somewhat Agree			Strongly Disagree

Student Relatedness: Q1, Q5, Q10, Q11

Teacher Relatedness: Q3, Q6, Q8, Q12

Competence: Q2, Q7, Q9, Q13

Autonomy: Q4, Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17

## Appendix I: Interview Protocol (Students)

### Interview Protocol for Student Participants

Individual interviews will follow the script and questions as closely as possible. Slight modifications in wording, may be necessary at the time of the interview depending on how the participants respond to the individual questions.

**Researcher:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the wellbeing of refugee students through analyzing the schools, programs and services that support these individuals.

In this section of the study you will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded so that I can transcribe it and analyze it at a later time.

Whether you participate or not is entirely voluntary. You will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I will keep your identity and comments confidential throughout and beyond this study. When I have completed the transcription of this interview, I will provide you and your parents/guardians with a copy of the transcript for your review. You will have the opportunity to delete any comments that you do not want to remain a part of the study. You will have the right at any time to remove or alter any quotes or comments that you feel are misrepresented or inaccurate. At the completion of this study, I will send you a general summary of the findings, at your request. For the purpose of maintaining your anonymity, you can choose a pseudonym (code name) that I will use for any written or oral summary, analysis, or interpretation of results. I also ask that you keep your own comments that you make during the interview confidential.

You indicated that you understand the nature of the study and the conditions for participating by reading and signing the letter of consent that I provided to you (and your parents/guardians). If you have any further questions you are free to ask them at any time.

*When the participant provides the signed consent letter the researcher will proceed with the following comments:*

**Researcher:** I will ask you several questions, and I would like you to say as much as you would like to help me understand your responses. If possible, please provide examples to help explain your responses. If there is a question that you do not feel comfortable answering or you do not want to answer you can just tell me you do not want to answer that question or just say “pass” and we will move on to the next question. If at any point you don’t want to continue with the interview just tell me to stop and that your don’t want to continue. The interview will be stopped immediately. Do you understand?

### Student Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? For example, where are you from? How did you get to St John's and how long have you been here? Who did you come here with and why did you come here?
2. What are your feelings about St. John's, Newfoundland and Canada in general? For example, do you like living in St. John's. Why or why not? What are some of the things you like about St. John's and what are some of the things you don't like?
3. What were some of the challenges that you had to overcome when you arrived here in St. John's? How did you overcome these challenges? Was there anyone or any community services that helped you overcome these challenges? If you did receive help can you describe the help that you received?
4. Do you like your school? Why or why not? What are some of the things you like about your school? What are some things you don't like or would change about your school?
5. Do you feel that you are capable of doing well in school? Do you find your schoolwork (courses) easy or too difficult? Can you explain?
6. Tell me about the school courses you are doing. How and why did you choose those courses? Did anyone help you choose your courses?
7. If you need extra help with your schoolwork where can you get the extra help you need?
8. Do you feel safe and comfortable at school? Why or why not? Do you think the other people in your school (teachers, school staff and students) accept you and your beliefs, opinions and culture? Why or why not?
9. How do you feel about the teachers in your school? Do you think they care about you and the other students in your school?
10. Do you have many friends at school? Who are your friends? How did you meet them? Would you like to have more friends?
11. What types of extracurricular activities are available for students at your school? Do you participate in any extracurricular activities here in school? Why or why not?
12. Can you tell me about a positive/negative experience you had in school (if you

had one)?

13. Do you think your school treats all students fairly and equally? Please explain.
14. In your school classes, do you have the opportunity to do projects and assignments that interest you, or are you always told you have to do this topic or assignment?
15. What are your future goals related to school and work? Do you feel that you will be able to achieve these goals? What are some of the challenges you think you will experience in achieving these goals and how do you think you will be able to overcome these challenges? Is there someone you can turn to for advice in your school when you have questions about your future?
16. Is there anyone at your school that you can approach for help if you are feeling stressed? Has anyone ever taught you how to cope with stress?
17. Do you think the students in your school have a say in how the school is run? For example, do the teachers and school staff ask for student input when new rules or policies are implemented?
18. In your opinion, is there anything that your school or the St. John's community could do better to help support refugee students when they first arrive here in Canada?
19. What do you think about Canadian culture? What are some of the differences between your culture and Canadian culture? Have you experienced any conflicts between Canadian culture and your culture? Do you feel like you can celebrate your culture here in Canada? Do you think Canadians are understanding of your culture and accept your culture?
20. What are some of your future goals? Why do you have these goals?
21. What is your biggest challenge as a student?
22. What are some things that you are good at? Do you get to do those things in school?
23. Are there any school rules or policies that you don't like? How would you change them?
24. How would you compare school here in St. John's to the schools in your home country?

**Researcher:** That's all of the questions that I have for you. I am just wondering if there is anything else that you would like to add.

## Appendix J: Interview Protocol (Adults)

### Interview Protocol for Adult Participants

#### **Teachers - School Administrators - School Counselors - School Settlement Workers**

Individual interviews will follow the script and questions as closely as possible. Slight modifications in wording, may be necessary at the time of the interview depending on how the participants respond to the individual questions.

**Researcher:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the wellbeing of refugee students through analyzing the schools, programs and services that support these individuals.

In this section of the study you will be interviewed for approximately 45 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded so that I can transcribe it and analyze it at a later time.

Whether you participate or not is entirely voluntary. You will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. I will keep your identity and comments confidential throughout and beyond this study. When I have completed the transcription of this interview, I will provide you with a copy of the transcript for your review. You will have the opportunity to delete any comments that you do not want to remain a part of the study. You will have the right at any time to remove or alter any quotes or comments that you feel are misrepresented or inaccurate. At the completion of this study, I will send you a general summary of the findings, at your request. For the purpose of maintaining your anonymity, you can choose a pseudonym (code name) that I will use for any written or oral summary, analysis, or interpretation of results. I also ask that you keep your own comments that you make during the interview confidential.

You can indicate that you understand the nature of the study and the conditions for participating by reading and signing the letter of consent that I am providing for you. Please read over the letter to make sure that you understand the nature of this study, and feel free to ask me any questions that you might have. When you are ready, you may sign the letter and we will begin the interview.

*When the participant has signed the letters, the researcher will proceed with the following comments:*

**Researcher:** I will ask you several questions, and I would like you to say as much as you would like to help me understand your responses. If possible, please provide examples to help explain your responses. If there is question you do not want to answer you can just tell me you do not want to answer it or you can just say “pass” and we will move on to the next question. If at any point you don’t want to continue with the interview just tell me to stop and that your don’t want to continue. The interview will be stopped immediately. Do you understand?

## **Interview Questions**

### **(Teachers - Administrators - School Counselors - School Settlement Workers)**

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself? For example, what is your job position and how is related to refugee student education? How long have you been in your position and what training, experience or professional development have you received related to refugee students?
2. What are some of the biggest challenges that refugee students have to overcome as they adapt to school here in St. John's? How does your school (or the school system) help refugee students overcome these challenges?
3. Can you tell me about the programs and supports that you have here in your school that helps refugee students succeed in school and to feel welcome here?
4. Can you tell me about some of the policies that you have that support refugee students' well being? Who developed these policies? Has the school ever collected feedback on these policies from the students or included students in the decision-making process?
5. In particular, how would you say that your school supports refugee students' sense of autonomy, belonging (relatedness), and competence?
6. What more do you think can be done in this school to support students' sense of wellbeing (belonging, competence, and autonomy)?
7. What could the school district do to improve the programing and policies that support refugee students' wellbeing?
8. In your opinion, how has the LEARN program impacted the academic outcomes of the refugee students in your school? Can you provide some specific examples? How could the LEARN program be enhanced to better meet the needs of refugee students?
9. What are some of the main community-school partnerships that exist that support the wellbeing of the refugee students in your school? Are there other partnerships that you would like to see established? How could the wider community work to better support refugee students?
10. How does your school acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of cultures that are represented here in your school?



11. What supports are here in your school to help refugee students that may suffer from mental health issues? How does your school help refugee students cope with any stressful issues they may face? Is this an area where you think your school could use more supports? If so, please elaborate.
12. How does your school maintain open communication with refugee students' parents? How does your school promote the inclusion of refugee students' parents?
13. Do you talk to refugee students' parents about their goals and hopes for their daughters or sons? Do you talk to the parents to find out if the students have any special needs or issues that need to be addressed?
14. Has your school ever held professional development or in-service training sessions for teachers and school staff that specifically deal with the needs of refugee students?
15. Do you think the formal curriculum offered in your school provides a culturally diverse point of view (e.g. providing perspectives from individuals with varied backgrounds and experiences)? Can you provide me with an example?
16. Do you think your school provides opportunities for refugee students to become leaders or to take on leadership roles? Can you please explain?
17. Do you think your school provides spaces where refugee students can feel emotionally safe?
18. Does your school offer any mentorship programs for refugee students? For example, peer tutoring or a buddy-buddy system to help new students learn about their new environment.
19. With regards to helping students with mental health issues, do you feel that you are adequately trained to deal with these issues? Why or why not? How do you help refugee students cope with the psychological issues that they bring with them from their previous experiences?
20. What are some challenges that you personally face when you work with refugee students?

**Researcher:** That's all of my questions. I am just wondering if you have any last thoughts to share or anything you would like to add to our conversation.