BUILDING SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY: INVESTIGATING HOW REFUGEE ADOLESCENTS CULTIVATE SCHOOL READINESS THROUGH A SUMMER YOUTH READINESS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

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Each year, as many as 80,000 refugees are permanently resettled to the United States, 35-40% of whom are individuals under the age of 18 (BRYCS, 2009). The period of resettlement can be extremely complex for refugee adolescents who are faced with additional stressors inherent to this developmental period of life, and are challenged with having to navigate new social settings while integrating into American schools. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to investigate to what extent participation in a summer youth readiness program would increase levels of social self-efficacy in refugee adolescents and prepare them to start school feeling equipped to navigate the new school environment. Through pre- and post-program surveys, semi-structured interviews, and observational data, the findings of this study were viewed through Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive framework in order to address how this type of educational programming can help to build self-efficacious beliefs within school social settings, and ultimately help refugee students to cultivate a greater sense of readiness for school in their new cultural context.

Overall, these data suggest that participation in a summer youth readiness program may help refugee adolescents to establish meaningful ties to fellow peers and teachers, which may enable them to access knowledge about their new school environment and feel more prepared upon entry in the fall. Additionally, participation in this program may provide an opportunity for students to learn through observation from more experienced peers, establish a sense of collective identity among the other students, and feel encouraged to focus on positive goal formation for the future.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This mixed-methods study examines the experience of recently resettled refugee adolescents in Washington State, specifically the effect that their participation in a Summer Youth Readiness Program (SYRP) has on their individual feelings of social self-efficacy and academic preparedness. Drawing data from both quantitative and qualitative sources, this study uncovers some of the challenges facing refugee adolescents during the early stages of their resettlement, and works to understand the role that the SYRP plays in addressing these issues and easing the adolescents’ cultural and social transition.

Background of the Study

Every year, millions of people around the world are forced to leave their homes and cross international borders as refugees to escape violent conflict and/or persecution due to “reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UNHCR, 2012). Though resettlement is the least common of the durable solutions proposed by the UNHCR and affects only one per cent of refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2011b), the United States receives up to 80,000 refugees annually for permanent resettlement. Some parts of the United States experience a greater influx of refugees than others, and consequently have a greater network of established social resources to assist this population during resettlement. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2011), refugee admissions in Washington peaked at 3,004 new entrants by the end of the 2010 fiscal year. It is estimated that approximately 35 per cent of all newly arrived refugees to the United States are under the age of 18 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2011) and will be enrolled in some form of schooling during the resettlement period.
As a branch of the federal Department for Health and Human Services, The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) attends to the social and educational needs of refugees upon entry into the United States. Established in 1998 by the ORR, the Refugee School Impact Grant (RSIG) represents a government funding source which can be used to strengthen educational programming for refugee youth across the country. One such program funded by the RSIG is the Summer Youth Readiness Program (SYRP) that was established in 1998 through collaboration between a large resettlement agency in Seattle, Washington, and the Washington State Department of Education. Currently in its fifth year, the SYRP offers a 7-week summer program to recently resettled refugee children to instruct them in the non-academic, “soft skills” needed to thrive in the American school system. By cultivating knowledge about how to interact with same-aged peers, learning about proper classroom conduct, and becoming familiar with navigating local schools, the SYRP works to strengthen the interpersonal skills and social adeptness of these newly arrived youth.

This study investigated whether participants in the summer readiness program, offered through the refugee resettlement organization (RRO) in Seattle, WA entered school feeling better equipped to navigate the new school environment due to increased levels of social self-efficacy than students who did not participate in the program. This research study will utilize Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory as a framework through which to better understand how the triadic factors of personal, environmental, and behavioral elements influence the social self-efficacy levels exemplified by the participants included in this research project. The following main research question will be investigated in this study: To what extent do recently resettled refugee adolescents experience an increase in social self-efficacy through their participation in a summer youth readiness program?
The main research question will be supported by the following sub-questions:

**Sub-question 1:** Does the Summer Youth Readiness Program’s (SYRP) focus on fostering social skills help these youth integrate smoothly into the American school system?

**Sub-question 2:** To what extent does the participants’ level of social self-efficacy equip them to overcome the psychosocial challenges of resettlement?

**Sub-question 3:** In what ways does participation in the program cultivate a greater sense of perceived capability and readiness for academic success in their new educational context?

**Justification for the Study**

Considering the size of the refugee population entering the United States every year, the rationale behind this study lies in the hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of the tangible difference that government funded programming can have on the educational experience of refugee youth. The program organized by the RRO in Seattle, WA primarily focuses on the non-academic side of the educational experience in the United States, which directly links to some of the concepts underlying Bandura’s social cognitive theory and the self-efficacy construct (2001). According to Bandura’s theory, self-efficacy can be defined as an individual’s “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997). This theory asserts that efficacious beliefs can have self-enhancing or self-debilitating consequences on how well individuals motivate themselves and persevere in the face of difficulty or adversity (Bandura, 2002). Conducting this type of study has important implications for gaining a deeper understanding of how the cultivation of social self-efficacy can
contribute to positive academic and social outcomes for refugee youth who are facing some of the challenges of resettlement to the United States.

Though studies have been conducted to measure the social self-efficacy of many adolescent populations, the body of literature has not been expanded to investigate how this construct affects refugee adolescents and their schooling experience in the United States. Pursuing this type of research may provide useful information for refugee advocates who are interested in expanding policies to implement further educational programming in areas with large refugee populations. Furthermore, the insight gained from student participants in this study might also reveal the strengths of programs such as the SYRP, as well as what could be improved upon in the future.

**Organization of the Chapters**

This thesis is organized into six chapters. The first chapter, the introduction, outlines the purpose and scholarly justification for this study, as well as prepares the reader with an understanding of how the manuscript is organized. The introduction chapter is followed by an extensive review of the relevant literature within this field in. Specifically, Chapter II outlines the process of refugee resettlement to the United States and describes some of the major psychosocial challenges facing refugee adolescents. Additionally, Bandura’s social cognitive theory is introduced to the reader as the theoretical framework which will be used in this study.

Chapter III describes in detail the specific methodology used to conduct this mixed-methods study. At the beginning of this chapter, the reader is given a brief overview of the researcher perspective, which contextualizes the following discussion of the data. This chapter also includes a comprehensive overview of the participant selection, data collection methods employed, including quantitative social self-efficacy surveys, semi-structured interviews, and
observational data, as well as the data analysis processes. Additionally, some of the methodological limitations encountered in this study will also be shared in this chapter.

Chapter IV shares both the quantitative and qualitative findings of the study. This chapter is organized around each of the research questions driving this study. Each of the three sub-questions is addressed through a presentation of the pertinent qualitative and quantitative data, such as pre-program survey data, qualitative interview and observational findings, and post-program survey data. The quantitative portion of this chapter includes descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA tests, as well as repeated measure tests which were conducted using the survey data. The qualitative findings incorporate verbatim quotations from the interview participants and a summary of the qualitative themes emerging from the transcribed interviews.

In Chapter V, the guiding research questions are addressed individually using the combined data findings of the study. This point of integration presents a rich discussion of the quantitative and qualitative strands in relation to the literature review and the theoretical framework. Finally, Chapter VI concludes the thesis with a brief summary of the findings and analysis, as well as implications of the study and directions for future research in the field.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter presents an overview of the current research findings existing within the field of refugee education particularly as they pertain to the concept of social self-efficacy, and the connections between this concept and the educational experience of refugee youth and adolescents in the United States. This review of the literature has been organized into sub sections provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the term refugee, the barriers that refugee adolescents face during the resettlement process, the importance of self-efficacy during the developmental period of adolescence, as well as the implications that social self-efficacy and specialized educational programming can have on the successful integration of refugee youth into schools in the United States.

Defining Refugees

When examining the refugee population within the United States, it is imperative to establish a working definition of who qualifies as a refugee, as well as examine the historical context which led to the development of this term. According to the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which convened in 1951 following the end of World War II, the term refugee came to define one who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UNHCR, 2012). The 1951 Convention aimed to consolidate previously existing refugee documents and codify the rights afforded to refugees in order to establish a legal foundation to help this population (UNHCR, 2010). However, the scope of those who qualified under the 1951 definition was limited to individuals who became refugees before 1 January 1951 and were not already protected under
another United Nations group (Marshall, 2011). The limitations of this Eurocentric definition were intentional, as the goal of the Convention was to distribute the European refugee burden of World War II without creating a binding obligation to assist non-European refugees (Hathway, 1991).

In response to global political events in the next two decades, the United Nations recognized that the application of this definition needed to be expanded beyond its 1951 parameters and was thus amended through the ratification of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (Marshall, 2011). The 1967 Protocol removed the temporal and geographical limitations of the previous definition, yet left in place the condition that one only qualifies as a refugee if they are facing persecution on the grounds of civil or political status (Hathaway, 1991). While this change allowed for the application of the term refugee to encompass peoples residing in countries outside of Europe, it continued to exclude many refugees of the developing world whose flight is prompted by natural disaster, war, or economic turmoil, rather than persecution (Hathaway, 1991).

**Resettlement into the United States**

The term ‘resettlement’ is defined by the UNHCR as “the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State which has agreed to admit them- as refugees- with permanent residence status” (2011a, p. 9). This process of resettlement is based on the principle of non-refoulement, namely that refugees hold the “right to not to be returned in any manner whatsoever to a country or territory where one’s life or freedom may be threatened on one of the 1951 Convention grounds” (UNHCR, 2011b, p. 14). Resettlement, along with voluntary repatriation to the country of origin or local integration in the country of asylum, are proposed by the UNHCR as durable solutions, which allow refugees
to “[end] the cycle of displacement by resolving their plight so that they can lead normal lives” (2012, p. 28). The UNHCR (2012) emphasizes that there is no hierarchy among these three durable solutions, that they are complimentary in nature, and that they involve cooperation between the countries of origin, the host States, the UNHCR, as well as the refugees themselves. Resettlement generally benefits only a small percentage of those refugees in need of a durable solution, with less than one per cent of the world’s refugees being resettled in 2011 (UNHCR, 2011a).

Historically, the United States has played a critical role in the history of refugee resettlement, as it has on average accepted more refugees than the other nine leading resettlement countries combined (Xu, 2007). Of the 79,800 refugees who were admitted by 22 resettlement countries in 2011, 51,500 were resettled into the United States of America (UNHCR, 2011a). One major component which makes refugee resettlement in the United States successful is an extensive network of government, non-government, and faith-based organizations that collaborate to help assist families throughout the resettlement process (Nawyn, 2006; Eby, Iverson, Smyers, & Kekic, 2011). The close relationship between the federal government’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and nongovernmental organizations allows for financial allocations to be made available to resettlement organizations throughout the country, which subsequently provide reception and placement services during refugees’ first 120 days in the country (Nawyn, 2006).

In the early stages of resettlement, refugees are identified abroad by the UNHCR, U.S. Embassies, or qualified non-governmental organizations, after which they seek approval to enter

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1 Though not listed in detail by Xu (2007), the UNHCR states that the 10 traditional resettlement countries are: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.
the United States through the U.S. Department for Homeland Security (UNHCR, 2011b). Once a case has been approved for entry into the United States, an allocations committee distributes it to one of many resettlement agencies across the country based on capacity, specific needs of the refugee, and geographic locations available (Eby et al., 2011). Today, approximately 6 per cent of refugee caseloads are resettled by ethnic agencies, 24 per cent by secular agencies, and 70 per cent by faith based agencies (Eby et al., 2011). National resettlement agencies in the U.S., such as the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, collaborates with a nationwide network of agencies and community-based organizations to provide newly resettled refugees with English language lessons, job skills training, healthcare services, and educational opportunities (United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants [USCRI], 2011).

**Psychosocial Challenges for Adolescent Refugees during Resettlement**

Of the 40,000 to 75,000 displaced people who seek refuge within the United States each year, approximately 35-40% are under the age of 18 (Bridging Refugee Youth and Children’s Services [BRYCS], 2009). For many of these minors, the experience of resettlement coincides with the period of transition known within some western as adolescence. Frequently described as a period of “storm and stress,” adolescence is a life stage that can be characterized by psychosocial turmoil and discontinuity, as well as one of great opportunities for personal growth through the mastery of new skills and social relationships (Hall, 1904; Arnett, 1999; Bandura, 2006). While the acceptance of this developmental period is widely accepted in the United States, it should be noted that cross-cultural anthropological research has not found the psychological tensions of “storm and stress” to be universal to all cultures (Schlegel & Barry, 1991 as cited in Berry et al., 2011). However, it has been acknowledged that there are signs of
this period being a time for learning new social roles and responsibilities across many cultures (Berry et al., 2011).

Looking at the period of adolescence from within the context of the United States, this developmental phase can be further complicated for youth who are forcibly removed from their native environment and are left to experience this tumultuous stage of transition while grappling with a new language and becoming accustomed to a radically different cultural context (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). The period of resettlement has been described as “a process during which a refugee, having arrived in a place of permanent asylum, gradually re-establishes the feeling of control over his/her life and develops a feeling that life is ‘back to normal’” (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003, p. 62). This process can be further complicated for refugee adolescents who are facing external life factors and stressors that are inherent to this natural period of growth and change.

Though refugee adolescents leave behind the physical landscape of conflict or war, residual psychological symptoms and new social challenges frequently accompany them during resettlement. Psychological stress triggered by these traumatic events can emerge as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including symptoms of grief and loss, separation anxiety and concern for others, and exacerbated mental health problems (Pynoos & Nader, 1988; Davies & Webb, 2000). Additionally, forced migration can be characterized by additional social stressors, such as the need to acculturate to the dominant language, and balancing new shifts in family dynamics.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.** War and political violence are two of the primary factors behind forced migration, events which frequently expose refugees to situations of traumatic stress (Almqvist & Brandell-Forsberg, 1997). As a result, PTSD has been cited as one
of the most prevalent psychological symptoms that emerges in refugee youth and adults (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005). PTSD can be defined as “an anxiety problem that develops in some people after extremely traumatic events, such as combat, crime, an accident, or natural disaster,” often causing those afflicted to “relive the event via intrusive memories, flashbacks and nightmares” (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2012). It has been found that the manifestations of PTSD frequently affect one’s ability to function in interpersonal, intrapersonal, and occupational settings (Van der Folk, McFarlane, & Weisaeth, 1996). A study conducted by McCarthy and Marks (2010) revealed that a number of the young adult refugees being interviewed about well-being in their new life described nightmares and flashbacks, both symptoms of PTSD, as a normal part of their daily life after resettlement. Hinton, Rasmussen, Nou, Pollack, and Good (2009) similarly found in a study of Cambodian refugees living in the United States, that 49 per cent of the participants experienced daily symptoms of PTSD. Moreover, their participants exhibited high levels of anger toward nuclear family members, children in particular, which was commonly triggered by trauma recall and catastrophic cognitions (Hinton et al., 2009).

Though recognition of PTSD and other mental health issues have been identified throughout research conducted with post-resettlement refugees, there are still significant barriers which prevent refugees from receiving adequate mental health care. In some refugee communities, there exist varying levels of cultural resistance and stigma to the acknowledgement of mental illness, which can create difficulties in connecting those with mental health symptoms to the proper services (Kroll, Yusuf, & Fujiwara, 2011; Weine, 2011). In other circumstances, refugee communities are not provided with access to culturally sensitive interventions (Davies & Webb, 2000). Findings in the literature emphasize that conventional
western responses to mental health issues may be inappropriate or ineffective for some refugees, but not necessarily all (Davies & Webb, 2000). In these cases, individuals who are resistant to mental health interventions may be more receptive to preventative measures that are centered on themes of families holding resilient properties, such as strength, knowledge, and skills, rather than on deficits of the individual that are emphasized in American mental health practices (Weine, 2011). Developing stronger preventative methods of mental health care for, to accompany, or to replace individual trauma care is one potentially helpful measure.

Unfortunately, the implementation of this measure has been hindered by a lack of collaboration between the government, volunteer agencies, academic institutions, and community based services, such as educational programming (Weine, 2011).

**Acculturation and acculturative stress.** As refugee families transition from one country to another, they undergo changes in many facets of their daily lives, such as having to communicate in a new language and acquiring employment in their host country. This process, known as acculturation, has been widely defined as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). Acculturation has been cited throughout the literature as a factor which permeates the lives of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, sojourners, and other displaced groups of persons (Sam & Berry, 2006). In the case of refugees, Berry (1991) proposes that they undergo a unique type of acculturation which transitions between six stages: pre-departure, flight, first asylum, claimant period, settlement period, and adaptation.

Associated negative psychological reactions triggered by this period, usually including anxiety, depression and other psychosomatic problems, have been termed acculturative stress
Acculturative stress can be seen as a manifestation of the challenges faced during the process of acculturation which cannot simply be resolved through adjustment (Berry et al., 2011). Certain mediating factors, such as gender, age, and personal resources can greatly affect the acculturative experience, including the level of acculturative stress felt by an individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the case of refugees, when immigration is not pursued by choice but instead out of necessity, individuals may be susceptible to heightened symptoms of acculturative stress, due to the already stressful experience of being a refugee (Schweizer, Melville, Steele, & Lacherez, 2006).

The complex and multi-faceted experience of the refugee adolescent during the process of resettlement creates an environment in which the effects of acculturation might be acutely felt. Mena, Padilla, and Maldonado (1987) found that age 12 was a critical threshold for determining higher stress levels in immigrant youth, as it frequently marks the beginning of transition from childhood to adolescence. One point of evidence found in the literature states that children and adults acculturate at varying speeds to the new environment, leading to dissonant acculturation or intergenerational conflict (Hyman et al., 2000; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; McBrien, 2005; Qin, 2006; Oikonomidoy, 2009). Described as the phenomenon of immigrant children learning English and American ways more readily than their parents, and simultaneously losing one’s immigrant culture, dissonant acculturation can lead to parent-child conflicts and challenges during adaptation to the new environment (Ying, 1999; Qin, 2006). Additionally, unequal language fluency between the generations may also burden youth with new responsibilities, such as interpreting for their parents, and simultaneously cause parents to feel that their authority is being challenged by virtue of being dependent on their English proficient children (Hyman et al., 2000; Joyce, Earnest, De Mori & Silvagni, 2010).
Other studies have shown that immigrant adolescents may begin to desire increased autonomy and independence from their parents during the acculturative process, which can often lead to a sense of estrangement from their families (Erikson, 1968; Fuligni, 1998; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986; Qin, 2006). When a child or adolescent is transitioning between distinctly different cultures, particularly between a collectivist culture which emphasizes “fitting in” or finding a place amongst others (Masgoret & Ward, 2006), and an individualistic culture that values autonomy and uniqueness, such as that of the United States, this sense of estrangement may be heightened. A burgeoning sense of disengagement to familial ties can be further complicated for refugee adolescents who are coping with external stressors inherent to the resettlement process, such as recovery from trauma, flight from the country of origin, acculturation into the dominant culture, discrimination, and poverty (Allen, Vaage, & Hauff, 2006; Qin, 2006).

**Language barriers and the family.** One of the most frequently cited factors which inhibits a smooth transition during refugee resettlement is the acquisition of the host country’s dominant language (Hyman et al., 2000; Davies, 2008). Refugees arriving to the United States frequently experience a phenomenon known as linguistic isolation during and after resettlement, which refers to a household in which no adult is English proficient (Siegal, Martin, & Bruno, 2000). Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbenyiga, and Grace (2012) have investigated the consequences felt by refugee families experiencing linguistic isolation in the United States, and have found that many individuals experience a dearth of linguistic social capital, as they are not able to create meaningful ties to members of the dominant culture due to a lack of language proficiency. This lack in linguistic social capital was found to inhibit access to material assistance, information, and social support outside of their own ethnic community (Nawyn et al., 2012). Ultimately, this
lack of social capital can have grave repercussions on refugee children, such as anxiety about being mistreated by others, as well as not being able to access necessary resources, such as healthcare and social services (Nawyn et al., 2012).

In some linguistically isolated immigrant families, children compensate for the disconnectedness of their parents by assuming the role of language brokers for their elder relatives (Tse, 1996). In these cases, immigrant youth who acquire the majority language more easily than their parents and grandparents take on the responsibility of translating information between their home and school lives, and making decisions regarding their education which would normally be reserved for the adults (Tse, 1996). Serving as a language broker for others calls upon a variety of skills in the individual, including proficiency in multiple languages, the ability to navigate power differentials between adults and children, as well as understanding the cultural expectations and mores of two cultures (Weisskirch, Zamboanga, Bersamin, Kim, Schwartz, & Umana-Taylor, 2011). Hinton et al. (2009) discovered that refugee children who began to acculturate to mainstream culture and lose the native language of their parents experienced a greater cultural barrier within the family. This cultural shift that is often characterized by unequal language fluency and varying levels of acculturation to the host society values contributes to something known as intergenerational stress, which occurs between immigrant and refugee parents and their children (Hyman et al., 2000). Though intergenerational stress is frequently caused by a barrier to language and communication, it may also be exaggerated through the development of differing ideas of autonomy, freedom, and discipline between parents and their children (Hyman et al., 2000).

Though serving as language broker for the family may contribute to stress on a refugee or immigrant child, intergenerational or otherwise, there are also distinct advantages
accompanying this role. Buriel, Perez, De Ment, Chavez and Moran (1998) for instance have found through a study on Latino adolescents that the interpersonal experience of interacting with two languages and two cultures may actually impart increased feelings of self-confidence during social interactions. Additionally, Weisskirch et al. (2011) found that college students from immigrant backgrounds who had language brokered for their families reported greater retention of heritage cultural practices, values, and identifications, and that language brokering served as a conduit for cultural value retention. Finally, Buriel et al. (1998) found that Latino adolescents from immigrant backgrounds who served as language brokers for their families exhibited greater levels of academic and social self-efficacy within a school context, which ultimately led to heightened academic success.

The Role of Schools in Resettlement

**English language development.** The acquisition of the host society’s dominant language has consistently been cited in the literature as a critical element for refugees in the process of assimilating to their new cultural context. For refugee youth arriving to the United States, schools play an important and influential role in this process, as they represent one of the most extended points of contact that refugee children have with their host society (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). It is at school sites that refugee youth have the greatest opportunity to fulfill some of their most critical needs, such as building English language skills, which will help to facilitate their overall integration into the new social and cultural context (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Research has shown that such linguistic competency can be linked to academic achievement, social acceptance, economic self-sufficiency, employment opportunities, accessing basic resources in the community, and avoiding social alienation (McBrien, 2005; Office of Refugee Resettlement, 2008; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009;
Nawyn et al., 2012). In contrast, research has also found that a lack of English language abilities and parental illiteracy can impede the adaptation and integration process of refugee youth (Davies, 2008).

As previously discussed, many refugee youth learn English with more ease than refugee adults, thus becoming a crucial resource for older family members who need to navigate various social and professional spheres in their new home (Woodhead, 2000, as cited in Xu, 2007). However, the playing field is not equal for all refugee children. Many arrive to their country of resettlement after a long interruption in their schooling, or without any formal educational background at all (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Moreover, due to their experiences prior to resettlement, some refugee youth may be dealing with psychological trauma or anxiety which could manifest itself in aberrant behavior, thus influencing the process of language acquisition (Tangen, 2009). Cranitch (2010) concludes through her study of a literacy pilot program geared toward refugee youth in Australia that “successful [literacy] outcomes need to be contextualized by the life experiences as well as the starting point of the individuals” (p. 265), emphasizing that interrupted schooling can also lead to cognitive gaps and concepts of literacy (p. 265). Due to the unique academic, social, and psychological needs of refugee youth, federal and state agencies have frequently collaborated to work at building an educational infrastructure that will accommodate this population (BRYCS, 2009). Additional resources, such as school readiness programs, opportunities for remedial coursework, after-school mentoring support, parental education measures, and interpreter services are examples of ways that refugee needs, linguistic and otherwise, might be better met through the process of schooling during resettlement.

The importance of belonging. Regarding the period of adolescence, there is a growing consensus in the literature that academic motivation and educational outcomes can be linked to
the intricate web of social and personal relationships that develop within school and social settings (Goodenow & Grady, 1993). Termed school membership (Wehlage, 1989) and belonging (Finn, 1989), these concepts refer not only to the physical act of being enrolled in a school, but “student perceptions that others in the school, especially adults, are there for them and that they count in the school” (Goodenow & Grady, 1993, p. 61). Some researchers posit that the search for the sense of belonging and affiliation to others is a compulsion that is an intrinsic component to human well-being and survival (Keyes, 2004; Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009). Anant (1966) describes the concept of belonging as “the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment” (as cited in Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992, p. 173). Moreover, multiple studies have found that greater levels of school membership and belonging can have positive outcomes within the educational sphere, such as increased motivation in school, academic engagement, higher self-efficacy levels and lower rates of depression (Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Anderman, 2002; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007).

During the process of refugee resettlement, a great deal of focus is placed on meeting the physiological and safety needs of refugees, such as food for subsistence and shelter, as are outlined in Abraham Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs. However, according to Maslow’s theory, individuals must also satisfy their belonging and esteem needs before they can realize their full capabilities and potential. Sinclair (2001) argues that education should be considered an essential element of humanitarian aid for refugees, alongside essential needs, such as water, food, and shelter. She states that the psychosocial trauma frequently present in refugee children and young adults can be countered by the sense of normalcy that school attendance gives (Sinclair, 2001). Sensing that school is a welcoming place that is safe and dependable, refugee
children can begin to attain a sense of routine through school attendance that was likely absent during the period of asylum and resettlement. Further, granting refugee students a specialized context within schools in which they can establish a collective identity with others, such as an ethnic club or class, has been shown to reinforce the developing sense of membership in the host country during resettlement (Oikonomidoy, 2009). In Davies’ (2008) case study focused on Sierra Leonean refugee adolescents, participants likened their school to a family or home, where both their cognitive and affective needs were met through the development of relationships with peers and teachers. Davies’ study points to the fact that an overt acknowledgement of a refugee’s unique cultural background exemplifies the culture’s acceptance into the larger school structure, and allows the student to build a greater sense of place or membership within the host community.

**Overcoming alienation.** One potential outcome to a lack of belonging or membership in schools is the emergence of alienation or marginalization, instead of feelings of inclusion (Nicassio, 1998). Peer discrimination was one hindrance found in the literature which prevented refugee adolescents from attaining membership or the sense of inclusion within schools. Ellis, MacDonald, Klunk-Gillis, Lincoln, Strunin, and Cabral (2010) found throughout their study with Somali refugee adolescents that three fourths of their participants had experienced at least one act of discrimination in school, and that many described discrimination as a regular part of their adolescent experience. Furthermore, the study found that female participants more frequently felt discriminated against because of their cultural heritage, due to their style of dress or wearing a head scarf, whereas males were frequently lumped in with African American students and discriminated against based on race. Despite likening their school with a home or family, the Sierra Leonean refugees in Davies’ (2008) study also reported feeling ostracized at times by
peers in school, based on their clothing, the color of their skin, or their accent. This sense of being ostracized, which leads to a lack of group identification and increased alienation, creates a situation in which youth of immigrant backgrounds feel they are not meaningfully connected to the greater society (Safipour, Schopflocher, Higginbottom, & Emami, 2011). Ultimately, this trend can lead to the isolation of ethnic groups and depleted social cohesion in multiethnic communities (Safipour et al., 2011).

One buffering factor which can help prevent these negative feelings of isolation is that of familial support. Qin (2006) found that refugee and immigrant children are much more prone to such risk factors as discrimination and alienation if they have lost the buffering element of parental support. Though it is difficult for these youth to navigate the experience of acculturation while balancing their native culture at home, those who have close ties to their culture of origin and parents are more likely to adjust well to a new culture than those who no longer have this support (Kurtz-Costes & Pungello, 2000; Qin, 2006). Additionally, research also shows that family and community support networks protect refugee and immigrant youth from becoming involved in violence and crime, an outcome which frequently results from feelings of inadequacy or a lack of community belonging (Rossiter & Rossiter, 2009).

While definitely an important means of strength for a child, familial support does not always adequately combat the threats of alienation that a student feels in school. An alternative method of tempering these feelings of discrimination or alienation in school is to provide a forum for minority students to connect with others sharing the same ethnic heritage. Oikonomidoy (2009) found that Somali refugee youth were able to foster a sense of individual and collective social identity through the development of a Somali Club at their school. However, frequently school personnel or educational policies tend to overlook providing such a
forum for minority students within schools, which denies these students a key assistive element in the acculturative process (Oikonomidoy, 2009).

**Building psychological resilience.** As many refugee youth live through traumatic life situations in their home countries and during the process of resettlement, it is easy to readily cast them into the role of a victim. Some argue, however, that it would inappropriate to draw inferences about their emotional or psychological health or capabilities based on these events (Timini, 1998). Frequently, refugee children exhibit qualities of psychological resilience, which are exemplified through a proclivity for academic and social achievements despite environmental or socioeconomic adversities (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994; Boon, 2008). The development of this buffering capacity emerges through exposure to a triad of positive, protective factors: a positive disposition, a supportive family, and an accessible community (Eisenbruch, 1988; Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993), as well as in reaction to risk factors in the environment, such as violence or stress. It should be noted that resilience is not an intrinsic characteristic, but a process that develops with the help of outside factors (Brooks, 2006). Resilient qualities in a child have been shown to contribute to positive outcomes, such as intelligence, self-esteem, connections to caring adults, and self-efficacy, despite the presence of risk factors (Brooks, 2006).

The first of these triadic factors has been described as a positive disposition toward life events (Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993). This characteristic has been described as having a temperament which elicits positive interactions with others in the environment, high levels of social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose (Benard, 1996; Brooks, 2006). The second of the three triadic factors, parental involvement, has been referenced in empirical studies as one of the most instrumental in the cultivation of resilience in at-risk youth (Brooks, 2006). Refugee adolescents report the ability to maintain a sense of
culture, identity, and traditional values through strong relationships with family members, which result in greater stability and connectedness to their home country (Davies, 2008). Ellis, MacDonald, Klunk-Gillis, Strunin, & Cabral (2010) report that Somali youth who participate actively in cultural practices within their Somali community tend to place themselves in settings in which they feel safe and protected against discrimination in their host country, whereas those who participate less in Somali culture are more vulnerable to discrimination.

Finally, the third factor, community support, has also been cited in the literature as an important source of support which helps to build positive development and resilience in youth (Benard, 1996). One branch of the community that is extremely pertinent for children is that of schools and the educators therein. Morris and Allen (2007) state that a safe classroom environment and positive teacher-student interactions are crucial protective factors in the school that can potentially lead to students’ increased social competency and autonomy. This finding speaks to the importance of schooling as an institution within which refugee youth might build greater resilience. In turn, youth with greater resilience have been found to seek and attain greater meaning in their lives following traumatic events than those with low levels of resilience (Werner, 1993, as cited in Xu, 2007).

Resilience is said to be the quality which allows people to bend instead of break in the face of these risks, primarily through positive interactions with the immediate environment, such as within families, schools, and local communities (Brooks, 2006; Chan, 2006; Gilligan, 2007). Resilience is extremely relevant when analyzing the effect of the previously mentioned psychosocial challenges faced by refugee adolescents. The academic implications for refugee children who lack strong levels of resilience could include an increased potential to resist
adverse academic influences of low-achieving peers, dropping out of school, or performing at a lower capacity than one is truly capable (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

**Refugee Educational Programming**

Recognizing that refugee children and adolescents face unique social and psychological challenges upon entering the public school system (BRYCS, 2009), the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) has developed specialized educational programming to target this population. This specialized assistance primarily takes the form of grant programs which encourage the creation of remedial and readiness programs for refugee youth in areas with high resettlement populations (BRYCS, 2009).

One of the major focal points of refugee educational programming aims to address the lack of schooling opportunities and/or the disruption of formal schooling that many refugee youth may have experienced before and during resettlement. Additionally, many refugee youth have been exposed to multiple risk factors during the period of transition, such as exposure to violence, a lack of formal schooling, and low literacy rates in their native language, which can lead to heightened levels of anger, depression or frustration during the resettlement process (Xu, 2007; Davies, 2008; Due & Riggs, 2009; Tangen, 2009). This, in turn, can create challenges within the classroom and school environment as these students are ushered into mainstream American schools. Davies (2008) spoke with public school teachers in New York City who worked with refugee youth from Sierra Leone and found that anger management issues and aggressive student tendencies frequently interfered with successful teaching and learning in the classroom. Moreover, the teachers expressed that there was a noticeable lack of motivation in their refugee students, which they attributed as a product of the circumstances endured by these students during resettlement (Davies, 2008).
A plethora of recommendations exist within the literature regarding steps that can be taken to implement effective educational strategies for refugee youth. These strategies include hiring qualified teachers who are empathetic to refugee issues, implementing a culturally relevant curriculum reflective of the students’ experiences, fostering meaningful parent-teacher partnerships, offering trauma counseling services within the schooling structure, and nurturing a warm and caring school community (Davies, 2008). Beneficial interventions that have been established using governmental and nongovernmental support to further these efforts include newcomer readiness programs, parent workshops, summer programs, psychological or mental health services, and professional development training for educators, many of which have been shown to have positive effects on refugee youth (Xu, 2007; BRYCS, 2009).

**Social Cognitive Theory as a Framework**

The social and psychological processes of refugee adolescents can be better understood through a broader examination of the social cognitive theory. The following section will provide an overview of this theory, highlighting those elements which are pertinent to understanding the unique conditions and circumstances present in the development of refugee youth. Albert Bandura’s (1986, 2001a) social cognitive theory, also known as social learning theory, analyzes the developmental changes which occur across an individual’s life span due to evolvement and the development of human agency (Bandura, 2006). This theory postulates that human functioning is neither driven completely by internal forces of the individual, nor wholly shaped and controlled by external stimuli. Rather, Bandura (1986) states that human motivation and functioning is a result of the interplay between personal factors, such as emotions and cognitions, as well as behaviors and environmental conditions, each acting as a determinant of the others (See Figure 1). Within this system of reciprocal causation, humans both exercise
control over the course of their life path, as well as react and change depending on the influential events and biological changes which occur (Bandura, 1989, 2006).

Figure 1. Schematization of triadic reciprocal causation in social cognitive theory. Bandura (2001b).

This adoption of an agentic perspective in regard to human development is one of the fundamental building blocks of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1989, 2001a, 2002, 2006). Specifically, agency refers to actions which are driven by intention and planning that are meant to result in the outcomes that are desired by an individual (Bandura, 2001a). From this perspective, humans can be viewed as self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting; people are not simply products of their environments, they are contributors to their life circumstances (Bandura, 2006).

Within this theory, there are three distinct modes of agency which humans require to function successfully in their social and cultural context: direct personal agency, proxy agency that is dependent on the actions of others to attain desired outcomes, and collective agency which is exercised through group action (Bandura, 2002). As individuals do not always have
direct control over the conditions and institutions which dictate their daily lives, it becomes vital for them to exercise agency through social interactions and relationships with others. A fundamental aspect of this social cognitive theory is the idea that humans do not live their lives in isolation, but instead, rely on joint capabilities to bring about the changes they desire (Bandura, 2006).

Finally, among the mechanisms of human agency included in the social cognitive perspective, none is more vital or pervasive than that of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy influences both one’s behaviors and the surrounding environment, and is reciprocally influenced by these two determinants (Schunk & Meece, 2006). This concept of efficacy will serve as one of the foundational concepts upon which this study is built.

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy, which is grounded in Bandura’s social-cognitive theory (1977, 2001), is concerned with how individuals perceive their own ability to perform in such a way that will give them control over the events of their life. Bandura (1977) purports that an individual will have little incentive to act or persevere in the face of adversity unless they believe they will be able to produce desirable outcomes. These self-efficacy expectations, or the beliefs one holds regarding ones competencies in certain behavioral domains, are said to constitute the foundation of human agency (Matsushima & Shiomi, 2003; Bandura, 2006). Human agency further accounts for the building blocks of human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishment (Bandura, 2006).

Self-efficacy beliefs regulate cognitive, motivational, and affective processes (Benight & Bandura, 2004), as well as influence thought patterns which can be self-helping or self-debilitating (Bandura, 1989). The effects of self-efficacy beliefs can be seen in the goals which
individuals set for themselves, the amount of energy dedicated to meeting these goals, as well as the level of persistence exhibited when facing difficulties encountered while attempting these goals (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Moreover, self-efficacy beliefs also contribute to one’s ability to cope with intense life stressors; individuals with high levels of coping self-efficacy are able to alleviate themselves of stress and anxiety by turning hazardous environments into benign ones (Bandura, 2004). Individuals with low levels of self-efficacy are more prone to avoid difficult tasks, have low aspirations for themselves, or exhibit a weak commitment to the goals they set for themselves (Bandura, 2000; Matsushima & Shiomi, 2003).

Along with social cognitive theory’s concept of triadic reciprocity is the idea that human functioning can also be seen as rooted in a few basic capabilities: symbolizing, which allows a person to draw on previous knowledge and experience to build a guide for future action; forethought, which helps individuals use regulated thinking to guide intentional action; and vicarious capabilities, or the process of learning through observing others (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (2001a), humans rely heavily on symbolization, or the process of cognitively deducing causal relationships and expanding knowledge by operating using the wealth of information derived from personal experience. Moreover, by deriving information from external sources, such as through family members or peers, an individual can vicariously reap the benefits of a particular body of knowledge, or more readily generate solutions to a problem without having to have done it before (Bandura, 2001a).

Finally, Bandura (2006) states that there is no all-purpose measure for perceived self-efficacy; in order for it to effectively be measured, it must be tailored to the particular domain of functioning that is the object of interest. The present literature on self-efficacy exists within a plethora of domains, ranging from culture, academic motivation, creativity, and physical activity
Social self-efficacy. The domain of social self-efficacy focuses on applying Bandura’s (1977) theory of self-efficacy to social interactions. Smith and Betz (2000) define this domain as the level of an individual’s confidence in his/her ability to engage in social interactional tasks which are necessary to build and maintain social relationships, as well as exhibit skillful social behavior within interpersonal relationships. Wheeler and Ladd (1982) found that this construct is related more closely to perceived social acceptance and self-esteem among peers, than academic competence or physical domains.

Previous research has shown that low levels of social self-efficacy can impair the formation of positive social relationships and support networks which help to buffer against detrimental emotional and psychological outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and avoidance (Smith & Betz, 2000, 2002; Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Herman & Betz, 2004). Moreover, research has also shown that the level of perceived social-self efficacy in youth can be closely linked to aspects of other expectancy related constructs, such as self-concept, self-confidence, self-worth, and self-esteem (Connolly, 1989), which in turn can impact performance in social and academic spheres. Furthermore, in a study focusing on social self-efficacy and interpersonal stress in adolescence, Matsushima & Shiomi (2003) discovered that individuals with high social self-efficacy can be expected to cope more positively with points of stress in their interpersonal relationships.

Within the sphere of social interactions, language skills and verbal communication play a critical role in the development of self-efficacious beliefs. Schunk and Meece (2006) state that one method of acquiring self-efficacy beliefs is through forms of persuasion, such as verbal
encouragement from others. Bandura (1997) asserts that individuals who are persuaded verbally of their capability to succeed at mastering a specific task will more likely mobilize greater efforts to accomplish their goals instead of dwelling on personal deficiencies. For non-native speakers of English, the inability to understand verbal cues in the environment or receive verbal persuasion from others may influence their ability to develop self-efficacious beliefs. Consequently, research has shown that one of the major impediments for recently resettled refugees during the adaptation process to the United States is a lack of English proficiency, which can serve as a significant barrier while learning within an academic context (Davies, 2008).

Adolescence and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy holds a great deal of pertinence during the period of adolescence. Bandura (2006) has stated that adolescence is an ideal time for personal growth through the mastery of new skills and social relationships, and that the middle and high school years are prime for the cultivation of self-efficacious beliefs. However, during these years, extreme environmental and social changes can also undermine an individual’s sense of control over the occurrences in their life and inhibit the development of self-efficacious beliefs.

Factors which can potentially prevent adequate development of self-efficacy beliefs in adolescents include neighborhood or location, positive role models, socioeconomic status, and parental education level (Bandura, 1997; Gephart, 1997; Schunk & Meece, 2006). In a recent study on immigrant families in Los Angeles, Seegan, Welsh, Plunkett, Merten, and Sands (2012) found that parental support and psychological control were mitigating factors in the development of self-efficacy in immigrant children and adolescents. Specifically, parents who engaged in controlling behaviors with their children, such as using guilt, shame, and love withdrawal, had a greater impact on the perceived self-efficacy in their children than
socioeconomic status or family structure. In another study focusing on Somali adolescent refugees, Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007), discovered that exposure to extreme circumstances, such as war, violence, and displacement significantly heightened levels of depression, PTSD symptoms, and lowered levels of self-efficacy.

**Self-efficacy and academic outcomes.** Studying the construct of self-efficacy has great pertinence within the field of education, as research has linked it to performance outcomes such as academic achievement. In their 2007 study on first-generation college students, Ramos-Sanchez and Nichols found that self-efficacy levels in at-risk college students helped to predict their later adjustment within post-secondary educational pursuits. These findings echoed previous research conducted by Hackett, Betz, Casas, and Rocha-Singh (1992), who found that academic milestones self-efficacy, or the belief that one can perform specific accomplishments necessary for academic success, was one of the greatest predictors of college academic achievement. Similarly, Gore (2006) discovered that self-efficacy beliefs measured at the beginning of a college freshman’s academic career can be used to predict their academic performance and persistence throughout college. Furthermore, Gore (2006) posited that student-faculty relationships, student organizations, and campus involvement all work to bolster pro-academic social skills that may transfer to increase self-efficacious beliefs.

These findings associated with college aged students might also be helpful in studying the academic performance of adolescents. The cultivation of self-regulatory skills, such as time management, goal-setting, and self-evaluation, can be viewed as components which can aid in fostering the development of the greater mechanism of agency (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). For example, if a refugee adolescent is given guidance in how to properly manage homework and extracurricular school activities, both of which are important aspects of the American
schooling experience, they will more likely feel capable and self-confident in balancing each successfully (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

**Situating the Present Study within the Literature**

As demonstrated through this review of the current body of literature, the process of resettlement for refugee adolescents is significantly different compared to that experienced by refugee children or adults undergoing the same transition. Due to unique psychosocial and interpersonal challenges inherent to this developmental period, refugee adolescents are presented with the task of navigating complex social relationships, while simultaneously adjusting to a new cultural context, language, and balancing shifting family dynamics during the period of resettlement. While research has identified social self-efficacy as a vital tool during the period of adolescence as it instills youth with a sense of agency and control over their environment and the external circumstances in their lives, little information is known about how refugee adolescents might benefit from an increased sense of self-efficacious beliefs. As most refugee adolescents are streamlined into the public school system upon entry into their new host country, this type of study has important implications for gaining a deeper understanding of how the cultivation of social self-efficacy can contribute to positive academic and social outcomes for refugee youth in the United States.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The following mixed-methods study aims to analyze how specialized educational programming can help to build the sense of social self-efficacy in recently resettled refugee adolescents. Hoping to construct a rich and comprehensive illustration of the experience of the refugee adolescent participants, this research is comprised of multiple strands of quantitative and qualitative data which will be corroborated against each other to address guiding questions of the study. The following methodology was chosen because mixed-methods research allows the investigator to solve problems and answer questions using all methods available, rather than being limited to one approach (Creswell, 2011). This flexibility was advantageous to the context of this study, as it allowed me to tailor the focus of the data collection to the population available at the SYRP.

Questions of the Study

As to gain deeper insight into the experience of refugee adolescents in the United States, this mixed-methods study will be guided by the following main question: to what extent do recently resettled refugee adolescents experience an increase in social self-efficacy through their participation in a summer youth readiness program? Furthermore, I address the following sub-questions through this investigation:

Sub-question 1: Does the Summer Youth Readiness Program’s (SYRP) focus on fostering social skills help these youth integrate smoothly into the American school system?

Sub-question 2: To what extent does the participants’ level of social self-efficacy equip them to overcome the psychosocial challenges of resettlement?
Sub-question 3: In what ways does participation in the program cultivate a greater sense of perceived capability and readiness for academic success in their new educational context?

**Statement of the Researcher Perspective**

To contextualize my role and motivation behind this research, I will first begin by describing my own personal and academic background and how it has influenced my interest in this study. I am a Caucasian female who was born and raised in the rich cultural diversity of the Pacific Northwest in the United States. Though I grew up speaking only English, my parents opened their doors to house many exchange students and international travelers over the years, which attuned my interest at a young age to appreciating cultural differences and foreign languages. In high school I participated in the International Baccalaureate Program which deepened my consciousness of international awareness and influenced the direction of my educational endeavors. At the age of eighteen I had the opportunity to spend a year living as an exchange student in Germany where I was immersed in a culture other than my own, and exposed to the challenges that exist for an adolescent who is struggling to find a place within a new culture and gain command of another language.

After this experience, I spent four years completing my undergraduate degree in German language at Grinnell College in Grinnell, IA, after which I had the opportunity to spend a year as an English teaching assistant in Germany with the Fulbright Diversity Initiative Program. Through exposure to this program, which aimed to bring international language resources to underserved students throughout the country, I became aware of the challenges that some minority students face in the stratified German educational system. My interest in this subject expanded when I returned to the United States and gained further professional experience
working in an administrative capacity at a community college in southern California that served many students coming from refugee backgrounds. During my many first hand encounters and conversations with these students, I became familiar with some of the issues they were facing upon arrival to the U.S., specifically in regard to their ability to access higher education. These interactions sparked my curiosity in learning more about the refugee community, which melded with my previous experiences of working and living abroad and motivated me to return to school to address these developing inquiries.

I left California in 2011 to pursue a Master’s of Arts degree in Cross-Cultural and International Education (MACIE) at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH. Inspired by the core classes of the MACIE program, which place a great emphasis on developing an understanding of the social, cultural, and psychological underpinnings of educational systems and the systemic inequities therein, I was inspired to return to my native state of Washington to work with the expanding refugee community. Thinking back to my own experience of cultural immersion as an adolescent in Germany, I was interested in understanding how adolescents in this community cope with the process of forced relocation and how this experience affects their overall academic experience.

**Design: A Mixed-Methods Approach**

This study follows a mixed-methods approach. Simply described by Creswell (1999), a mixed-methods study involves mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis into a single study (as cited in Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, and Hanson, 2003). By converging different kinds of data, the strengths of one method can potentially neutralize the weakness of the other (Creswell, 2005). Mixed-methods research is frequently categorized along two dimensions: time orientation and paradigm emphasis. The first of the two dimensions refers
to when the methods or strands of research are implemented within the study, generally either in a concurrent or a sequential manner. The latter of the two dimensions refers to the priority given to each paradigm in the study (quantitative vs. qualitative). Two additional dimensions are also frequently taken into account when designing mixed-methods research; the stage in the research in which integration of the two methods takes place, as well as the theoretical perspective driving the focus of the research. These four criteria help to determine the specific type of mixed-methods design the researcher is hoping to employ (See Figure 2 Below).

![Mixed methods design matrix in four cells. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004).](image)

*Note: “qual” stands for qualitative, “quan” stands for quantitative, “+” stands for concurrent, “→” stands for sequential, capital letters denote high priority or weight, and lower case letters denote lower priority or weight.*

*Figure 2. Mixed methods design matrix in four cells. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004).*

For the purposes of this study, the research will be following a concurrent explanatory mixed methods design. Specifically, this two-phase quan + QUAL model first involves collecting quantitative survey data that is elaborated upon through a qualitative interview component. Additionally, this study will incorporate a pre-post aspect of the design which will allow for
survey data to be collected at two different points, both prior to participation in the SYRP, as well as after the program. Creswell et al. (2003) note that this approach is straightforward and allows for data to be reported in two distinct phases, with a final discussion that integrates both methods.

One strong rationale for pursuing a mixed-methods research design for this study is that of triangulation and complementarity, or the idea that mixed methods can lead to multiple inferences which confirm or complement each other (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This form of seeking corroboration of results is a way to add credibility to the inferences drawn from the findings (Briggs, Coleman, & Morrison, 2012). In the case of developing a design for this study, a mixed-method approach is advantageous, as it produces multiple data sources that will be available for analysis, potentially strengthening the validity of the findings.

Furthermore, Creswell (2011) points out that one limiting the data pool to one source may be inadequate in several ways. For example, one data source may be too small to allow the researcher confidence in addressing the research question or quantitative and qualitative findings could be contradictory, but would remain unknown by only utilizing one approach. Creswell (2011) asserts that employing a mixed-methods design can help to counter these potential deficiencies. In the case of this study, both the quantitative and qualitative data pools are relatively small, due to a limitation in available participants. When viewed individually, both data sources would be inadequate in addressing the research question, yet combined, they offer a rich data pool through which a more complete understanding of the research problems can be attained.
One challenge in developing a proposal for this study was not knowing how many students would be available for participation. As the SYRP has varying numbers of students each summer, it was impossible to know if a large sample size could be obtained to pursue a quantitative study. Conversely, it was difficult to plan for an entirely qualitative study without previous knowledge of students’ English abilities that would be necessary for conducting lengthy, in-depth interviews. Thus, designing a mixed-methods approach, which incorporates pre- and post-surveys and semi-structured qualitative interviews, allows for maximum flexibility in pursuing a study that is most compatible with the population available at the SYRP.

The Context

As to protect the confidentiality of the participants in the study, the name and location of the organization and educational program will not be disclosed or described in extensive detail. Instead, the organization will be referred to as the Refugee Resettlement Organization (RRO), and their sponsored summer program will be simply referenced throughout this thesis as the Summer Youth Readiness Program (SYRP). The SYRP was established seven years ago through the RRO, a secular, non-profit refugee resettlement agency that has offices throughout the United States and around the globe. The RRO is powered heavily by the work of volunteers, as well as funded through grants, some of which originate from the U.S. federal government. The main office of the RRO is located in New York City, but the branch sponsoring the program highlighted in this study can be found in Seattle, WA.

The city in which the SYRP took place lies in the outskirts of Seattle and is near a large international airport. The combination of being further removed from the high cost center of the city and the abundance of low-skill jobs made available through the airport industry has led to increasing ethnic and socioeconomic diversity in the surrounding neighborhoods. A notable
demographic shift in recent years has included large numbers of immigrants and refugees settling in the area due to the relatively low cost of living. According to the 2010 Washington Census, the city’s population was 19,107; of this total, 43.9% was White, 19% was Asian, 17.9% was Black, 9.3% was other, 6.0% were two or more races, 2.8% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 1.1% of the population was American Indian/Native Alaskan (Washington State Census, 2010). Moreover, the proximity to a large city center also allows these individuals to access necessary resources during resettlement, such as healthcare services, English Language Learner programs, and culturally sensitive counseling that have been developed to aide refugees and immigrant residents in the area.

The mission behind the SYRP is to provide recently resettled school-aged refugee youth with an opportunity to become familiarized with the U.S. school system during the summer before their first semester of public school enrollment. The program places a particular emphasis on fostering basic knowledge of the school environment and the social skills needed to function smoothly in an academic setting. Funded through a grant made possible by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), the SYRP represents an example of collaboration which occurs between government branches and non-profit organizations to support the unique needs of refugees in the United States. The program participants were connected with the resources of the SYRP through their resettlement caseworkers who were familiar with the benefits of this cost-free program. The SYRP participants reflect the diversity of the surrounding city, with the majority of the students coming from Nepali/Bhutanese, Burmese, or East African backgrounds.

My work with the SYRP began with a program orientation on June, with the school session spanning seven weeks in July and August. For the duration of the program, I collaborated with six fellow interns and two program directors. The interns were graduate and undergraduate
student volunteers from around the country, and the directors were a local elementary English Language Learning (ELL) teacher and a long-time employee of the refugee resettlement agency. This diverse group of all-female leaders offered a wide range of professional experience and educational backgrounds, which undoubtedly enriched the overall depth of my internship and research experience, as well as the experience of the students. I worked at the SYRP for seven consecutive weeks, from Monday through Thursday, beginning 7:30 a.m. and finishing at 12:30 p.m. At 1 p.m. each day the students would transition from our curriculum to a second component of the SYRP which was organized by the local school district. Unlike our course aims, which focused on building social skills and familiarity with the school environment, the latter component of each day focused on building English fluency and literacy.

The daily routine at the SYRP was fairly consistent throughout the seven week period, as it was intended to simulate an average day in an American public school. However, some days were longer than the normal seven hours due to field trips to local businesses, and attractions that were all reached using local city public transportation. Each morning at 7:30 a.m., the interns would gather at the program site, which was located at a local elementary school, to discuss the daily agenda and depart to pick up the students at their homes. Due to the lack of a school bus, the interns accompanied the students on foot from their apartment complexes to the program site each day, both before and after school. Upon arriving to the site, students were ushered into the cafeteria to eat breakfast. The breakfast was provided throughout the summer months by a local school district initiative to provide free, healthy lunches to any community youth under the age of 18. Following breakfast, students were divided into two groups, a younger and an older age group, which remained fairly consistent over the duration of the program. Three interns and one lead teacher were responsible for the two program levels which each had about 15-20 student
participants. As new resettlement to the area did not slow during the summer months, it was not uncommon for new students to join the group from one day to the next. This element of fluctuation made it difficult at times to accommodate the rapidly changing skill levels presented by the students, as new students were constantly joining and old students were quickly acquiring English language skills.

The program curriculum was organized into six major themes, with a new theme being presented at the beginning of each week. The themes consisted of the following: The School Day, my community, Health and Hygiene, Family Life, Recreation and Physical Fitness, and My Hopes and Dreams. I chose to spend all six weeks working with the older group of students, who were between 11 and 19 years old. At the beginning of each class session we had different individuals practice stating and writing the date on the board, naming the interns that were present, and then introducing the activities for the day. We generally worked for the first hour and half on creative projects until they left for recess to participate in interactive field games. After recess the students practiced songs and focused on the weekly theme, then had a lunch break and a closing session before moving to the strictly academic component of their day.

My aim as a volunteer intern/researcher at the SYRP was to build meaningful relationships with the students and staff in order to foster trust and rapport within the school community. Additionally, I met many of the students’ parents and relatives when I picked up the participants at their homes each morning. At times I was welcomed into the homes to drink tea or speak with the parents as the children got ready to leave for school. This additional aspect of contact helped me to build trust with the children, and also establish an element of familiarity with parents before approaching them about the research portion of my role. Throughout the six week program, I played games with the students and filled the role as mentor rather than a figure
of authority or a disciplinarian. My goal was to gain student trust through conversation, offering help on school work, and during playful interactions on the field at recess.

I feel it is necessary to include this rich description of the internship program as to help contextualize my role for the reader and help them to understand the important position I held as both an intern and a researcher. Maxwell (2005) states that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is a complex and changing entity, emphasizing that in qualitative research, the researcher serves as the instrument. This internship enabled me to truly embrace this principle. Working closely with the students for several weeks over the course of the SYRP allowed the students to see me as an intermediary; I was not one of their peers, yet I also did not assert an authoritative presence. Consequently, our interactions enabled them to feel more relaxed during our interactions and allowed my observation of their natural behaviors to be more authentic. Furthermore, understanding the daily routines at the SYRP and the larger context of the organization and its aims helps to frame the overall study for the reader.

**Site Selection**

The process of locating and choosing a site for data collection began in late fall 2011 and coincided with the planning of my mandatory summer internship for my graduate program. I knew that I wanted to work with an educational program that focused on refugee issues and youth education, yet I was undecided on the geographical region or organization with which I hoped to collaborate. I decided to focus on finding an organization near my hometown in Washington State whose mission was aligned with my research interests. After doing some preliminary online research regarding refugee resettlement agencies in the area, I decided to contact the RRO to inquire about the SYRP. Through email and telephone correspondence with the program director, I was offered the position of summer youth intern for their seven week
session in July and August 2012. In early February 2012 I completed the SYRP intern application and a mandatory background check through their national headquarters, and negotiated an opportunity to collect data for my independent research in exchange for volunteering 120 hours of my personal time volunteering with their organization.

**Participant Selection**

In order to gain meaningful information and a thorough understanding of the research topic being studied, I employed purposeful sampling techniques throughout the data collection process. Creswell (2007) defines purposeful sampling as a process in which the researcher selects individuals and sites because they will provide greater insight into the research problem and central phenomenon being investigated in the study. Participants for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of this study were recruited from the SYRP, alumni of the SYRP who were serving as summer mentors, as well as a separate group of adolescents who were affiliated with a different non-profit organization in a town 25 miles south of the SYRP site. In total, there were 20 participants from these three separate groups. Of the total participants, 12 (60%) were from Nepal, 1 (5%) was from Iraq, 2 (10%) were from Eritrea, 2 (10%) were from Guatemala, 1 (5%) was from the DR Congo, 1 (5%) was from Myanmar, and 1 (5%) was from Ecuador. Additionally, 10 (50%) were female and 10 (50%) were male (See Tables 1 and 2 Below).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Time in U.S.</th>
<th>Yrs English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SYRP PARTICIPANTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diti</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>4+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>4+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>&gt;1 year</td>
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<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2+ years</td>
<td>2-4 years</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1-3 years</td>
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<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>DR Congo</td>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>&gt;1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>2+ years</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Than</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>2+ years</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Interview Participant Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Time in U.S.</th>
<th>Years of English</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diti</td>
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<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunal</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leena</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>4+ years</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deena</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>4 weeks</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>11th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harsha</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabeen</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>6-12 months</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The names of all participants have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality*

During my first week at the SYRP, I extended individual invitations to the students between the age of 11 and 19 to participate in the study. At this point in time, I consulted one of the two program directors to obtain her opinion on which students had an adequate command of English to participate in the surveys and interviews. Before beginning data collection, I visited several apartment complexes nearby where all of the program participants were located. At this time, I was able to speak with parents and explain the aim of my study so that they could decide if their child would be able to participate. During these visits I relied on older siblings and neighbors to serve as translators, as many of the parents did not speak much English.

By completing these home visits I was able to obtain signed consent and assent forms, administer the first round of the survey in a quiet location in which the students felt comfortable, and also access translating services due to the close proximity of neighbors and older relatives. I also administered the survey to a group of six students who had participated in the SYRP program the year before and were serving as mentors to the current group of participants. The
students then took the consent and assent forms home to review and have signed by parents, returning them the next day before completing the survey. Additionally, I recruited a third group of participants from a non-profit organization in a city south of the SYRP site. I established contact with the organization via email and corresponded with the program director and one of the classroom teachers to set up a time to visit the classroom, have consent forms signed, and administer the social self-efficacy questionnaire.

Lastly, I also conducted six short, semi-structured interviews with a small sub-sample of the SYRP participants who completed the pre and post surveys. I extended this invitation to participate in an interview to all of the students who completed the survey, yet only these individuals had the desire answer more in-depth questions about their schooling experience. For those six individuals who did express interest in being interviewed, the interview location was the SYRP classroom or an adjacent room in the school. Interviews were conducted during recess, lunch, or after school hours when the student did not have to attend the second portion of their school day.

**Data Collection Process**

Having received approval by the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University in April 2012, as well as permission from the RRO to collect data at the SYRP site, the data collection process began at the end of the first week of my internship in July 2012. In order to gain a more holistic perspective on the effect of the SYRP and the experience of adolescent refugee students, I collected both quantitative and qualitative sources of data during the months of July and August. My first aim was to administer the social self-efficacy questionnaire twice; once as early on in during the seven-week program as possible, and again at
the end of the seven-week span in an effort to gauge how student perceptions changed over the duration of the program. Participant recruitment took place primarily after SYRP classroom hours while visiting the homes of the participants and speaking to parents regarding the nature of the study. It was during these home visits that I was able to have parents sign consent forms for students who were under the age of eighteen, as well as obtain assent from all students stating their willingness to participate in the study.

**Quantitative**

The pre-program and post-program questionnaires specifically measured student levels of social self-efficacy, both before and after participation in the Summer Youth Readiness Program. Over the course of the first week of the SYRP, consenting participants were asked to complete a demographics questionnaire covering basic questions, such as their age, gender, country of origin, and length of time in the United States (See Appendix D). Stapled to the demographics sheet was a copy of the Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, which consisted of 26 questions about social interactions in school that each participant could answer based on a seven point Likert scale, with 1 being “impossible to do” and 7 being “extremely easy to do” (See Appendix E). The survey questions had been slightly adapted prior to the survey administration to accommodate varying levels of English fluency. While administering the survey, I read the individual questions aloud to the students in order to give them the opportunity to clarify any questions about language comprehension. Additionally, some of the participants had a more thorough knowledge of English, which allowed them to help other participants when questions about language arose. The survey took between ten and fifteen minutes to fill out, allowing students to complete this process during their lunch break or after the during independent work time during the school day. At the end of the seven week session,
these same participants were asked to fill out the identical social self-efficacy questionnaire a second time. Similarly, I read the questions aloud to participants to ease language barriers, and students helped one another where comprehension issues were present. After both of these survey administrations, students were thanked and allowed to return to their daily classroom activities.

Additionally, two separate groups of students were also asked to participate in this quantitative aspect of the study. The first of these alternate groups was known as the SYRP mentors, as they had been SYRP participants during the past summer. Of these 6 students, 5 (83.3%) were female and 1 (16.7%) was male, all were between 14 and 21 years old, and each had been attending school in the U.S. for at least one year. As the mentors were all proficient in English, I did not read the questions aloud but instead allowed them to quietly complete them at their own pace and submit them when they were finished. The students were thanked for their participation and then continued on with their day. Since these students were not current participants in the SYRP, it was not necessary to complete a post-survey to gauge change in perceptions over time. The second of these alternate groups was a class of seven students unrelated to the SYRP, who were also refugee adolescents resettled to the United States but living in another city 20 miles south from the SYRP site. Of the seven students in this group, 5 (71.4%) were male, 2 (28.6%) were female. Concerning the ethnic background of these students, 2 (28.6%) were from Eritrea, 2 (28.6%) were from Guatemala, 1 (14.3%) was from Myanmar, 1 (14.3%) was from DR Congo, and 1 (14.3%) was from Ecuador. Including this last group of students was intended to provide a comparison group that could be used to draw inferences about the effect of the SYRP on social self-efficacy levels.
As the majority of these students were over the age of 18, most did not need parental consent forms. For the two students who were under 18, case-workers were able to sign off on the consent forms, as the organization technically held legal guardianship. These consent forms and completed surveys were faxed to me at a later date. After the consenting process was finished, I stood in front of the classroom and read aloud the demographics questionnaire and social self-efficacy survey to accommodate any language comprehension issues which existed. The English teacher who helped to organize my classroom visit was also present to help field any questions which arose during the administration of the survey. These students were thanked at the end of my visit for their participation.

**Qualitative**

The qualitative data collection process took place during August of 2012, after which the data were thoroughly reviewed and analyzed during the fall of 2012. The participants for this component of the study were drawn from the same sample used for the quantitative element. During the consenting process described above, students were asked if they would like to participate in a brief interview focusing on their feelings about school and the SYRP. Several weeks into the SYRP session, I verbally asked the students again if they would like to be interviewed. After indicating their interest, six students engaged in semi-structured, one-on-one interviews which took place during school lunch breaks or after SYRP classes. The interviews were audio recorded in order to capture the nuances of participant responses and to maintain accuracy of the data being collected. The participants were clearly asked prior to the interviews if it was okay to record the interviews. After receiving verbal consent which corresponded to their written consent, a recording device was placed on the table between the researcher and the participant. I did not begin recording until the student confirmed they were ready to begin. As
English was not the first language of any of the participants, I frequently spoke slowly during the interviews and phrased questions in multiple ways to ease existing language barriers.

For the interviews, I used a semi-structured script for all of the students (See Appendix G). Though the interviews were guided by this set list of questions, the semi-structured nature allowed for elaboration into certain topics that the students were more interested in talking about, or which I deemed important as the interviews progressed. The interviews lasted between ten and fifteen minutes each, depending on the length of student responses. My goal during the interview process was to establish a relaxed environment with each student so that they would feel at ease disclosing their feelings and opinions about topics covered in the interview. Audio files of the interviews were transcribed verbatim within a month of the data collection process in preparation for analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

Quantitative

At the beginning of the study, each participant was assigned an identification number when the initial consent and assent forms were distributed in order to maintain student confidentiality. A master file was kept in a Word document on my computer with the student names and their corresponding numbers. These ID numbers were used throughout the study to organize the data. After administering and collecting the demographic and social self-efficacy surveys, all data were entered into an SPSS data file under each student’s ID number. In order to prepare for analysis of the data, the student demographic data was entered using categorical variables, and all of the ratings assigned to the pre and/or post surveys were entered as continuous variables representing the Likert-scale format of the questions.
After entering the data into SPSS, descriptive statistics were conducted, such as one-way ANOVA tests, mean calculations and tests for repeated measures. These tests were conducted to identify trends or emerging patterns between the different groups of students and the answer choices indicated on the surveys. Due to the small sample size, statistical comparisons between pre- and post-survey answers were not able to produce generalizable results. Instead, the focus of comparing pre- and post-quantitative data was to recognize changes that individual students indicated in their overall sense of social self-efficacy, which would then be explored more thoroughly through the qualitative interview process.

**Qualitative**

The recorded interviews were transcribed and organized by individual participant. The transcriptions were then transferred to an Excel spreadsheet in order to break each question and response into manageable units for analysis. After thoroughly reading through each interview transcription in detail, the data were coded for themes relating to social self-efficacy. The themes which immediately emerged were knowledge of English, cross-cultural interactions, importance of family, and happiness in school. In order to go more in depth with the analysis, all of the interview data were color coded by theme. From here, individual quotations were drawn from all of the interviews to analyze, elaborate upon and ultimately collapse into broader, interrelated themes.

**Mixed Qualitative and Quantitative**

Following the concurrent explanatory mixed-methods design, the next stage of data analysis involved an integration of the two approaches. This final stage involved investigating how the prominent themes discovered in the qualitative interviews were reinforced by the
emerging patterns found during both stages of quantitative data. This final discussion focused on explaining how group differences in participants affected their ratings on the social self-efficacy questionnaires, as well as why certain survey scales received significantly higher or lower ratings than others. This interactive strategy of merging the two sources during the analysis phase helped to facilitate more comprehensive comparisons and interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2011).

**Validity and Credibility**

In the case of mixed-methods research, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) propose using the term inference quality to replace validity and credibility frequently used in strictly QUAN or QUAL research. Adopting a new nomenclature to describe the accuracy of mixed-methods research will help to transcend the single method orientation of the commonly used terms mentioned above, as well as avoid the misuse of the term validity (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Throughout this study, various steps were taken to recognize and avoid potential threats to inference quality which could have potentially compromised the correctness or accuracy of the results. In order to better understand these precautions, it would be first beneficial to look at each paradigmatic approach separately and then view them holistically.

When approaching qualitative research, Creswell (1998) recommends incorporating at least two verification procedures to strengthen the validity of the study. The first of these procedures was implemented to bring awareness of my own role as a researcher and the subsequent influence or bias I brought to the interviewing process. Described by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) as reflexivity, this concept emphasizes that the researcher has as inescapable influence on the setting and individuals being studied that is impossible to fully eliminate during the study (as cited in Maxwell, 2005). One way of managing reflexivity is to explain the particular values or expectations that you bring into the study as a researcher.
Additionally, clarification of any potential researcher bias from the outset of the study can help to strengthen the validity of the study (Merriam, 1988). Following this advice, I included a detailed statement of the researcher perspective in order to reduce any potential biases or issues of reflexivity that could have influenced the findings or conclusions of the study.

Another procedure employed to counter potential threats to measurement validity was that of establishing rapport with my participants. As I did not conduct the interviews until the very last week on site, I was able to establish a level of trust with the students during the previous five weeks of interaction in classes. Giving students the time to get to know me in a casual setting allowed them to feel more comfortable throughout the interview process. This also enabled me to better understand the comments and references made during the interviews, particularly those having to do with peer relationships or family issues that I had learned about over our time together.

While member checking was not feasible due to my distance from the program site during the data analysis phase, data triangulation was used to counter any potential threats to credibility. Maxwell (2005) describes triangulation as the collection and utilization of information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods. Relying on semi-structured interviews, observation, as well as notes taken on each participant after the interviews, I was able to pull in data from multiple angles to create a fuller and more credible report about student experiences in the SYRP.

In quantitative research, internal validity refers to the “extent that research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation” (Briggs et al., 2012). One particular threat to internal validity in survey studies occurs when respondents do not fully complete the questionnaire (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In response to this concern, I took the precaution of
walking most of the students through the surveys in order to monitor that all questions were being understood and answered. Additionally, to account for language barriers which may have deterred students from answering some of the questions, the survey was slightly adapted to ease language comprehension. Moreover, the participants were generally able to clarify any questions about survey items with an older student or relative who was capable of translating the questions into their native language.

One threat to internal validity of survey studies was not having enough respondents to make the results generalizable. Due to the extremely small sample size for the quantitative portion of this study, the statistical comparisons conducted were statistically underpowered. To account for this threat to inference quality, methodological triangulation was used to compensate for the number of survey responses by corroborating the QUAN and QUAL methods against each other (Briggs et al., 2012). Interviews were also conducted to provide another source of data to complement the survey results. Due to the small sample size in this study, statistical analysis would not be capable of producing meaningful conclusions about the data. Instead, quantitative data analysis is limited to primarily descriptive statistics. Additionally, a pre-post design was also built into the study to compensate for a small sample size with multiple data collection points.

Methodological Limitations

Due to the specific population participating in this study, there were several significant limitations and challenges which emerged during the data collection process. The first and most notable limitation was accessing a large enough sample of students from within the SYRP participants who were interested in taking part in the study, and who had enough knowledge of the English language to do so. As I was looking specifically at the experience of the adolescent
refugee, many of the students at the SYRP were not old enough to fit into this age category. Of the students who were between the ages of 11 and 19, many had only been in the United States for a short period of time and did not have a solid enough command of English to understand the survey questions, or feel confident speaking at length about their own experiences in the interviews. Others who did have a more thorough background in English language did not express interest in talking about their experiences, or did not trust working closely with a researcher who was outside of their community.

Another challenge in recruiting participants for the study was due in part to having to obtain informed consent from parents who did not speak English or were difficult to track down due to work schedules and appointments which frequently took them out of the home. I found that the most effective way of obtaining consent was to conduct individual home visits, which was time consuming and did not always produce the outcome I desired. Moreover, as I was hoping to gauge initial student perceptions about their social self-efficacy levels at the beginning of the 7-week long program, there was a time constraint in participant recruitment at the beginning of my time at the SYRP. This hope to obtain survey data from students who had not yet gotten to know me as a mentor likely affected their willingness and interest in participating.

Other limitations began to emerge during the data analysis process. It should be noted that despite taking precautions to walk students through the survey, some students did not fully complete all of the questions. Additionally, some of the students who completed the pre-survey were not available to complete a post-survey, due to absence from the program during the last week when administration of the survey occurred, or due to a lack of interest. Due to these various factors, the sample size obtained for this mixed-methods study was too small to produce
generalizable quantitative results. The survey data was therefore only useful for producing
descriptive information rather than statistical analysis.

Additionally, it should also be noted that my own positioning as a researcher may have
produced significant limitations as well. I did not speak the native language of any of the
students participating in the study, nor did I have extensive knowledge of their cultural
backgrounds. While we did spend 7 weeks getting to know each other within the context of the
SYRP, I have never been a refugee arriving to the United States, nor have I ever been in a
position of having to acclimate to American culture. Thus, despite my interest in understanding
the full experience of these students, I will never be fully capable of comprehending the
obstacles or challenges they face. Despite these limitations, my experience working with diverse
populations and my educational background in cross-cultural education adequately equipped me
with the opportunity to work with these students and gain a much deeper appreciation for their
lived experiences.
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The primary focus of this mixed-methods study was to investigate the extent to which refugee adolescents experience an increase in social self-efficacy through their participation in the Summer Youth Readiness Program. Both quantitative data derived from the students’ responses to Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey and qualitative data emerging from semi-structured interviews are presented in this chapter.

The layout of this chapter is organized around the following main research question: to what extent do recently resettled refugee adolescents experience an increase in social self-efficacy through their participation in a summer youth readiness program? This first research question is approached through a presentation of the quantitative data obtained through pre- and post-program distributions of Connolly’s (1989) Social-Self Efficacy Survey at the SYRP, as well as an overview of the qualitative themes emerging from the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, the following three research sub-questions will also be investigated throughout the chapter:

**Sub-question 1:** To what extent does the participants’ level of social self-efficacy equip them to overcome the challenges of resettlement?

**Sub-question 2:** Does the Summer Youth Readiness Program’s (SYRP) focus on fostering social skills prepare these youth to integrate smoothly into the American school system?

**Sub-question 3:** In what ways does participation in the SYRP cultivate a greater sense of perceived capability and readiness for academic success in the students’ new educational context?
Each of the three research sub-questions is individually addressed through a presentation of the emergent themes and sub-themes which were drawn from the qualitative semi-structured interview data, as well as some of my own personal observations obtained during the time as an intern at the SYRP. Additionally, these qualitative data are supported with a description of the quantitative findings derived from the subscales included in Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey.

**Main Research Question: To what extent do refugee adolescents experience an increase in their social self-efficacy through participation in a summer youth readiness program?**

Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey consists of 26 individual items which participants rate from 1 to 7 on a Likert-scale, where 1 represents “impossible to do” and 7 stands for “extremely easy to do.” Each item on the scale describes a type of social task or interaction that is commonly considered problematic for teenagers (Ford, 1982; as cited in Connolly, 1989) (See Appendix E). The items on Connolly’s scale are divided into the following five sub-scales to measure different aspects of the social self-efficacy construct: A) Friendship/intimacy: 7 items; B) Social assertiveness items: 5 items; C) Social groups/parties items: 7 items; D) Public performance items: 3 items, and E) Giving/receiving help: 3 items. The total rating of the survey can range from 26 to 182. During the study, 19 students took the survey; 6 SYRP participants, 6 SYRP mentors, and 7 students from the Control Group (CG). Of the participants, there were 11 females (57.9%) and 8 males (42.1%), and the mean age was 16.37 years. Additionally, 5 students from the SYRP took the survey a second time at the end of the seven-week program.

Throughout all of the survey distributions, subscale E (Giving/receiving help items) received the highest mean rating ($M=6.03$, $SD=1.38$), when compared with the other subscales
(See Table 3 Below). Descriptively, it appears that the Control Group students consistently rated the survey items lower on nearly all of the social self-efficacy subscales, with the exception of subscale B, when compared with the other groups. This trend will be investigated more in-depth in the following group comparison analyses to determine whether there is a difference in the social self-efficacy levels of students who have participated in the SYRP and those who have not.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the Survey Sub-Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale Description</th>
<th>SYRP Pre-Program</th>
<th>SYRP Post-Program</th>
<th>SYRP Mentors</th>
<th>CG Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscale A: Friendship/Intimacy (7 Items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total M (SD) = 4.53 (1.58)</td>
<td>4.27 (1.81)</td>
<td>5.40 (1.08)</td>
<td>5.22 (1.29)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale B: Social Assertiveness Items (5 Items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total M (SD) = 5.17 (1.68)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.88)</td>
<td>5.12 (1.33)</td>
<td>6.30 (.687)</td>
<td>4.74 (1.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale C: Social Groups/Parties Items (7 Items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total M (SD) = 4.78 (1.38)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.01)</td>
<td>5.46 (.857)</td>
<td>4.04 (1.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale D: Public Performance Items (3 Items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total M (SD) = 4.67 (1.39)</td>
<td>3.78 (.981)</td>
<td>5.93 (.722)</td>
<td>5.28 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale E: Giving/Receiving Help Items (3 Items)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total M (SD) = 6.03 (1.38)</td>
<td>6.44 (.620)</td>
<td>5.73 (1.11)</td>
<td>6.50 (.781)</td>
<td>5.29 (1.96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pre-Post Program and Between Group Comparisons

Though three different groups of students were administered Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey, the main research question aims to understand the extent to which participants of the SYRP experience a change in their social self-efficacy levels over the course
of the seven-week program. Therefore, this section will focus on examining how the social self-efficacy ratings of the SYRP students changed between the first and last week of the program.

Despite my recruitment efforts, only a few of the SYRP students were available or interested in participating in both distributions of the survey, resulting in a very small sample for the pre- and post-program surveys. Moreover, some of the participants did not fully complete all of the survey items each time the survey was distributed, resulting in occasional missing data. As a result, the test of repeated measures that was conducted using the pre- and post-program data is significantly underpowered and unable to provide generalizable results.

Table 4

**SYRP Participant Pre and Post-Program Social Self-Efficacy Ratings and Difference Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale A</th>
<th>Subscale B</th>
<th>Subscale C</th>
<th>Subscale D</th>
<th>Subscale E</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
<td>M (SD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre Survey</td>
<td>4.27 (1.80)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.57)</td>
<td>3.78 (.981)</td>
<td>6.44 (.620)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Survey</td>
<td>5.40 (1.08)</td>
<td>5.12 (1.33)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.01)</td>
<td>5.93 (.722)</td>
<td>5.73 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>-.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the students who were included in this pre-post program comparison, it was found that participants had a pre-program mean social self-efficacy level of 4.95 ($N=6$, $M=4.95$, $SD=.823$), as opposed to a post-program mean level of 5.26 ($N=5$, $M=5.26$, $SD=.776$). Subscale D (Public performance items) appears to exhibit the greatest gain in mean rating between the pre- and post-program self-efficacy levels, with a difference score of 2.15. Despite the limitation of being
limited to a small sample size, the pre- and post-program student ratings were compared using a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test for significant differences in social self-efficacy levels over the course of the seven-week SYRP curriculum. Though there is no evidence of significant gains between the two distributions of the survey, the mean scores of three of the subscales (A, B, and D) do increase slightly between the two data collection points, while the mean scores of two subscales (C and E) decrease.

One potential explanation for these changes could be the fact that the students had not yet been integrated into the American schooling context and therefore had not yet been exposed to a significant amount of external stimuli that would drastically change their social self-efficacy levels. Another reason for such small gains could be explained by the extremely small sample size of pre- and post-survey participants.

In addition to looking at the pre- and post-program surveys of the newly resettled SYRP participants, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted between those students who had been exposed to the SYRP curriculum (post-program SYRP students and SYRP Mentors) and those who had not had this type of educational programming (Control Group) (See Table 5). Though the SYRP participants and the mentors were exposed to the SYRP at different points in time, this test is conducted to investigate whether or not significant differences in social self-efficacy levels can be identified in students who had access to a school readiness program. The between groups ANOVA test reveals marginal significance $F(1, 16)= 4.437, p=.051$ when tested at the .05 alpha level. Specifically, the mean social self-efficacy ratings of the post-program SYRP students and SYRP mentors appear slightly higher overall ($N=11, M=5.49, SD=.778$) when compared to the Control Group participants ($N=7, M=4.33, SD=1.56$).
Table 5

*Post-program ratings compared to Control Group Ratings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-Program (SYRP</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.49</td>
<td>.778</td>
<td>.051*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Participants +Mentors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group (CG)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

These quantitative data do provide preliminary evidence that increased social self-efficacy levels in refugee adolescents could be partially explained by the type of educational programming that is accessible to them upon resettlement. However, these findings could also be influenced by other external variables, such as community support, family structure, or previous educational background, it would be worthwhile to conduct further studies on a larger scale to investigate the development of social self-efficacy as a result of this type of educational programming. These initial quantitative findings will now be expanded upon through an investigation of the qualitative data derived from this study, specifically as they pertain to the three research sub-questions guiding this study.

**Overview of Qualitative Themes**

The qualitative findings in this chapter include a summary of the interview data, namely the themes and sub-themes which emerged during data analysis. The sub-themes of the qualitative data were established by initially labeling the transcribed interview data with codes, extracting viable quotations from each of the transcripts which reflected these codes, and then collapsing the codes into larger themes. These emergent sub-themes were then grouped together under three major themes which reflect three vital aspects of the lived experience of these
refugee adolescents. These main themes include: (1) The SYRP as a Safe Place, (2) Settling In, and (3) Moving Forward (See Table 6). In addition to the qualitative interview data, some of my own personal observations collected during my time as an intern at the SYRP will also be presented after the interview findings have been shared.

Table 6
*Themes and Sub-themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Settling In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language as a Barrier or an Asset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation from Peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familial Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 2: The SYRP as a Safe Place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fostering Relationships with Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships through Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facing Fears about School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3: Moving Forward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Academic Aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving back to Family and the Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As all of the interviewees were non-native speakers of English, many of their responses were somewhat ambiguous or difficult to understand during the data analysis process. In order to account for this limitation during data collection, I made sure to rephrase the interview questions several ways and paraphrase student responses back to them for confirmation of accuracy during the interviews. I feel it is important to leave the original transcripts intact in order to retain the essence and authenticity of participant responses, and pay respect to the participation efforts put forth by the students.
**Research Sub-Question 1: To what extent does the participants’ level of social self-efficacy equip them to overcome the psychosocial challenges of resettlement?**

This first research sub-question aims to identify some of the psychosocial challenges faced by refugee youth, such as acculturative stress or linguistic isolation, and further address how these challenges can be overcome by possessing higher levels of social self-efficacy. Though the interviewees were not asked directly if they were experiencing psychosocial challenges, they were asked to answer the following questions during the semi-structured interviews: 1) What do you find difficult about making friends, and 2) What is the hardest part about interacting with other students? (See Appendix G). These questions are meant to uncover any issues that the refugee youth felt were problematic during their social interactions immediately after resettlement, as well as to understand what skills the students deem necessary to successfully deal with these issues. The following qualitative findings under the theme *Settling In* share a few of the identified challenges associated with resettlement, as expressed by the refugee youth at the SYRP. These qualitative findings are followed by a closer examination of the pre- and post-program scores on two of the subscales within Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey. Specifically, the Social Groups/Parties Items and Social Assertiveness Items (Subscales B and C), which both focus on overcoming feelings of isolation and embracing self-confidence within peer interactions, will be examined to identify if the psychosocial challenges raised in the qualitative interviews are reflected in the individual social self-efficacy scores of those students interviewed.

**Interview Findings Theme One: Settling In**

The first major theme which emerged during analysis of the qualitative interviews was that of negotiating a sense of settling in within the new school community. This larger theme
also encompasses the following three sub-themes: language as a barrier or an asset, isolation from peers, and familial support. As all of the interviewees had been living in the United States for less than one year, many were still adjusting to living life surrounded by a new language and culture. Nearly all of the interview participants referenced experiencing challenges at school because of their English abilities, or lack thereof, and the problems this caused in interactions with fellow students. The sub-themes under this main theme of \textit{Settling In} reflect some of the issues referenced by the youth as being problematic or significant during the period of adjustment after being resettled to the United States. The first two sub-themes address two major challenges faced by the youth during the acculturative process; language barriers and making friends. The last sub-theme touches on the importance of family during this period, particularly in proving emotional support and academic motivation to the students during this time of transition.

\textbf{Language as a barrier or asset.} The first and most prominent sub-theme emerging within this category was that of language acting as a barrier or an asset to the development of vital social relationships within school and the community. Many of the youth referenced the knowledge of English as an important skill that assists or inhibits them from making friends, enables them to feel confident within the classroom setting, or helped family members adjust to life in the United States. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to share details about their past schooling experiences in their home countries and how they felt about past interactions and relationships with peers. The emerging information offered by the students helps to contextualize the role that language played in these interactions, and also illuminated some of the challenges which emerge during the period of transition between their home country and the United States.
When asked to describe what it was like making friends in her home country, Deena, an 18 year old female from Nepal who had been living in the U.S. for four weeks at the time of the interview, stated that making friends in her home country was easy “because we are all [sic] same community and same language. So we can make easily friends [sic].” When later asked what it is like to make friends in the United States, Deena offered a much different answer which emphasized the barrier created by having to speak a new language: “Uuhh...difficult...a little much [sic]. They understand...they can’t understand our language, sooo, we...Can’t talk, can difficult to make them friends [sic].” Surprisingly, when asked if this made her nervous or worried about making friends in school Deena answered “no,” but reiterated the division between her and the other students: “They are, they are not like us. They are different language [sic]. It was difficult to make friends.”

Deena’s 17 year old cousin Leena, who had arrived to the United States with Deena shortly before the SYRP began, also shared the same feelings about language holding a significant role within her peer interactions. When questioned about what makes meeting new people difficult in the United States, Leena answered that “Nepalis talk Nepal [sic] language, and other students talk another language...Burmese.” This reference to Burmese speaking youth reflects the cultural diversity of the area and the dense population of Burmese refugees who lived in close proximity to many of the Nepali families. The dynamic between these two cultural groups was referenced several times during the interviews and can be understood as a tenuous relationship that exists between the students at the SYRP.

Similarly, Diti, a 14 year old female from Nepal who had been living in the U.S. for 4 months at the time of the interview, reflected upon her past life in Nepal by saying that making friends in her home country was easy, “‘cuz [sic] they were all my language people.” In regard
to her first few months living in the U.S., Diti admitted that making friends in school wasn’t always easy: “Yeah, it was, little bit difficult for me to make friends when I was new. But when I, when I sit here, like three or four months in, it’s been easier and easier for me.” She then confirmed that she feels her English is also getting better with each passing month, presumably explaining in part why she feels more confident now about making friends than she did when she first arrived.

Sabeen, a 12 year old female from Iraq who had been living in the U.S. just under one year at the time of the interview, was extremely talkative and eager to reflect upon her life and schooling in Iraq prior to resettlement. When asked why school in Iraq was easier than in the United States, Sabeen responded:

Because, because, because, I know...I know the language so good. And I have friend [sic]. And my teacher is my uncle, and, and, and so smart [sic]. So much thing [sic]. My father is teacher in Iraq and I have so many friend [sic], cousin, brother, friend. It’s easy.

Sabeen contrasted this positive image of schooling in her home country by describing her American experience as “little bit easy, little bit hard.” To elaborate on this description, Sabeen shared her feelings about some of the interactions she had experienced during the first weeks at the SYRP: “Uh, in school, last week. First day in my school, nobody talk [sic] with me, nobody, nobody. Just my teacher and one girl, she’s so good. She’s always so good to me.” As the only Kurdish speaking refugee, and the only refugee from Iraq in the group at the SYRP, Sabeen was both culturally and linguistically isolated from others sharing her ethnic background and language.

One of the students also expressed how their English knowledge proved to be an asset when helping their families to navigate within their new country. During the interview with
Deena, I learned that she served as a language broker for her family: “All my family...because all my family, in order to teach them, if I know something...they can easily know with me [sic],” when asked if she has the role of being a translator in her family, she answered yes, “‘Cuz they don’t know how to talk English...only Nepali language.” Deena shared that this role was not difficult for her because she had learned English in Nepal while at school. My personal observations during home visits also confirmed that she held the role as translator for her parents.

**Isolation from peers.** The second sub-theme which emerged during the qualitative data analysis was that of isolation from peers in school. Often referenced in relation to the aforementioned sub-theme of language, this sub-theme reflects some of the experiences shared by the SYRP students of being excluded by their peers within the school context.

During the interview with Sabeen, it became evident that she had experienced difficulties interacting with some of the students in her class. Due to her age (12 years old), Sabeen had been initially placed in the younger classroom for the first several weeks of the program, which she described as being a point of frustration: “Eh, I anyone [sic] not talk with me [sic], just just just the teacher talk with me, because they little. And I didn’t want talk with them. Because eh they don’t wanna talk with me.” Likely in response to feeling isolated from same-aged peers, Sabeen shared that “sometime I help them sometime they help me. And that was it,” emphasizing that she intentionally did not have extensive contact with the other students in her classroom.

During my interview with Harsha, a 14 year old male from Nepal who had been living in the United States for less than one year, he shared that he sometimes experiences challenges during cross-cultural interactions. When asked if it was difficult to get along with other students, Harsha affirmatively answered that sometimes “Somebody talk fun of me [sic]...” which he then described further as being specifically in regard to the Burmese students who did not speak the
Nepali language like him. Though Burmese students were not represented in my study, there was a large Burmese refugee community in the neighborhood, and a number of Burmese students who participated in the SYRP. I was also informed by the SYRP director that conflicts had flared up between these two cultural groups during past summer programs. Similarly, Leena also made reference to Burmese students in her interview, specifically sharing that it was difficult to meet people due to language barriers, particularly those who were Burmese.

**Familial support.** Throughout the interviews, as well as during my interactions with parents and siblings on my home visits, I became aware of how important the role of family was during the process of resettlement. Appropriately, familial support is the third sub-theme. The role of family emerged as particularly important in combating students’ feelings of loneliness and isolation, as well as giving them motivation to work hard at school and to be a strong role model for siblings.

I had the fortune to accompany Sabeen to school every day during the seven-week session, which allowed me to meet her parents and her older brother. Her father had been a teacher in Iraq prior to their departure, which had equipped him with fairly good English skills and a strong interest in ensuring that Sabeen had access to educational resources in her new home in the United States. When I went to seek parental consent for the study, Sabeen’s father invited me in for tea and allowed me to explain the aims of the study to him. At this time, he shared that they were one of only two families in their apartment complex from Iraq (nearly all of the other families were Nepali or Burmese), and that Sabeen and her brother were the only youth who spoke Kurdish in their vicinity. He expressed concern that Sabeen had little opportunity to interact with same-culture students her age, aside from her older brother who was in his late teens. During our interview together, Sabeen referenced the importance that family
ties were to her, both before and after resettlement. She expressed that she felt somewhat isolated in school, as previously mentioned, and also shared that she frequently accompanies her older brother and his friends when he goes to his high school to play soccer:

Sometime, sometime [sic], I got with my brother to Franklin High School they have something [sic]. they play soccer ball. Not any girls, but just me I play with my brother, my brother have friends. And they play together.

Sabeen did not mention spending time with friends her own age outside of school, but limited her discussion of extracurricular activities to those she shared with her older brother. She seemed to take comfort in the company of her brother, despite the age difference which would often deter siblings from spending so much time together outside of school, at least within an American cultural context.

Through the interviews, it also became evident that parents and siblings were a strong source of motivation for the refugee adolescents to become committed to succeeding in school in the United States. Nearly all of the interviewees mentioned that their parents expected them to attend college or university after graduating from high school, and Diti’s mother also hoped she would act as a role model for her younger sister: “I...tell them to study and I help them to study hard...I give them some questions, like mathematics. I make them study hard.” Kunal, a 13 year old male from Nepal who had been living in the U.S. for less than 6 months prior to the SYRP, expressed that “reading hard [sic]...get a good grade [sic]...and speaking English well” were the primary ways that he could succeed in school and attend college, which he shared was his parents’ and his uncle’s desire. These parental hopes emerged in nearly all of the interviews as a driving motivational factor to integrate into the American school system, which was viewed as key to attaining success in their new life in the United States.
Observational Findings

In addition to providing the qualitative interview findings, I feel it is also important to contextualize this chapter by providing brief snapshots of my own personal observations from the time spent as an intern at the SYRP. Due to the fact that many of the participants did not possess extensive communication skills in the English language, many daily interactions were colored by body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, and choices in behavior. These components, which are not evident in the survey data, nor throughout the interview transcriptions, are key pieces of information which will be described at this point to help provide a richer description of the experiences had by the SYRP participants.

**Ethnic grouping.** One of the most important observations made throughout my time at the SYRP was regarding how students tended to group themselves according to ethnic background. Though the mentors and teachers made an effort to diversify the groupings in class, students frequently did not extend this practice beyond the classroom, particularly in the case of our female students. During recess it was common to see the same group of 4 or 5 female Nepali teenagers congregating away from the other students, and usually refusing to participate in group activities. Interestingly, the male adolescent students did not tend to isolate themselves by ethnic group. Instead, they commonly integrated through play; games of soccer, American football, basketball seemed to unite the male students in a way that did not apply to our female students. Conversely, this same pattern did not carry through into the classroom. The male adolescent students tended to rearrange themselves from our original seating chart to one which placed them near their same-culture peers to better facilitate in-class conversation.

**Parental focus on education.** Another observation while interacting with the families of the SYRP students, was their overwhelming belief in the importance of education for the
children. While conducting home visits to obtain consent forms, I had the opportunity to speak at length with Sabeen’s father and Diti’s mother. In the case of Sabeen, her father made it clear that he held high expectations for his daughter. He took pride in the fact that she spoke several languages (Kurdish, Arabic, and English), and he diligently observed Sabeen while she filled out the social self-efficacy questionnaire. Though I encouraged him to allow her to fill it out independently, he was excessively inclined to correct answers which he felt were not accurate. Not only did this present a significant limitation to the credibility of my findings, it also spoke greatly to the pressure that he placed on his daughter to meet his own high expectations for her academic performance. In the case of Diti’s mother, I was able to speak with her when Diti was not at home. Her mother had excellent English skills and was interested in the study that I was conducting. Once she heard that it was for a university project, she seemed increasingly interested in having her daughter participate. She shared that she hoped Diti would attend university and that the United States would more readily allow her this opportunity than Nepal.

**Survey Findings**

Table 7

*Participant ratings on Subscales B and C*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B) Social Assertiveness Items</th>
<th>Pre SYRP</th>
<th>Post SYRP</th>
<th>SYRP Mentors</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscale B Total M (SD)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.88)</td>
<td>5.12 (1.08)</td>
<td>6.30 (.687)</td>
<td>4.74 (1.82)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| C) Social Groups/Parties Items | | | |
| Subscale C Total M (SD) | 4.94 (1.57) | 4.78 (1.01) | 5.46 (.857) | 4.04 (1.69) |

Subscales B and C are incorporated into research sub-question one, as they reflect tasks that focus on overcoming feelings of isolation among peers, and require self-confidence within
social interactions. Drawing from the interview data presented in this section, it seems pertinent to compare how the ratings of the particular social tasks included in these two subscales align with the interview data included in theme one describing some of the challenges faced during resettlement. Descriptively, the survey findings for subscales B and C appear to have received similar mean ratings by the pre-program SYRP students, with the Social Groups/Parties items appearing to be perceived as slightly easier than the Social Assertiveness items. Referring back to the results presented in Table 3 (p. 58), it does appear that the SYRP mentors and post-program SYRP participants assigned higher ratings to these two subscales than the pre-program participants, suggesting that tasks associated with social assertiveness and social group interactions may be considered more easily accomplished by students who have already participated in the SYRP. Further support of this conclusion can be seen in the data derived from the Control Group students who rated the items in subscales B and C the lowest of all four groups that completed the survey.

Despite these implications, the pre- and post-program survey ratings and difference scores presented in Table 4 (p. 60) indicate that the SYRP participants’ perceptions of these items either increased only marginally, or decreased over the six week period of the program. The overall mean rating of subscale B increased by .56 in students over the 7 week program, whereas the student mean ratings of subscale C fell by .16 during this same time period. The decrease in subscale C, including tasks associated with social group activities, speaks to the conclusion that the SYRP alone does not increase self-efficacious feelings during the immediate six week period of the program. However, based on the aforementioned evidence that the SYRP mentors and post-SYRP students gave overall higher ratings to these items than the Control Group students, it may be asserted that participation in a program such as the SYRP might be
one resource that helps to encourage self-efficacious beliefs needed to overcome some of the psychosocial challenges faced by refugees.

**Research Sub-Question 2: Does the Summer Youth Readiness Program’s (SYRP) focus on fostering social skills help these youth integrate smoothly into the American school system?**

The second research sub-question hopes to gain a better understanding of how social skills and interpersonal relationships developed through the SYRP curriculum better equips the refugee youth to transition smoothly into an American school context. For the purpose of addressing this research sub-question, the second major theme from the interview data will first be examined to uncover student perceptions of their personal relationships at school, with both students and teachers alike. These interview findings will then be elaborated upon through a brief illustration of the pre- and post-program ratings assigned by SYRP program participants on subscale A (Friendship/Intimacy Items) of Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey.

**Interview Findings Theme Two: The SYRP as a Safe Place**

The second major theme that emerges from the interviews with the refugee students is that of viewing the SYRP as a safe place in their new lives in the United States. This sentiment is often expressed through one of the following sub-themes: (1) Fostering relationships with teachers, (2) Building friendships through play, and (3) Facing fears about school. Though the students were not asked in the interviews to elaborate on their past life experiences as refugees, it was known by the staff that the majority of the students had spent their entire childhood living within the confines of refugee camps that had minimal facilities and limited educational opportunities. As the SYRP represents one of the students’ first points of social contact within their new cultural environment, establishing a sense of safety was crucial in allowing the
students to feel comfortable and cared for during a difficult transition period in their lives. These sub-themes reflect the protective qualities of the SYRP that students alluded to during their interviews.

**Fostering relationships with teachers.** For the first sub-theme, several of the students acknowledged their appreciation toward the teachers and interns at the SYRP and the importance they placed on developing relationships with these new role models in their lives. For Sabeen, this gratitude was shared through a display of the knowledge she had gained through her interactions with the teachers at the SYRP. When asked what she liked best about the SYRP, she answered:

> Uh, they taught me everything about [sic] body, about family, food, everything. About, uh, eh about you have to wash your hands so good, you eat so good, you do [sic] breakfast good, do lunch, everything good. You cooking [sic] good. Everything. They tell [sic] everything about it.

Referencing some of the weekly topics built into the SYRP curriculum, Sabeen reflects on what she has learned through the program and the fact that the teachers were the individuals who imparted this knowledge to her. Similarly, Diti also paid tribute to the guidance given to her by her SYRP teachers when asked what she liked about the summer program: “*mmm, like you, you teachers helped us, you taught [sic] us good knowledge.*” 18 year old Deena from Nepal echoed this sentiment by voicing that:

> This program help [sic] us to increase in studies, teachers are good, and they teach us good [sic], and they increase us to in school [sic], and they make us happy, so we are come [sic] happy and happy to come to school today.
Deena not only acknowledges that she learned from the teachers, but that their presence and assistance distinctly made a difference in her day to day outlook toward school and her overall happiness level. When asked what her favorite thing was about the SYRP, she focused on the role that the teachers played in her experience: “Ummm...I feel so happy, this school [sic] because all, all teachers are very good and they teach us well and fine. They make us happy, so I feel so excited.”

As previously mentioned during the first theme and its sub-theme of language as a barrier or an asset, Sabeen expressed that she often felt excluded by other students: “nobody talk with me, nobody, nobody,” except for her teacher and one other student. In this description of her first days in school, Sabeen pointedly showed how her teacher had given her the sense that she had at least one ally in the classroom with whom she could speak, even when nobody spoke her native language and students rarely approached her.

One final way in which teachers had an impact on the interviewees was by providing a sense of safety for the students. In her interview, Leena expressed gratitude for the role that the interns and teachers played in her daily life while participating in the program. When asked what she liked best about the SYRP, Leena answered that it was: “Safe all the students [sic].” Not understanding at first, I asked her to repeat herself: “Safe the all the students [sic]....safe.” She continued on by specifically pointing out that, “you come to my home...and take me carefully,” citing that we helped the students “cross the road” safely. Though it took me a minute or two to understand what Leena was describing, it became evident that one of her favorite parts of the program was the attention paid to the safety of the students and the care the interns took in making sure she got to school safely each morning and back home safely in the afternoons.
Though this topic was not elaborated upon in the interview, Leena’s comments beg the question of how safety played a part in their daily lives while living in the refugee camp in Nepal.

**Friendships through play.** The second sub-theme within the category of viewing the SYRP as a safe place, was the students’ ability to build friendships through play on a daily basis. Each day the students were given two recess breaks outside (approximately 20-30 minutes each), during which they had time to pursue individual play and collective group activities. The SYRP staff had access to the school’s recreational equipment which allowed us to introduce the students to new and unfamiliar games, such as baseball, American football, Capture the Flag, and kickball. These times of play gave the students an opportunity to interact with all of their classmates, including those who did not speak the same language. It also afforded the staff with the opportunity to incorporate concepts of teamwork and cooperation into the daily curriculum, as well as encourage these values on the playground. Additionally, many of the students had never had access to recreational equipment and playgrounds in their home countries, which accounted for a great deal of excitement about recess every day. During the interviews, several of the students shared how much they enjoyed playtime on the field and within the classroom.

When asked how the SYRP could have been improved, Leena gave the single solution of having more playtime. Harsha seemed equally excited about the recreational time at school. When asked what his hobbies were or if he played sports, Harsha got very excited and began to recount his experiences playing soccer at school. When asked if most of the students he played soccer with were Nepali, he responded, “no, different people” and then answered “no” when asked if it was easy to get along with everyone. He continued on by saying, “No. Lot [sic] of people play soccer push, and fall down,” and that they were “mean.” Thinking this may have been because of his ethnicity, I asked if they were mean because he was Nepali and they were
Harsha laughed at this question and said, “no...just tough soccer players,” informing me that he felt comfortable playing with a diverse group of students on the field, even when he sometimes felt ostracized in the classroom due to his language or ethnic background.

Sabeen also shared some of her feelings about her joy of recreational activities in her interview. As previously discussed, Sabeen enjoyed joining her older brother and his friends on the soccer field when possible. She was very confident in her abilities to play soccer: “Yeah, I’m so good at play [sic] soccer.” When asked if she also aspired to join the soccer team in high school, she answered with excessive gesticulations:

Yeah, on the, on soccer, on running [sic], jumping playing. I know how everything about jump, dance, dancing like this, you put your hands like this, you lift up and here, and do like this and like this. I know how to do this so good.

Recreation and sports was an area in which Sabeen felt she could excel and that brought her much pleasure. School gave her the opportunity to become involved in the activities she had participated in Iraq, which she expressed was a source of happiness in her daily life and also way to provide her with a personal sense of security in her own abilities.

**Facing fears about school.** The third sub-theme in this section is that of facing fears about school through participation in the SYRP. During the interviews, each student was asked to express their feelings about beginning public school in the fall. Though some of the students didn’t share any doubts or worries associated with this new phase in their life, others voiced concern, nervousness, fear, and a lack of confidence about starting school. One of the primary aims of the SYRP was to help these students confront any preconceived fears they may hold about American schools, and help them to overcome these concerns through exposure to the daily routine and gaining familiarity with school life. When asked about her feelings toward
starting school, Diti stated: “I am excited, a little bit worried. About my study...” when asked to elaborate further on these sentiments, she expressed that “I may not know the rules, or I may not know the homework. That’s the problem...” Through my observations of Diti in class, it was clear that she generally excelled at everything she attempted in school. When we played vocabulary games in class, her team was nearly the first to finish every time, due primarily to her English skills and fairly competitive nature. She wrote the most out of the entire class when given an assignment, and she adamantly completed every writing assignment as quickly as possible in class. These characteristics about her personality help to understand her fears regarding not knowing the rules or not being able to complete the homework with the same accuracy and speed that she normally held as her standard in Nepal.

In the interview with Kunal, it was clear that he also felt apprehensive about beginning in an American school in the fall. When asked if he felt nervous or worried about anything, he shared: “first day [sic] I’m nervous.” When asked to describe what specifically made him nervous thinking about the first day, he responded “Uh, teacher told me but I don’t, uh, understood [sic]...all of them... and I understood [sic], uh it’s little, uh little [sic].” Not quite understanding what he was trying to express, I asked him to clarify if he meant he was nervous about the teacher asking him a question and him not understanding it. He replied affirmatively, but with hesitation: “yeah.”

Leena also expressed trepidation about starting school, though for more of a social reason. When asked how she felt about beginning school, Leena responded that she was, “afraid” but when asked to describe why, she said, “um, I dunno [sic]...” Hoping to gain a deeper understanding of her fear, I asked if she was afraid to talk to other students, to which she responded affirmatively, “yes.” Later in the interview, she elaborated by saying “I’m talk [sic]
Nepali…that’s another language,” referencing once more the presence of language as a barrier when interacting with others. When asked if this was something she worried about, she nodded her head in affirmation, thus expressing that language was not only a source of fear or anxiety prior to starting school, but also a barrier to social interactions with peers.

**Observational Findings**

**Affection toward same-culture peers.** An additional observation which emerged from my experiences at the SYRP was the level of affection that the Nepali students showed toward one another, as well as to the teachers and interns. Some of their common practices, such as handholding, hugging, and standing in close contact to each other, stood out as they were not customarily considered acceptable practices for an American school context. Moreover, these signs of friendship and camaraderie did not remain within strict gender or age lines. It was common to see male Nepali students holding hands with each other or affectionately carrying younger children when they were tired or homesick. The younger children also readily attempted to hug and kiss the teachers and interns each day, which we were forced to discourage on the basis of not wanting to perpetuate behavior that would later be deemed inappropriate for school. These interactions surprisingly did not seem to bother non-Nepali students very much, yet it was apparent that they were not extended the same affection from the Nepali students, creating a somewhat subtle division between cultural lines.

Finally, over the course of working with the large group of Nepali students, it became clear how closely connected and familiar they felt with their same-culture peers. Though many of these students were related by blood or marriage, others who were not connected by family ties still called each other ‘brother,’ ‘sister,’ or ‘cousin.’ This common practice caused slight confusion for the staff, as it at times appeared that all of the students were somehow related to
each other when our student paperwork said otherwise. Confusion aside, these observations spoke loudly to the important role that family ties and peer support played within the Nepali community. All of the SYRP mentors who visited our classroom were from Nepal and were able to speak both Nepali and English with the SYRP participants. Throughout their time at the SYRP, the mentors conducted Q&A sessions with the participants in order to answer any questions the new students had regarding school in the United States. The mentors also accompanied the participants on some of the field trips to destinations in the community, such as the library and the local high school. Due in part to these interactions, our Nepali students rarely seemed isolated or completely on their own, as the mentors shared their native language and cultural background. In contrast, our students from other ethnic backgrounds did not have the benefit of being exposed to mentors at the SYRP who shared their same cultural background, which may have influenced their level of comfort within the classroom.

**Survey Findings**

The quantitative findings from subscale E on Connolly’s social self-efficacy scale was chosen for this sub-question as the items pertaining to friendship and peer interactions comprise an important aspect of an individual’s integration into the American schooling system. The pre- and post-program ratings of this subscale (See Table 8 below) also align with the first and second sub-themes of the major theme, The SYRP as a Safe Place. As expressed through the interviews, the SYRP participants felt that the relationships formed with teachers and fellow students at the SYRP provided a positive source of support within the school structure, which may be reflected in the ratings assigned to this particular subscale of Connolly’s instrument.
Table 8

*Participant ratings on Subscale A*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale Total M (SD)</th>
<th>Pre SYRP M (SD)</th>
<th>Post SYRP M (SD)</th>
<th>SYRP Mentors M (SD)</th>
<th>Control Group M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.27 (1.81)</td>
<td>5.40 (1.08)</td>
<td>5.22 (1.29)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 8 above, the mean social self-efficacy ratings of subscale A increased in SYRP participants over the course of the seven week program. With a difference score of 1.13 (See Table 4, p. 60), SYRP participants appear to feel more self-efficacious regarding tasks associated with friendship and intimate peer interactions after participation in the program than prior to starting at the SYRP. Furthermore, the Control Group reported feeling less self-efficacious in this area than the other two groups that were administered the survey, indicating that they did not feel as comfortable engaging in these types of social tasks.

**Research Sub-Question 3: In what ways does participation in the SYRP cultivate a greater sense of perceived capability and readiness for academic success in their new educational context?**

This final research question aims to identify how the SYRP curriculum helps to increase student perceptions of capability and readiness for academic success in American schools after resettlement. The qualitative data will first be examined to reveal the final theme and its sub-themes which focus on the students’ aspirations for the future in the United States. These qualitative themes will then be followed by a brief summary of the quantitative data derived
from subscale E (Giving/Receiving Help Items) on Connolly’s (1989) Social Self-Efficacy Survey. One noteworthy aspect of this final section is the way in which these two sources of data align to illustrate the importance that giving and accepting help plays in the lives of the students.

**Interview Findings Theme Three: Moving Forward**

The final major theme which appeared throughout the interviews was the students’ focus on the future and moving forward beyond the period of resettlement. Within this larger theme, the following sub-themes also emerged: (1) Professional and academic aspirations and (2) Giving back to the community. Most of the interviewees had specific goals about their future lives which they freely shared in the interviews. Many of their ideas about the future were somehow grounded in reflections on their home countries, a desire to return to their homeland or a hope to give back to their community and culture in some way. These qualitative findings are useful in understanding how the students’ future goals tie into the third guiding research question. An important part of the SYRP curriculum was based on allowing the students to think about what they planned to do after high school and giving them the space to talk about their hopes and dreams for the future. By creating this environment which embraced thinking about new opportunities for the academic and professional growth, some of which may not have been previously possible before resettlement, the students were encouraged to focus on the potential of the future, rather than on the limitations of the past.

**Professional and academic aspirations.** A primary topic which emerged during the interviews was the students’ desire to attain specific academic and professional goals later in life. Education was cited as playing a fundamental role in accomplishing these goals; most of the students referenced doing well in school and eventually progressing on to college or university as objectives which they highly valued and strived to meet. This sub-theme fits into the larger
category of Moving Forward, as many of the students expressed that their families felt that the
U.S. provides more opportunities than their home countries and emphasized this fact in gearing
their children toward future endeavors in school.

When asked during her interview if she felt attending college or university was important,
Deena responded: “Yes, so much important [sic]. Because I’m, I want to read, I want to read
more, and meet some great people, so it certainly is important for me.” The main reason cited
for her belief in the importance of attending university was so that she could be of more help to
her parents. As stated earlier in the interview, Deena shared that she often assumed the role of
being a translator for her parents and relatives. When stating that she hoped to attend university,
she continued on by explaining why her own education helps her parents: “If I know
something...they can easy to know with me [sic],” implying that her knowledge and education
will be beneficial to the well-being of her entire family, as well for herself.

Interestingly, all six interviewees expressed that they were interested in attending college
or university for the purpose of pursuing a very specific career path, either in education or the
medical. Kunal and Harsha shared that they hoped to become teachers later in life, while Leena,
Deena, and Diti all stated they hoped to become nurses in the future. Sabeen stated that she
would like to “be a doctor. If not, wanna [sic] be a teacher,” showing interest in the same two
professional fields as the other interviewees. Previously in the interview she shared that her
favorite subject was math was her favorite subject in school, and she described that: “With me
it’s not hard so much, it’s little bit easy,” though admitted that “Science is hard for me.” The
fact that she seemed to offer a backup plan to her future career goal echoed her earlier concerns
about science being difficult for her, as well as her self-confidence in her math skills.
Giving back to family and the community. This next sub-theme is tightly connected with the previous sub-theme of academic and professional aspirations. Most of the interviewees disclosed a deeper intent that was driving their desire to pursue higher education, specifically the desire to give back to their cultural community or family. The fact that all of the students shared that they hoped to go into the fields of education or healthcare disclosed a desire to help others through their career choice, and a few of the students explicitly stated this as a criterion for choosing their later profession.

At one point during the interview with Harsha, he managed to tell me about an exchange he had shared with one of the teachers from the academically focused component of the SYRP program. When asked to share what his hopes and dreams were for the future, Harsha shared that “.....somebody said...... you work for for boss [sic]....” Not understanding what he was trying to convey, I asked him to clarify who he had been speaking with and what they had told him. He continued on with his story, stating that one of the male teachers had told him “You ARE the boss” and had pointed at him, which I could tell had given him a sense of importance and satisfaction, based on the excitement in his voice and the smile on his face. At this point, I realized that Harsha had heard one of the teachers use the colloquialism “you’re the boss,” which he had interpreted literally as the teacher telling him he would someday be the boss. Furthermore, he continued on by saying that a different teacher had applauded him for his behavior: “Ms....one SYRP Miss....I mean, CSC Miss said, you are helping” Based on these answers, I then asked Harsha if he hoped to be the boss of a company or a school someday, to which he replied: “school” so that he could “help kids.” To this response, I asked if he wanted to help other refugee kids, or Nepali kids, and he replied laughing “every kids [sic].”
During the interview with Leena, I learned that she has hopes to become a nurse someday and that she also hopes to someday return to Nepal, though these two wishes were not necessarily connected. Leena shared that she hoped to visit Nepal someday, but that her parents would like her to return to the country. Her cousin Deena also asserted that she hoped to follow a similar career path: “My hope, my aim is to become a nurse.” When asked why she hoped to become a nurse, Deena continued on by stating: “To help poor people, and make good people, and help my mom, my dad, and that’s all.” Though when asked if she planned on returning to Nepal, she said that she would rather stay in the United States “because all my family is here, so I also ...like this place,” reiterating the idea that family was a very important component of her life and future plans.

Survey Findings

The quantitative findings of subscale E on Connolly’s social self-efficacy represent some of the most highly rated items on the survey, speaking to the ease with which the participants feel they can rely on others for assistance, or be relied upon by others (See Table 9 below). This subscale aligns with some of interview findings which speak to the importance that the SYRP students place on incorporating service to others into their future career plans. As all of the interviewees hope to enter into fields of medicine or education, some driven by the specific goal of helping others in need, this survey subscale composed of giving/receiving help items ties in with this one particular aspect of the qualitative findings, particularly the sub-theme concerned with giving back to the family and the community.
Table 9

Participant ratings on Subscale E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E) Giving/Receiving Help Items</th>
<th>Pre SYRP M (SD)</th>
<th>Post SYRP M (SD)</th>
<th>SYRP Mentors M (SD)</th>
<th>Control Group M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscale Total M (SD)</td>
<td>6.44 (0.620)</td>
<td>5.73 (1.115)</td>
<td>6.50 (.781)</td>
<td>5.29 (1.96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On each of the items within this subscale, the pre-program SYRP survey ratings show that the participants felt more efficacious about this type of social task than those included within the other subscales, with ratings nearly reaching the upper limit of the Likert scale on the pre-program survey. The post-program mean ratings on subscale E, while still higher than the subscale means on the post-survey, do decrease slightly over the seven-week program. Nonetheless, the post-SYRP ratings remain quite high, particularly when compared to the other subscales (See Table 3, p. 59). Furthermore, it appears that Subscale E received the overall highest ratings among all four groups that were administered the survey (M=6.03, SD=1.38), pointing to the conclusion that items contained within this subscale were generally viewed as more easily accomplished than those in the other 4 subscales.

Summary of Findings

As a mixed-methods study, the findings presented in this chapter are meant to work in a collaborative fashion to present the reader with a comprehensive understanding to what extent participation in a summer youth readiness program serves to raise social self-efficacy levels in the refugee adolescents. Through this presentation of the quantitative and qualitative data, I have aimed to provide plausible answers to the main guiding question to this study, as well as its related sub-questions. Regarding the main research question of this study, the analysis presented
in this chapter has resulted in the conclusion that refugee participants experience marginally significant gains in social self-efficacy through participation in the SYRP, though further studies need to be pursued in order to ascertain whether these results are generalizable. Secondly, these findings also speak to the prominence of language skills, peer acceptance, and family support in serving as helpful mechanisms for refugee students facing some of the psychosocial challenges of resettlement. Most importantly, the findings of this study highlight some of the subtle connections existing between the social self-efficacy construct and future academic achievement in refugee adolescents, which will be discussed in further detail through from social cognitive perspective.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The main objective of this master’s thesis is to investigate the following research question: to what extent do recently resettled refugee adolescents experience an increase in social self-efficacy through their participation in a summer youth readiness program? Using a concurrent explanatory mixed-methods research design, both qualitative and quantitative data sources were obtained in order to address the main research question and its associated sub-questions. This chapter will address each of the guiding research questions in relation to the present body of literature in this field. Additionally, in order to create a rich discussion of both the quantitative and qualitative data strands obtained through this study, Albert Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory and his extensive discussion of the self-efficacy construct will serve as a framework to inform the study results. It will also be used to highlight the ways in which educational programming can impact the social self-efficacy levels of refugee adolescents and affect their ability to navigate future social and academic interactions in their new school environment.

Research Sub-Question 1: To what extent does the participants’ level of social self-efficacy equip them to overcome the challenges of resettlement?

In addition to looking at interview and survey data, answering this first research sub-question is best served by drawing upon the literature presented in chapter two, as well as personal observations I made during my time as an intern at the SYRP. As the social self-efficacy questionnaires and semi-structured interviews did not specifically collect information regarding the psychosocial challenges faced by the refugee participants, information from the extensive body of literature regarding these common challenges will be used to analyze how the
development of social self-efficacy plays an important role for refugee students overcoming the challenges of resettlement.

**Discussion of Acculturation**

According to the review of the literature in this field, psychosocial challenges frequently afflict refugees who undergo the process of resettlement (Kea-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Several of these issues can be particularly detrimental to refugee adolescents who are already experiencing unrelated challenges inherent to this developmental stage in life. In particular, acculturation and acculturative stress emerge as significant barriers during the process of resettlement (Sam & Berry, 2006). Though the SYRP participants were not specifically asked about the acculturative process, some of the interview findings spoke to the presence of various concepts tied to acculturation, such as communication barriers, linguistic isolation, and the buffering quality of resilience. The following discussion uncovers how self-efficacious beliefs can help to buffer or overcome the psychosocial challenges of resettlement, as well as investigate whether participation in the SYRP plays a significant role in building these feelings of self-efficacy.

**Linguistic isolation.** Several items on Connolly’s (1989) social self-efficacy questionnaire speak to some of the signs of acculturation as outlined in the review of the literature. Specifically, students’ responses to items regarding language emerge as important indicators that some of the SYRP participants experience side effects of acculturation, such as linguistic isolation and communication barriers. The interview data corroborate these findings, as well as highlight that some of the students had additional responsibilities requiring English language skills, such as being language brokers for their families.
As presented in the previous chapter, the newly resettled SYRP students consistently assigned lower ratings on items within nearly all of the subscales on the self-efficacy survey, when compared to the SYRP mentors. While none of the mentors participated in interviews, my observations of their confidence in the classroom suggest that their higher survey scores were a result of both increased English skills, as well as greater confidence in their ability to utilize English comfortably. The qualitative interview data similarly confirm that the SYRP participants lacked confidence in their ability to utilize the English skills they possessed, unlike their SYRP mentors. Though most of the SYRP students had adequate English abilities which allowed them to thoroughly understand class instruction and the interview prompts, many were quite timid to express their opinions and share their thoughts in English. Kunal and Leena, two of the quietest students I interviewed, both managed to understand nearly all of my interview questions, yet consistently responded with single-word, yes or no answers. Kunal also expressed his fear that he would not understand instructions given by the teacher once starting school in the fall, suggesting that he did not have extensive confidence in his own language abilities.

I also observed that many of the mentors did not speak impeccable English, but nonetheless felt confident speaking in public. It is likely that these students knew through personal experience that native English speakers would be able to understand and respond positively to their use of English, even if it was not perfectly executed. Within the social cognitive framework, Bandura (1997) asserts that knowledge structures are composed of information about the appropriate rules and strategies needed to take effective action. These cognitive models are formed through observational learning, exploratory activities, and synthesis of previously acquired knowledge from the surrounding environment (Bandura, 1997). Once developed, these knowledge structures allow an individual to be adaptive to the environment and
enact skills in a variety of manners, rather than in a fixed fashion (Bandura, 1997). Building off of this framework, the SYRP mentors’ confidence in using English and their self-efficacious feelings about engaging in social tasks which require language might be seen as partly tied to their more advanced knowledge structures about school in the United States. As the mentors gained access to settings where English was primarily spoken, such as American public schools, the previous boundaries of linguistic isolation in the community were broken down. It is also possible that the mentors gained part of this confidence through observing peers or mentors during the months immediately following their resettlement a year or two prior.

**Communication barriers.** Building on the previous findings regarding the importance of language, the first emergent theme of the qualitative interview data further clarifies these findings about the role that language plays in assisting or preventing students to integrate smoothly into American schools. Specifically, one student’s testimony about her immediate post-resettlement struggles exemplifies how making friends became much easier after several months of living in the United States. Though 14 year old Diti did not explicitly attribute her increased confidence to her language abilities, I learned through the interview that she had taken more than 4 years of English instruction while living in Nepal, which likely equipped her with a strong foundation for language development upon arrival to the United States. Likely due to her extensive educational background, Diti rated many items much higher overall than her peers on the pre- and post-surveys. Notably, the differences in Diti’s pre- and post-survey ratings were overwhelmingly positive on questions 7, 8, 10, and 12, each belonging to a different subscale of the survey, jumping from a score of 1 to a score of 7. Both item 10, *Stand up for your rights when someone accuses you of doing something you didn’t*, and item 12, *Have a good conversation with a person you don’t know*, relate to interactions which require strong language
skills. Descriptively, it appears that Diti became increasingly confident between the pre- and post-program data collection points when considering her comfort in completing these two social tasks. Despite these gains, Diti’s rating on item 3, *Join a new group of kids in the school cafeteria for lunch*, indicates that she feels less capable of accomplishing this task at the end of the program than at the beginning. Dropping from a rating of 7 to 1 on this item, Diti’s response could reflect personal challenges that were experienced in the SYRP during unstructured time, as the lunch break frequently allowed students to become segregated by ethnic group. These findings could also point to changes in self-efficacy as a response to the shift in schooling environment.

As expressed by several students through the interviews, there was noticeable tension between several of the ethnic groups represented in the SYRP, specifically the Nepali and Burmese youth. Though she stated in her interview that she generally felt comfortable speaking with students from different ethnic backgrounds, these data suggest that this level of comfort did not extend to this realm of social interaction in the program. Diti’s drastic change in rating on item 3 could be explained in various ways: it could be revealing of a social task which is not eased through the possession of extensive language skills, representative of cultural conflict existing between two of the ethnic groups at the SYRP, or simply due to an error when filling out the survey for a second time. This change could also be reflective of overall changes in self-efficacy which often coincide with transitional periods in schooling (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Specifically, Schunk and Pajares (2002) assert that there is frequently incongruence between the self-efficacy beliefs of children and their actual performance ability on those tasks. This incongruence is due in part to a lack of familiarity with the nature of certain tasks, causing individuals to overestimate their initial ability to execute the task successfully (Schunk &
Pajares, 2002). With experience, these judgmental capabilities improve and children are more accurately able to practice self-appraisal of these tasks (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). In the case of Diti, it is possible that the period of transition in her schooling caused a shift in her self-efficacious beliefs of this task; after an initial overestimation of her self-appraisal in this skill, she self-corrected her judgment after a longer period of time being exposed to the new environment.

Though the first research question pertains primarily to those students who participated in the SYRP, it is also beneficial to look at the CG students who did not participate in the program. As shown in Table 6 (p. 62), the CG students had the lowest mean ratings on the social self-efficacy survey when compared with the other post-program students. Despite living in the United States for a longer period of time than the SYRP participants, the CG students did not have accordingly higher levels of perceived social self-efficacy. Though interviews were not conducted to elaborate further on the ratings provided on the social self-efficacy survey, conclusions nonetheless might be drawn from the quantitative data obtained from this population.

One potential explanation for this discrepancy could be the type of programming available to the CG students immediately upon resettlement. Though the students were participating in a program to improve their English abilities and help them prepare for their post-high school plans, they were not engaged in a program that had a specialized curriculum aimed to build the social-skills needed to succeed in school. While it is possible that a lack of participation in the SYRP could have been one factor responsible for the students exhibiting lower social self-efficacy ratings on the questionnaire, there are many other additional factors
which could explain these same results. These potential factors could include a less supportive or smaller cultural community in their surrounding environment, additional family stressors such as living in foster care, and/or a lack of English exposure prior to resettlement. Thus, while it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions about the CG students in relation to their lack of access to the SYRP, it is notable that differences do exist between these students and the other two student groups.

**Psychological resilience.** Another challenge students faced during the process of resettlement, which emerges throughout the surveys and interviews, is the perception of not fitting in within the school environment and among same-aged peers. As outlined in the review of the literature, the feeling of belonging within the school structure is vital during the period of adolescence, particularly with refugee students who are struggling to attain a sense of routine in their new lives and feel accepted by their new community. Oikonomidoy (2009) found that a sense of membership or belonging within the school structure can be fostered by helping refugees establish a collective identity with students who share a similar background. Through encouraging this form of membership or belonging in schools, alienation and discrimination have been found to be more successfully avoided through the development of psychological resilience (Oikonomidoy, 2009). The concept of resilience, which is known as the quality that allows individuals to bend instead of break when confronted with personal risks and traumatic events (Brooks, 2006), has been found to be associated with positive social and academic outcomes in individuals who face environmental adversities. Furthermore, Bandura (1997) also states that resiliency is reflected in the ability to “withstand adverse circumstances and recover from a disordered life course” (p. 172).
Several of the questionnaire items and interview questions pertain to this concept of being viewed as different by other students and struggling against feelings of alienation. For example, questionnaire items included in subscale B (Social Assertiveness Items) measure a student’s ability to stay true to themselves when their values, culture, or habits are being challenged by peers. According to the pre-survey scores, most of the students participating feel that items in this subscale are, on average, no more difficult than other tasks on the questionnaire. With an overall mean score of 4.56 on subscale B, the survey data suggest that the participants possessed a certain level of psychological resilience when facing external negative stimuli, even before participating in the SYRP.

The three protective factors which foster the buffering quality of psychological resilience are a positive disposition, a supportive family, and an accessible community (Eisenbruch, 1988; Ajdukovic & Ajdukovic, 1993). Data from the qualitative interviews show that the participants felt somewhat vulnerable to judgment and discrimination from other students, yet also seemed fairly well-connected to these protective factors which foster resilience. For example, Harsha expressed in his interview that he felt bullied at times by the Burmese students at the SYRP. Similarly, Sabeen and Leena shared feelings of isolation due to linguistic and cultural barriers which existed between them and their peers in school. Despite these instances of alienation, the students all expressed feeling high levels of academic motivation to complete school and pursue a career path which would be beneficial to their entire family. Moreover, the students continued to show that they had a positive outlook on their situation, despite feeling isolated at times by their fellow students.
Drawing from these results, it might be asserted that the SYRP students faced certain social challenges, such as isolation or alienation from their same-aged peers, following the period of resettlement. Though the survey data alone did not provide extensive information or significant patterns about the nature of these challenges, the interviews provided a more comprehensive view of the ways in which the refugee youth felt alienated by their peers, as well as details about how these challenges affected their outlook on life. The fact that the students were not deterred from setting high academic and professional future goals for themselves, despite facing adversity, suggest that the SYRP students had high levels of psychological resilience. The concept of resilience can be seen as closely linked to that of self-efficacy, in that both qualities push individuals to be highly motivated, set goals, and thrive on a sense of personal agency (Bandura, 1997; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998). The two concepts differ, however, in the sense that resilience develops in response to external conditions (Brooks, 2006), whereas self-efficacy beliefs are typically assessed prior to engaging in a task and are considered to be a forethought process (Zimmerman, 2000, as cited in Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

In answering the first research sub-question it is important to consider how psychological resilience allows students to rebound from external adversities, such as resettlement to a new country, and ultimately develop a greater sense of self-efficacy. In the case of the SYRP participants, the data speak to the conclusion that qualities of resilience enable the students to cope successfully with the challenges of resettlement, such as acculturation and linguistic barriers, which have the potential to cause feelings of alienation from others. Though the students acknowledge that they sometimes feel alienated by peers, they still manage to exhibit positive outcomes, such as goal setting and academic motivation, which are characteristics of psychological resilience. Thus, the ability to bend with resilience when
presented with these adversities of resettlement also enable the students to create a space for building their own sense of self-efficacy within the realm of social interactions in school.

**Familial ties and collective agency.** A fundamental building block of the social cognitive theory is its adoption of the agentive perspective, which states that humans are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting (Bandura, 2006). Humans form intentions and strategize carefully to realize their plans, regulating personal action to tailor the outcomes of situations so that they will attain a sense of satisfaction and self-worth (Bandura, 2006). Importantly, Bandura (2002) also states that agency is not always possible through individual action. Social cognitive theory also encompasses two other forms of agency to explain human behavior; proxy agency and collective agency. The latter of these two distinct modes of agency represents a pooling of personal resources, such as knowledge, skills, and mutual support, specifically when the outcomes desired by an individual are only attainable through socially interdependent efforts. Collective agency is a result of a group’s shared belief that their joint cooperation will bring about desired changes in their lives, which consequently increases motivation and individual vision of what is deemed possible (Bandura, 2006).

When looking at the aforementioned factors which can affect the level of self-efficacy held by the SYRP participants, it is imperative to discuss the important role that familial support plays throughout the process of resettlement. Taking into consideration the degree to which the participants reference issues pertaining to family throughout the interviews, as well as the amount of family interaction I observed while conducting home visits, it is extremely evident that familial ties not only provide emotional support for refugee youth in this program, but also represent a source of collective agency in their lives. Bandura (2002) states that collective agency is a group’s belief that collective action will produce results that are desired by the entire
body of individuals. Furthermore, the locus of collective agency resides in the minds of its group members and is manifested through the actions and behaviors which are produced by the individuals. The efficacious beliefs held by a group regarding their ability to achieve desired results will affect the type of future they pursue, the manner in which their resources are used, as well as the degree of effort dedicated to a particular endeavor (Bandura, 2002).

In viewing the self-efficacy levels of the SYRP participants through a social cognitive lens, it is imperative to acknowledge the environmental factors which influence their actions, both as individuals and as members of a larger group. As previously discussed in my summary of observational data, the majority of the SYRP participants belonged to a close-knit Nepali community that highly valued family relationships. The Nepali students referenced their peers by labeling them as family members, even when they were not related by blood. During the interviews, the Nepali students referenced wanting to succeed in school to make their families proud and also be able to pursue specific career paths for the benefit of their relatives. Additionally, some of the parents also expressed how they hoped the United States would present expanded educational opportunities for their children, which would ultimately ensure prosperity for the entire family.

These characteristics possessed by many of the participants and their families spoke to a collective mindset that was customary of the practices pursued within their greater Nepali culture. This type of cooperation between generations and amongst members of a cultural group can be seen as representing what Bandura (2002, 2006) explains as collective agency. The close-knit nature of the families included in this study can be understood as a form of pooling resources for the advancement of the entire group. The parents of the SYRP participants, unable
to learn English with as much ease as their children, would seek attainment of a prosperous future by exercising collective agency through their offspring. Advancing the education of their children can be understood as a form of investment in the future of the entire family. Bandura (2006) would describe this practice as a type of collective agency based on mutual support and alliance formation that will eventually secure accomplishments that cannot be attained by individual action. Moreover, the Nepali students who were not actually related to each other by blood engaged in practices which fostered a type of familial network within the school setting. These relationships also represent a group mindset that allows students to embrace a greater sense of collective agency through their ties to other students in their cultural group.

Despite the fact that most of the participants in this study were Nepali, the SYRP participants were culturally heterogeneous. In addition to our one Iraqi student Sabeen who did participate in this study, there were also several students from Somalia, one from Ethiopia, another from Eritrea, and two from Thailand who did not participate in this study. With the exception of Sabeen, these students from different cultural backgrounds chose to not take part in the surveys and interviews. Consequently, minimal data were collected regarding feelings of isolation due to being outside of the ethnic majority within the SYRP. Further studies could benefit from investigating the role that a strong ethnic community plays in equipping refugee students with forms of personal and collective agency.

Overall, my analysis of the data illustrates that higher levels of social self-efficacy are one factor which can help recently resettled refugee adolescents overcome some of the side effects commonly associated with resettlement and the acculturative process, such as linguistic isolation, communication barriers, and not fitting in with same-age peers. As social self-efficacy
is primarily concerned with an individual’s confidence in his or her ability to engage in social interactions and build meaningful social relationships, communication and language play a crucial role in establishing these efficacious feelings within a social sphere. The interview data indicate that the SYRP students identify language as a major prohibitive factor in their social interactions at school, primarily when attempting to make new friends. Furthermore, survey data suggest that the SYRP mentors feel more efficacious in social settings than the SYRP participants. Observational data in the classroom also indicate that the mentors feel more comfortable using English than their recently arrived counterparts, regardless of proficiency. Viewing these findings through a social cognitive framework, it can be asserted that self-efficacious beliefs play an important role in helping individuals conquer challenges associated with resettlement, but that other elements are of equal importance. Specifically, internal dispositional characteristics, such as psychological resilience, as well as environmental conditions, such as familial support and collective agency, are equally important factors contributing to an individual’s ability to overcome the challenges of associated with the acculturative process.

Research Sub-Question 2: Does the Summer Youth Readiness Program’s (SYRP) focus on fostering social skills prepare these youth to integrate smoothly into the American school system?

According to Bandura’s (1997) social cognitive theory, human adaptation and change are rooted within social systems. Humans are said to possess personal agency, which allows them to be both producers and products of the social systems in which they are embedded (Bandura, 1997). These social systems provide both resources and constraints for the individuals within the structure, though they do not determine or foreordain how an individual will react within the
environment (Bandura, 1997). However, self-efficacious individuals are more likely to take advantage of structural and institutional opportunities available in the environment, such as those found within a school (Bandura, 1997).

One of the primary goals of the SYRP curriculum is to foster interpersonal skill development and emphasize the importance of building personal relationships and friendships, rather than placing an overwhelming focus on academics during the resettlement period. These aims are accomplished through encouraging frequent class discussion, peer-to-peer cooperation, as well as adequate time for both structured and unstructured playtime each day. Bandura (1997) emphasizes the importance that vicarious experience plays in the development of self-efficacious beliefs. Though individuals sometime learn through direct experience, people can also successfully gain information and skills through symbolization (Bandura, 2001a), or modeling off of others (Bandura, 1997).

Research sub-question two aims to uncover whether the SYRP curriculum builds social skills in refugee youth that will help to prepare them to smoothly integrate into American schools. Using the foundational concepts of the social cognitive theory as a framework, the following discussion looks at several aspects of both the quantitative and qualitative findings in order to address this guiding research question.

**Peer Networks and Symbolization**

When looking at the SYRP’s aims through a social cognitive lens, the goal of building social skills among the refugee participants can be seen as fulfilling a very important function in their social and psychological development. As refugees, many of the youth belong to families that lack strong connections to the host community into which they have been resettled. Due to
linguistic and cultural barriers present in the new environment, many families live in
neighborhoods that are predominately inhabited by other refugees. This type of living situation
has the potential to create an isolating effect due to linguistic isolation, which can prevent them
from accessing the dominant culture and native English speakers (Siegal, Martin, & Bruno,
2000; Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbenyiga, & Grace, 2012). The SYRP curriculum enables refugee youth
and adolescents to have access to educational resources immediately upon resettlement, even
before the public school year commences. Moreover, the SYRP also encourages the youth to
interact with peers from other ethnic backgrounds, despite a proclivity to remain isolated with
same-language peer groups.

Schunk and Meece (2006) speak to the importance of peer networks during the period of
adolescence, particularly in terms of providing youth with a source of academic motivation.
Specifically, peer networks provide a source for vicarious learning to occur, which allows
individuals to observe others successfully performing tasks that are unfamiliar to them (Schunk
and Meece, 2006). Bandura (2001a) describes this process as symbolization, a powerful tool that
helps individuals to comprehend and navigate the environmental occurrences which influence
virtually all aspects of their lives. Individuals gain deeper knowledge and understanding of the
causal relationships in their environment by obtaining symbols through observation (Bandura,
2001). Bandura (2001a) states that the combination of symbols can be used to build cognitive
models which serve as guides for judgment and personal action. These two factors ultimately
affect one’s own level of self-efficacy, which is a mechanism of personal agency.

The adolescent participants at the SYRP expand their own cognitive models of symbols
by interacting on a daily basis with same-aged peers who originate from different cultural
backgrounds and have been living in the United States for a longer period of time. Through an expansion of knowledge about causal relationships present in American classrooms, such as learning that raising your hand in class leads to being called on or cooperating with your peer results in being positively rewarded by the teacher, the refugee students are able to broaden their own cognitive models regarding schooling in their new cultural environment.

One way in which the SYRP provided its participants with an opportunity for this transfer of knowledge to occur was through the participation of more experienced student mentors into the seven-week curriculum. A primary example of this information transfer and type of knowledge building can be seen through the observational data of the Q&A sessions conducted in class by the mentors, or when these more experienced students shared their own knowledge of American schools with the recently resettled students. On a field trip to a local high school, the student mentors walked the SYRP participants through their daily routine of opening their locker, going to lunch, and asking for a hall pass when they needed to use the restroom. These shared interactions represent a form of vicarious learning between less and more experienced individuals, in which the former gained applicable knowledge about skills necessary within an American school context from the latter.

Another way in which the SYRP provided a forum for the transfer of knowledge between individuals was through the formation of new friendships at school. The pre- and post-program survey date from subscale A (Friendship/Intimacy Items) support the conclusion that the peer interactions made possible through the SYRP positively influenced the self-efficacy beliefs of the program participants. As illustrated in Tables 3 (p. 58) and 4 (p. 59), the SYRP participants reported experiencing a gain in mean social self-efficacy levels in tasks associated with
friendship and intimate peer relationships over the course of the seven-week program. Additionally, participants in the Control Group who were not exposed to the SYRP programming, and thus did not have the same type of access to forming peer relationships as the SYRP participants and mentors, reported feeling less self-efficacious about forming friendships than their SYRP counterparts. Additionally, these types of interpersonal interactions and friendships strengthen students’ peer networks by allowing them to develop relationships with other youth in their community who have more access to forms of social capital, as discussed below.

**Access to social and economic capital.** Schunk and Meece (2006) cite peer networks as one of several important contextual factor included in the social cognitive framework which can affect the development of self-efficacious beliefs. Another contextual factor noted by Schunk and Meece (2006) as having an influence on the self-efficacy of children and adolescents is the degree of capital, financial, human, or social, that is held by the family. Generally speaking, Schunk and Meece (2006) assert that families with greater economic capital (e.g. income) and social capital (e.g., social networks and connections) are able to foster a childhood experience for their offspring that is rich in resources, such as educational classes, books, and extracurricular activities. Exposure to these various resources has the power to build a child’s perceptions of their own ability to succeed in school, as the knowledge developed through these supplementary activities enables them to feel capable of navigating a broader range of skills. Consequently, families with lower levels of economic or social capital are often unable to provide their children with the same degree of external resources useful in developing equal levels of self-efficacious beliefs.
During my time at the SYRP, I learned that many refugee families face ongoing financial struggles. In addition to taking out government loans to cover the cost of airfare from their country of asylum to the United States, travel costs are frequently exacerbated by an inability to find well-compensated employment once resettled, frequently due to a lack of language skills required for many jobs. In addition to economic burdens, many refugees experience extreme cultural and linguistic boundaries in their new environment, which makes it difficult to establish social ties and a strong social network with the surrounding community. These weak social ties have the potential to translate into a dearth of social capital in refugee families as well. Schunk and Meece (2006) posit that weak social ties and a lack of social capital may affect the degree to which self-efficacious beliefs might be fostered in adolescents who are exposed to these environmental conditions during this period of development.

Despite the lack of linguistic capital faced by many recently resettled refugee adolescents, the interview data in this study suggest that the SYRP participants maintain relatively positive perceptions of their own academic abilities in the future. As illustrated in the interviews, each of the interviewees held specific goals pertaining to their future academic and professional aspirations, sharing that attending a post-secondary institution was imperative to their attainment of these milestones. Though the students did not necessarily display overwhelming confidence in their linguistic abilities, as expressed throughout the interviews as well, they did not appear deterred in setting their aims high due to this limitation. One explanation for the presence of such resilience in the refugee youth participants is the presence of strong peer networks available within their cultural communities. As outlined in the literature review, resilience is often fostered through the development of accessible peer networks in the
surrounding environment, such as those encouraged through the SYRP, as well as through the support of a positive family environment.

Moreover, the process of symbolization and the positive peer relationships formed through the SYRP can help to offset some of the challenges faced by refugee youth during the process of resettlement. One of the adverse side effects that refugee youth endure during the steps of fleeing their home country, seeking asylum in a foreign land, and eventually resuming life in a host country, is the disruption they experience in their educational path. Rossiter and Rossiter (2009) identify the gap in schooling as a critical educational issue for refugee youth who are transitioning to a host country. This gap in schooling can be detrimental to refugee youth who are expected to integrate seamlessly into new school system and a grade level that corresponds to their age, even if their past educational level is much lower. The SYRP provides an additional resource which can help to buffer new refugee students from disruptions in their education, as well as serve to compensate for a lack of past resources.

In summary, the SYRP’s focus on fostering social skills throughout the six week curriculum manages to help integrate these youth smoothly into the American schooling system by providing them with resources in their immediate environment that aide in building extended peer networks. The development of these relationships with other youth in the community enables SYRP participants to use symbolization to expand their cognitive models regarding rules and practices in American schools. By gaining this knowledge prior to entering school in the fall, the refugee youth will be able to more successfully navigate unknown social situations which may arise. Additionally, the peer networks established at the SYRP also represent a channel
through which the participants can build their levels of social capital to compensate for weak social ties which may be present due to linguistic or cultural barriers.

**Research Sub-Question 3: In what ways does participation in the SYRP cultivate a greater sense of perceived capability and readiness for academic success in the students’ new educational context?**

When looking at the role that the SYRP had in cultivating greater levels of social self-efficacy, pre- and post-survey ratings show minimal gains. Judging from the quantitative data before and after participation in the program, it would not seem that the SYRP curriculum had much of an effect on changing student perceptions of being any more or less prepared to enter school and engage in social activities with peers. A pre-survey mean rating of 4.95 versus a post-survey mean rating of 5.26 reveals minuscule changes in perceived social self-efficacy levels due to participation in the program. As outlined in the review of the literature, self-efficacy levels have been positively linked to academic outcomes, such as pursuing post-secondary education and success throughout the college experience (Hackett et al., 1992; Gore, 2006). Taking this information into consideration, the quantitative data alone do not suggest any improvement in academic preparedness or a proclivity for pursuing more advanced academic outcomes due to participation in the SYRP. However, when viewing the quantitative data in conjunction with the interview and observational data, the findings lead to more complex possible outcomes. In a mixed-methods study, these inferences that are “developed through an integration of inferences obtained on the basis of QUAL and QUAN strands” have been described by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p. 710) as meta-inferences.
Increased Opportunity in the Environment

An important sentiment that permeates the qualitative data is the amount of gratitude students demonstrated toward teachers at the SYRP, and students’ notable appreciation for the opportunity to attend school in the United States. Though social self-efficacy scores may not increase drastically due to participation in the program, both SYRP participants and mentors express that they have specific plans in place to ensure future academic success. The qualitative interviews and my own observations suggest that resettlement in the United States represents a degree of opportunity for the students that was not possible in their countries of origin. For example, the second theme within the interview findings illustrates that many students possess an immense amount of gratitude for the educators at the SYRP. Several of the students spoke about their appreciation for the teachers and interns at the SYRP due to the knowledge they imparted upon the students during the program, and the safe environment which was fostered at the school. The implication in these statements was that the same degree of assistance and care was something that stood out to them as exceptional in their new educational environment. While the students alluded to missing their old schools and friends back home, it was evident that the educational facilities and infrastructure in their new home presented more promising educational outcomes. In response to a question regarding her overall feelings about school in the United States, Diti went so far as to share that “It’s nice and better than Nepal. Here [sic] have all facilities,” drawing a direct comparison between her old country and her country of resettlement.

My interactions with the students and my observations of the parents and family members also supported this idea that the United States presented increased educational opportunities for the youth. As described in the summary of my observations in the previous chapter, several parents held high expectations for the professional outcomes of their children
now that they resided in the United States. These sentiments, along with the interview data, suggest that the SYRP program may be representative of a newly acquired accessibility to succeed academically in the United States. Simply residing in the U.S. seemed to provide the youth and their families with a new hope that all professional aspirations are attainable. Participation in the SYRP is symbolic of this new expansive set of educational opportunities. Bandura (1997) might argue that the SYRP represents a social structure within the external environment of the refugee youth that serves as one of the three major classes of determinants within the system of reciprocal causation. Though personal and behavioral determinants also influence the actions pursued by an individual, this one triadic element plays an important role in determining how individuals exercise their personal agency in life situations. Viewing research sub-question 3 from this angle, one could argue that participation in the SYRP does cultivate a new sense of heightened readiness for academic success. Serving as an accessible resource in the new environment, the SYRP enables students to feel like active agents shaping their own academic future.

**Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement**

As outlined in the review of the literature, the construct of self-efficacy has important implications for the future academic achievement of youth and adolescents. Specifically, self-efficacy is tied to an individual’s level of motivation, goal setting, and perseverance in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 1999). From the social cognitive perspective, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy tend to be self-regulating, highly motivated to set challenging goals for themselves, and dedicated to exerting the required energy to reach these goals (Bandura, 1999). Achieving these goals may at times require the assistance of others or the utilization of external resources within the social structure in order to attain the desired type of personal development.
(Bandura, 1997). The SYRP participants indicate on subscale E of the social self-efficacy survey that they feel highly capable of seeking assistance from others when it is needed, a finding which speaks to the components of motivation included within this theory. These findings, combined with the qualitative data gleaned from my own personal observations within the classroom, are particularly important when looking at the ways in which the SYRP cultivates a greater perceived sense of capability for academic success, as outlined in research question three.

**Motivation and goal setting.** The primary aim of the last curriculum unit during the six week long SYRP revolves around the students’ hopes and dreams for the future, specifically in the context of educational and professional aspirations. Through my observations within the classroom, as well as during the qualitative interviews, it became evident that nearly all of the students hold very specific goals for themselves, such as pursuing a university degree in a specific field or returning to their home country as an adult. This type of goal setting was encouraged by activities built into the SYRP curriculum during this unit, such as having the students create imaginative visual collages about their future lives and sharing them with their classmates. In his social cognitive theory, Bandura (1997) posits that goal formulation enlists self-investment in an activity, and that once a goal is set by an individual, they are more likely to seek self-satisfaction through its fulfillment. The goals which people set for themselves, the efforts mobilized to achieve these goals, and the amount of persistence exhibited to press forward in the face of difficulty are all influenced by the amount of perceived self-efficacy held by an individual (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Taking these aspects of the theory into account and extending its application to support an analysis of the effectiveness of the SYRP in supporting positive academic achievements in the refugee youth, it seems logical
that the program’s focus on encouraging goal adoption by the students would have a beneficial influence on their perceived capability of attaining these goals in their new cultural environment.

Moreover, the social cognitive theory states that humans are self-regulating and self-reactive to the environment and their own performance when working toward a set goal or standard (Bandura, 1997). Thus, when difficulties are encountered in this process, or headway is not being made to accomplish the self-set challenge, individuals readjust accordingly (Bandura, 1997). Interestingly, on subscale E of Connolly’s social self-efficacy survey the SYRP students indicate that they feel comfortable helping other students and asking for help when it is needed. This proclivity to seek help in certain social situations potentially represents a form of utilizing the external resources available within the social structure, as referenced by Bandura (1997) as one of the fundamental components of human adaptation and agency.

Overall, the findings of this study lead to meta-inferences regarding ways in which participation in the SYRP may cultivate a greater sense of perceived capability and readiness for academic success. Interview data suggest that the SYRP participants recognize the program as representative of new educational opportunities made possible through resettlement to the United States. Though the survey data obtained through this study do not provide conclusive evidence that student perceptions of readiness for social interactions changed over the course of the SYRP, interview data suggests that the program has the ability to encourage positive student attitudes toward goal formation and a focus on future professional and academic outcomes. With a strong emphasis on hopes and aspirations, the SYRP curriculum pushes students toward self-investment in academic goals, which can result in an individual mobilization to seek satisfaction in goal completion.
Discussion Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have presented the reader with potential answers to the main research question investigating the extent to which refugee adolescents experience an increase in social self-efficacy through participation in the SYRP. In regard to this primary point of inquiry, the data obtained through this study suggest that there is minimal evidence speaking an increase in social self-efficacy levels as a direct result of participation in the SYRP. While the survey findings uncovered marginally significant increases in social self-efficacy ratings between SYRP participants and a control group not exposed to this program, a variety of external factors, such as family composition, previous education, or community support, could also be responsible for these changes.

Despite these limitations, the discussion presented in this chapter points to alternative conclusions about the importance of this type of educational programming for refugee adolescents during the post-resettlement period. First, interview data collected in this study suggest that the SYRP students view language differences as a prohibitive factor in communicating with peers and establishing relationships in school. Second, the SYRP environment provides refugee youth with resources in their immediate environment which aide in the development of extended peer networks, stronger social ties, and expanded social capital. Finally, the SYRP’s focus on future academic aspirations encourages self-investment and motivation that can result in mobilizing students to work toward actualizing their goals.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, the following chapter presents a summary of my findings and analysis, as well as the implications of this study within the field of refugee education and suggestions for future research. While extensive literature exists regarding the isolated issues of refugee resettlement, adolescence and academic achievement, and social self-efficacy, little is known about how these three concepts overlap and influence one another. The aim of this small mixed-methods study is to investigate how recently resettled refugee adolescents perceive their own ability to successfully navigate social settings in their new cultural environment, and how participation in a U.S. newcomer readiness program can alter these perceptions and affect their long-term academic trajectory.

**Summary of Findings and Analysis**

The results of this study conclude that specialized educational programming may provide recently resettled refugee students with a positive environment through which they might experience marginal gains in social self-efficacy levels and feel enabled to overcome some of the challenges of resettlement. By adopting Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory as a framework for this study, I have illustrated how the SYRP can be recognized as a contextual element of the environment which enables this population of students to feel capable of shaping their own life path, despite conditions of adversity inherent to their refugee status. While the quantitative data obtained in this study do not provide generalizable results about how this type of educational program can raise student levels of social self-efficacy, the qualitative data do uncover useful information about the benefits of the SYRP curriculum, as well as meaningful implications for policy makers and educators interested in expanding refugee education.
Exposure to the SYRP environment immediately after resettlement provides newly resettled refugee youth with an opportunity to build ties to fellow community members and students from other cultures, an element which could build efficacious beliefs. As evident in a comparison of students who had participated in the SYRP and the Control Group, those who had been exposed to the SYRP curriculum had marginally significant gains in social self-efficacy levels when compared to their non-SYRP counterparts. One potential explanation for these findings could be attributed to the role of building social capital made possible through participation in the SYRP. As refugee students may be experiencing a dearth of capital as a consequence of being removed from their native culture and language, the SYRP provides a resource to access new forms of social capital through developing relationships with both teachers and fellow students. By way of new peer relationships and learning through symbolization, SYRP participants are given an opportunity to learn how to navigate the American school system through observing the behaviors and practices of more experienced students.

However, these findings may also be explained by other external variables, such as community support, family structure, or previous educational experience available to the youth before, during, and after resettlement. In order to more conclusively assert what role the SYRP plays in building self-efficacious beliefs in refugee youth, it would be worthwhile to conduct further studies on a larger scale to investigate the development of social self-efficacy as a result of this type of educational programming.

One of the main emerging themes throughout this entire study was the importance of language acquisition in allowing the participants to build these peer networks and integrate smoothly into their new cultural context. Both the quantitative and qualitative data sources
obtained in this study point to the conclusion that more thoroughly developed English skills enable the refugee adolescents to overcome some of the challenges of resettlement, such as acculturative stress, linguistic isolation, and low self-confidence due to communication barriers with their peers. Observations of the SYRP mentors and interview data with the SYRP participants spoke to a newfound sense of empowerment and growth in self-confidence experienced after developing more extensive language skills. These findings can be explained through the application of Bandura’s (1997) social cognitive theory, which posits that humans are capable of building cognitive models based on observation, which allow them to be more adaptive to the surrounding environment and make more educated judgments for personal action. These more advanced knowledge structures built through peer interactions can be advantageous to refugee adolescents who are undergoing the process of acculturation within their new environment.

Another important factor emerging through this study is the degree to which family guides, supports, and protects the refugee youth from the psychosocial challenges associated with resettlement. The SYRP students spoke openly during the interviews about the expectations and goals held by the families regarding future educational and professional endeavors. These close-knit familial networks were a driving motivational factor for some of the students, as well as a source of emotional support to buffer against feelings of cultural and linguistic isolation. Though I did not interview the students in the Control Group, or gain in-depth information about their family backgrounds, I learned that many of them had been in foster care after resettlement to the United States. Though a combination of factors could be responsible for their lower ratings on the social self-efficacy survey, it is possible that this difference in family structure
could be an important variable affecting the psychological resilience of these youth, as well as their self-efficacious beliefs regarding school and academic achievement.

Additionally, looking at the mechanism of human agency included from a social cognitive perspective proves helpful in understanding how the relationships formed through the SYRP allowed students to establish a greater sense of self-efficacy through their collective identity as a program participant. Considering the concept of collective agency, which allows an individual to attain desired outcomes through a collaboration of efforts with others, the SYRP might be seen as a means of fostering this type of agency in students who share similar ethnic backgrounds, which in turn may lead them to feel more efficacious throughout their social interactions. Conversely, an opposite effect may also be taking place, in which students who are culturally isolated from their peers may be inhibited from establishing the same degree of collective agency as their majority culture peers. As this study does not delve further into this phenomenon, further studies are needed to determine if a lack of collective agency due to cultural isolation has greater implications for the academic achievement of recently resettled refugee adolescents.

Lastly, this study also uncovers the ways in which SYRP participants exhibit positive goal formation regarding their future academic and professional aspirations. One of the final curriculum units of the SYRP was My Hopes and Dreams, during which participants are encouraged to openly express their desires for the future. Qualitative interview data uncovers that the SYRP students specifically aim to prioritize education among their future goals, and also pursue career paths which focus on helping others, namely within fields of education and medicine. Within a social cognitive framework, goal setting is viewed as a form of self-investment in an activity which can lead to persistence in goal completion (Bandura, 1997).
Through encouraging the SYRP students to focus on setting and sharing their goals for the future, the program aimed to build a foundation of motivation and self-investment in the students, which may have long term implications for their academic future in American schools.

**Implications of the Research**

The rationale behind this study is driven by the hope of gaining a deeper understanding of the tangible difference that government funded programming, such as the SYRP, can have on the self-efficacy levels of refugee adolescents and their academic achievement. While there is a fairly extensive body of literature focused on the experiences of refugee adults and children, significantly less is known of the refugee adolescent post-resettlement experience. Moreover, most of the existing studies about refugee resettlement in the United States are driven by only one paradigmatic approach, which limits the ability to gain a comprehensive view of the pertinent issues and challenges facing refugees in the United States. Finally, I was informed by the director of the SYRP that evaluations conducted to measure participant progress before and after the SYRP are generally limited to quantitative methods. Notably, the SYRP students are generally not given an opportunity to express their thoughts about the program and their lived experiences in a narrative form, speaking to the unique and important opportunity created through this study.

The results of this research study can provide useful insight for the continuation and future expansion of refugee educational programming in the United States, as well as justify extended government funding for refugee resettlement organizations. Though the scope of this study is small and limited to one geographical region of the U.S., the mixed-methods approach provides a rich pool of data from which to draw inferences and conclusions about the participants and the guiding research questions. As the SYRP relies heavily on external grant
funding, evidence supporting the tangible benefits of this type of curriculum will help to build a strong case for future investment in refugee educational programming.

While this study highlights the many strengths of the SYRP curriculum, it also provides a forum to address areas which may benefit from slight alteration. One such recommendation could entail encouraging cultural integration throughout all of the activities occurring at the SYRP. The interview and observational data uncover several instances of cross-cultural tension among students at the SYRP, which at times affected their comfort interacting with other students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Through building more intentional practices of cross-cultural mixing into the curriculum, as well as addressing issues of cultural conflict during class activities and discussions, these issues may begin to diminish in future SYRP sessions.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

As this study was conducted in only one region of the United States, and the participants were refugees originating from only a few countries, the data obtained were specific to these particular variables. Consequently, the experiences of the participants may be markedly different than those of refugees living in other parts of the United States, or originating from other countries. Thus, the implications of this research project are specific to educational policies and programming in the Pacific Northwest region of the U.S. and cannot necessarily be extended to other parts of the country. Despite this limitation, the results of this type of study can be extremely beneficial for the advancement of programs such as the SYRP, which rely heavily on external funding from government agencies. As more data is collected about the importance of this type of program, a stronger case might be created for extending the scope and breadth of its curriculum through new funding sources.
Another important suggestion for conducting future research would be to establish an effective and reliable form of communication between all the subjects and the researcher prior to data collection. One major limitation encountered throughout this study was the communication barrier standing between me and the participants. As the demographics at the SYRP shift each year, the program director was unable to predict what the predominant languages of the students would be. During the design phase of my research study, I was unsure of what the linguistic skill levels of my participants would be, and which languages they would be speaking. This element of surprise made it difficult to ascertain whether or not translators would be needed, or how the students would respond in an interview setting. Future researchers would benefit from entering a similar type study knowing that reliable interpreters are available, should language barriers arise during the data collection phase.

Finally, future research in the field of refugee education could benefit from conducting a similar type of study on a larger scale, such as comparing the effects of newcomer readiness programs on different refugee populations in various locations around the country. Moreover, similar studies could be deepened by collecting follow-up data, both surveys and interviews, once the participants had been enrolled in public schools for 1-2 years. By adding a longitudinal component to the current research design, changes in social self-efficacy levels could be tracked over time as the students advance through school, which could better illustrate the long-term changes that transpire in the participants. Additionally, students might be better able to communicate more effectively after living in the United States for a longer period of time, which could potentially produce more thorough and detailed qualitative data.
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Zimmerman, B. J., & Cleary, T. J. (2006). Adolescents’ development of personal agency:
Dear Students,

My name is Ellen Lambert and I am a graduate student at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. I am currently doing a research project on refugee students’ attitudes about school. I wish to collect data from students who have been living in the United States for less than one year.

The purpose of this study is to understand how new refugee adolescents feel about themselves and other students in their new school. This study may be of use to the Refugee Resettlement Organization, or other organizations working to improve educational opportunities for refugee students.

We are looking for approximately 150 students to participate in this study. Your participation in this project will help us understands how refugee adolescents feel about their new schooling environment.

You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire one (1) time before taking part in the Summer Youth Readiness Program, and (2) times after the program. It will take about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire each time. You may also choose to participate in a short interview (30 minutes), but it is not required if you choose to fill out the questionnaires.

If you are interested in being in this study, please contact Ellen Lambert using the information listed below.

Thank you for your consideration!

Ellen Lambert
Graduate Student, School of Educational Foundations, Leadership & Policy
Bowling Green State University
(253) 359-5349
ellenl@bgsu.edu
APPENDIX B. LETTER OF INFORMED PARENTAL CONSENT

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your son/daughter is being asked to be in a study being done by Ellen Lambert. Ellen Lambert is a graduate student at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. The purpose of this study is to learn about how the Summer Youth Readiness Program is working to build your child’s self-confidence and to prepare them to start school in the fall. Ellen Lambert hopes to research student feelings about working with classmates and social activities in school. She would like your son or daughter to participate in (3) questionnaires and possibly one (1) short interview. Each survey will last approximately 15 minutes and the interview will last approximately 30 minutes. If your son/daughter would like to have an interview about their school experiences, it will take place at a secure location of your approval (for example, at the IRC program site or at a public library). However, students are not required to do an interview if they complete the questionnaire. Both the consent and assent forms must be returned to Ellen Lambert before they can participate.

There are no physical or mental health risks involved in this study. Some participants may feel uneasy about sharing their personal information with someone outside your community. To minimize any worries, the survey will not be seen by anyone other than Ms. Lambert, and the interview will be held in an environment that you feel is safe. Further, if at any time during the survey or interview your child wants to stop, they must simply tell Ms. Lambert and the interview will end.

To assure confidentiality, your child’s identity will be protected. All data collected through the survey will be organized by an identification number instead of a name. The information from the interview will not be linked to your child’s name, but will use an ID number of pseudonym instead.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your child may stop the interview at any point. Your child may also choose not to answer questions. You will not be penalized if your child does not participate in the study. Your child’s participates will not influence your future relations with Ms. Lambert, Bowling Green State University, or the Summer Youth Readiness Program.

Your child will be given a small token of appreciation for taking the time to consider participating. Other than this, there are no direct benefits to your child by participating in this study. By engaging in this survey and interview, your child will be contributing to research about refugees in the Washington State school system. This work may someday be used to improve educational programs in local schools, as well as spread awareness about issues concerning refugee adolescents and youth.

If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact Ellen Lambert at (253) 359-5349 or ellenl@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s
Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu, if any problems arise during the study.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have been able to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that your son/daughter will be able to participate in the study; if you change your mind you may withdraw your consent for your child to participate. Your child cannot participate without his or her assent and without your consent.

By signing this agreement you are NOT giving up any of your or your child’s legal rights.

This document must be returned to Ms. Ellen Lambert prior to any survey or interview participation.

Thank you for your consideration.

I, ____________________________ agree to let my son/daughter
Parent/Guardian’s name

_______________________________ participate in the research study conducted
Child’s name
by Ellen Lambert.

Signature of the parent/guardian __________________________________________

Date: __________________________

Printed name of the parent/guardian

________________________________________________________________________

Printed name of the child

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C. LETTER OF INFORMED ASSENT

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Below is a brief outline of information you need to know about the questionnaire and interview process.

**Purpose of the study**
You are being asked to participate in a study being carried out by Ellen Lambert, a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. The purpose of this study is to understand how refugee students feel about their relationships with other students and how the Summer Youth Readiness Program helps to prepare them for doing well in school.

**Description of the study**
This study is being conducted by Ellen Lambert. Ellen Lambert is a graduate student in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH. She would like to speak to middle and high school refugee students about their feelings toward the American schooling experience. Each participant will be asked to fill out one (1) questionnaire before the IRC program and two (2) questionnaires after the program. Each questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete. You may also be asked to be interviewed, but this is not required if you do the questionnaires. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. Ms. Lambert would like to audio record the interview with your permission.

**Confidentiality**
The information you provide in the questionnaire and interview will not be linked to your name. All data collected from the questionnaire and all transcripts of audio tapes made during the interview will:

- Use a number as opposed to your name for classification purposes
- Use a pseudonym (a false name) to protect your identity
- Alter any additional information that may reveal your identity

The questionnaire data and interview transcripts will be kept under lock and key in a secure location, and will not be available to anyone except Ellen Lambert. Once the study has been completed, all data from this study will be destroyed.

**Voluntary participation**
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the questionnaire or interview at any time, and you may choose to not answer any question. Whether or not you choose to participate will not influence your future relations with Ellen Lambert, Bowling Green State University, or the cooperating agencies. Participation or withdrawal will not affect any rights to which you are entitled.

**Risks or discomforts**
There are no physical or mental risks to participating in this study. Some participants may feel uneasy about sharing their information with a non-community member. The following are steps taken to minimize any discomforts:

d. You may choose to not answer any of the questions on the questionnaire
e. The interview is held at a location and environment that you feel is safe and that you are comfortable in
f. If you start to feel uncomfortable, just ask Ms. Lambert to stop the interview
g. If you wish, helpful information about where you can get support services can be provided

You must complete and return the participant assent form and one of your parent or guardians must complete and return the parent consent form before the interview can take place.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. By engaging in this study, you will be contributing to research concerning immigration, academic success, and education in general. This work may in turn used to improve educational policy and programming as well as spread awareness about issues affecting refugee youth.

Questions
If you have questions or concerns you can contact Ellen Lambert at (253) 359-5349 or (ellenl@bgsu.edu). You may also contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University’s Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or (hsrb@bgsu.edu), if any problems or concerns arise during the course of the study.

Agreement
h. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you may have about the study
i. Your signature also says that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your assent to participate at any time
j. You have been told that by signing this agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights
k. Permission has been obtained by a parent or guardian for your participation in this study
l. You have been given a copy of this agreement

Signature of the participant: ___________________________ Date: ____________

Printed name of the participant: ___________________________

Researcher: ___________________________ Date: ____________
APPENDIX D. DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Age: ______ years

Gender:
Male   Female

What is your home country?
_________________________________

How long have you lived in the United States?
0-6 months   6-12 months   1-2 years   More than 2 years

What is your native language?
_________________________________

How long have you been learning English?
Never learned English   Less than 1 year   1-3 years   2-4 years   More than 4 years

How big was your old school?
Don’t Know   Less than 100 people   More than 100 People

How many years did you attend school in your home country?
Less than 1 year   1-4 years   4-6 years   More than 6 years

How did you hear about the Summer Youth Readiness Program?
Friend   Family Member   Community Outreach   Local School   Other ________________
### APPENDIX E. SOCIAL SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

**Directions:** Read each question and circle the number which best describes how you feel about it. On a scale of 1-7, where 1 = impossible to do and 7= extremely easy to do, how easy are these tasks?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Start a conversation with a student who you don’t know very well</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2. Express your opinion to a group of kids discussing a subject you are interested in</td>
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<td>3. Join a new group of kids in the school cafeteria for lunch</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>4. Work on a project with a student you don’t know very well</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Help make a new student feel comfortable with your group of friends</td>
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<td>6. Tell a group of kids an interesting story about your life</td>
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<td>7. Put yourself in a new and different social situation</td>
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<td>8. Volunteer to help organize a school social event</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Ask a group of kids who are planning to go to a movie if you can come</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>10. Stand up for your rights when someone accuses you of doing something you didn’t</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Get invited to a party that is being organized by one of the most popular students</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>12. Have a good conversation with a person you don’t know</td>
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<td>13. Be involved in group activities</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>14. Find someone to spend lunch with</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>15. Wear the clothes you like even if they are different from what other kids wear</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Stand up to a student who is being a bully</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>17. Tell someone to stop if they are making fun of you</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>18. Help a student who is visiting your school to have a fun time</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>19. Join a school club or sports team</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>20. Share your feelings with another student</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>21. Ask someone over to your house after school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Ask someone you don’t know to hang out with you</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Go to a party where you don’t know anyone</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Ask another student for help if you need it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Make friends with kids your age</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Help another student find his or her classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A) Friendship/Intimacy Items
1. Start a conversation with a student who you don’t know very well
12. Have a good conversation with a person you don’t know
14. Find someone to spend lunch with
20. Share your feelings with another student
21. Ask someone over to your house after school
22. Ask someone you don’t know to hang out with you
25. Make friends with kids your age

B) Social Assertiveness Item
2. Express your opinion to a group of kids discussing a subject you are interested in
10. Stand up for your rights when someone accuses you of doing something you didn’t
15. Wear the clothes you like even if they are different from what other kids wear
16. Stand up to a student who is being a bully
17. Tell someone to stop if they are making fun of you

C) Social Groups/Parties Items
3. Join a new group of kids in the school cafeteria for lunch
7. Put yourself in a new and different social situation
9. Ask a group of kids who are planning to go to a movie if you can come
11. Get invited to a party that is being organized by one of the most popular students
13. Be involved in group activities
18. Help a student who is visiting your school to have a fun time
23. Go to a party where you don’t know anyone

D) Public Performance Items
4. Work on a project with a student you don’t know very well
8. Volunteer to help organize a school social event
19. Join a school club or sports team

E) Giving/Receiving Help Items
5. Help make a new student feel comfortable with your group of friends
24. Ask another student for help if you need it
26. Help another student find his or her classroom
### APPENDIX G. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Tell me about going to school in your home country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Describe your school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Describe what it was like to be a student there</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Tell me about your expectations for school in the United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. What are you excited about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What are you worried about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Do you feel prepared to start?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Tell me about your social life.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. What do you find difficult about making friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What is the hardest part about interacting with other students?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Tell me about your future academic goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Is graduating an important goal for you and your family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Do you plan on going to college?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DATE: April 27, 2012

TO: Ellen Lambert
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [321572-3] Building social self-efficacy: Investigating how recently resettled refugee adolescent students cultivate greater social adjustment and academic preparedness through a newcomer readiness program

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: April 27, 2012
EXPIRATION DATE: April 3, 2013
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Full Board review category

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 150 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on April 3, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsr@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.