NEPALESE-BHUTANESE REFUGEE YOUTH IN NORTHEAST OHIO PUBLIC SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES TO INTEGRATION

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By

Radha K. Bodapati

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A dissertation written by

Radha K. Bodapati

B.A., University of Delhi, 1984
M.A., University of Delhi, 1986
M.Phil., University of Delhi, 1991
Ph.D., Kent State University, 2019

Approved by

______________________, Director, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Vilma Seeberg

______________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Ning-Kuang Chuang

______________________, Member, Doctoral Dissertation Committee
Linda Robertson

Accepted By

______________________, Director, School of Foundations, Leadership and
Kimberly S. Schimmel Administration

______________________, Dean, College of Education, Health and Human Services
James C. Hannon
Globalization in the 21st century has dramatically transformed the sociocultural and economic ethos of the world and there has been an unprecedented acceleration of human movement across the globe. These migratory flows have posed many new challenges to education systems all over the world, and over half of these migrants are children. Nepalese-Bhutanese (N-B) refugees are one such group that were forcibly displaced from their homes in Bhutan, since the early 1990s, because of persecution and ethnic cleansing. This dissertation study explores the acculturation and sociocultural adaptation of N-B youth in Northeast Ohio public schools using multiple theoretical frameworks, such as acculturation, ecological systems theory, and the theory of segmented assimilation. Qualitative interviews were conducted with a sample size of six intergenerational families including recent high school graduates. The study found that N-B students face multiple challenges at school, such as language insecurity, cultural and pedagogical differences, teasing and bullying, and an unwelcoming environment at schools. However, all the participants in this dissertation study overcame the obstacles and created their own pathways to higher education and diverse careers. Even though there is evidence of dissonant acculturation, the participants in this study had positive outcomes because N-B youth facilitated the acculturation process of their parents. The
preferred strategy of acculturation of participants at school was initially, *separation*, followed by *integration*. There are reports of truancy, significant dropout rates and use of alcohol, drugs and gambling among N-B youth. Further research is needed to confirm these reports of sociocultural maladaptation.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Unlike economic migrants who move to places where there are jobs, the forcibly displaced are fleeing conflict and violence, often suffering from a loss of assets, lack of legal rights, absence of opportunities, and a short planning horizon. They need dedicated support to overcome these vulnerabilities and regain confidence in their future—so they can work, send their children to school, and have access to services. Left without support, the displaced may face hardship and marginalization, as do those who are negatively affected in host communities, which can hamper development efforts. (World Bank, 2016)

Since the start of the new millennium, mass movement of migrants across the globe has dramatically altered the ethnic composition of many Western countries. These movements have impacted classrooms and schools both in America and around the world (Connor & Comments, 2016; Nieto, 2017). Among the receiving nations, the United States is home to the largest number of immigrants in the world, followed by Germany, but by a wide margin. According to the United Nations, an estimated 46.6 million people living in the U.S. are not native-born. As per the projections made for the year 2050, Non-Hispanic Whites will be 43% of the population, while 57% will be from communities of color (Teixeira, Halpin, Barreto, & Pantoja, 2013). In light of this significant change in demographics and diversity, American public schools need to be prepared to cater to students from different cultures and countries, speaking any one of
350 different native languages that are currently spoken in the United States (Banks, Suárez-Orozco, & Ben-Peretz, 2016).

Schools and other educational settings act as arenas for *acculturation* and *socialization* of immigrant children coming from various geographic locations, cultures, and religions. These children have been resettled to different host countries around the world. For some immigrant groups, the acculturation is *voluntary*, while for others—such as refugees and indigenous people—it is not (Berry, 1997). Whereas voluntary immigrants relocate for better economic prospects or family reunion, forcibly displaced (FD) immigrants relocate for other reasons; they may have been uprooted from their homes and countries due to political or ethno-cultural tensions, disasters, natural calamities, infrastructure or developmental projects, or climate change. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), 65.6 million people have been forcibly displaced. Out of that number, 22.5 million are refugees, and half of them are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2017). This prompts us to increase research and explore ways in which FD youth can be resettled in host countries while paying attention to their intrinsic needs. Often,

Refugees are forced to resettle in new cities with little choice about preferred location and are immediately exposed to foreign, and sometimes conflicting, cultures. Acculturation of these groups may influence or be facilitated by several domains, including educational opportunities and education-driven outcomes. (Sheikh & Anderson, 2018, p. 29)
The ability of the FD refugees to adapt to this unfamiliar environment while they go through the process of cultural transition is a litmus test for how well they can integrate into the larger society.

An estimated 20 million children were uprooted from their homes in 2001. These children were either internally displaced within their country or were seeking asylum in other countries (Stewart, 2011). In addition to environmental changes and political and economic shifts, as mentioned earlier, technology and social networks also play an important role. According to Banks et al. (2016), forcible displacement has a deep impact on families. They explained that “protracted family separations threaten the identity and cohesion of the family, transform well-established roles, create new loyalties and bonds, and destabilize cultural scripts of authority, reciprocity, and responsibility” (p. 6). The above information is relevant to understand the emotional state of FD refugees and children who may have been affected by PTSD and may need special resources in schools. Nepalese-Bhutanese (N-B) children are one such group that were forcibly displaced from their homes in Bhutan because of ethnic violence and persecution. They lived in a “protracted refugee situation” and statelessness for a prolonged period of time. The youngest generation among such refugees may not have personally experienced violence; nevertheless, the trials and tribulations of their parents or grandparents may still have a significant impact on their lives.

**Problem of the Study**

N-B refugees were resettled in Northeast Ohio by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2008, yet we have very little knowledge about
their process of acculturation and adaptation to their new home and school system. Although there has been a substantial amount of research on the achievement gap of ethnic, national, and cultural minorities, there has been little empirical research on school adaptation patterns of some of these groups (Sam, Vedder, Ward, & Horenczyk, 2006). Accordingly, there is a literature gap on N-B youth and their acculturation strategies that warrants attention.

The unprecedented flow of migrants, forcibly displaced people, and refugees is creating challenges for countries around the world. American public schools are not adequately informed about such populations and their diverse linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. This poses a problem in providing equitable education and resources to help forcibly displaced refugee students succeed in the U.S. public school system. According to Lerner (2012), educational resettlement of refugees has not been very successful in the U.S. For example, in an article on resettlement (Roxas, as cited in Lerner, 2012) argued that refugee students experience rejection and isolation, perform poorly in standardized tests, and have higher dropout rates. Additionally, Roxas also stated that “while the existing research is rife with Western psychological perspectives, there has been very little investigation of cultural issues surrounding the resettlement of refugee children” (p. 9). Bearing these perspectives in mind, this dissertation study tries to address the literature gap on sociocultural issues related to acculturation and adaptation of one such group, N-B- refugee youth, in American public schools.

Despite efforts made by schools to socialize young immigrants, often these students are faced with many unpleasant situations. These include “assaults,
microaggressions, and devaluing of the ethno-cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage” of immigrant students (Banks et al., 2016, p. 7). As a result of such treatment, students are at risk of developing negative attitudes towards school and experiencing a sense of alienation. In addition, there is literature that suggests that media plays a role in dehumanizing refugees, with punitive policies in their treatment and implicitly supporting the idea of distancing oneself away from refugees (Anderson, Koc, Deslandes, Hartley, & Pedersen, as cited in Cowling, Anderson, & Rose, 2018).

Given this unpleasant environment, immigrant youth need attention from schools and other institutions that can provide a social support system of community-based organizations, mentors, and peers, who can help alleviate acculturation stress. This dissertation study is therefore timely, because it explores the challenges faced by N-B youth as they socioculturally adapt to a new country. It also tries to understand the varied pattern of their acculturation based on the strategies they use during this process. Recent research indicates that some Western nations have been more successful in integrating immigrants into their countries than the U.S. For example, Canada and New Zealand have been quite successful in the resettlement of immigrants by creating more realistic language and educational integration policies. As a result, such policies have helped immigrant youth perform better academically and earn higher grades (C. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

Almost seven decades after the rise of multicultural movements in the United States, we are again at the crossroads of a cultural crisis that has impacted the U.S. and many European countries. The mass exodus of humanity across countries in the last few
decades has proven to be a challenge for all receiving countries, and it is only now that scholars and policy makers are trying to understand this phenomenon and deal with the unpreparedness of institutions across the board. The socioeconomic and cultural consequences since the arrival of FD refugees can be seen in every sector of society. Debates are held across the aisle, where one group of pundits argue for a closed-door policy for fear of refugees being a burden to the American economy and society, while another group reiterates, categorically, that America is indeed a land of immigrants created by immigrants. It is within this landscape of political and cultural heterogeneity that children of refugees find themselves navigating through American schools. Education for children of FD refugees is an area that needs not just attention, but adequate resources so that they may flourish academically, socially, and economically.

A lack of timely response from schools to address the above situation is part of the problem. Despite a substantial amount of generated theory that has resulted in a variety of reform models, including equity pedagogy, responsive pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, anti-racist pedagogy, and so forth, very little effort has been put into following through with these reforms in schools. This gap between theory and practice is concerning and warrants attention.

Educational institutions in the country of settlement have a responsibility to be cognizant of the sociocultural challenges of new immigrants in their classrooms, the absence of which may lead to maladjusted immigrant or refugee youth who are at risk of becoming minimally productive members of society. In addition, there is the question of whether refugee students have access to opportunities like majority children. In order to
flourish, ethnic minority groups need the same resources and access to learning. Overlooking these issues challenges the notion of equitable education in American public schools. The dissertation study therefore aims to address the above issues and bridge the existing literature gap on N-B refugees.

**Historical Antecedents of N-B Refugees**

The following is a brief introduction to N-B refugees, including their history and journey from the hills of Eastern Nepal. Knowing their historical antecedents can help us understand their identity, their roots, as well as their journey to America, a country that is socioculturally and geographically distant from their country of origin. It was during the late 1800s that groups of immigrants from Nepal migrated to the southernmost part of Bhutan in search of work. They found jobs as agricultural laborers (Hutt, 2005) and have since been referred to as Lhotshampas—or people from the South [of Bhutan]. Bhutan was home to the Lhotshampas for 100 years, but during the late 1980s they were persecuted by the Bhutanese king and the ruling class and were forcibly displaced from their homes and lands.

Bhutan is a landlocked Buddhist Kingdom nestled in the Himalayan mountain ranges of Asia. Michael Hutt (2005) explained that there are three different ethnic categories that exist in Bhutan. Each of these groups occupies a third of Bhutan. The ethnic group of Ngalong live in the West of Bhutan, the Sharchop in the East and the Lhotshampas in the Southeast (Rizal, 2004). From 1950 onwards, the Lhotshampas began to maintain contact with the *Drukpas*—that is, the Buddhist people in the North of Bhutan. However, Bhutanese King spread propaganda against the Lhotshampas, as a
result the Drukpas volunteered to join the militia to cooperate with the government and to evict the Lhotshampas while the ethnic group of Scharchop remained were neutral. (Neel, personal conversation, January 2019). By the 1980s, the ruling Buddhist majority decided to enforce strict rules against the Nepalese Hindus. They began to discriminate against the Lhotshampas and legally enforced wearing only traditional Bhutanese attire and speaking their language. This was also a time when nationalistic fervor and ideology was at its peak. They followed a policy of “One Nation One People,” which Rizal (2004) referred to as an act of self-serving, ethnocentric nationalism to unify the county. The Lhotshampas protested nonviolently for their rights, but instead the Bhutanese government arrested them and evicted them from their homes. After evicting the Lhotshampas from their lands, Bhutanese government redistributed those lands to Scharchop and Ngalong to win them over on to their side. However, there is also research that suggests that Lhotshampas were considered a threat by the Bhutanese elite because of the growing power of Nepalese Maoists and their influence on Lhotshampas (Evans, 2010).

Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, N-B families were forcibly pushed out of Bhutan because of growing religious persecution and ethnic violence. Indeed, 100,000 Nepalese-Bhutanese were forcibly displaced from their homes and found refuge in Eastern Nepal (Evans, 2009). Seven Bhutanese camps were established in the southern lowlands of Nepal, including Goldhap, Timai, Kudhunbari, Sanichare, and Beldangi (UNHCR, “Bhutanese Refugees - The story of a forgotten people,” 2011). For many
years, they endured significant hardship living in the refugee camps. The participants of this dissertation study were born in any one of the above listed camps.

**Third Country Resettlement**

In 2008, the UNHCR, along with the government of Nepal and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), intervened and resettled 100,000 Bhutanese in eight core countries across the world. These were Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. Among the eight countries of settlement, the United States resettled the largest number of Bhutanese refugees with a total of 84,819 refugees (Refugees, 2015). N-B are referred to as Bhutanese refugees in the United States, even though they are of Nepalese ancestry and may culturally identify as Nepalese rather than Bhutanese people. N-B refugee youth in this dissertation study followed any one of the three religions Hinduism, Kirat Mundhum, or Buddhism. The languages they speak include Nepalese and Dzongkha, one of the languages spoken in Bhutan.

Immigration policies in the U.S. have been previously receptive to refugees. The U.S. has resettled 80% of N-B refugees from Nepal. Upon their arrival, N-B families are placed under different Volags, or Voluntary agencies, that help with various services such as language translation, tutoring, English language class, employment counseling and authorization, elderly programs, skill-building classes, and so forth. Resettled refugees are automatically put on a path to citizenship. They are eligible to apply for legal permanent residency within a year of arrival. This allows them to live in the U.S. and gain employment. After five years, they become eligible for citizenship. Appendix C
provides a general idea of the process of refugee resettlement in the U.S. from the time of their entry into the country. Case managers help refugees settle into their new homes and provide them with information on potential employment opportunities. Typically, refugees are provided assistance and guidance by case workers for a period of three months, following which the refugee families are expected to be self-sufficient (see Appendix C for more details).

N-B parents and participants have portrayed a very positive picture of the agencies and volunteer organizations that helped them acculturate to the country of settlement. However, in the past few years, there has been great uncertainty and fear of a change in policies that may impact family reunification. Additionally, anti-immigrant sentiments, which have increased in recent times, have also been a cause for concern.

Bhutanese refugees who were resettled in 2008 were provided many resources, including social security, language classes, employment authorization, residence, and the path to citizenship at the end of the year (Personal correspondence with Warsha, an informant; see Appendix C for more details on resettlement of refugees). However, according to Pew Research Center data (2017), the percentage of the Bhutanese population living in poverty is double that of the rest of all Americans. Accordingly, 33.3% among Bhutanese are living in poverty, versus 15.1% of all Americans. There is visibly a wide gap in the above statistics, and this may have an implication on the sociocultural adaptation of N-B youth in American public schools.

N-B participants in this dissertation study were born in refugees camps and are between the ages of 18-20. These students may have experienced some physical and
emotional stress while they were in camps or because of resettlement. Appendix I describes the factors that may have contributed to PTSD among N-B adults. Additionally, these factors may also have had an impact on N-B students’ education and their adaptation to school. This dissertation study therefore attempts to understand the pre-migratory experiences of N-B youth as well as their experiences in their current environment—their home, school and community—to gain a holistic perspective on their challenges as they acculturate into the country of settlement

**Need for the Study**

So far, there have been studies conducted on different immigrant groups that have settled in the United States. Scholars such as Suárez-Orozco, Portes and Zhou, Gibson, Ogbu, Berry, and so forth, have studied immigrant acculturation from different perspectives, such as academic achievement of immigrants, their pattern of assimilation into society, strategies they choose during acculturation, as well as the oppositional attitudes of some youth and their deep-seated antagonism to schools and learning.

Although there are refugee children in every state in the U.S., there is limited research on their school experiences. Reiterating the same, Lerner (2012) asserted that “more ethnomethodological and qualitative research is needed to examine these children’s environments and understand the cultural context” (p. 14). While stories of immigrant resettlement in the United States have been documented in family narratives, legends, poems, films, and research studies, we know little about how they are adapting to new schools and the challenges they are encountering. Suárez-Orozco argued that this gap in literature is troubling because this demographic, immigrant youth, is the fastest growing
segment of the population (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008). A lack of information on FD youth may pose many challenges for teachers and administrative staff as these students try to navigate through the school system and environment. Knowledge of the acculturation and adaptation of this ethnic group, which is culturally and religiously very different from their own, may help policy makers and educators become cognizant of the areas that need more attention or resources. Understanding the new culture that is linguistically and culturally different would benefit immigrant youth to integrate into the larger community and society. Quantitative data related to academic performance of N-B youth through standardized testing may be helpful to a certain extent but will not reveal an in-depth understanding of their trials and tribulations, especially as they go through their teenage years.

Therefore, qualitative inquiries are needed to gather data on how N-B refugees are dealing with the school environment; their interactions with teachers, staff, and peers; and the overall sociocultural challenges that they encounter in their existential routine at schools. There is a need to understand the positive and negative experiences of this group of refugee students within the formal school environment so that one can assess their strengths as well as weaknesses that may be holding them back from better performance. Response to these critical questions may be gained through qualitative research, which is the aim of this dissertation.

**Theoretical Frames**

My dissertation on N-B refugee students in Northeast Ohio public schools is informed by Berry’s *acculturation* framework and Portes and Zhou’s theory of
segmented assimilation, along with other theories that have expanded my knowledge. Berry (1997) defined sociocultural acculturation as a way in which immigrants deal with daily problems related to family life, work, and school. Using the theoretical framework of acculturation, I explore the school experiences and challenges/barriers encountered by N-B youth from their perspective. This theory falls within the parameters of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model. These theories can help provide some clarity to understanding the methods of N-B youth as they acculturate to a new environment and to how different ecological levels within the environment can play an important role in their adaptation to American public schools.

Acculturation, according to Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006), is described as the cultural changes that take place in a group, including its customs and its economic and political life. There are multiple factors that Berry (1997) used to describe the elements that influence acculturation of immigrants. Berry’s acculturation framework explained that there are two independent dimensions to acculturation, which are the society of origin and the society of settlement of the immigrants. How immigrants acculturate is dependent on their situation prior to emigrating, which is in their country of origin, as well as their situation during acculturation in the country of settlement.

Demographic factors that can impact acculturation include their age prior to entering the country of settlement, gender, prior education, prior social status, their migration motivation, as well as cultural distance between the country of origin and the country of settlement. Additionally, factors that may have an impact on acculturation of immigrants include their duration of stay in the host country, their coping strategies, the
social support they receive, and any discrimination or prejudice they may encounter in the host society.

Portes and Zhou (1993) argued that the kinds of bonds that students build with their peers have implications for their pattern of mobility as they adjust to their country of settlement. They conducted empirical studies on various groups of immigrant youth and developed the *theory of segmented assimilation*. They found that immigrant students who are well adjusted in high school are more likely to be college-bound and less prone to dropping out of college. They asserted that dropping out of college could potentially lead to downward mobility for the rest of their lifetime. According to Portes and Zhou (1993), immigrants of the same ethnic community may have varied trajectories leading to segmented assimilation. Even though some may attain upward mobility due to various factors, others may adopt reactive cultures and end up on a path of downward trajectory. Ogbu and Simmons’ (1998) cultural-ecological theory will help understand where refugees fit in within the binary of involuntary or voluntary minorities or, more likely, whether there may be a third category of their own that could be identified.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the *sociocultural acculturation* of forcibly displaced N-B immigrant youth attending public schools in Northeast Ohio. Gaining an in-depth understanding of various strategies used by N-B youth during their process of acculturation can provide us with a whole new perspective on their experiences at school, their pattern of adaptation/acculturation into the country of settlement, the reception they receive at school and in the larger community, as well as the discrimination and prejudice
they may have encountered in their daily life. The following section presents the research questions that act as a guide for my research.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this research is to understand the challenges faced by N-B youth as they acculturate and socioculturally adapt to American public schools

Question 1. What are the perceived challenges to their acculturation, especially with respect to immigration policies in the country of settlement, discrimination against immigrants, and their family values?

Question 2. Which of the four acculturation strategies/attitudes—*assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization*—are used by N-B refugee youth in Northeast Ohio public schools?

Question 3. What role does *human capital, modes of incorporation, and family structure* play in how N-B youth assimilate? How do the above lead to varied trajectories and *segmented assimilation*?

Question 4. How do N-B youth and their families perceive the role of schools in meeting the goals of multicultural education?

a. What role do teachers and administrative staff play in *acculturation of* N-B youth?

**Significance of the Study**

Schools are a microcosm of American culture and society at large and therefore play an important part in the socialization process of children. Information from this dissertation may provide deep insights into aspects of the school life of forcibly displaced
refugee students and the issues that nag or even torment them. This dissertation study listened to the voices of N-B refugee students and gave them an opportunity to verbalize their thoughts and process their feelings about their school experiences. Understanding the acculturation processes of N-B students and the pathways they choose may have implications for the adaptation of N-B refugees and their integration into larger society. As mentioned earlier, knowledge and information on the background of N-B students and their strategies to adapt to the school system may help teachers address their academic needs as well as their sociocultural adjustment to the school environment.

This dissertation might have implications for schools that can recalibrate their attitudes towards N-B refugees in general and accommodate them so that they may more successfully develop academically, socially, and culturally in their society of settlement. It can help prepare teachers to be more culturally responsive and empathetic to this population. Schools can create better spaces where newcomers can feel welcome and safe. An enlightened and culturally aware school community can nurture strong bonds and cohesiveness in American classrooms and help immigrants/refugees smoothly transition into society (Prior & Niesz, 2013). Qin (2006) contended that “the education and well-being of immigrant children is directly linked with the well-being of American society” (p. 16).

Additionally, research on N-B students and their acculturation may lead to a more targeted domain of research that focuses on similar forcibly displaced ethnic groups in the U.S.
Outline of the Study

In this segment I provide a bird’s eye view of the content, topics, and issues which I address in the chapters that follow. In Chapter 1, I have explained briefly the problem, purpose, need, and significance of my dissertation study, as well as the research questions that I wished to address through conducting empirical research.

In Chapter 2, I provide a brief background and setting of the study, including the contextual background of multicultural education and certain policy reform models. These issues are relevant to the schooling and education of immigrant children and youth in this millennium. Additionally, I discuss the intersection of globalization, migration, and education, and the role it has played in changing the way we think about immigrant students in our classrooms. Finally, recent literature specific to refugees and schooling is reviewed along with theoretical frameworks that act as an anchor to my dissertation study.

Chapter 3 describes the design of the dissertation study and the research methods that have been used. This dissertation research is a narrative inquiry that utilizes a constructivist paradigm, and its aim is to explore and capture the lived experiences of N-B youth in Northeast Ohio public schools. I explain the logic behind my thought process and the way I proceeded in my field work. Additionally, I explain how the empirical research informed my research questions and provides validity to my research. I discuss the methods for the dissertation study, including the research design and the paradigm that compliments my design. In the procedures section, I outline the methods of data collection, the process of data analysis, and my commitment to ethical concerns.
which are of utmost importance to this qualitative study. Finally, the limitations of the dissertation study and the trustworthiness are underscored at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4 details the findings of the research based on data collection from various sources. The findings are categorized into themes that emerged through data analysis. The themes and sub-themes act as hidden chests from where one can discover answers to the research questions.

Chapter 5 summarizes the dissertation study and its findings while engaging with the literature, the theoretical frameworks, and the research design, while making recommendations to policy makers and stakeholders on future research of issues that were not fully explored.

**Definition of Terms**

**Acculturation**: “When group 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, as cited in Berry, 1997, p. 7).

**Adaptation**: Changes that happen in individuals or groups due to environmental demands. Adaptation could be both positive and negative based on multiple factors including the attitude of the receiving countries towards the acculturating groups.

**Forced migration**: “A migratory movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihood, whether arising from natural or man-made causes (e.g., movement of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as people displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famine, or developmental projects)” (Glossary on Migration, 2019).
**Forcibly displaced:** Includes both internally displaced people (IDPs) as well refugees.

**Interculturation:** Processes through which groups identify themselves as culturally distinct and are interested in the formation of new cultures more than in the acculturation approach.

**Internally displaced person (IDP):** An individual forced to flee from his or her home or place of habitual residence but who has not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

**Lhotshampas:** People from Nepal who settled in the South of Bhutan for a hundred years and are colloquially called “Southerners.”

**New second generation:** Children of post-1965 immigrant parents (Phalet, 2006).

**Refugee:** A person who, owing to well-founded fear of persecution for one of a number of specific reasons contained in the 1951 Refugee Convention, is outside the country of his or her nationality, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.

**Refugees and immigrants:** These terms have at sometimes been used interchangeably in context to the common challenges faced by these groups at school. However, refugee youth are more vulnerable than other immigrant youth.

**Refugee in protracted situations:** A refugee in a long-term state of displacement; for UNHCR, a protracted refugee situation is one in which a large number of refugees of the same nationality have been in exile for several years in a given asylum country.
Second generation immigrants: Those immigrants who are born in the United States but have immigrant parents.

Stateless persons: A person who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law (1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons). Not all stateless persons are displaced. While some people are born stateless, others become stateless over the course of their lives (Refugees, 2015).

Usage of Terms

Acculturation attitudes, strategies, modes, and orientation are used as interchangeable terms with same meaning. They refer to ways in which immigrants cope in the country of settlement. According to Berry (1997) these strategies are assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.

Majority culture, dominant culture, American culture, national culture are used as interchangeable terms with reference to the majority group of White people in America as per this dissertation study.

Abbreviations

AI Inc.—Aid Immigrants Inc.
FD—Forcibly Displaced
ICSEY—International Comparative Study of Ethno-Cultural Youth
IOM—International Organization of Migration
LIA—Lean International Association
N-B—Nepalese-Bhutanese
NBA—Nepalese Bhutanese Association
NBC—Nepalese Bhutanese Community

UNHCR—United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WFO—World Food Organization
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Frames for the Dissertation Study

Immigrants of the 21st century include a diverse group of refugees, asylum seekers, FD immigrants, family members of settled immigrants, guest workers, and documented and undocumented workers. This diverse group of immigrants from across the globe brings with them various languages, religions, cultures, and identities, challenging us to look at the notion of culture, identity, and values differently and in ways that we have never envisioned before. It is ever more challenging for receiving nations to provide education to children of immigrants due to the increase diversity in classrooms and to help them successfully transition into the society of settlement. So, what should the nature of such education be? What are some of the key issues and theoretical developments of multicultural education that are relevant to immigrant and refugee youth? How has globalization and mass migration impacted education in the 21st century?

This segment prepares the ground for the literature review by discussing the topics mentioned above and then presenting a review of the literature on the various challenges faced by immigrant/refugee youth as they integrate and adapt into public schools and to the larger society. Since this is a dissertation study on an Asian ethnic group, recent literature on Asian Americans and the prevailing misconceptions about them are reviewed as well and a detailed literature review is presented on the theoretical frames that act as a scaffolding and inform this dissertation study. Additionally, I have
highlighted certain themes that are part of the conceptual schema and help in creating a story about the content of the literature (Foss & Waters, 2007). The topics have been organically tied together while drawing attention to the domain of multicultural education, the strides it has made, and the urgency to expand the conversation further to include the challenges of schooling FD refugee students in American public schools.

This segment provides a contextual background to multicultural education in the United States as well as the issues and challenges that have consumed the pioneers of such research.

**Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The landmark decision of *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 saw backlash in schools where African American, Latino, and Native American students were disproportionately singled out or expelled by schools that reflected Anglo-European American perspectives (Bennett, 2001). There were multiple disadvantages faced by minorities, such as structural exclusion; discrimination and racism; a quest for self-determination, equality and inclusion; inequality in curriculum and textbooks and teacher attitudes (Banks, 1993). Additionally, the failure of integration in schools led to new sociocultural reform movements. Banks (as cited in Bennett, 2001) explained that the field of multicultural education emerged quickly and passionately. It was influenced by the long history of multidisciplinary inquiry, social action, and artistic and scholarly literature. It was during the third phase of this movement, in the 1970s, that multicultural education addressed issues relating to race and class. By the 1980s, many other issues
related to gender religion, language, exceptionalities, and sexual orientation were added (Seeberg, Swadener, Vanden-Wyngaard, & Rickel, 1998).

One of the foundational principles of multicultural education is the concept of pluralism, which was developed in the early 20th century by Horace Kallen (Bennett, 2001). It upholds democratic rights and core values, such as equity, social justice, universal human rights, respect for human dignity, and a right to maintain one’s culture and heritage. It is a compromise between two extremes: that of assimilation into the Anglo-European American culture and segregation. The nature of multicultural education is dynamic and has been evolving over the decades. The reform movement that was initially centered around the needs of ethnic minorities soon grew into a movement that voiced the concerns of traditionally marginalized social groups. The 1980s and 1990s can be viewed as an era of national canon debates. The debates were on the type of knowledge, related to multicultural diversity, that should be presented in schools. There were the traditionalists who wished to present and preserve Western history and culture, the Afro centrists that wanted African culture to be at the center of the curriculum, and the multiculturalists who believed that curriculum should reflect the history and culture of many ethnic and minority groups (Banks, 1993; Banks & Banks, 2013).

The following is some foundational knowledge on the discourses within the domain of multicultural education, while pointing towards the changing composition of students in our classrooms and the way in which we need to address them.
As we know, immigration leads to culturally plural societies which encourage the formation of cultural groups. However, the groups that are formed are not equal in power, either because of their numbers or their economic or political differences. Acculturation of immigrants takes place due to three factors: voluntariness, mobility, and permanence (Berry, 1997). It is estimated that one in four Americans is an immigrant or the child of an immigrant (Portes, Fernández-Kelly, & Haller, 2009). Consequently, immigrant groups have a deep effect on American society. Hence, it becomes imperative for educators to understand how immigrant students are acculturating in our public schools, as well as the challenges they encounter.

Amthor and Roxas (2016), citing other scholars, highlighted the contribution of multicultural education and called for a more inclusive vision for refugee youth, reiterating the importance of a culturally relevant pedagogy. Amthor and Roxas argued that,

As the United States experiences unprecedented demographic shifts and immigration becomes the biggest contributor to population growth—both through new arrivals and children born to immigrants—schools, as social institutions, and well-intentioned educators across the United States attempt to adapt to new classroom dynamics and student needs. It is a mutually beneficial adaptation, because the positive adjustment, well-being, and eventual productivity of immigrant youth has long-term political and socio-economic implications for the entire population. (p. 169)
In addition to the need for positive adjustment and well-being of immigrant youth, the authors underscore the need for genuine cross-cultural relations and emphasize the importance of inculcating cultural agency for newcomer youth and abandoning the search for cultural authenticity.

Also, schools can act as a buffer against the anti-immigrant sentiments, where teachers can play an important role in impacting the adaptation of students of color. Amthor and Roxas (2016) contended that teachers can change the script by generating alternative contexts of reception and curating a multicultural education that pays attention to the needs of immigrant and refugee students, which have thus far not been addressed.

The construct of resilience among postsecondary refugee students has been studied by Wong and Yohani (2016). Their research findings “suggest that resilience is cultivated by family, resettlement community, and educational supports. These findings inform the need to establish community support to foster educational success” (Wong & Yohani, 2016, p. 175). It would be important to observe the adaptation patterns of N-B students not just as victims of forcible displacement but also as survivors who may have overcome some of the stereotypes attached to them.

With the growing diversity in American classrooms there is a general agreement that educators are not well prepared to teach new immigrants, and educators miss out on the valuable assets that the students bring in. Nieto (2017) contended that these assets include bilingualism, multilingualism, as well as numerous life skills and strengths such as resilience, courage, and grit. I agree with Nieto and additionally I believe that it is important for educators and schools to also acknowledge the funds of knowledge and
cultural richness that they bring into the American classroom along with their unique way of life (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

There is also a need for a shift in our thinking about multicultural education where we need to move away from *tokenization* and *patronization* (Ngo, 2010) of ethnic culture and also to recognize the power dynamic and the unequal power relations that are part of the problem of inequality (Amthor & Roxas, 2016; Nieto, 2017). These issues are critical to multicultural education. Needless to say, there are changes that are slowly happening, and there is an increasing focus on critical pedagogy and critical literacy, since the 1990s. Ngo echoed the same views and pointed out that there is a theory to practice gap in multicultural education and that the “gap persists between what we know and want out of multiculturalism and what is happening in schools and classrooms” (Ngo, 2010). She emphasized the need for critical multicultural education and for teachers and students to discuss conflicts, inequalities of cultural differences.

Describing the changing currents of multicultural education Nieto (2017) contended that massive privatization, marketization, and standardization since the mid-1980s has changed the nature of education in America and the world over. Globalization has impacted the world unequally; to some it has been beneficial while to others it has been more exploitative. In the literature review I examine the impact of globalization on immigration and education. Additionally, the above topics act as a strong foundation for comprehending mass movements of people, the catalytic events that lead to such movements, and the resultant outcomes of such events on home and host societies.
Over the decades of its development, the field of multiculturalism in education became even more inclusive of groups of individuals with specific social characteristics. Many of the issues taken up by multicultural education apply to immigrant as well as native-born American students. The scholarship relating to what I call key issues are reviewed in the next section.

**Key Issues in Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education has gone through its own process of evolution. Over the years, the definition and nature of the domain has expanded to include many other marginalized groups, as mentioned earlier. During the early years of the multicultural movement, leading scholars made a call for education that is multicultural. Even though many necessary changes were made, certain factors continued to cause a sociocultural schism in multicultural education. These included teacher composition, gender of teachers, education level of teachers compared to the parents, as well as technical adeptness of teachers (Seeberg et al., 1998). Banks and Banks (2013) stated that there was also a wide ethnic, cultural, social class, and linguistic gap between many teachers and students. For example, White middle-class teachers were unable to relate to students from a different cultural and ethnic community. Additionally, there was a heavy reliance on textbooks, high stakes testing, and accountability. These were some of the factors that slowed down the institutionalization of multicultural education in schools (Banks & Banks, 2013). Even though attempts were made to bring cultural diversity in schools by discussing race, religion and language, and so forth, there was no discussion on the underlying issues of racism, discrimination, sexism, or prejudice. Attempts to promote
multicultural curricula were weakened by lack of implementation by all faculty and administrators (Seeberg et al., 1998). Some of the most pertinent issues of multicultural education include racism, gender inequality, and sexual orientation and achievement gap.

The Trump administration has undone many of the policies toward immigrants and this may change the attitudes of people in general. Considering these policy changes, how then will schools deal with racism? Unless attitudes of major governing bodies and institutions align with the philosophy of multicultural education, little change can be expected. Also, the goals of multicultural education can be achieved by a paneducational approach—like promoting its message through various forums. For instance, this can be done through Girl and Boy Scouts organizations, religious institutions, the armed forces, major corporations, and civic organizations. With a changing global world that is becoming more and more interdependent, it is imperative to promote intercultural relations to work together and collectively progress.

Theoretical Developments in Multicultural Education

The following segment is an overview of some of the theories related to multicultural education. One of the most intractable problems in the field of cultural foundations of education is identifying the fundamental reasons for achievement gap between dominant and minority groups. Sometimes, this achievement gap could be intra-group or between subgroups, as can be observed in the segment that relates to segmented assimilation. There are multiple theories that relate, directly or indirectly, to achievement gap, a few of which I have included below. These include socio-economic inequality, difference in learning styles, teaching quality, structural limitations, stereotype
threat, class reproduction, privilege hoarding, opportunity hoarding, race, whiteness as a property, oppositional culture as observed with involuntary immigrants, and so forth

**Inequality and Achievement Gap.** Conservatives believed and continue to believe in achievement ideology—the notion that the American dream can be achieved through hard work and by following protestant morality and family values. Yet this is often not true. Social reconstructionist have questioned some of the inequitable practices in schools and unfair advantages given to students from Anglo-Western dominant groups. They include scholars like Sleeter, McLaren and Ladson-Billings among others (Seeberg et al., 1998).

There are ways in which individuals and groups further class reproduction and create inequality and exclusivity in society. Immigrants and refugees may join the ranks of that segment of society and must face the truth about elitist institutions.

**Class Reproduction.** While working on a theoretical hypothesis to explain unequal scholastic achievement of children, Pierre Bourdieu came upon the idea of cultural capital. He contends that advantages that certain classes have, in terms of tools of learning, play a significant role in acquiring cognitive skills. Society is reproduced as dominant classes maintain their position of advantage. Cultural, economic, and social capital help dominant classes differentiate themselves from those below them. Capital in its objectified and embodied forms takes time to accumulate but has a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital can manifest itself in three different forms, depending on the field in which it functions. Economic capital pertains to capital that is directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in
the form of property rights; cultural capital can be converted to economic capital under certain conditions and can be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and social capital is accrued from social obligations, which are convertible in certain conditions to economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of title of nobility. Cultural capital exists in three forms: the embodied state is in the cultural qualities a person has within his mind and body; the objectified state is in the form of goods a person is exposed to, like books, dictionaries, machines, pictures, and so forth; and the institutionalized state is where a recognition of cultural competence is given to holders of academic qualifications. Social capital is acquired through networks, kinship, mutual acquaintances, that provide membership into exclusive groups. Possession of economic capital, which is the root of all other types of capital, would help to convert it to other forms of capital. Bourdieu concluded that this would require strategies that are aimed to ensure reproduction of capital.

**Critical Race Theory (CRT).** CRT is among the most significant theoretical frameworks of multicultural education. Race is a powerful social construct in which there exists a cultural ranking between Whites and Blacks (Ladson-Billings, 1998). While discussing the prominent themes of CRT, Ladson-Billings argued that whiteness is what makes CRT an important social and intellectual tool to deconstruct oppressive structures, reconstruct human agency, and construct equitable social relations of power. CRT and its relevance to education is examined by questioning an agenda that favors Whites in various areas, such as curriculum, instruction, funding, and facilities. Do N-B students encounter barriers in the above areas? If so, how do they deal with it? These are
some questions that I have raised while interviewing this group of refugee students.

CRT reinstates that racism in education needs to be exposed and radical solutions must be proposed and implemented. Based on a body of legal literature, Dixson and Rousseau (2005) have examined the CRT framework and a variety of constructs in education that have originated from the framework. These include constructs such as property value of whiteness, construct of voice scholarship, construct of restrictive versus expansive vision of anti-discriminatory laws, and the construct of color-blindness (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

**Policy Reform Models in Multicultural Education**

In this segment, I have provided an overview of policy reforms proposed by scholars of multicultural education and have labeled them for the purpose of readability. The labels are loosely based on the quintessential school reform agendas/models. An understanding of them will help us analyze the way in which they may apply to refugee students. Additionally, it also helps us understand the extent to which these agendas have been put to practice in classrooms in Northeast Ohio public schools.

Most scholars agree that the goal of multicultural education should be to reform schools, colleges, and universities so that students from diverse groups can have equal opportunities to learn. However, reform at its initial stages had more to do with superficial changes, like including women and ethnic groups into the content of the curriculum (Banks, 2009). This type of reform defeats the overall purpose of multicultural education.
**Equity Pedagogy.** Several scholars have developed various approaches, dimensions, paradigms, and goals, some of which have been summarized below. Banks developed five dimensions of multicultural education which included content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school culture. Equity pedagogy is similar to culturally relevant pedagogy. Through this method, teachers could modify their teaching to facilitate students from different racial, cultural, and social classes. In order to do so, a wide range of teaching and learning styles must be used. For example, cooperative teaching techniques can be used to teach Native American and Alaskan students (Banks & Banks, 2013). However, the challenge in the next few decades would be to modify the teaching to accommodate many other ethnic and cultural group as well as forcibly displace refugees.

Banks provided four approaches to integrate content into curriculum. Out of them, the *transformative* and *social action approach* are the ones that would be more engaging for students. Through this approach students are encouraged to identify social issues, gather data, reflect on them, and make decisions thus making them more empowered (Banks & Banks, 2013). Banks envisioned a change in strategy, which was to reform the total social environment—including teaching style and strategies, languages and dialects of the school, community participation and input, testing procedures, instructional material, and so forth (Banks, 2009). This *transformative approach* has evolved over the years, with a different agenda for the global era. In his most recent work, Banks (2016) called for civic education, which he believed is integral to the mass movement of immigrants. He proposed the idea of transformative citizenship education,
which basically encourages all students to be able to participate in the globalized world. Such an education will provide intercultural knowledge and skills; question structures in society that perpetuate inequality; and develop decision making and social action skills. Banks argued that this will help students develop multiple identifications that are cultural, national, regional, and global and are interactive, contextual, and fluid (Banks et al., 2016).

Even though Banks does not use the concept of critical pedagogy, his ideas are similar to that of Paulo Freire. For example, Banks (1993) argued that students should be provided information on the types of knowledge that exist. This would help them to examine freely, in a democratic classroom, their own perspectives and commitments. He believed that teachers could play an important role in making students critical thinkers, and together they can attempt to bridge the gap between ideals and realities. Also, Banks proposed the idea that students can critically analyze and construct knowledge by interpreting the past, present and future, very similar to Freire’s Liberatory pedagogy.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.** Ladson-Billings (1995) conceptualized the term culturally relevant pedagogy based on a study composed by her. Teachers chosen for the study were African American and from a low-income neighborhood. Her interest was to challenge the deficit paradigm that was prevalent in literature on African-American learners. Her findings led to a theory that proposes a need to encourage students not just to achieve academically but also to develop cultural competence and critique the social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The main principles of the pedagogy are based on strengthening teacher quality by making them culturally responsive. This can be
achieved by connecting with students, creating communities of learners, encouraging collaborative learning, and encouraging students to be responsible for one another.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.** Gay (2003) contended that through a culturally responsive pedagogy, educational equity can be achieved. She argued that “educators must systematically weave multicultural education into the central core of curriculum, instruction, school leadership, policy making counseling, classroom climate, and performance assessment” (2003, p. 32). Gay emphasized the need to use of multiple teaching techniques that are relevant to the experiences of ethnic youth and that are culturally responsive to various learning styles.

**Anti-Racist Anti-Bias Agenda.** The question to be asked is whether the theory and practice of multicultural education are working in tandem with one another. School reform in public schools has brought a lot of changes in terms of curriculum, yet there is much more to be achieved to make education more equitable. An anti-racist and anti-bias agenda is proposed by Sonia Nieto (as cited in Nieto & Bode, 2013). She asserted that simply introducing culturally relevant pedagogy, native language instruction, and untracking students is insufficient to improve students’ academic performance. The factors for underachievement of students are attributed to inequitable school funding and large class sizes. Nieto (as cited in Nieto & Bode, 2013) explained that the underlying philosophy of multicultural education is critical pedagogy, which challenges racism and any form of discrimination. Additionally, the focus is on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis), and the idea is to promote democratic principles and social change (Nieto & Bode, 2013).
What role does power play in multicultural education? Certain discriminatory policies are institutionalized and legitimized by those that are in power and have control over the institutions. However, teachers can play a role in addressing issues of racisms and bias in classrooms, while teaching in culturally responsive way. In doing so, students become more critical and reflective learners. They can therefore act as collaborators in developing a curriculum. Nieto and Bode (2013) posited that through a critical perspective, students need to reflect on contradictory perspectives to get a bigger picture of the reality. Through this, students can become agents of their own learning, cultivating critical judgment and decision-making skills. Schools should also maintain high expectations and rigorous standards for their students (Nieto & Bode, 2013).

**Social Reconstructionist Pedagogy**. Grant and Sleeter (2013) described five approaches to multicultural education. It is to promote the idea of a differentiated curriculum that would modify instruction and curriculum to suit the needs of diverse students; a human relations goal that would fight stereotypes and promote unity; single and group studies that would keep special group students informed of their history; and multicultural education. The fifth approach is education that is social reconstructionist, that is, redesigning of the educational program. This includes active participation of students calling for change and joining groups with common concern (Bode, 2009). The most important feature of this is social justice education. The approach seeks to reconstruct society and make it more equitable for people belonging to a different race, class, or gender and to those with a disability. The approach envisions children to think critically about issues, like access to education and jobs. For example, making them
aware of the difference in opportunity for Whites and men as opposed to women and non-White groups. Advocates of this approach expect to achieve excellence and equity. Grant and Sleeter (2013) believed that through this approach they can build bridges with different oppressed groups and collectively advance toward their common interest.

In addition, Bennett (2001) created a comprehensive framework that included four genres: curriculum reform, societal equity, equity pedagogy, and multicultural competence. Each genre or category of multicultural studies focuses on ways of thinking—such as intellectual, social, and personal development—that could make a difference in the development of children and youth. Bennett believed that these genres could act as tools for comprehension, critical thinking on multicultural education, guide teachers and educators reorient existing programs (Bennett, 2001). Furthermore, he argued that in order to promote cultural pluralism in schools, they must have certain conditions such as “an antiracist approach, positive teacher expectations, intercultural competence, and inclusive curriculum, and social action” (Bennett, as cited in Nieto, 2009, p. 81).

The above policy reform models inform my dissertation study and acted as a guide while I interviewed administrators, staff, counselors, and teachers to explore the kinds of pedagogy that they are currently incorporating in their curriculum.

Let us now step back and recapture the backdrop of mass migration and the consequences it has had across the world. The following is a literature review of the two most important phenomena that have contributed to mass movement of people and which have inadvertently impacted youth and their adaptation to host countries and school
systems. While researching refugee youth and schooling I came across several articles that discuss the intersectionality of globalization, migration, and education/schooling.

**Globalization and Mass Migration**

Berry (2008) has discussed the relationship between globalization and acculturation and stated that globalization is a process and acculturation is an outcome of it. He challenged the belief that there are any uniform consequences of globalization, such as homogenization of the non-dominant members of society. Using the acculturation framework, he explained that there can be highly variable outcomes both for individuals and cultural communities. He argued, based on empirical research, that their studies show clearly that cultural loss and homogenization (which are often the assumed single consequence of globalization as a process) do not inevitably occur. Indeed, the studies reveal that cultural loss and individual assimilation, while evident, are not the most frequent outcomes of a high degree of contact and domination.

(Berry, 2008, p. 335)

This research study examines the relationship between globalization and mass migration in the 21st century, and how it has impacted education and presented educational challenges. According to the United Nations, the international migrant population at the turn of the 21st century was estimated at 150 million, which by 2013 increased to 232 million (Bekerman, 2016). The mass movement of people around the world has had an impact on every sphere of life, including education. Scholars like Suárez-Orozco argued that globalization is the reason for the unprecedented number of
immigrant students entering American schools (Ciarniene & Kumpikaite, 2008; M. Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Globalization is a phenomenon that has its antecedents in the history of humankind and dates back many centuries. Globalization is an ongoing process that accelerated substantially during the late 20th century. High-tech communication networks, along with computers, cell phones, internet access, and advanced modes of transportation, have made the world more interdependent and a size smaller. In addition, instant flow of capital and active investments by multinationals contributed immensely to the swift movement of products and finances across the globe. The trends of globalization have also altered dynamics of the transmission of cultures and ideas instantaneously.

**Globalization and its Impact on Migration**

Even though the term globalization was popularized in the 1980s, Suárez-Orozco and Sattin (2007) stated that “…it is an ancient dynamic that perhaps originated sixty thousand years ago when humans first embarked on a journey that would take us, as a species, out of African Savanna to explore and transform the globe” (p. 7). However, Dickinson (2016) made a more conservative estimate and believed that globalization has been around for over 500 years. In the past few decades, the term has become a mantra among scholars across disciplines.

**Theories of scholars on globalization.** Some scholars have linked globalization to the emergence of capitalism in the 16th century (Castles, 2002; Dickinson, 2016; Jackson, 2016). Wallerstein (cited in Dickinson, 2016) developed the world systems theory. The theory describes globalization as a cyclical occurrence throughout the
history of the modern world. World systems theorists believe that “immigration is a consequence of economic globalization and market penetration across national boundaries” (Massey et al., 2004, p. 3). The theory argues that all the countries in the world can be placed in four different regions: the core, periphery, semi-periphery, and external regions. The core includes dominant countries that have enormous amounts of capital, while those on the periphery are producers of raw materials or provide labor to other countries. The countries in the semi-periphery are countries in between and remained dependent and underdeveloped. They are countries that play a small role in exploitation and are also exploited by core countries. According to the theory, when capitalist regions penetrate the peripheral, non-capitalist societies, it leads to a mobile population that is more prone to migration.

The process of globalization continued into the 19th century. During the colonial era, from the 17th century (1607-1763) European countries colonized and exploited other nations for raw materials while strengthening their economies. The current era of globalization is also a manifestation of such exploitation and does give some credence to the above theory. However, the difference lies in the players. Now it is governments and multinationals that perpetuate a capitalistic and exploitative agenda (Massey et al., 2004, p. 13). This agenda leads to an unequal distribution of wealth and resources between countries, such that the wealthier nations grow rapidly, while people from poorer nations are forced to migrate for a better life. Echoing the same view, Ciarniene and Kumpikaite (2008) contended that globalization exacerbates inequalities between nations to such a degree that for some, migration is an economic necessity rather than a choice.
According to Suárez-Orozco and Michikyan (2016), the current iteration of globalization is shaped by three Ms: Markets, their integration and disintegration; Media, the information, communication and social media technologies that reterritorialize labor and put a premium on knowledge-intensive work and stimulate new longings and belongings; Migration that involves mass movement of people on a planetary scale.

Globalization has stimulated markets, media, and migration in many ways. As the markets open, countries with more goods and services experience an increase in flow of capital, which leads to an increase in the flow of immigrants. Advances in technology, communication, and transportation not only increase economic production but also generate an interest in consumers for novel attractions and new tastes, which also stimulate migration (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2009). Additionally, the need for foreign workers in both the knowledge-intensive sectors as well as the labor-intensive sectors also provides an impetus to immigration.

Held and McGrew (as cited by Dickinson, 2016) bring our attention to how globalization has led to the interdependence of countries, and that it involves many political, social, and economic changes that span across the globe. These changes include an increased flow of trade, investment, finance, culture, migration, technology, knowledge, and so forth, while seamlessly blurring geographic boundaries. Consequently, these developments led to the transformation of migratory patterns that were hitherto unprecedented. Mobasher and Sadri (2003) argued that while previous migratory flows were caused by sporadic catastrophic events of the era, the migratory
flows of the modern era are attributed to a sustained pattern of movements and resettlement of populations around the world.

**Three major waves of migration.** There have been two significant waves of immigrants that came to the U.S., spanning a century from 1820-1920. The first wave of immigrants, called “old immigrants,” were from Northern and Western Europe and included people from Ireland, England, Germany, Canada, and Scandinavian countries. The second wave of immigrants, called “new migrants,” arrived in the 1880s. They belonged to Eastern and Southern Europe and were from countries like Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Italy. The third wave of immigrants were from 1965 onward and included millions of immigrants from Mexico, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Asia, and Africa. The lifting of the “quota system” and the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1965 opened U.S. doors to immigrants from many other parts of the world (Mobasher & Sadri, 2003, p. XI). It is not a surprise, then, that in the last two centuries the United States has been the largest recipient of immigrants in the world.

In the 21st century, there have been two different models of migration. The *temporary model* and the *settler migration model*. The former relates to guest workers who migrated for brief periods of time but remained connected to their country of origin. The education policy adopted by the receiving countries was to allow the immigrants to maintain their culture. However, this was not the case with the children of settler migrants. The strategies adopted by the receiving countries toward permanent settlers was one of *assimilation* and absorption into the dominant culture (Castles, 2002). Even though immigrants in the 1970s wanted to assimilate, they could not do so due to the
discrimination they experienced. In addition, they also wanted to maintain their own cultural identity, language, customs, and religion. Schools in the United States addressed this by initiating multicultural education to allow students to maintain their cultural identity.

Around the 1990s, there was an influx of migrants from countries in the East moving towards the West and from South to North. These mass movements triggered fear among the receiving countries because of the impact it could have on their societies. As a result, stricter restrictions were enforced on migration and more border controls were implemented. Despite these restrictions, migrant flows continued to build momentum. According to Castles (2002), most major theories on immigration forecast that this trend of mass migration will only keep growing.

**Key factors for mass migration.** There are many explanations provided for mass movements. Demographic explanations for the movement argue that fast growing economies with low fertility rates and an aging population are experiencing labor shortages and need working-age people who can perform low-skilled jobs. Castles (2002) referred to these jobs as the 3 D’s—dirty, dangerous, and demanding/demeaning jobs. There are also “push and pull” factors, where people from poorer countries are pushed out because of unemployment while wealthier countries experience labor shortages, creating a gravitational pull by offering opportunities and jobs. Then, there is of course the familial aspect, where migration is perceived as a coping mechanism or survival strategy for many. In some countries in East Africa, the eldest member of a family is sent overseas by pooling all of their resources. The family believes that the
member migrating to another country will be able to support the family once they are employed. Mass recruitment of labor by corporations also shapes the migratory flows. Even though these business arrangements appear to be mutually beneficial, they often lead to a conflict of interest. For example, receiving countries may choose to restrict immigrants or repatriate guest workers. In such cases, corporations intervene and oppose government policies. This situation seems much too familiar amidst our current political climate in the U.S. Just a year back, the Trump administration, with its anti-immigrant fervor, enforced laws to round up undocumented immigrant farm workers in California and repatriate them. Ciarniene and Kumpikaite (2008) described the contradictory policies of the U.S. and stated, “ironically, the United States, despite their tight border controls, depend heavily on illegal farm workers to do work such as fruit and vegetable picking” (Ciarniene & Kumpikaite, 2008, p. 44). Policies adopted by the current U.S. government have threatened agribusinesses, which funded the Republican campaign but are incurring great losses. Strict government policies and bureaucratic bottlenecks prevent businesses from attaining visas for guest workers, thus further hurting domestic business in the U.S., as is illustrated in Bjerga’s (2016) article “Crops Rot While Trump-Led Immigration Backlash Idles Farm Work.” The repatriation of guest workers may have implications for the education of their children in American public schools.

There are also sociological explanations to international migration. It is also a fact that the cultural and social capital amassed by people furthers their desire and motivation to migrate. Cultural capital refers to the knowledge that people gain through various forms of print, visual, and social media. Much of this media exposure comes
from Western nations, and prompts immigrants aspire for what they see as a better life.

On the other hand, social capital refers to the familial and prior contacts that immigrants have in receiving countries. For example, pre-existing migratory networks act as an anchor for emigrants and ease their decision-making process.

**Globalization and its impact on education.** Globalization and education have greatly affected each other and have a common goal of preparing youth for today’s interconnected world and business eco-system (Gupta, 2017). Discussing the current era, Jackson (2016) contended that globalization as a contemporary condition or process shapes education around the globe in terms of policies and values, curriculum and assessment, pedagogy, educational organization and leadership, conceptions of the learner and teacher, and so forth. She argued that the very first impact of globalization on education can be seen during the late colonial and imperialist era. During that era, there was an emergence of mass schooling for children in most developing regions, such as Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. However, this desire to create schools did not come out of sheer generosity, as according to post-colonial theorists such as Paulo Freire (as cited in Jackson, 2016), institutionalization of schooling was done with vested, ulterior interest. Education that was being provided was not only for the development of the local communities, but also to undermine the local culture and advance English language to preserve colonial interests and maintain a global empire (M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007).

**School Ethos in A New Era**
Bearing the above in mind, immigrant youth and their performance in schools needs to be studied in a holistic manner, such that one can grasp the political, social and economic conditions that exacerbate or ameliorate existing circumstances within various institutions, including education. Knowledge of how other countries are dealing with issues related to multicultural education, and the strategies used by schools across the world, can help us gain knowledge and incorporate some of their innovations into our own school systems.

The following literature presents research on the challenges faced by schools in non-U.S. countries while dealing with immigrant students. Discussing the enormity of the migrant population around the world and the needs of diverse groups, Sussmuth (2007) wrote, “each of the approximately 200 countries on the earth is a destination, transit, or source country of international migration, or a combination of all three” (p. 196). The future of the world therefore involves a large amount of cross-border movement of people, which inevitably includes children of schooling age. Schools will have to prepare for students with diverse cultures, languages and religions, as well as children that are a product of forcible displacement such as refugees. Schools must thus work on processes that involve transformation of school policies, curriculum, ethos, and ideology across the globe.

Globalization in the 21st century has brought to the forefront many new challenges to both learning and teaching. M. Suárez-Orozco and Sattin (2007) argued that there is a need for institutional and cultural reforms to cope with the challenges of globalization. This requires the active participation of educators, policy makers, and
school administrators to create classroom environments that can incorporate new learning
techniques that fit within the context of globalization. What does a student who is a
product of this global era look like? What would this student aspire for? M. Suárez-Orozco and Sattin described the product of globalization as follows: “an
intellectually curious, autonomous, socially responsive, engaged, productive, and
globally conscious member of the human family in the twenty first century” (M. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007, p. 19). Such students, they argued, can no longer be
taught through anachronistic methods that perpetuate a factory model of education. This
model does not stimulate or engage students to flourish in a globalized era.

While youth education through innovative methods should be a priority, so should
varied educational needs of a growing demographic. Suárez-Orozco and Michikyan
(2016) contended, “children of immigrants are the fastest growing sector of the child and
youth population in most of the high and middle-income countries around the world” (p. 1). This implies that there is a need for schools to reorient their style of teaching and
curriculum in a manner that is inclusive of this demographic. Indeed, there is a need for
researchers to rethink and re-innovate educational practices to maximize the learning
potential of youth from all around the world.

**Challenges to Adaptation and Integration of FD Youth**

Integration is defined as a process in which immigrants settle into the host county
and its social structure. Consequently, this leads to changes in the immigrants as they
interact with the host society, while simultaneously causing changes in the society of
settlement as well. A report on immigrant pathways and opportunities describes four
keys dimensions of integration. The first of these dimensions is *structural* integration, which refers to having access to educational institutions and employment opportunities. Second is *cultural* integration, which relates to borrowing some of the behaviors, attitudes, and language of the country of settlement. Interacting and building relationships with native people is the third form, known as *social* integration. The fourth and final dimension is *identification*, which is when immigrants begin to feel a sense of belonging and take on a new identity in their country of settlement (C. Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Teranishi, 2016).

**Trauma**

Let us now examine some of the literature on the challenges that FD youth may face in their country of settlement. These often stem from the ambiguity of their legal status in their new home, which may prevent them from attaining basic services and freedoms of a citizen like reunification of family (Hart, 2014). Often, FD youth may have lived in refugee camps, stateless, with continuous disruption in schooling. There are also situations where these children may have never been inside a physical classroom. For such students, adjusting to a new environment and adapting to social and school norms is a challenging task. There may also be FD students who were exposed to conflict and violence and are therefore vulnerable to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It is from the perspective of the above situations that one must understand FD children in American public schools.

**Disruption in Schooling**
Forcibly displaced youth encounter disruptions in their schooling, for example from psychological stress due to exposure to violence and other resettlement stressors (Brenner & Kia-Keating, 2016). This disruption in their life may have a serious impact on their academic performance. Additionally, FD youth may be separated from their siblings, parents and grandparents, which may further induce stress in their lives.

**Masks of Achievement**

Mosselson (2006) argued that there is a need to understand refugees through a more holistic approach. She explained this through her *roots and routes* paradigm and underscores the importance of *masks of achievement* that often hide the suffering and trauma of refugee students caused by their encounters in war and migration. Often, such a mask leads to psychological problems and isolation among refugee youth. Moselsson (as cited in Lerner, 2012) is critical of the Western perspective of schooling, where the aim is to mold students to conform to socially acceptable behavior. In the process, she contended that opportunities are lost to cultivate cultural hybridity that can help refugees in schools.
**Literature Gap**

Even though there has been a substantial amount of research on the achievement gap of ethnic, national, and cultural minorities, there has been little empirical research on the school adaptation of these groups (Sam et al., 2006). There are multiple theories on how immigrant youth are adapting to their countries of settlement. Some have successfully integrated into society, while others have become a cause of concern and even a threat to national security. In recent years, there have been several news stories on both immigrant and non-immigrant youth who have been radicalized by militant groups like the Islamic State and have threatened their countries of settlement. For example, nations like France and the Netherlands are dealing with ethno-political tensions that led to violence from disadvantaged minority groups. On the other end of the spectrum, there are countries like Australia and Canada which are enacting anti-discriminatory laws and crafting social legislation that benefits immigrants.

**Cultural Distance**

Literature on the schooling of refugee students indicate that there are no concrete policies and practices designed to accommodate the needs of refugee students. For example, Koyama and Bakuza (2017) stated that

When refugees are resettled in third countries, like the U.S., which are geographically and culturally distant from their countries of origin, their numbers are relatively small. As a result, what kinds of education are best to accommodate these refugees and their families has been left to individual districts, and even
single schools, creating a patchwork of often disparate and disjointed programs, policies and practices. (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017, p. 332)

**Cultural Identity**

Some scholars have recommended paying attention to the difference between *culture* and *cultural identity* (two anthropological and sociological terms that have been extensively used in acculturation literature). Clarifying misconceptions on the usage of these terms would help immigrants understand the aspects of culture that they must retain in order to preserve their cultural identity. Van Oudenhoven, Ward, and Masgoret (2006) stated that “Culture is a complex construct and may be seen as encompassing artifacts, social institutions, language, customs, traditions and shared meanings. Cultural identity, however, refers to a sense of pride and belongingness to one’s cultural group” (2006, p. 647). Differentiating between these terms helps us in our efforts to understand N-B culture and the aspects of their cultural identity that they are trying to preserve.

**Cultural Misunderstanding**

Refugee students face multiple barriers as they enter American public schools. According to McBrien (2005), this is typically due to pre-migratory acculturation stress, which may impact their ability to cope with their surroundings. Additionally, living in high-poverty, urban areas can lead to a subtractive assimilation pattern where youth distance themselves from their own culture in order to gain acceptance from their native peers. According to McBrien, cultural misunderstanding of refugees, discrimination, and negative attitudes can also act as barriers for students to integrate. These kinds of negative attitudes can further worsen the emotional state of refugee students (Portes &
Additionally, a lack of language skills can lead to cultural misunderstanding and worsen the situation.

**Narrowed Pathways**

One of the challenges that refugees face in high schools is a lack of guidance from high school staff to access educational pathways leading to higher education. In an ethnographic study on three different groups of Bhutanese, Burmese, and Iraqi refugee students in Philadelphia public schools, McWilliams and Bonet (2016) explained how refugee students aspire for post-secondary education but lack navigational assistance to attain their goals.

The present-day refugee experience indexes a continuum of precarity, one that is produced in the liminal spaces between war, flight and exile and furthered by their interactions with the unstable institutions following resettlements such as schools and social service agencies. (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016, p. 157)

They argued that barriers are caused by failing schools plagued with poor infrastructure and an inability to provide navigational assistance to students with college aspirations. McWilliams and Bonet therefore pointed out that it is not just the pre-migratory experiences of the students that prevent students from aspiring for a good life, but also the narrowed pathways that prevent them from acquiring postsecondary credentials.

**Discrimination**

A study on perceived discrimination, language proficiencies and adaptation in Australia by Buchanan, Abu-Rayya, Kashima, Paxton and Sam (2018) found that between non-refugee and refugee youth, the latter experience more maladjustment. This
was evident from their lower psychological adaptation (example: self-esteem), as well as poorer sociocultural adaptation (example: school adjustment). In addition, they argued that adaptation between the two groups cannot be viewed as being monolithic in nature, and that intervention programs should specifically address the needs of refugee youth. The authors explained that refugee youth at times must cope with multiple situations like trauma from prior experiences, cultural loss, and acculturative stress. Buchanan et al. contended that being in such a stressful state “can impede their adaptation, along with attention, concentration and other cognitive processes which are important both in motivation and learning ability during contact with their new society” (2018, p. 106). Separately, adaptation outcomes of immigrant youth are associated with their group status and the choices they make.

According to Berry, “research that ignores key features of the dominant society (such as demography, immigration policies and attitude towards the immigrants) is . . . incomplete” (Berry, 1997). Consequently, various studies indicate that acculturation strategies adopted by immigrant youth are related to their positive or negative experiences, such as with discrimination. When immigrant youth experience less discrimination, they lean towards assimilation and integration strategies. Conversely, if they experience more discrimination, they are likely to choose separation or marginalization (Berry & Hou, 2017; Sam & Berry, 2010). Elsewhere in another study, Berry et al. (2006) contended that “the experience of discrimination was the single most important factor negatively impacting the wellbeing of immigrant youth” (Berry & Hou, 2017, p. 31).
Refugee youth face discrimination in different ways and may encounter microaggressions, bullying, and xenophobia. A report initiated by a Research Consortium to identify the needs and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees states that most of the refugee children experienced bullying and difficulty in building peer relationships (Arnot & Pinson, 2005). Additionally, Candappa (as cited in Lerner, 2012) stated that schools do not take enough action against bullies. Berry and Hou’s (2017) study examined phenomena of acculturation and adaptation of refugees by understanding their sense of belonging, their heritage culture, the acculturation strategies they used, their experiences with discrimination, and their general sense of wellbeing. Their study found that “the experience of discrimination has been shown to be one of the greatest risk factors in both the acculturation and wellbeing of immigrants” (Berry & Hou, 2017, p. 37).

** Forced Maturation or Parents’ Parents **

There is a need to conduct empirical research on the identity construction of refugee students and how they navigate socially through the school system. Immigrant students may develop identity confusion as well as forced maturation (Sleijpen, Mooren, Kleber, & Boeije, 2017), which may lead to conflict between different generations. Typically, this happens because of a reversal of roles between parent and child. This role reversal has also been discussed by Portes and Rumbaut (2001), who stated, “One of the most poignant aspect of immigrants’ adaptation to a new society is that children can become in a very real sense, their parents’ parents” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 53). Typically, this happens when children acquire language skills sooner than their parents
and are forced to play multiple adult roles, such as translating for their parents or handling and managing important financial and medical transactions. These added skills may also make them more confident and question parental authority. Acculturation gaps across generations can have serious implications such as downward assimilation for immigrant youth. However, there can be vast differences based on the family and the degree of loss of parental authority and control (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

Are all outcomes of role reversal or *forced maturation* negative, or are children capable of helping parents? This has been discussed by Sleijpen et al. (2017) who argue that

> Although young refugees found it hard to deal with their (psychologically) ill parent and their autonomy could be considered as forced maturation, they explicated that they actively and willingly pursued this strategy and that helping their parents gave them power and the feeling that they were able to keep up spirits within the family unit as well. (2017, p. 360)

Refugee students seem to have strategies that act as a buffer and provide coping mechanisms that help them remain altruistic despite their stressful circumstances.

**Gender and Schooling**

There are noticeable variations in the outcomes of acculturation and adaptation of boys versus girls. According to Qin (2006), gender shapes the adaptation trajectories and experiences of immigrant children. Gender is an important segmenting factor because it determines how students adapt, as well as their future prospects of mobility. Her research also explains why girls perform better in schools. Qin attributed it to “parental
expectations after migration, socialization at home, relations and school and gendered process of acculturation and identity formation” (2006, p. 8).

**Gendered Pathways**

A similar study by Güngör and Bornstein on gender and acculturation of Turkish youth in Belgium revealed that acculturation of youth follows *gendered pathways*. For example, “Turkish Belgian boys reported more personal experiences with discrimination than did immigrant Turkish girls. Moreover, older boys believed more strongly than did older girls that Turks as a group were discriminated against” (Güngör & Bornstein, 2013, p. 186). Overall, they found that both boys and girls separated their private life from public life by maintaining their heritage culture in their private life, and adopting mainstream culture in public.

Güngör and Bornstein (2013) explained that younger and older adolescents acculturate differently and that

Acculturation is dynamic; even younger and older adolescents respond differently to contextual demands of home and host cultures. Specifically, younger adolescents often navigate between these social and cultural ecologies more fluidly than do older adolescents, as they are developmentally more flexible and open to new experiences. (Aranowitz; Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, as cited in Güngör & Bornstein, 2013, p. 178)

In the following segment, three different theoretical frameworks that inform my problem of study are discussed. These following theories and models act as a scaffolding for my dissertation study and have been a valuable resource to examine and explore the
phenomenon of acculturation and sociocultural adaptation of N-B refugee high school students.

**Theoretical Models/Frameworks**

This segment provides a snapshot of the three theoretical frameworks that informed this dissertation study. They are Berry’s *acculturation* taxonomy (Berry, 1997); Bronfenbrenner’s *bioecological* framework, which falls within the parameters of Berry’s taxonomy; and Portes and Zhou’s (1993) theory of segmented assimilation. The dominant melting pot/straight-line model of assimilation of the early 1900s, developed by Robert Park of the Chicago School, has been challenged by more recent scholars such as Portes and Zhou (1993) with their theory of *Segmented Assimilation* and Gibson’s theory of *Accommodation without Assimilation* (M. Gibson, 1988). In addition, Ogbu’s *cultural ecological theory* (Ogbu & Simons, 1998) informs my research on barriers to education and access to employment, in addition to discrimination of minority groups.

There have been several theories on how immigrant youth are acculturating into the country of settlement. This dissertation study tries to explore the phenomenon of acculturation and sociocultural adaption of N-B youth through the lens of multiple frameworks. The dissertation study is informed by Bronfenbrenner’s *bioecological model*, which falls within the parameters of my dissertation study and can help understand the role of environment in the development of a child, or in this case, refugee students. Berry’s model of *acculturation* taxonomy (Berry, 1997) lays the foundation for this dissertation study and helps differentiate between the multiple strategies used by immigrants as they acculturate into the host society/country. In addition, Portes and
Zhou’s (1993) theory of segmented assimilation will help us understand the potential path that immigrant youth may take based on their context of reception, family structure, and human capital in the country of settlement. The divergent destinies (Zhou, 1997) of immigrants/refugees may depend on the segment of society they adopt, which could put them on trajectory of upward mobility or a spiral of downward mobility.

**Ecological Systems Theory**

Bronfenbrenner’s seminal work on the role of environment and its impact on the development of a child can help us understand its applicability to the ecology that surrounds refugee youth. This dissertation study draws upon Bronfenbrenner’s model, initially known as the ecological systems theory. The theory evolved over three phases and during the third phase, the theory was renamed as the bioecological theory/model. While examining multiple contextual layers, or bioecological levels, in the environment, this segment also presents a brief discussion on the concept of chaos (Lustig, 2010) and its impact on refugees. A rudimentary outline of the evolution of Bronfenbrenner’s model that spans over three decades, between 1970-2005, is relevant to understanding the factors that play an important role in the overall development of an individual. Through the ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner presented “the idea of enveloping circles, represented as the nested ‘matrioshka’ (Russian dolls) continued to be used” (Rosa & Tudge, 2013, p. 254). Bronfenbrenner explained his theory through a diagram of concentric circles that represent the different systems in the environment. The ecological systems theory went through considerable changes over a period of time. During its first phase, the focus was largely on context, but in the more recent and more mature phase the
settings (Lustig, 2010) in which the individual spends time are considered more important.

The different levels in the ecology that surrounds the child/student are presented in Figure 1. Although this theory was conceived to understand the development of children, it has been used for adults as well. The first level within the ecology is the **microsystem**, where the home, school, neighborhood, church, and peers are important settings that help the development of a person. The second level is the **mesosystem** which relates to the interaction between the different settings in the microsystem, in which the developing person participates. The third level is the **exosystem**, where the developing person is not situated and does not participate actively (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). For example, it refers to changes that can happen due to outside factors like issues at a parent’s workplace, educational policies at school, and so forth that indirectly impact the person. The most distal level of the environment, the **macrosystem**, can still impact a refugee student based on issues at the national level, beliefs and customs in society, culture or subculture, the political and economic system (Brenner & Kia-Keating, 2016). For example, anti-immigrant policies by a country of settlement can indirectly impact refugee youth in American public schools. Overturning Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) is an example of how a distal contextual layer in the environment can have an impact on
immigrants that entered the United States when they were children.

**Figure 1.** Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems theory
Therefore, family, school, neighborhood, community and societal, cultural, and national values can impact an immigrant in both positive and negative ways (Brenner & Kia-Keating, 2016).

With the evolution of the ecological systems theory, a more sophisticated and further-developed version of the previous theory was presented as the bioecological theory by Bronfenbrenner. The main elements of the model are explained by Bronfenbrenner and Morris:

Defining properties of the model, which involves four principal components and the dynamic, interactive relationships among them. The first of these, which constitutes the core of the model, is Process. More specifically, this construct encompasses particular forms of interaction between organism and environment, called proximal processes, that operate over time and are posited as the primary mechanisms producing human development. However, the power of such processes to influence development is presumed, and shown, to vary substantially as a function of the characteristics of the developing Person, of the immediate and more remote environmental Contexts, and the Time periods, in which the proximal processes take place. (2007, p. 795)

The four components in this model—Process, Person, Context, and Time (PPCT)—are required to conduct bioecological research. During the last phase of Bronfenbrenner’s work, proximal processes were re-considered as the driving force of human development. The theory maintains that proximal processes are mutually influenced by a person’s characteristics and the environment. In addition, proximal
processes also influence the development of the individual. At the microsystem level, the term proximal processes refer to the reciprocal transactions between the child and persons, objects, and symbols in the immediate microsystem that directly influence childhood development. In situations where there is stability in the family with parental responsibility at home and teacher guidance at school, the proximal processes are more likely to have positive developmental outcomes. Conversely, in an unstable setting, proximal processes will slow down the outcomes of developmental dysfunction (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). Also, with relation to the Person component of PPCT it is important to note that “identifying dispositional characteristics of the persons that are developmentally generative versus developmentally disruptive” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007, p. 825) are also of consequence. There are three types of characteristics: demand characteristics, which include temperament, appearance, age, gender and skin color; resource characteristics, which relate to a person’s ability, knowledge skill, and experience and could encourage or limit proximal processes; and force characteristics, which are elements such as curiosity and independent engagement with an activity. The next component of PPCT is Context. Context refers to multiple contextual layers and has been widely referenced—these are the Micro-, Meso-, Exo- and Macro-systems. Time was a part of the earlier ecological systems theory but broadened during the last phase of evolution for the bioecological model. The contextual layer of time, called the chronosystem, refers to the changes that happen over a period of time in a child’s life, which can also have a bearing on their development (Rosa & Tudge, 2013). These changes include the birth of a sibling, death in the family, parent separation, illness in the
family, and so forth. Crisis and instability of any kind can lead to chaos and impact the development and growth of those surrounded by it. The concept of chaos and its impact are relevant to this dissertation study, because refugees are a product of actions or events in that macrosystem that could have calamitous outcomes. The following findings by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2007) help to understand the effect of chaos and its impact on a person’s development

At a more general level, the research findings reveal that growing chaos in the lives of families, in childcare settings, schools, peer groups, youth programs, neighborhoods, workplaces, and other everyday environments in which human beings live their lives. Such chaos interrupts and undermines the formation and stability of relationships and activities that are essential for psychological growth. Moreover, many of the conditions leading to that chaos are the often unforeseen products of policy decisions made both in the private and in the public sector. (p. 824)

In summation, the bioecological model by Bronfenbrenner has contributed immensely to our understanding of the role of ecology in the development of a child. This theory, when applied to the N-B refugee, also provides some important information. The old adage “it takes a village to bring up a child” supports to some extent Bronfenbrenner’s theory that proximal processes like church, school, family, and peer all play important roles in the development of a child. In addition, any changes in the family structure or crisis in the family can have an impact as well. Finally, decisions at a national level can also disrupt the life of a refugee child and have negative consequences.
A change in immigration policies, such as the decision by the current administration to limit and reduce the number of asylum seekers and refugees in the U.S., may have a significant indirect impact on children because of issues like family separation. Separately, chaos of any kind in the life of immigrant youth, such as disruption of schooling, separation from family or extended family, unemployment of parents, or life crises like death or divorce can affect a child’s overall performance.

**Bioecological model.** In a more recent work, Schachner, Juang, Moffitt, and van de Vijver (2018) drew upon Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems approach in order to understand refugee and immigrant adjustments from the perspective of school context and the levels within it. First, the proximal level or layer is observed—that is, the interactions in the classroom that include *peer relations, student-teacher relations, teaching belief, and teaching practices*. This was followed by reviewing the school ethos, the diversity climate in the school, and finally the national policies relating to diversity and school tracking. This aspect of the article informs my dissertation study, especially as I use Bronfenbrenner’s model to understand N-B student development through the various ecological systems.

The article also pointed towards an important theoretical shift in acculturation orientation from one to three dimensions. Schachner et al. referred to the recent study on Italian-, Portuguese-, and Albanian-heritage adolescents in Switzerland and state that the study identified “three dimensions of acculturation—heritage culture orientation, majority culture orientation, and multicultural orientation” (2018, p. 45).
**Chaos concept and refugees.** There is a growing interest in *chaos* in the lives of children and how it impacts the healthy childhood development. Lustig (2010) explained the experiences of the refugees as being a product of *chaos*, and that it applies to children as well as adult refugees. Chaos has been examined by Lustig through changes in the macrosystem, which include the wars and natural disasters that lead to the creation of refugees. So, what are some of the chaos-generating characteristics? These characteristics include deprivation, upheaval, fear, uncertainty, and loss. In addition to the above insecurities, refugees must find ways to cope with being transplanted into a new environment, where they experience multiple losses that are described as *cultural bereavement*. These include loss of one’s family, favorite places and pastimes, favorite cuisines, and cultural values (Lustig, 2010). Indeed, “the refugee experience is by definition one of many tectonic shifts in typical macrosystemic structures of stability, community, culture, political, and educational systems, in light of the migration that refugees make around the world” (Lustig, 2010, p. 241).

**Unworthy role models.** Lustig (2010) discussed how disruption in the social ecology can have multiple consequences on the physical body and have an impact on growth, cognition, social skills, and moral thought. Refugee children are forced to play adult roles of caretaking siblings or sometimes working to take care of their family. On the other hand, parents who lack language skills or specific skills to find a job may lose self-esteem, as well as their position as a patriarch or matriarch of the family. This alters the parent-child relationship, where parents begin to be looked upon as unworthy role models. Consequently, children may begin to question authority and disregard parental
supervision. There may be conflict between refugee parents and adolescents also because of cultural differences that exist within the country of settlement. Multigenerational families are very common among Southeast Asians but are less common among Americans. This change in cultural norms can also lead to conflict and chaos within immigrant/refugee families.

**Mental health and suicide.** What happens when there is a traumatic event like suicide or mental health issues in the family? How much does it psychologically impact children and young adults? Consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory, N-B refugee youth may have been impacted by such a crisis which relates to mental health problems of Nepalese-Bhutanese refugees. Articles in community newsletters and magazines such as *The Atlantic* read, “Bhutanese Refugees are Killing Themselves at an Astonishing Rate” (Preiss, 2013). Highlighting the crisis, the National Public Radio (NPR) carried a story about increased suicide rates among N-B refugees residing in Pittsburgh. These refugees are among the millions of FD people in the world. NPR Pittsburgh reported that there is a vast difference in the suicide rates of N-B refugees in the U.S. as compared to the rest of the population. According to the report, typically the global suicide rate per 100,000 people is 16. However, “the U.S. rate [of suicide] for the general population is 12.4 . . . the Bhutanese rate is much higher at 20.3 among refugees resettled in the U.S.” (Beras, 2014). The cause of this disturbing phenomenon was attributed to unemployment, depression, and a lack of family ties, which could lead to severe depression (Preiss, 2013). Preiss explained that
The rate of depression among the Bhutanese surveyed was 21%, nearly three times that of the general U.S. population (6.7%). In addition to depression, risk factors for suicide included not being the family’s provider, feelings of limited social support, and having family conflict after resettlement. Most of the suicides were within a year of resettlement to the U.S. and, in all cases, the victims hanged themselves. (Preiss, 2013)

Such statistics raised a red flag among community members and mental health professionals. However, according to Neel, from Lean International Association (LIA), in the past few years those numbers have come down significantly. This was mainly due to intervention and awareness programs in the community.

As immigrant groups resettle into a host-country, they find themselves between two sets of cultures. They encounter many changes and challenges that may be unique to them. For example, they need to acclimatize to physical changes like urbanization and a dense population, changes in temperature, biological changes such as diet and exposure to disease, economic changes such as loss of status and job opportunities, social changes such as disruption from communities and new friendships, and cultural changes that are equally intimidating. Changes in food habits and clothing, as well as major shifts in language, religion, and value systems are also important as they adjust to the new society (Berry, 1997; Zhou, 1997). The factors mentioned apply to the whole family, while economic changes would typically apply to the main breadwinner of the family. For example, SES of immigrant adults may fall or improve in comparison to their economic status in the country of origin. These sociocultural and economic changes may directly
or indirectly impact youth and their process of transition into schools. This dissertation study tries to examine the extent to which these theories apply to N-B refugee children in Northeast Ohio public school systems.

**Stress and refugee families.** Research on immigrant youth has shown that refugees are more vulnerable to stress as compared to native youth (Sleijpen et al., 2017). Using the *socioecological framework*, Sleijpen et al.’s study tries to identify the processes that can contribute to their positive outcomes. In addition, using the *resilience* construct, they identified the protective factors that contribute to the psychological wellbeing of refugees living in the Netherlands. The participants for their research were between 13-21 years of age. Their findings indicate that the challenges faced by refugees include a lack of trust on arriving to a country of settlement, living in uncertainty when waiting for key decisions related to their lives, a sense of powerlessness, and older refugees’ perception of real and perceived barriers to access and opportunities. Sleijpen et al. explained that, “influences within and between micro-, meso- and macro-systems are bidirectional; political decisions influence young refugees’ school circumstances and subsequently their wellbeing, as well as vice-versa (their well-being influences their school performances)” (p. 359). Understanding the bioecological model helps us understand how school-based intervention and prevention programs (Brenner & Kia-Keating, 2016) can help improve sociocultural integration of refugees.

**Acculturation and Sociocultural Adaptation**

Acculturation of immigrants into the receiving country has been researched and studied extensively in the U.S. The definition of the term is “acculturation comprehends
those phenomena which result when group of individuals having different cultures come into continues first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, as cited in Berry, 1997, p. 7).

Interestingly acculturation is a term that is considered to be neutral. In the sense that when individuals or groups come into contact with each other, both groups could experience changes. However, changes take place to a greater degree in one of the groups rather than the other.

Let us now examine some of the strategies used by individuals during the process of acculturation. This will provide us with a deeper understanding of how immigrant youth in the United States acculturate when they join a new school system. According to Berry (1997), cross-cultural psychology has demonstrated that “there is a link between cultural context and individual behavioral development” (p. 6). Which means that the behavior of immigrants is in correspondence to the cultural influences around them. The concept of acculturation can be understood through three different perspectives (Phinney, Berry, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). It could be related to psychological adaptation, sociocultural adaptation, or economic adaptation. Psychological adaptation deals with the psychological and physical well-being of individuals. For example, in a study related to youth it would explore their satisfaction of life in general, self-esteem, psychological problems such as anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms. Sociocultural adaptation or acculturation refers to how well an individual navigates through daily life in a new cultural context. While psychological adaptation is interpreted through use of stress and coping framework, sociocultural adaptation is interpreted through an analysis of social
skills, interaction, and cultural learning. With reference to adaptation of youth, the focus would be about school adjustment and behavioral problems such as issues related to antisocial behavior in school and community. Additionally, research on sociocultural adaptation of youth is concerned with whether or not youth are acquiring “culturally appropriate skills needed to operate effectively in a specific social or cultural milieu” (Sam et al., 2006, p. 118). This dissertation study focused in particular on sociocultural adaptation. And lastly, economic adaptation is concerned with the migration motivation, loss of status on entering a new country, and the potential of individuals to obtain work, as well as the extent to which that work is satisfying and effective in the new culture (Berry, 1997). According to Ward and Rana-Deuba, “Overall Berry’s model of acculturation and adaptation is highly regarded and widely recognized as exerting a prominent influence on theory and research in the field” (1999, p. 423).

Qualitative research articles on acculturation and sociocultural adaptation can provide us with a sound understanding of theoretical constructs/concepts. However, in addition, quantitative perspectives use additional tools to gather valuable information to understand the same phenomenon but through a different lens. For example, an acculturation index was conceived by Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) which could be used to gather data on the extent of acculturation of immigrants, based on their responses to a list of items and how they identify with them. These include clothing, food, religious beliefs, self-identity, values, and so forth, in the country of settlement. (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Their work has been cited extensively in acculturation literature and aligns with Berry’s acculturation strategies. The authors refer to the instrument “as a
comprehensive, valid, and flexible measurement of acculturation styles” (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999, p. 426). Although, there are a few debates on its applicability, yet it has been adopted by many researchers. The index with its list of items provided this dissertation study significant insights in identifying acculturation styles in more specific, tangible or perceptible ways.

Understanding cultural differences in communication styles norms and values helps predict sociocultural adaptation of individuals or groups from a different culture, resettling to into the country of settlement. Sociocultural adaptation is explained as “the ability to ‘fit in’ or to negotiate interactive aspects of life in a new cultural milieu” (Masgoret & Ward, 2006, p. 59). In order to identify the level of sociocultural adaptation, a scale, similar to the *acculturation index*, was conceived by Ward and Kennedy (1999), and called the *sociocultural adaptation scale* or (SCAS). The scale consists of different items such as norms, local value system, cultural differences, ability to make friends, interaction with opposite sex, dealing with unpleasant situations, and so forth (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). The list helps clarify the smallest units of sociocultural experiences in the country of settlement encountered by immigrants in their daily life. Also, according to the authors immigrants that relocate to other countries with a host of financial and social capital find acculturation and adaptation to a new country less challenging. Also referencing other scales to measure behavioral dimensions of acculturation they described the inventories as including “language difficulties, making friends, communicating effectively, adapting to new food and living conditions” (Ward &
Kennedy, 1999, p. 673). The above aspects were considered during the interviews with participants.

Four different acculturation strategies or attitudes have been identified by Berry (1997). These include *assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization*. 

*Assimilation* is when individuals seek contact with other cultures and do not maintain their own cultural identity. When the assimilation is voluntary then it is similar to the notion of a melting pot; but if there is forced assimilation, then it is similar to a *pressure cooker*. *Separation* strategy is when individuals wish to maintain their cultural identity and avoid contact with mainstream groups. *Separation* could become *segregation* when the dominant society follows exclusionary policies. *Integration* is when they wish to maintain contact with their own culture as well as that of the larger society. This can be pursued only when the dominant society is open and inclusive, and when there is also mutual accommodation. *Marginalization* happens when individuals neither pursue cultural maintenance nor have interest in the other cultures. It is an option that is rarely chosen willfully by people. People become marginalized when they are forced to assimilate and are in what Berry (1997) contended to be a metaphorical *Pressure cooker*. This type of *assimilation* was present with the first wave of immigrants to the United States, where the outcome was a great amount of discontent among immigrants. An example of forced assimilation in this decade is the recent ban of full-face veil and burqa in France. This ban led to mass protests against the discrimination of Muslim women. In the same manner, when a group experiences forced exclusion, it leads to *segregation*. 
The above approaches can be used to analyze national policies and programs in different countries. Some countries may be *assimilationist* while others may be willing to accept immigrants following their own cultural terms as well as that of the country of settlement, which would be an *integrationist* approach. An example of such an approach would be Australia and Canada that have demonstrated a greater degree of tolerance toward the immigrants and refugees in their country. For a brief period of time in 2017, the United States moved away from an integrationist approach, when it imposed a ban on immigrants from Muslim countries.

In Figure 2, Berry’s model demonstrates all the above-mentioned approaches or strategies and the four possible outcomes of those strategies.

![Acculturation Strategies](image)

*Figure 2. Acculturation Strategies (Berry, 1997)*
Here it is important to mention that there are certain constraints attached to the acculturation strategies used by immigrants. For example, physical features can set apart certain ethnic groups from the dominant groups, such as their skin color or other distinct physical appearance. Therefore, it would make it difficult for such groups to assimilate or integrate into the host society. N-B youth in American public schools could also face similar constraints because of their distinct features and skin color.

Is it possible to identify the extent to which youth adapt socioculturally to the country of settlement? In the past, this was not possible because Berry’s conceptual framework was based on data collected from only one ethnic group in one particular country. Emphasizing some of the limitations of previous studies, Phalet (2006) argued that

Typically migration studies and policies tend to overlook or underestimate the great diversity of acculturation strategies and experiences at the individual level of ethnic youth and their families. (p. x)

Berry himself restated the limitations in an interview, where he said that much of the research on acculturation and adaptation of youth in the past “were one shot studies, like Vietnamese in Norway, Somalis in Canada, Argentinians in Spain” (Berry, 2013). Due to this limitation, it was not possible to generalize the findings of their research.

In order to make the research and findings more generalizable, a cross-national acculturation study was conducted between 1995-2002 by Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006). This study was called the International Comparative Study of Ethno-Cultural Youth (ICSEY) and the sample size of research is large. The research
was based on acculturation and adaptation strategies that they studied from a sample of more than 5000 students in 13 different countries of settlement. Based on the research, Phinney et al. (2006) identified four different profiles of adolescent acculturation. They are classified as follows: integration profile, ethnic profile, national profile, and diffuse profile.

Additionally, the ICSEY study conducted by Berry et al. (2006) provides a more detailed understanding of the factors that influence acculturation. These include demographic factors such as gender, age and development, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status of immigrant youth. Contextual factors are also important in how youth acculturate. They include country of settlement, neighborhood and family values and orientation. For example, immigration policies of the government in the country of settlement and the cultural diversity in a country may determine the extent to which immigrants the society welcomes the immigrants. Additionally, perceived discrimination by immigrant youth may also impact their acculturation process. The above cross-cultural study was based on the foundations laid by Berry’s iconic framework that continues to act as a beacon for researchers studying the phenomenon of acculturation and adaptation.

Figure 3 describes Berry’s variabilities in acculturation of individuals as well as groups. Here is a rather rudimentary summary of the main features of his framework that may help the readers gain a deeper understanding of this framework. The society of origin: whether the immigrants came voluntarily or not, the push and pull factors, the cultural distance from the country of settlement; all of these can change the acculturative
experiences of individuals. Similarly, the *society of settlement*, its historical and attitudinal situation—that is, whether it is or is not accepting of cultural pluralism and holds a positive regard towards *multiculturalism*—determines prevailing attitudes towards the immigrant population on a spectrum from *assimilationist* to *segregationist*, both extremes being detrimental to immigrant populations.

*Figure 3.* A framework for acculturation research, Berry (1997)

Firstly, there are group level changes that also have an impact of how immigrants acculturate. These include changes in the physical environment, like urbanization, density of population, and so forth; biological changes in diet and exposure to disease; economic changes such as financial situation or employment in the host society; social
changes that include loss of friendships and social networks; cultural changes, such as food and clothing; and a shift in values, such as religious beliefs and value system.

Secondly, Berry’s framework includes the individual level variabilities that are dependent on age, gender, education, cultural distance, and so forth. So, for example, it is well established that children that enter the country of settlement at a young age do not face the kind of acculturative stress experienced by adolescents that relocate at an older age. Similarly, those with educational credentials will have more opportunities than those that do not. The individual level variables also include the factors that arise during acculturation that can impact immigrants. These include the duration of the stay of the immigrants—so recent immigrants will experience more acculturation challenges as opposed to those that have lived in the country of settlement for a longer time. The acculturation strategies they use, the social support they have, as well as the societal attitudes like prejudice and discrimination also determine the level of acculturation of the individual.

The middle portion of the Figure 3 explains the main group and psychological acculturation phenomena, that flow from the left to right. It explains how during group acculturation their changes take place at the political, economic and social and cultural level and that these changes impact the individual leading to a number of psychological experiences and finally to adaptation (Berry, 1997). This model and its features have been examined with reference to N-B youth in this dissertation study to determine the extent to which the above-mentioned factors had an impact on their acculturation.
Here are some important findings that are generalizable, to a certain extent, in the multinational research conducted by ICSEY study and can inform us on the process of acculturation of immigrant youth. Berry (2013) in an online interview said that based on their findings from 13 countries, they could generalize the relationship between how youth acculturate and how well youth are doing it. Their findings indicate that in terms of sociocultural adaptation, school adjustment was similar for both national and immigrant youth. Girls experienced more psychological problems than boys. However, boys had more difficulty to fit into the national society. Additionally, children that immigrated at a younger age adjusted much better than those who immigrated as adolescents. The length of residence also depended on how well they adjusted.

But in a more recent study, Ward, as cited in Sam et al. (2006), explained that the way sociocultural adaptation can be predicted is by determining cultural knowledge of the immigrants—the degree of contact and the intergroup attitudes—that may be positive or negative.

**Immigrant Paradox Challenged**

There is a general belief that immigrant youth may experience problems due to adjustment between two cultures. However, a term “immigrant paradox” has been used by scholars to describe counterintuitive findings which assert that immigrants adapt just as well or show better adaptation skills than their national peers. Also, the paradox suggests that first generation immigrants have higher levels of adaptation than the second generation. Additionally, over a period of time their adaptation skills may decline to the national level. In challenging the paradox, Phinney et al. (2006) argued that we cannot
generalize across countries on how well immigrant youth adapt. In some countries, the findings were congruent with that of the paradox (Australia, Finland, Sweden, and U.S.), while in others, in terms of psychological adaptation, the findings showed evidence of an opposite effect (Phinney et al., 2006, p. 218).

As mentioned above, ethnicity is an important factor that helps determine how well immigrant youth acculturate. Phinney et al. (2006) pointed out that ethno-cultural groups—their values, attitudes, and behaviors—are important to acculturation. Their research compared the acculturation of Turkish and Vietnamese youth in four different countries and concluded that adolescents in both these groups have oriented themselves to different profiles. For example, if a certain group experiences perceived discrimination in the countries of settlement, this would be identified as diffuse profile, which is one of endorsing contradictory attitudes such as separation.

In sum, Phinney et al. (2006) stated that ethno-cultural groups play an important role in immigrant orientation and behavior in the country of settlement. So, it is important to observe the groups into which they are adapting to understand the outcomes. Phinney et al. maintained that “ethno-cultural group membership makes a substantial difference specifically in ethnic orientation and ethnic behaviors . . . and these in turn are important predictors of adaptation outcomes” (Phinney et al., 2006, p. 223).

Theory of Segmented Assimilation

Several scholars have tried to understand the conundrum of why some immigrants succeed and others fail. What is the reason for their divergent destinies (Zhou, 1997), and why do some move on an upward trajectory in their country of settlement, while
others find themselves on a steep downward spiral? An overview on the theories of assimilation could help understand how they impact immigrant acculturation and their social outcomes. There are three major theories on assimilation that explain immigrant acculturation and their social outcomes. They are *straight-line assimilation*, *segmented assimilation*, and *acculturation without assimilation* (Kao & Tienda, 1995, p. 3). The phenomenon of assimilation was studied in the early 1900s by Robert Parks of the Chicago School and was explained as the dominant melting pot/straight-line model of assimilation. The straight-line assimilation model by the Chicago School argues that each succeeding generation of immigrants will show upward social mobility in education and occupation and finally integrate into mainstream society. This theory hypothesizes that ethnic groups go through four stages before they assimilate. They first come into *contact*, *experience conflict*, *accommodate*, and finally *assimilate*. However, this model has been challenged by more recent scholars such as Portes and Zhou (1993) with their theory of Segmented Assimilation of the “new second generation” and Gibson’s theory of Accommodation without Assimilation (Gibson, 1988).

There is a significant amount of research on how the new second generation identify themselves and how they negotiate through the countries they settle in. The term “New second generation” refers to children of post-1965 immigrants (Phalet, 2006). According to Phalet, research on this demographic is crucial for their success or failure in integrating into American society. Hence, the alternative theory developed by Portes and Zhou (1993) argued that assimilation of the new second generation could lead to divergent destinies (Zhou, 1997), which the scholars refer to as segmented assimilation.
(Waters, Tran, Kasinitz, & Mollenkopf, 2010; Zhou, 1997). The outcomes could be upward mobility, which is joining the ranks of White middle class; second leads to permanent poverty and becoming the underclass of America and leading to downward mobility; or it could lead to upward mobility with delayed acculturation, in which case the immigrants preserve their ethnic values (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). As noted above, the third type of assimilation is known as accommodation without assimilation. An example of this strategy was seen among the Punjabi youth in Central California. The youth adapted to their school environment by following the norms of the school. However, they were discouraged from interacting with American peers outside of the school setting (Gibson, 1987; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ogbu & Simons, 1998). We will revisit this strategy later.

The three probable outcomes of segmented assimilation mentioned above correspond to three processes that explain the dynamics between parents, children, and the community. These are consonant acculturation, dissonant acculturation and selective acculturation.

Consonant acculturation is when both parents and children abandon their culture and learn American culture at the same pace, and dissonant acculturation, when children learn American culture faster than their parents. This process could potentially lead to downward assimilation because of a lack of parental or community support for the youth (Waters et al., 2010, p. 1169). Finally, there is selective acculturation, which is considered to be the best path for second generation immigrants aspiring to gain upward mobility and assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters et al., 2010; Zhou, 1997).
During this process, both parents and children continue to be embedded in their own ethnic community and gradually learn American culture. This helps maintain parental authority and leads to little intergenerational conflict.

**Downward trajectory.** The new second generation’s outlook on life and job prospects are different from the previous generation. According to Portes and Zhou (1993), the lack of opportunities to work restricts upward mobility. While the first generation of immigrants were willing to perform menial jobs, the new second generation is unwilling to do those jobs. In addition, due to deindustrialization, there are fewer labor-intensive jobs available. The second generation is further at a disadvantage because they lack college degrees, skills or training that prevents them from upward mobility. Portes and Zhou (1993) explained the above predicament of the second generation as creating disjuncture between the two generations, where the first generation attain material prospect while the second generation grow to expect the same but do not.

In a more recent work, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have discussed further the major challenges or external obstacles to educational attainments of children of immigrants. In addition to bifurcation of U.S. labor market leading to fewer jobs in the industry, there is the issue of racial discrimination, and the emergence of countercultures because of the density of marginalized population in inner cities.

Other factors determine the outcomes of assimilation of immigrants. These are human capital, which is the educational skills, knowledge of language, job experience, and economic status. This is explored in Research Question 3. These resources provide families access to economic goods, homes and schools in better neighborhoods, and a
wide range of opportunities. Additionally, the *structure of the family* is equally important, where children with both parents can provide more attention to their children and their aspirations. Secondly, *the modes of incorporation* refer to the context of reception of immigrants in the host countries. Because different countries of settlement may have different approaches, and their responses to immigrants may vary substantially, ranging from “exclusion, passive acceptance, or active encouragement” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p.46) of immigrants in the country of settlement. The *social context* of immigrant acculturation is equally relevant, which refers to color of skin, the neighborhoods to which immigrants moved, and the presence or absence of a mobility ladder in their communities. Therefore, it is important to note that social capital, ethnic networks, and *density of ties* among immigrants are considered far more valuable resources in order to overcome obstacles to adaptation than mere economic success of immigrants.

Another major obstacle to upward mobility is wayward immigrant youth that prematurely follow a path of American lifestyles without much education or experience. Parental control is undermined by immigrant youth that are swayed by new lifestyles and media driven consumption. Selective acculturation of immigrant youth is possible only if the youth have strong family ties as well as a supportive community that reinforces parental norms (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

**Upward trajectory.** So, what are some ways in which immigrants manage to attain upward mobility despite the above-mentioned disadvantages? Some of the ethnic groups have been able to enter the middle class with the help of some outside resources.
Certain types of resources may help the second generation deal with the challenges of assimilation. For example, new government policies that may provide access to education may counterbalance some of their disadvantages.

Social networks in the co-ethnic communities provided immigrants with a number of important resources. These communities provided the second generation access to college grants, entry to private schools, and other niche opportunities availed through small businesses in the community. This sheltered the second generation from exposure to discrimination and provided access to jobs—even without college degrees. Portes and Zhou asserted that “through creation of a capitalism of their own, some immigrant groups have thus been able to circumvent outside discrimination and the threat of vanishing ladders” (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 214).

As mentioned earlier, groups of immigrants belonging to the same ethnic communities can have divergent destinies. An ethnographic research study by Portes and Zhou (1993) at Field High School in Central California validates the theory of segmented assimilation and how it could lead to upward or downward mobility. They observed the pattern of acculturation of three different groups of Mexican American youth at the above school and studied the impact it had on their academic outcomes. Mexican students that that were recent arrivals were different in physical appearance and dress habits, and they continued to consider Mexico their home. They performed well academically and stayed out of trouble. The next group were Mexican-oriented students that had lived in the U.S. for over five years and were bicultural and did were proud of their heritage. They did well in studies. There were also other youth groups such as Chicanos and Cholos who
had lived in the U.S. for longer than five years and but had lost their roots. These groups resented their treatment by Whites and were trapped in caste-like minority status (Zhou, 1997). As a result, they adopted an oppositional culture, by joining gangs, and they associated academic achievement with acting White. The Cholos performed poorly at schools. This clearly shows the divergent destinies within the same ethnic communities. Referring to the Chicanos and Cholos who adopted reactive subcultures, Portes and Zhou advised that “the principal protection of Mexicanos against this type of assimilation lies in their strong identification with home-country, language and values which brings them closer to their parents’ cultural stance” (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 89). In other words, they suggest following a selective acculturation strategy like the second group he identified that were Mexican-oriented Americans.

**Creative strategies.** Some of the immigrants have had more favorable outcomes by using creative strategies of assimilation (Gibson, 1987). The Punjabi Sikhs in Valley Side High School in Northern California went through a different and difficult process of acculturation. This was because of the extremely hostile attitude of the residents and children who were anti-immigrant. Despite the discrimination, these students performed well in schools (Gibson, 1987; Portes & Zhou, 1993). The success of these students is attributed to the parental control and the tight knit communities that acted as a support system. Parents admonished children against “becoming Americanized” and disapproved of the American culture of dancing, dating, living independently after 18, and friendships between both sexes. These rules and attitudes of parents led to delayed acculturation (a concept stated earlier from Berry, 1997). This was one of the factors that led to better
academic performances of this group of Sikh youth. The other factors were the lack of oppositional subcultures or groups within the Sikh community. This protected them from being influenced negatively. In addition, constant reinforcement by parents of values of hard work, perceived advantages of education, and the benefits of economic and social capital all seem to have helped them remain focused on grades and school. Being part of a cohesive community was another factor that gave them a sense of pride and ability to counter discrimination. Gibson explained this strategy as acculturation without assimilation. The Sikh youth used this strategy of “playing by the rules” when they were at school but following family values and attitudes at home and in their community.

Portes and Zhou (1993) referred to a similar group that benefited from the lack of an oppositional culture. Their research on Cuban second-generation immigrants in the southern part of Florida demonstrated how Cuban youth benefitted from the social and economic capital in enclaves created by the previous generations. The new immigrants had access to economic opportunities that led them to a path of upward mobility. Lack of exposure to inner city and oppositional culture made the Cuban youth succeed at school. However, Haitian immigrants experienced the exact opposite because of their exposure to inner city culture, which ultimately resulted in downward mobility. Portes and Zhou therefore suggested that the best course for immigrant minorities would be a strategy of paced selective assimilation, although this strategy would be contingent upon the resources available to them.

**Segmented assimilation challenged.** Thus far, we have noted that different acculturation types can lead to different trajectories and outcomes. However, a recent
study on second-generation immigrants, including several groups such as West Indians, Dominicans, Chinese, and so forth, in New York, from 1999-2000 by Waters et al. (2010) challenges the findings of Portes and Rumbaut (2001). They agreed with the previous analysis that education is the most important predictor of occupational attainment but argue that dissonant acculturation among the second generation is an exception rather than a norm. They also challenged the theory that types of acculturation and level of ethnic embeddedness explain the divergent outcomes of the groups. In the case of two groups, Puerto Ricans and Chinese, they found high rates of dissonant acculturation but with divergent outcomes. For example, their research showed that Puerto Ricans performed poorly in schools because of a negative reception context, such as racial discrimination in housing and inner-city schools. Conversely, Chinese second-generation students performed better because of class heterogeneity within the immigrant community. They benefited from the social ties and networks with those that were successful in society and therefore could achieve upward social mobility. Another important point made by Waters et al. is that

\[\text{It is not the overall level of ties to the ethnic group or selective acculturation at the individual level that led to better outcomes. Rather it is maintaining ethnic ties within these groups which have significant numbers of middle class, educated members that help children of poor immigrants. (2010, p. 1189)}\]

Here it is important to note that economic, social, and cultural capital of members of the ethnic groups are the reason for better outcomes, however immigrants would benefit especially if they maintained ties with those members or group within the co-ethnic
community that have resources and a potential to make a difference to their lives. Table 1 explains the profiles as well as the commonality between Berry’s (1997) foundational research on the strategies of acculturation, Portes and Rumbaut’s (2001) theories of segmented assimilation, and Phinney et al.’s (2006) classification of profiles of immigrant youth.

**Synthesis of frameworks.** The theoretical frameworks presented in Table 1 were synthesized to get a basic grasp of the phenomenon of acculturation and assimilation. The purpose was to give a quick synopsis of the theoretical stances reviewed in the above literature and how they apply to the N-B youth in American Public schools. While Berry’s (1997) seminal research was based on single country studies which encouraged researchers to study a group of immigrants in one particular country, a more recent longitudinal cross-national study called (ICSEY) by Phinney et al. (2006) is a product of findings on acculturation of various immigrant groups in multiple countries. There is much more variability and comparison in such studies where the findings on acculturation strategies, of the same group of immigrants, may differ based on the history of the country and its attitude towards immigrants. I chose Berry’s framework on acculturation for this dissertation study because this is a single-country study on N-B refugees in United States as opposed to the comparative research (ICSEY) studies conducted by Phinney et al.
Table 1

*A Synthesis of Three Different Types of Assimilation and Acculturation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies four acculturation strategies</td>
<td>They identify four possible outcomes of acculturation using the concept of segmented assimilation,</td>
<td>They identify four different profiles of adolescent acculturation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration Participation in the larger society while maintaining cultural integrity</td>
<td>Selective acculturation Parents retain ethnic culture while children become bilingual. This pattern is partially similar to integration but can cause conflict within family</td>
<td>Integration profile Immigrants are involved in the new society, but retain their ethnic heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation When they avoid interaction with others and hold on to their original culture</td>
<td>Consonant resistance Isolation of parents and adolescents within the ethnic community</td>
<td>Ethnic Profile Immigrants are involved in their ethnic milieu but there is little involvement in new country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assimilation Immigrants seek daily interaction with other cultures</td>
<td>Consonant acculturation Both parents and children assimilate to mainstream culture at the same pace</td>
<td>National Profile Immigrants have strong orientation to larger society There is little attention to ethnic culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalization Little interest in their own cultures or having contact with others</td>
<td>Dissonant acculturation is similar to marginalization in diffuse profile. There is a different pattern of change among parents and children. They are losing ethnic culture but are not becoming part of mainstream culture</td>
<td>Diffuse profile They endorse 3 contradictory attitudes—assimilation, marginalization, separation</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Berry (1997), Phinney et al. (2006), and self-synthesized
For example, a comparative study would include understanding various profiles chosen by the same ethnic group in different countries. N-B may choose different profiles in countries of settlement like, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. The context of reception of immigrants in these countries will determine the profiles or strategies they use. However, the focus of this dissertation study is on acculturation of youth specifically in the U.S. and hence Berry’s framework fits well for that purpose. The second theme compared in the above table, within the domain of immigration, was segmented assimilation. This theory examines the diverse pattern of acculturation and adaptation by Portes and Zhou as cited in Berry (2006). Their research on the “new second generation was to understand the rationale behind segmented assimilation among immigrants and the factors that contribute to their upward and downward mobility.”

**Cultural-Ecological Theory**

The cultural-ecological theory developed by Ogbu (1987) explains the dynamics that affect performance of minority children in school. I outline the tenets of his theory and also present some critiques on his work at the end of this segment. Ogbu (1987) attributed the relatively poor academic performance among involuntary minorities, like African Americans and Latinos, to the pursuit of an oppositional ideology. While Bronfenbrenner’s theory identified different levels or systems in the environment that can have positive or negative impact on the development of a child, Ogbu identified barriers that are responsible for school failure of Black students. These include school, societal, and community forces that hinder access to education and employment, although it
appears that Ogbu did not try to identify Black students that have been successful or identify the “forces” that play a role in their achievement.

Based on the above information, where would the refugees be placed in this dichotomy of voluntary and involuntary immigrants? According to McBrien, Ogbu placed refugees in a middle category, describing them as semi-voluntary immigrants. He claimed that voluntary immigrants view learning the language and ways of the dominant culture as desirable avenues to success, whereas people with an oppositional cultural frame of reference (such as colonized or enslaved people) view conformity as “a symbol of disaffiliation” with their own culture. (p. 201)

This dissertation study focuses on Ogbu’s theory, especially findings that relate to sociocultural adaptation of immigrants and the extent to which they may relate to forcibly displaced refugees. According to Gibson (1987), minority groups may differ from the dominant groups in terms of culture, language, social identity, and folk theories like “making it” or “getting ahead.” These theories take a new meaning with different groups. For instance, for White Americans theories like “making it” refer to the notion of education being the gateway to a good life. They therefore believe in the achievement ideology. However, these theories do not resonate with minorities in the same way. In fact, immigrant minorities are unable to relate to achievement ideology because of the barriers they experience while aspiring for a good education and employment. As a result, they seek strategies to survive which often comes with a sense of competition with school rather than collaboration. Let us now examine the forces that contribute to school
failure by Ogbru and Simmons (1998) as mentioned earlier. School forces refer to the inability of school staff and teachers to understand the culturally learned behaviors of minority children, and vice-versa. This lack of understanding may obstruct the child’s adjustment. Additionally, the treatment of minorities as inferior to the dominant group may affect some of these groups. Societal forces include barriers to education and employment access. Additionally, structural factors include inferior curriculum, funding, and facilities, as is evident in southern Black schools. Community factors are the third force that can impact school adjustment. In his hypothesis on variability minority performance, Ogbru described three types of minority status which have different implications for schools. These are immigrant minorities, caste-like/involuntary minorities, and autonomous groups. Autonomous groups are small minority groups such as Amish, Jewish, and Mormon communities. Immigrant minorities include those that emigrate due to economic prospects and a better life. The third category is of involuntary caste-like minorities that include African Americans, Native Americans, and Native Alaskans who have a history of experiencing barriers and of being discriminated against (Ogbru, 1987).

The cultural differences among the immigrant minorities and involuntary minorities are classified into primary and secondary cultural differences. Primary differences are those present prior to their entry into the country of settlement; these include values, religion, and dress, while secondary cultural differences develop in response to acculturation, especially when it involves the domination of one group by the other. Secondary cultural differences according to Ogbru play an important role in the
school experience of minority children. The above two cultural differences are similar to Berry’s model of acculturation which differentiates between *moderating factors prior to acculturation*—similar to Ogbu’s *primary* cultural differences—and *moderating factors during acculturation*—similar to *secondary* cultural differences.

Ogbu’s (1987) work has not specifically addressed refugees and their pattern of adaptation. Although I do believe that some of the challenges of immigrant and involuntary minorities may apply to forcibly displaced refugees as well. These challenges include issues related to school adjustment; academic-learning problems; cultural barriers like learning a new language; communication styles; opportunity barriers, and so forth. Ogbu contended that the differences between immigrant and involuntary minorities stem from the origin of their minority status; nature of the cultural differences between them and the dominant group; folk theory of success; and the degree of trust they have in Whites and White institutions.

According to Matthews (2008), the cultural model of acculturation developed by Ogbu explains socioeconomic conditions as a reason for success of Asian American immigrants and the educational failure of Black students. Even though both groups experience discrimination the former, Asian immigrants view their discrimination as an outcome of their migrant status. Their sociocultural identity as immigrant/voluntary minorities results in more positive attitudes and they have a “dual frame of reference and optimistic view of the future” (Matthews, 2008, p. 40). Matthews argued that the Asian immigrants see their discrimination as temporary related to their lack of language skills and their status of a foreigner which they believe could be overcome with hard work and
education. As a result, they follow a policy of *accommodation without assimilation.*
This conversation ties into my research question of N-B refugees and how they identify themselves and the strategies they are using as they acculturate into the American school system and society.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that there are a few scholars that do not agree with Ogbu’s typology of immigrant and involuntary minorities. Nonetheless, they agree that the typology does “hold in a number of national contexts and often provide[s] useful units for analysis.” (Foster, 2004). However, the typologies hold only for specific settings and are complicated by local circumstances. According to Foster, these categories should be used as ideal types and not absolutes. Additionally, Ogbu has also been critiqued for making a distinction between functional African Americans and dysfunctional African Americans, while overlooking the range of attitudes and behaviors within each category (Foster, 2004). Ogbu’s theory and his critiques caution us not to arrive at categorical conclusions, which has been taken into consideration by me while exploring the adaptation pattern on N-B youth.

In the next chapter on methods, research design, data collection methods, procedures, data analysis, ethics, and limitations of the dissertation study are discussed.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

In this chapter, I share my researcher’s reflections as well as positionality in the dissertation study. This is followed by the research design and paradigm that has helped keep my work aligned with the methodology chosen for this study. Additionally, this chapter also includes procedures of data collection and data analysis, as well as the ways of ascertaining trustworthiness and reliability. Finally, a summary of ethics and limitations of the dissertation study are presented.

Researcher’s Reflections

Globalization is indeed a complex phenomenon that frequently elicits a great deal of attention and inquiry from scholars and columnists. It manifests itself in many ways in our quotidian lives as well. The following is a brief note on how globalization has impacted my life. I entered this promising land from India in the early 1990s, which puts me into the third wave of immigrants that came to the U.S. I came as a voluntary immigrant with no social, cultural, or economic capital. Those were the days when India was not yet a haven for information technology and outsourcing. With no pre-existing social networks in the U.S. and with bookish knowledge of Western societies, I found few opportunities for acculturation with the dominant culture, and if there were opportunities, they were mostly through spousal workplace interactions. This situation was worsened by a gradual loss of contact with friends and family back home, mostly due to prohibitive calling rates to India. Not to mention, air travel was equally unaffordable, costing about two months’ worth of mortgage payments! It was truly challenging to be
an immigrant in an era when the World Wide Web was a novelty rather than a reality; when both Google and YouTube were about a decade away, and Mark Zuckerberg was still a kindergartner with presumably no intentions of founding Facebook.

In just over a decade, I felt the impact of globalization as it changed my life dramatically. Connecting with family and friends through mediums like Skype and Facebook became free of cost. Additionally, there was a significant drop in air travel prices as airlines competed to entice eager travelers like me. It was a time when Google was becoming a search engine and platform to consume and share information in unprecedented ways. As I look back, I realize that I was the transnational that immigration scholars write about; the active participant sending remittances from the receiving country to the country of origin, the one who traveled across the Atlantic to meet family and was able to avail the benefits of medical tourism in India—another boon of globalization! So yes, globalization did impact one and all. It initiated the opening of markets, high-speed access to communication, advances in information technology, a reduction in transportation costs, the emergence of social media, the dissemination of knowledge and information synchronously, and a worldwide supply chain of goods and services. It further strengthened the interdependence of countries and cultures like never before, while turning the world into a global community. The 21st century marks the first time in history that people are able to participate in events remotely from across the world via social media. People are now in a position to watch and witness events and have an impact on the outcomes—be it elections, natural calamities, or even surgeries performed remotely! The idea of the above description was to capture more than the
academic definition of globalization, and to create a setting which would act as a
springboard from where I can discuss its connection to migration and education.

The following segment explains the researcher’s first interactions with N-B
children and youth at a church in Cleveland, and how these interactions led to genuine
curiosity in their lives, culture, and sustenance in a Western environment. This is
followed by a brief write up on the researcher’s positionality.

My own personal journey with N-B refugee kids began when I started
volunteering for an afterschool enrichment program at a church in Cleveland Heights.
My task was to teach dance to a small group of children that I was told were Bhutanese
refugees. So, on one Sunday morning, I showed up with a Boombox containing a
selection of songs. The kids were happy to see me, particularly because dancing meant a
reprieve from their math and reading work. After interacting with them for a couple
hours, I surmised that the children in the class were born in Nepal, their parents were
from Bhutan, but they had never visited their parents’ home country. I decided to teach
them Nepali folk songs and thought it was a good way to keep N-B children connected to
their roots. It was easy for me to look up a few Nepali folk dances on the Internet and to
curate and cull a dance piece. This group of N-B boys and girls were between the age of
5 and 15. They spoke in Hindi or English, and to my astonishment, were not at all
interested in Nepalese folk music. Instead, they told me that they loved dancing to
Bollywood dances based on movies and songs from Indian popular culture. The songs
are upbeat and have catchy tunes that follow different genres of Western music.
As a student of cultural foundations, I was truly curious to understand how this group of children and youth were identifying themselves, and how they were adapting and adjusting to an American society and culture that is significantly different from their own. From here my journey began, as I started to gather literature on this group of refugees as well as other refugee youth adapting to schools in different parts of the world.

**Researcher’s Positionality**

I am an Indian woman in my 50s and have been in the U.S. for over 25 years. The empirical phase of this dissertation study made it important for me to think about who I am and how my identity may be perceived by participants and other adults. I erred on the side of caution while approaching members belonging to this vulnerable population. The reception I received from the community was varied. I met a few members of the community who immediately trusted me and were interested to know about the dissertation study, and even volunteered to provide information or contacts. However, there were others who were very uncomfortable talking to me and were hesitant to divulge any details. As a narrative inquirer, one must reflect upon the actions of others and what their underlying motives may be (Schram, 2005). While I discussed this attitude of secrecy with other members that were willing to share information, I was informed that typically, N-B consider it a taboo to talk about their youth, especially those who have gotten into trouble or dropped out of school.

During the interviews, I tried to be cognizant of the fact that this group of refugees has traveled from faraway lands and is still adjusting to their physical and cultural surroundings. I thought it was extremely important for me to make them feel
comfortable and not place excessive pressure on them for answers. On occasion, I would skip a question or two if I sensed that they were not eager to share information. Also, at times I told them upfront that they could choose not to respond to a question if they felt uncomfortable.

While I spoke to the participants and their parents, I often reflected upon my own acculturation process and realized how I had my own phase of acculturative stress. Although, I must admit that because my medium of primary and secondary education was English, I did not face the same challenges that other immigrants may have. The culture shock that I experienced was during my first few years in America, when the only close interaction I had with Americans was through my husband’s workplace. The neighbors in our apartment complex were very insular and rarely even visible, so the opportunities to exchange pleasantries was limited. Just as friends are important to adapt to one’s school, the same is true when you relocate to a new country as an adult. It was only when we moved to another neighborhood that I met my first friend, Tina. Tina is an Italian-American who may be the kindest soul I have ever known. The process of acculturation between us, as I look back, was uneven but certainly bidirectional. Neither of us is strongly religious, nor do we have imposingly strong views on culture or any particular ideology. However, our common interest at that point was the babies kicking in our bellies! We had so much to talk about: about our interrupted sleep, our cravings, our nausea, our neighbors that we never knew, and about shopping for baby clothes. I relocated to France because of my husband’s work, and when we returned after four years, we moved back to where Tina and I lived. For the past 25 years, we have been the
best of friends. So, despite the absence of the proximal layer and support system as described by Bronfenbrenner in his bioecological model, I managed to do OK as an immigrant with just one close friend. As for the bidirectional changes during acculturation, I would say that before long I turned into an Italian baker of sorts, while Tina turned into a quasi-master of spicy Indian food!

As I look back at the field research process, I am amazed at what an exceptional journey it was and how I was able to observe so many different facets of people’s lives. The process was a novel discovery of human behavior—of both our strengths and weaknesses—that fostered a new-found admiration for Samaritans like Amit, who was the most valuable informant of the dissertation study and volunteered to help with no expectations from me at all. I am reminded of an oath that we read every morning in primary school, in which one of the lines read “. . . to do and not to look for any reward.” Amit exemplified this idea.

**Research Design**

A qualitative research design is effective when a researcher wants to explore a phenomenon or issue that demands comprehensive, holistic, expansive, thick, and rich descriptive details (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In qualitative studies, it is this description that can capture the essence or nature of a problem that is being studied (Roberts, 2010). Additionally, the researcher is the primary instrument as he or she conducts fieldwork to collect data through interviews, observation, and documents. This process involves analyzing vast amounts of data, meaning-making, identifying themes, and pattern recognition, which makes it intellectually engaging. The goal of an investigation is to
understand, describe, discover, find meaning, and generate a hypothesis. Needless to mention is that the design characteristics ought to be flexible, evolving, and emergent (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

**Narrative Inquiry**

I have chosen narrative inquiry as the methodology for this dissertation study. The process of narrative inquiry is dynamic and involves living and telling stories, and then reliving and retelling stories done by the researcher. The stories that are told are not only of the participants, but also of the researcher. While telling stories, the researcher’s life and experiences may be reflected in some way or the other. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) asserted that “in narrative inquiry, it is impossible as a researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect idealized, inquiring, moralizing self” (pp. 61-62). Narrative inquiry is described as a type of inquiry that is based on stories of participants, including their social, cultural, and familial relationships that are lived and told (Clandinin, Caine, Lessard, & Huber, 2016). According to Clandinin et al., “families are a part of the visible or invisible contexts of their [children’s/youth’s] lives” (p. 109). Keeping that in mind, this dissertation study is intergenerational and employs a familial lens to learn more about the phenomenon. Narrative inquiry has also been called relational inquiry where researchers work from the field to acquire field text (like interviews, conversations, letters, etc.), and from field text to research text. In this case, field is not only a site but is explained as a space where the researcher negotiates with the participants in an ongoing relational inquiry space (Clandinin et al., 2016).
Clandinin et al. (2016) have described some important design elements that can be used to engage in narrative inquiry with children and youth. They suggested living alongside and telling stories as being a starting point to the design of a study. The design should include pre-preparation on a venue where the inquirer can meet the participants while paying attention to the metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry spaces. The idea is to co-compose what they refer to as a research puzzle that moves through field texts, interim texts (narrative accounts), and research texts (articles and books).

*Temporality, sociality, and place* are foundational to the design of a study. *Temporality* refers to events, places, and people that have a past, present, and future. It is also essential to be aware of *sociality*, which refers to personal and social conditions. *Personal conditions*, as the authors contend, are feelings, hopes and desires. Similarly, *social conditions* are the existential conditions such as one’s environment and surrounding factors. *Place*, the third dimension, comprises the concrete physical and topological boundaries that the inquirer should be aware of while working with youth and their families. The metaphorical three-dimensional space allows inquirers to be not just observers, but deep thinkers. The inquirer is actively engaged in self-reflection (looking inward) while understanding the current phenomenon, examining its past, and forecasting future implications for it. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) reminded us that as inquirers, we are not working with just the participants, but are also working with ourselves as well. They state that it is the three-dimensional space that allows “inquirers to travel inward, outward, backward, forward and situated within space” (p. 49).
Clandinin et al. (2016) preferred to use the term *research puzzle* instead of *research*. They stated, “as we design a narrative inquiry, the process involves engaging in imaginative thinking about the *research puzzle* along with possible participants” (p. 24). Another element of the design study is for the inquirer to be familiar with the scholarly research on the phenomena being studied by other narrative inquirers. A narrative inquirer must justify their work, which is a crucial element of the design. The question of “So what?” and “Who cares?” are critical to the work of inquirers. The only way of justifying research is through social and theoretical means, which I have tried to do.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquirers share their work in progress with the participants. The inquirer collaborates with the participants as they listen to their stories, reflects upon the collaboration, and retells those stories on the basis of his own observation. This brings us to the next topic on the type of paradigm that would be most suitable for the research objectives and questions that I wish to explore.

**Constructivist Research Paradigm**

Research paradigms or research philosophies are important to the design of a study (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I have chosen a *constructivist* paradigm as a tool to understand the sociocultural adaptation of N-B youth. Unlike the *positivists* who believe that there in only one objective reality, the constructivist seeks reality by viewing from different lenses, and the resultant knowledge gets filtered through many different people. The ontology of a constructivist paradigm is explained as “a science that argues that multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by
individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Hatch, 2002, p. 15). Such a paradigm is well-suited for my dissertation study to elicit responses to the research questions, and to obtain rich details from multiple perspectives of recent N-B high school graduates and their parents. Triangulating between all their stories provided a holistic picture of the phenomenon.

A constructivist paradigm entails co-construction of reality by participant and researcher. This kind of a model resonates with a collaborative method of conducting narrative inquiry. In constructivist projects, it is not just the researchers but also the participants that play an important role. This is because the participants can help decide how research questions could be modified, how other participants can be included, how they can identify methods of collection of richer data, and also provide input on framing of the analyses.

Data Collection

One of the most widely used statements in qualitative research is that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and data analysis (Hatch, 2002). And it is not surprising that the researcher has an ethical responsibility of addressing and reporting any personal biases that could impact the study. Following this dictum, I tried to bracket my biases as I engaged in data collection. Since my research design is a narrative inquiry, I have gathered data in the form of stories narrated by the participants.

Procedures

In the preliminary phase of data collection, procedures and instruments for collection were identified, while following rules and regulations to conduct research
before embarking on the empirical phase of this dissertation study. According to Hatch (2002), qualitative designs can be strengthened by the researcher charting clear plans and spending sufficient time in collecting data. The process of empirical research started by obtaining IRB approval; recruiting a pool of participants; contacting schools and gatekeepers for permission to gain access to public schools; and preparation of multiple question sets for different types of respondents including college students, community members, directors of nonprofit organizations, teachers, guidance counselors, and liaison officers. As mentioned above, this is a narrative inquiry and in this type of research design the participant and inquirer co-compose field texts, so attention was paid in selecting participants with whom a rapport could be established. Additionally, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), selecting a sample depends on the kind of research problems one wants to address. This was also kept in mind during selection of participants, in order to find rich, nuanced, and in-depth data that can provide relevant answers to the research questions of this dissertation study. The strategy used for this dissertation is nonprobability sampling, which is appropriate for qualitative research. Typically, such research is concerned with solving “qualitative problems, discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences” (Honigmann, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Two types of sampling are commonly used in the nonprobability strategy: purposeful sampling and theoretical sampling. Through purposeful sampling, the aim is to choose participants that would provide rich data on the phenomenon being studied. The idea is to gain deeper insights about acculturation and sociocultural adaptation of N-B youth by recruiting participants that
can inform and enrich this dissertation study. *Snowball sampling*—also called chain referral method or network sampling—is one such type of purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009). Patton (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) explained the metaphorical *snowball* and the recruitment process of participants as follows. Furthermore he said, “By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases” (p. 298). However, in order to elicit such information, the researcher depends on participants/informants who can connect the researcher to others, provided they meet the criteria of selection. *Snowball sampling* is typically used to reach out to hidden populations or hard to access populations such as drug addicts and other marginalized groups. Potential participants are pursued until the pre-specified number of participants are completed. According to Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaie (2017) explanation of such details in methods are important while conducting research. The pre-specified number for this study was six intergenerational units and once that was achieved, the process of sampling was complete. According to the above authors, most research papers do not have adequate explanation on the method.

Figure 4 explains the three different snowballs that originated with Warsha, Amit, and Greg (a coordinator at AI Inc.). They are identified in the yellow cells. Participants that finally agreed to be a part of the study are listed in the orange cells and list potential participants that initially agreed but later backed out of it are shown in grey cells. All the names are pseudonyms.
Refugee students are considered a vulnerable population and it took me some time before I was able to gain their trust as well as access into their community. In addition, being of Indian origin, I was able to connect with Nepalese-Bhutanese (N-B) families as a “quasi-insider” because of our shared characteristics and cultural background (see Researcher’s Positionality). Maintaining transparency about my research objectives and reminding them before interviews that confidentiality will be maintained may also have helped establish a constructive working relationship based on trust.

**Participant Observation**

Merriam and Associates (2002) checklist on what to observe when you enter the field was helpful. Apart from physical settings, they stated that interaction between people and their conversations may provide certain ques. For example, silences and
nonverbal behaviors can add more meaning to the exchanges between people. The above checklist did make me pay closer attention to participant and parent dynamic, as well as the interaction between participants and siblings, their confidence and self-esteem demonstrated by participants in their home environment.

During observation, I noted that N-B seniors live with their children and this helps financially by keeping their expenses low, and more importantly they are able to take care of the elderly, which is part of their value system. According to the participants that is how they stay connected to their language, culture, and traditions.

I took brief notes on the type of neighborhoods that N-B families lived in and the settings within the homes, especially the rooms where the interviews were conducted. I tried to be as discreet as possible while observing, not wanting to intrude upon their privacy. I also made a note of the social dynamic between the members present in the room, such as the non-verbal gestures, body language, or chemistry between participants and their family members. In doing so, I was able glean information on their family ties and on some of the cultural norms followed at home.

**Participant Selection**

The participants were required to be over the age of 18, to be of N-B heritage, and to have recently graduated from high school in Northeast Ohio (between 2016–2018). Also, the sample size is gender balanced, consisting of three participants from each group. Similarly, high school graduates from different schools were selected in order to have a heterogeneous sample, leading to richer and more varied perspectives and data. The final participant pool consists of N-B youth that graduated from five different high
schools. This diversity in schools of participants provided a varied perspective on their school experience. A point to be noted is that even though the participants belong to a common heritage, they all are from different refugee camps that were located in different parts of Nepal. Therefore, their experiences in camp schools is not uniform in terms of resources or teaching styles. Table 2 provides participant information including the career paths pursued by the participant in this dissertation study.

Table 2

*Participant Information*

N-B Participants in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Length of stay in the US</th>
<th>Major in college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amit</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>High school diploma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anish</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Biomedical engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bikram</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumari</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Legal studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhu</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pari</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Dentistry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Self-created, 2019

The rationale behind recruiting recent high school graduates, as opposed to current high school students, is that the latter may not be sufficiently mature to answer some personal questions. It is likely that they may withhold information for fear of real or perceived consequences, from their teachers or school. However, students who have graduated from high school, having entered the real world, may be relatively mature and willing to share their school experiences and challenges without reservations. This approach seemed to have worked. A few participants did reveal some sensitive
information during the interviews. For example, in one of the interviews, a recent freshman at college shared some of his most traumatic moments, which occurred at his high school during his first few years in the U.S. He narrated his most personal, haunting stories with almost no display of emotions, and he did so in order to have his ordeal to be told and his voice to be heard.

**Recruitment Process**

A few key participants that met the criteria were identified through three different sources such as *Snowball sampling*; nonprofit organizations involved with refugee resettlement and N-B community run organizations NBA and NBC. Coincidentally, just a month before I started recruiting participants, I happened to meet a woman called Warsha (pseudonym), who was a refugee from the N-B community who had resettled in the U.S. in 2008. She was extremely resourceful in providing information on the community and connected me with a parent and a recent high school graduate called Amit. This started the first snowball sampling network. Amit connected me with several participants who were either in college or working small jobs in the community. I followed up with the information and the contacts who either agreed to participate in the dissertation study or forwarded me to others that may be interested.

I was also able to find a participant and a community member who were extremely knowledgeable, resourceful, and interested in the research and were willing to help in whichever way they could. They may be described as good respondents or valuable “informants.” According to Merriam (2009), “Key informants, are able, to some extent, to adopt the stance of the investigator, thus becoming a valuable guide in
unfamiliar territory” (p. 107). They provided a lot of background information about refugee experiences and relentlessly helped with participant recruitment. Amit, one of the informants, was keen on seeing this research come to fruition so that it would help N-B refugee youth and their families.

It is important to mention that it was very difficult to assemble this participant pool because more of them were unwilling to participate or even speak with me. Some considered it an intrusion into their lives. One of the most difficult parts of data collection was scheduling interviews with N-B youth and their parents for interviews. All the N-B participants—with the exception of one—were busy with school and could not readily provide dates for interviews. In addition, scheduling interviews with parents was even more difficult, because often both parents of participants did double shifts doing labor-intensive jobs, such as factory work. Despite their best intentions, their financial responsibilities gave them limited time to spare, even during weekends.

**Informants**

I approached organizations that interacted with N-B population, such as Aid Immigrants Inc. (AI Inc.). This organization serves immigrant and low-income communities. It conducts language learning programs, safety education, nutrition programming, among other things. They provide transportation to older adults for socialization, health care needs, and so forth, and have enrichment programs for children and youth. I met with the program coordinator, Greg, at AI Inc. and it opened up new avenues for me to interact with N-B community. Greg gave me an opportunity to volunteer at their upcoming gala fundraiser and introduced me to some members of the
community. As a result, I was able to recruit a participant called Madhu, who was a high school graduate from the Whitman school system, and this contact helped start a second snowball sampling chain. Another organization that tried to help with recruitment but was not very successful was the Lean International Association (LIA). However, it was a valuable resource in providing in-depth information on the most trying issues related to the N-B community. This organization also provides English language classes and citizenship classes and helps refugees integrate into the American Society. Neel, an educator at LIA, spoke at length about their language programs and about N-B refugee families facing certain acculturation and adaptation challenges in the U.S. (see more in Chapters 4 and 5).

I also approached leaders of Bhutanese community organizations in Northeast Ohio to recruit participants and interview them on their perspectives of challenges faced by N-B youth while integrating into public schools. Through a Google search, I found listings for websites related to the community, such as the Nepalese Bhutanese Community (NBC) and the Nepalese Bhutanese Association (NBA). Both sites had contact information of their office bearers. I made a few phone calls to the leaders in the community and was able get a few appointments to interview those that were available. The president of NBA was a lady who took office in 2018 and was able to share some information and provide contacts of potential participants. With her, a third snowball network began leading to a few potential participants.

Through these three snowballs, I was able to put together a pool of 12 participants. Three of them were interested but could not commit because of their tight
college schedules. I was able to find six participants who met the criteria of selection. I began the process of interviewing six intergenerational family units, but not without hurdles. Two participants dropped out of the interviews, and one of them informed me on the day of the interview. As a result, I had to restart the whole process by contacting a few others that had not yet responded. From my phone conversations, I gathered that those participants who dropped out of the dissertation study were uneasy or insecure and embarrassed, because, unlike their friends, they were neither pursuing a college degree nor working.

Also, there were a few students who were willing to do phone interviews, but this would have been inadequate because the data collected may not have been as in-depth, rich, or nuanced as compared to face-to-face interviews. Despite these hurdles, a pool of six recent high school graduates was put together, and with that began the data collection process. (See Table 3.)

**Negotiating Access to Schools**

In order to gain access to the schools, multiple attempts were made to reach the principals for permission. The response was very disheartening. Most school staff members made assurances that that they would call back, but they did not follow through. I approached Carlton High School (pseudonym) where the contact person was helpful, but I was not able to get much information. Despite many efforts, it seemed impossible to connect with the right people.
After many phone calls and emails, I was finally able to speak with the coordinator at Whitman High School (pseudonym), who, coincidentally, has a Doctorate from Kent State University. This gave me an opportunity to build on our commonalities. I think the affiliation to Kent may have helped build credibility and interest in my work. I completed the required forms and sent the documentation immediately. On Dec 21,
2018, I received the approval letter to conduct interviews at Whitman High School. This whole process took close to five weeks.

**Triangulation in Data Collection**

In order to gain a holistic view of experiences of youth, it is important to explore the topic through multiple lenses. The stories of high school graduates, parents, ESL teachers, guidance counselors, and community members were used to triangulate information provided by the different sources. Additionally, information from unexpected sources may also provide deep insights on the phenomenon. An example of this is an interview I did with a N-B family liaison officer at Whitman High School, who coincidentally was also an alumnus of the school. As a liaison officer, he acts as a bridge between the families and school and is also a Nepali interpreter for parents who cannot speak English. He was able to add a different perspective on how experiences of the current group of refugee students may be different from that previous batch of N-B refugee students at Whitman.

**Instruments**

The researcher is considered the main instrument of data collection in qualitative research and interview questions act as a tool to gather information. During the interviewing process I tried to understand group differences within N-B and with other ethnic refugee groups. While doing so I was careful not to lump N-B into one pan-ethnic group of refugees. I created three different types of question sets for different groups of participant, parents, and informants. The questions for the parents tried to capture the trials and tribulations that they went through. The questions posed to the students were
related to school environment and their interaction with peers and teachers. Similarly, the questions posed to community members were not specific to any students but related to the ethnic group, their perspectives on the host and home culture, as well as the larger society in general.

As Merriam (2009) stated, the interaction between the interviewer and respondent does indeed have several layers in terms of insider and outsider status. I made a conscious effort to remember that social identities like gender, age, race, or socio-economic status play a key role in accessing information from the participants. Additionally, as Merriam (2009) rightly stated, “Both parties bring biases, predispositions, attitudes and physical characteristics that affect the interaction and the data elicited” (p. 108). Hence, I also tried to bracket any bias that may creep in during interviews.

In addition to qualitative methods of data collection, I found quantitative instruments that can further define the units of data collection within the research. Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) conceived an acculturation instrument, a list of items created while researching sojourner adjustment in a country of settlement. I referred to this list to gather acculturation related information on N-B participants. The list included food, clothing, religious beliefs, and so forth, that helped elicit more specific information (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999; see Chapter 2 for more details).

Similarly, in a separate study, Ward and Kennedy (1999) conceptualized a sociocultural adaptation construct and measured it through a Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS). They used this scale for a quantitative study based on a sample of 108
Singaporean students living broad. The list of items they created was intended to help understand how an individual or group of people from a foreign environment can familiarize themselves with the intercultural differences between themselves and the host society (Ward & Kennedy, 1999; see Chapter 2 for more details). During my follow-up interviews, I included a few of the items on the SCAS to gather more specific data. An example of some items on the scale are the immigrant value system, cultural differences, communicating with people from other ethnic groups, family relationships, and so forth. These items are applicable to refugees as well.

**Settings for interviews.** Interviews with high school graduates were conducted at various venues, depending mostly on their preference. Typically, a neutral place is suggested in literature on site choices for conducting interviews. However, in this case, most students preferred interviews at their homes because of time constraints and transportation. Four interviews were conducted at the homes of the participants, one at a library, and one at The University of Akron. Interviews with community leaders and administrators of non-profit organization were conducted at their offices, as well as one at the home of the interviewee. Additionally, five interviews with teachers and a staff member were conducted at Whitman High School.

**Interview procedures.** Prior to the interviews I did some prep work on the items needed for the interviews. I had a check list of documents to be carried, such as IRB approval (Appendix A) to interview refugees; authorization to conduct interviews at Whitman High School; demographic data forms; and consent letters (see example in Appendix B) to be read and signed by participants, parents, and teachers/staff members.
In addition to the check-list, I had the interview questions, a recorder (with extra batteries), and a brief summary of the dissertation study that explained the purpose and significance of it and the implications it may have for N-B refugee students. Finally, I wrote memos on how to interact with participants prior to the interview, particularly on how to be creative with the semi-structured questions when needed, depending on the information shared by the informants. At the end of the interview I informed them that I would contact them with follow-up questions.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with high school graduates about their acculturative experiences and sociocultural adaptation in Northeast Ohio public schools. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format while using a pre-prepared list of question. This type of interviewing allows flexibility in choosing the order of questions. For example, depending upon the response and body language of the participants, I would tweak the questions or make it more conversational to gather information. Additionally, I followed the format of responsive interviewing, which includes three types of questions. The main questions, which I prepared in advance; the follow-up questions were emailed to participants to get in-depth and vivid details; and finally, probes, where I asked for elaboration, examples, and clarifications. This type of questioning may help reveal any bias or slant in the responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Length of interviews. Interviews with high school graduates typically lasted one to one and a half hours, including the time spent before and after the interview. Interviews with teachers lasted between half an hour to 45 minutes, while interviews with community members sometimes went above one and a half hours. Before the start of the
interviews, I spent a few minutes introducing myself and getting to know the participants. Following this, I would explain the topic to them. The pre-preparation checklist items were followed while interviewing participants. An audio recording device was used to record the interviews. At the end of each session, I gave a brief recap on the significance of the dissertation study and the potential implications it may have for refugees and N-B students. Finally, participants were asked for a follow-up interview, to which they agreed.

**Transcription.** Recordings of the interviews were transferred from the recorder to a password protected personal computer. I tried to transcribe but soon realized how time consuming this was. So, I used other sources including our institutional transcription services, Rev.com, and Otter.ai. Otter.ai is a free software that had a speedy turnaround time and was able to provide fairly accurate transcription of the recording. Finally, all the transcriptions were uploaded to *NVIVO* software and saved for the purpose of data analysis.

**Journals, Logbooks and Demographic Questionnaire.** At the start of the interview participants were provided a demographic questionnaire to gather data on their place of birth, length of stay in the U.S., the nationality with which they identify, as well as, education of their parents.

Multiple logs, consisting of different types of information, were maintained. For example, logs on correspondence, contact information of potential participants, and logs with lists of participants and their pseudonyms, all in password-protected files. Additionally, I maintained logs on the date and timings of the interviews, as well as gift
cards logs given as incentives to participants and informants (following the IRB rules on incentives to participants).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that it is important to engage the participant in one’s study. They contended that the narrative inquirers collaborate with participants as they listen to their stories. As suggested by the authors a summary based on their interview was shared with participants, to avoid gaps in understanding the participant’s narration. This also acted as a member-checking procedure that helps validation of the dissertation study.

Data collection has been a learning experience, and prior preparation for the interviews provided me with knowledge and confidence to proceed to the next phase of the research. Data analysis was done using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Systems (CAQDAS). There are multiple software available for data analysis, and I used NVIVO for this dissertation study. Chapter 4 provides details on the procedures of data analysis and findings.

**Data Analysis**

The next step following data collection is data analysis, which Hatch (2002) described as a systematic search for meaning. He further described the meaning of analysis in a comprehensive manner, stating that it is

Organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis,
evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison and pattern-finding. (Hatch, 2002, p. 148)

Data analysis alongside data collection can be fruitful in identifying patterns which can further help generate some related questions for the participants. Following this approach, I noticed some patterns emerge as I was manually coding some of the transcripts of the participants. Based on these patterns, some follow-up questions were framed both for clarification and for learning more about the phenomenon.

**Narrative Analysis**

Data analysis of stories collected through narrative inquiry can be done by using three different approaches: a *biographical approach*, a *psychological approach*, and a *linguistic approach*. I have chosen a biographical approach, which fits well with my schema. According to Denzin (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), “the story is analyzed in terms of the importance and influence of gender and race, family of origin, life events and turning point experiences and other persons in the participants life” (p. 35).

Narratives are stories which have a structure of an essay with a beginning, middle, and end. The researcher has the task of making sense of the stories and retelling them through analytical descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Reconstructing stories based on narration and interpreting them not only requires skills, like being attentive to details and making connections, but also making sure that the narrative stands the tests of validity and reliability.
Using the biographical approach, I have paid attention to the lived experiences of N-B refugee participants, understanding their family values, any unpleasant incidents or situations in their school life, as well as the role of gender and race in their lives.

Thematic Analysis

After collecting relevant data from field notes, data were analyzed by manual coding and by using NVIVO. Data collected were analyzed using the method of thematic analysis. This type of analysis is considered to be a foundational method for qualitative research and is used widely; it is known to be flexible, because themes can be conceived in different ways; it can generate unanticipated insights, can be used for social interpretation of data, and is compatible with a constructionist paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, they contended that this method of analysis should be driven by research questions of the study as well as the broader theoretical assumptions. My research questions ranged from narrow to broad topics and hence, by using thematic analysis, I was able to generate a distinct list of codes and themes that could be further analyzed within and across one other. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), helps summarize a vast amount of data as well as its significant features, while providing a “thick description” on the phenomenon being studied. A constructionist method fits well with the dissertation study. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that this kind of method examines “the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society” (p. 81). Six different phases of thematic analysis have been outlined by them, the first of which includes familiarizing oneself with data—including transcriptions and other related
documents/data. Phase two involves generating codes, and these codes are collated in phase three. Phase four involves identifying potential themes and creating a thematic map of the analysis. The next phase is about defining the themes with titles that are more descriptive. Finally, in the sixth phase a scholarly report is presented with examples of selected extracts that support the analysis.

The first task in the process of data analysis was to read the transcriptions and manually code the data. According to Merriam (2009) data analysis begins by identifying a unit of analysis; the unit could be just a word or could include more descriptive phrases that can provide answers to the research questions. For data analysis, I used open coding and axial coding. The former is a starting point of data analysis, where data collected such as transcripts, field notes, and documents are coded manually in the margins and given a name. It is called open coding because the dissertation study is open to all kinds of potential categories. Using axial coding, I tried to identify any relationship between the emerging open codes and started looking for recurring regularities or patterns. This process was followed by the construction of categories/themes, or nodes (as they are called in NVIVO), where the software acts as a tool to create the overarching themes and sub-themes. Merriam’s advice on the topic was quite interesting. She stated that researchers should find categories that are comprehensive and illuminating. Accordingly, I have tried to extract information from data to create categories that are comprehensive and may speak to the readers “sensibilities.” I then paid attention to similarities between the categories that could be nested into a single domain.
The process of manual coding acted as a groundwork for data analysis using NVIVO software, and this enabled me to create a list of themes/nodes. Following Hatch’s (2002) axioms, I shared with participants some of the themes and patterns emerging from the interviews, so as to gain their personal insights on the issues in their community. In particular, I spoke with Neel (educator) and Amit to get their input on the emerging findings. Biographical sketches based on the transcripts were also shared with participants to member-check and determine if there were any gaps in my interpretation. This member-checking process helped with advancing the data analysis further by reexamining and confirming the data for validity. After the initial coding in NVIVO, I was able to nestle themes further into subthemes and categorize them. Before long, a nested structure of themes began to emerge. I methodically created nested structures of overarching themes/domains and categories that emerged from the data. Additionally, I was able to create rough mental maps and thematic structures which provided, at a glance, a hierarchy of overarching themes, domains, and categories that explained the coding schema, as can be seen in Figure 5. The overarching theme is identified in the blue cell followed by the domain—bullying and teasing—which is further described with specifics related to the domain.
The above process of thematic analysis acts as the groundwork for finding responses to research questions. There are multiple ways of analyzing qualitative data, such as typological, inductive, political, interpretive, and polyvocal approaches (Hatch, 2002). I chose the interpretive approach to analyze the research questions, because the process of the analysis is a good fit for the design and paradigm of this dissertation study. In this approach, the researchers need to spend time by “transforming and analyzing data in descriptive and analytical ways” (Hatch, 2002, p. 181). This approach also allows for
researchers to construct meaning and share them in meaningful ways. First impressions about an event or person are written on memos and later compared with data collected through interviews. The researchers write summaries and share it with participants and use excerpts from data to support their interpretations. This approach is very much in tandem with narrative analysis, the methodology of the dissertation study.

**Trustworthiness and Validity**

In order for research to be rigorous, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) contended that it must have insights and conclusions that sound true to the readers and other researchers. Keeping that in mind, I paid attention to the concepts and frameworks that relate specifically to the research questions in the dissertation study and chose participants that can help provide relevant, valuable, and trustworthy responses.

As suggested by Tracy (as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), I chose a topic that is worthy of research, rich in rigor, has transparency of methods, resonates with a wide variety of readers, attends to ethical considerations, and makes a significant contribution to research. I followed the process of making connections between the literature, research questions, findings, and interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

To ensure validity and relatability, I have triangulated the data and done member checks. For triangulation, I compared different sources of data collection methods, like interviewing a cross section of people in the community and verifying the findings. Wherever there was a need for clarification or probing, I contacted the participants and asked for additional information. In case there was a conflict in responses between participants, I spoke to an N-B educator, Neel, who works closely with N-B population at
a non-profit organization. For example, Neel was the first informant who spoke about certain N-B youth acting up because of a change in the power dynamic in their families. This included *role reversal* of youth and parents which resulted in youth devaluing parental authority and taking advantage of their parents’ ignorance. He confirmed the reports on truancy and other socioculturally maladaptive behavior of some youth. I was able to triangulate this with many of the participants, teachers, as well as the N-B liaison at Whitman High School. Triangulating information either pointed me in the right direction or made me search deeper for answers I was looking for.

Finally, data collection was continued until I was fully satisfied with the responses provided by the participants and until there was saturation and redundancy in responses. This, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), is an added layer that makes the research robust.

The findings of this dissertation study consist of six intergenerational families, are based on a certain setting, and are based on five high schools in Northeast Ohio. There was a certain amount of variability in their context of reception, the teacher attitudes and the attitude of peers towards this group of participants. For example, the level of bullying and teasing was different or in one case non-existent. So, based on a similar setting the findings may be generalizable to some extent. As Patton (cited in Schram, 2005, p. 177) puts it, this dissertation study intends to contribute to the topic and to “build general, if not necessarily generalizable, knowledge.”
Ethics

In qualitative research, participants play an important role in acting as informants about the actions and day-to-day happenings in their lives. Participants are the cultural insiders that agree to give a considerable amount of time and share the most intimate details of their lives (Hatch, 2002). I was aware of the ethical issues that are important in research with vulnerable populations. Participants for this dissertation study are post-secondary school refugee students who are adults between the age of 18 and 20. IRB permission was received before contacting them. Prior to the interviews, they were provided with the details of the dissertation study as well as a consent form to confirm their understanding of the nature of the research and their time and availability for interviews. In the case of parents who were illiterate, information on the dissertation study and its significance was shared through participants who volunteered to interpret.

In order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity, I created pseudonyms for the participants, teachers, parents, and community members. They were informed before and after the interviews that their identity would not be compromised under any circumstance. Additionally, I provided information to participants about the method of data collection, length of interviews, their time commitment, follow-up conversations, and authorship of the dissertation study (Hatch, 2002).

In addition, participants such as teachers, administrative staff, mentors, and so forth, were informed that they were not obliged to volunteer for the dissertation study and that they could refuse to participate at any point. Participants were informed about the tentative completion of the dissertation study.
Writing about the researcher-participant dynamic, Hatch (2002) put it rather poignantly and wrote, “We ask a lot, and if we’re not careful give very little [to the participant]” (p. 66). Therefore, reciprocity is an important ethical issue and the researcher and participant should have conversations on how they may benefit from the dissertation study. I informed the non-profit organizations that I would volunteer my skills and time for any of their programs. During the recruitment of participants, I had an opportunity to volunteer at a fundraiser to help them with the scheduled events. Additionally, I informed the participants that I would be able to help them with their academic and career choices and also volunteered my time to help participants improve some of their existing academic skills and navigate through issues related to higher education and admission processes. In appreciation and gratitude for their time, participants were also given a small token gift card.

**Limitations**

Limitations in a study are those factors over which the researcher does not have any control. Typically, self-reported data has inherent limitations (C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2008) of validity because the participant may or may not be providing the whole story or may have forgotten some important details for various reasons. This may be true with N-B participants as well.

However, this group of N-B appeared to be more mature and willing to share their experiences candidly, because they hoped their participation could further their efforts to make schools more welcoming. They said they looked forward to changes in school culture towards N-B and immigrants in general. According to C. Suárez-Orozco et al.
(2008) participants—especially youth—may often present situations in a better light than what they are. However, in doing so, they mask their challenges and do not seek help. This may have been possible with participating N-B youth as well, but this was not outwardly evident through the conversations. The only way to check was through triangulating data with other sources and other members.

Another limitation is researcher’s bias that can slip into the findings as well. So, efforts were made to reflect upon the research and bracket any biases that I had. For a brief moment, I did see myself trusting the reports of oppositional and troubling behavior of some N-B. However, my advisor, Dr. Seeberg, was able to keep me grounded by reminding me about the aim and purpose of my study and to not focus on reports that have yet to be confirmed through direct sources.
CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The empirical research segment of the dissertation study provided some answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of the thesis. The aim of this study was to explore the sociocultural acculturation of forcibly displaced N-B youth in public schools in Northeast Ohio. The purpose was to understand how N-B youth are adapting to the new culture of the larger society and navigating through the school system. In addition, it was to gain deeper insights into their context of reception as well as the challenges and barriers they encountered. During the process of data collection and data analysis, the study took on a life of its own as it evolved and posed some unanticipated questions, tempting me to go beyond the frame of the research questions. The study at times echoed the data from existing research, while in other cases revealed some unexpected findings that were inconsistent with the literature on the topic. During the course of data analysis, I realized that the findings of the dissertation study will at times concur, contradict, explain, or add to the existing knowledge. The dissertation study examined the sociocultural challenges of N-B youth while being cognizant of the role of identity, gender, trauma impact, resilience, premature adulthood, culture conflict, and so forth, that refugee youth may have experienced as newcomers in the country of settlement.

As explained in the methods section, data analysis was done by paying close attention to emerging themes as underscored in Merriam. She stated, “Categories should be responsive to the purpose of the research” (2009, p. 185). While creating and
developing categories, I tried to identify the frequency of some of the words or ideas in the data (words like “bullying” were mentioned by several participants). I was cognizant of the fact that not all audiences may find a given theme important. I also created categories if they had certain unique aspects that could connect to the research questions. In addition, I created categories if they revealed unique aspects to a problem—like parent illiteracy—and how it could impact youth in their school adjustment.

During the process of data analysis, the emerging themes became the foundation for the findings of the study. I have tried to guide the reader through my own exploration of themes and stories narrated by participants in the study. This was my rationale for following the order of thematic, narrative, and then research question analysis. Culminating with the research question analysis gives the readers a complete picture of the various aspects of data analysis and findings.

**Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis is considered a foundational method for qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and is used widely by researchers. Thematic analysis helped me conceive themes in creative ways, interpret data, and present them in a coherent manner. Researchers choose this form of analysis because it provides flexibility and can generate unanticipated insights. Additionally, it is compatible with the *constructionist paradigm* chosen for this study. Furthermore, according to the above authors this form of analysis helps summarize vast amount of data while providing rich description.

I began the thematic analysis by reading and rereading the transcriptions to become familiar with the content. Initially, in the margins of the data I scribbled broad
themes as they emerged. Then I tried to identify the smallest unit of analysis, which could be a word or descriptive phrases that can describe the main idea. Initially I started by manual coding data, later I used NVIVO software to create a list of nodes/themes that emerged from the data. The software is a useful tool that helped me highlight excerpts from data and file them into relevant themes that had emerged. As a result of this, data analysis became a streamlined process that was more efficient and time saving. In addition, I was able to create mind maps, using NVIVO, that could help organize the major themes and the relationship between them. Additionally, it helped clarify the phenomenon through a different medium: visual maps. The following themes have emerged from the data gathered rather than any pre-existing assumptions on the topic.

**It’s Also the Accent and the Speed**

The educational experiences of N-B participants prior to resettling in the United States are varied. Some of the participants had learned English while they were in Bhutanese camps in Nepal, while others had basic knowledge of the language when they entered the U.S. N-B students in this dissertation study are from six different Bhutanese refugee camps. Based on the data collected through interviews, it appears that the quality of schooling varied slightly at each of the six camps. However, none of the participants had comments on the way their teachers taught them English. Some of the participants said that speaking English was mandatory during English class and that they could get punished if they did not do so. However, this rule was not true in all camp schools, which explains part of the variance in their language skills. Most of the participants said that even though they learned British English in camp schools, they still experienced
trouble speaking the language in the U.S. because of the accent. This was especially when English was spoken extremely fast by their peers. N-B students are an example of refugee students who are struggling in classrooms in part because of the communication barrier that exists between them, their peers, and their teachers.

Interestingly, there seems to be variation between boys and girls on how they acquire language skills. According to Mr. August and Mrs. Molly at Whitman High School, girls seems to learn the language faster than boys. Both Mr. August and Mr. Patrick said that the biggest barrier faced by N-B youth is standardized testing at schools. Both teachers explained that N-B students do poorly because some of the high school English texts are college-level and are difficult for them to comprehend. The same is true with comprehension of poems. Mr. Patrick noted that these students are fine with reading novels but found informational texts to be extremely challenging. Additionally, in high stakes testing there is also an element of cultural bias which again hinders their comprehension.

Findings in this dissertation study indicate that language proficiency is closely related to acculturative stress and confirm the conclusions of existing literature: that a lack of language skills pose a barrier for the sociocultural adaptation of N-B immigrants in schools. Separately, parents of the participants also believed that the language barrier stifled many potential employment opportunities.

**Discrimination: Bullying and Teasing**

Consistent with theoretical research on immigrant children being bullied in school, N-B participants in the dissertation study experienced bullying and teasing in
some form or another. Often, when a child or an adolescent is mean to other children, people have a tendency to overlook and say, “Oh well, children are cruel.” Immigrant children are more vulnerable to violence as was evident from the negative experience vividly described by the N-B youth. Even though some of them reported these incidents to their teachers or principal, in most cases little-to-no action was taken. This was mostly because of inability of N-B youth to communicate the attacks on them due to the language barrier. It was only in the case of Madhu that the bullies were identified and punished.

A few examples below show the impact that these incidents had on the minds of young adolescent boys and girls. Bikram experienced bullying the most during his middle school years; he mentioned that every time he spoke in class discussions or during presentations, students laughed and made fun of him. In this passage Bikram provided details of being bullied and the suicidal ideation he had. Bikram said,

So, yeah, I was one of the four first Nepali kids to go to this Middle School, along with three others. They were in sixth grade while I was in fifth grade. And I was the only Nepali kid there. And, going there, like, it was like a nightmare for me. Because every time I went there, I would be, I would be made fun of. Everyone made fun of me, everyone would be laughing, like, when I spoke, and even at lunchtime, I would get thrown lunch at. And, like, even in the bathroom, I would get kicked, I would be . . . I was the joke of the class. And, like, even when I told the teacher, they wouldn’t listen to me. But then, now I realize that they did listen to me, it’s just that they couldn’t understand me. And also, one time, I got
suspended for no reason. Well, that was because of false accuse. So, yeah, at the lunch, at the lunch table, I was eating, but then like, out of nowhere, the security guard came over, and he took me to the principal office, and he said that I was suspended for seven days for throwing lunch. . . . by the end of the year, it made me realize that I was in Hell, because in Nepal, everyone said that America was land of the opportunity and it was like heaven. But then I realized it was all misconception. And, especially with the bullying. It made me, like, suicidal.

Bikram said that he was beaten every day in school. He was punched and kicked in the bathrooms by the boys. However, the teachers did not help him because the boys would often lie about the incident. He said that he was unable to defend himself because of the language barrier. Multiple times during the interview, Bikram mentioned that the idea of suicide crossed his mind. Because of this severe bullying, his parents transferred him to a private school. He believes that trauma due to bullying impacted him in his public speaking skills.

Similarly, Amit and his friends were also bullied at a Cleveland-area high school where the majority of students were White and African American. Amit’s story is similar to that of Bikram’s. Amit spoke about how some of the boys would throw a football at him while other boys would hold him. On many occasions Amit would cry at home and ask his family to enroll him in another school. So, when the bullying became severe, Amit’s mother transferred him to a high school that was more academically inclined and had a diverse student population.
Some of the N-B students experienced unpleasant acts but not hateful acts and they found ways to “get even” without being vengeful. For example, Anish recalls that some American students drove past him and his friends, and splashed water all over them, on a rainy day. They thought the best way to get even was to outdo them in sports and at studies, which apparently they did.

You Are an Outcast

The attitudes of members of the country of settlement may be influenced by the dominant narrative or ideological position of the current administration as well as the policies toward immigrants. Any kind of discrimination or prejudices against immigrants and refugees percolates into other institutions such as businesses, schools, and colleges. Such attitudes could lead to a wedge between host and ethnic migrant communities. Policies of the Trump administration (2019) have not been cordial towards immigrants, and this has created an atmosphere of distrust and fear and results in arbitrary judicial decisions and legislation for people with different immigrant status. A few participants in this dissertation study did feel they were targeted by their peers because of their skin color. One of the participants, Amit, narrated an incident that made him uncomfortable and said that he was “scared” for a while after that. This was at a fast food establishment where a classmate was deriding immigrants, while at the same time assuring him that he was not referring to Amit, but to other immigrants in the country. Such sentiments may also have an impact on the sociocultural adaptation of youth that see themselves as unwelcome in the country of settlement.
Vignettes of Violence in the Neighborhood

Amit was traumatized by two incidents that happened during the first few weeks of his arrival to the U.S. In one incident he was attacked on the street by a group of African American youth. They punched him and tried to mug him, and when his mother interfered, they pushed her to the ground, and she broke her toes on both feet. As a result, she was handicapped and unable to walk for a few months. Recalling the incident, Amit said,

And she was at home. She had no laptop, no Wi-Fi, no movies, or anything you know. Just by herself, you know. Alone in a strange country, you know. By herself, no son. You know, no husband. All by herself. She cannot walk outside because her toes are broken. So, she used to cry by herself and she told me now, you know.

Amit’s mother never shared her anxiety and depression with him because Amit was only 13 years old at that time.

Girls Take Charge

Girls in the study also experienced bullying. For example, when Madhu and her friends were walking to school, some children threw stones and attacked them. Their parents were unable to help because of their language barrier, so the girls took the initiative and reported it to the principal. Whitman High School has an assigned staff member to serve as an N-B family liaison and helped the girls share details of the incident. The students were identified and disciplinary action was taken against them. Similar incidents of bullying happened to participants at three different schools; however
Whitman was the only school that took strict action against the perpetrators. According to Mr. K, a teacher at Whitman High School, their school has a strict protocol to deal with such incidents, and bullying and physical violence are not tolerated. The consequences are made clear and are the same for students from all races and cultures. In case of an altercation between the ESL population, efforts are made to identify any miscommunication between the students because of language barriers. For example, Mr. K. said, “a word that has a positive meaning in a language and is a derogatory term in another” could result in conflict between students.

**Yet to Find Their Niche**

According to Mr. Patrick, the reason why some N-B students are excelling and others are not is because they have not found their niche. For example, some students have joined cultural clubs, sports teams, or artistic activities like drama club and dance. These activities draw them to school. For others, they may volunteer and help newcomers with language learning and academic guidance. According to Mr. Patrick, “The problem you find is when the kids aren’t particularly interested in soccer, or not good enough, or if they’re not performers, I think they’re slower to find their niche and where they belong.”

**N-B and Stereotypes**

Amit mentioned that because of his Asian physical features, he was stereotyped as the *model minority*. Stereotyping can be both negative and positive, but in either case there can be unexpected consequences. Amit was mistaken to be from a rich professional Asian family, as per the model minority stereotype. Typically, such students are
considered to be from affluent backgrounds and academically successful. However, when Amit explained that he wasn’t from the such background, his classmates then assumed that his parents must be owners of a gas station or a Seven Eleven convenience store.

**Parents and Illiteracy**

According to Neel, almost 90% of N-B parents are illiterate and have no formal education. They do not read or write their mother tongue, Nepali. In addition, belonging to a farming community of Lhotshampas, N-B may not have skills that are needed in the U.S. Youth from such homes are either attending school and working at the same time or are dropping out of school in order to financially support their parents.

**Premature Adulthood**

Elsewhere in the literature review, the topic of *role reversal* has been discussed. It is worth reiterating that this reversal of roles occurs when children acculturate sooner than their parents. Findings reveal that N-B youth are sometimes involuntarily pushed into positions of caretakers of siblings, driving parents to work (if they are working), interpreting for their parents, arranging doctor’s appointments, paying taxes, and so forth. Also, during the interviews, I observed that since N-B parents could not provide any academic guidance to their children, they depended on their older children to mentor their younger children and guide them with academic choices at school. Three of the participants in the study were either helped by a sibling or cousin, or they themselves helped younger siblings with schoolwork, and so forth.
Additionally, according to McBrien, “Many refugee children write checks for mortgage and other payments. Such role reversals between children and parents create identity confusion and conflict between the generations” (2005, p. 330). Such conflict may lead to questioning of authority and easily tip the scale of parental control. These findings are consistent with literature on immigrant youth and their school experiences. Scholars have referred to this as youth becoming parents’ parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), also called forced maturation (Sleijpen et al., 2017) or role reversal (McBrien, 2005). This role reversal was also evidenced in a study of Somali Bantu male students at an American high school (Roxas, 2008). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) referred to this as dissonant acculturation which puts the youth at risk of downward mobility. The youth acquire language and other skills sooner than their parents and are less likely to accept parental control thereafter.

The reversal of roles has a component of power dynamic which puts the parents at a weaker position. This premature independence may lead to immature judgment and poor choices. According to Neel, one of the educators and members of the N-B community, this premature sense of independence, adulthood, and maturation may have negative consequences for some of the refugee N-B youth. Neel mentioned multiple cases where N-B boys were taking money from their parents meant for expenses and gas and using it for alcohol, drugs, and gambling, and unsupervised had gotten into bad company and dropped out of school without the knowledge of their parents.

There is a significant amount of literature on how adulthood is thrust upon young immigrants, especially refugee boys, when parents are not in a position to interact with
members of the country of settlement because of a language barrier, illiteracy, or a lack of employable skills. I have used the term *premature adulthood* to describe the situation of some N-B youth who are forced to step into the shoes of their parents to take care of them and their siblings. According to Neel and Bikram, adolescent youth are forced into paying back the loans, for example, from International Migration Organization (IMO), taken by their parents.

**Cultural Differences**

N-B participants encountered situations that made them notice cultural differences that exist between them and the majority culture. These included differences in attitude toward people of authority, pedagogical differences, norms related to personal hygiene, as well as caste, dating and early marriages.

**Accepting authority.** The cultural norms of N-B youth are different in some ways from the majority culture. For example, teachers at Whitman High School, such as Mrs. Smith and Mr. Patrick, described N-B students as respectful of teachers and that they did not challenge authority. Cultural differences could often create misunderstandings between people. Bikram mentioned getting into trouble for not looking at the teacher while she was talking to him. His teachers thought of this as being disrespectful.

**Pedagogical differences.** According to community members Rani and Mohan, the style of teaching in American public school is different when compared to the schools they attended. So, both Rani and Mohan feel that parents are unable to participate in their students’ learning and progress. Even though both of them are educated, they are still not
able to help their son who is in middle school. The interviews revealed a certain sense of loss in being actively involved in the learning process of their children, even though the children were performing well at school. Separately, two participants in this dissertation study were drawn towards math and thrived despite the pedagogical differences. One of the participants, Bikram, took advanced math and calculus courses at school, and Anish won several awards in math and received the star student recognition in the Akron newspaper, the *Beacon Journal*.

**Personal hygiene.** Often, children make comments to one another that may, at times, sound cruel. However, when one looks at certain situations closely, there are hidden reasons that explain such behavior. N-B student have been teased for body odors or comments are made on their food—especially when it has a strong smell of garlic. According to Ms. Cate, some of the above is off-putting to majority students. She also mentioned that some of the N-B have a habit of spitting into dust bins, speaking loudly, or even clearing their throat loudly in hallways. Even though these are sensitive topics to discuss, the teachers at Whitman High School are trying to address them by making the students aware of the proper cultural norms. Ms. Cate quickly added that these norms were European but addressing them would help reduce some tension amongst students. Ms. Cate said that their school is trying to bridge these cultural differences. They have a culture day celebration every year and students from different cultures showcase their food, clothing, and music. Additionally, the school is also introducing career readiness classes that address some of these issues by teaching immigrant students cultural norms like looking into the eyes while talking, hand shaking, and so forth.
**Dating norms and marriages.** Girls in this study were shocked about the school culture and the American culture in general in respect to the dating norms. According to them, the concept of dating does not exist in Nepalese culture. In addition, public display of affection is not permitted in Nepal. Acculturation of N-B boys and girls in the U.S. has brought about certain unexpected changes. The schoolteachers at Whitman High School have noticed N-B youth not only dating but also entering live-in relationships which are causing a lot of stress for their parents.

**Early marriages.** According to Neel, if boys and girls were in a live-in relationship, their community considers them to be a married couple. The couple is then forced to follow through with a marriage ceremony that recognizes their relationship. Several cases of early marriages among N-B boys and girls were known to the participants. Some of the teachers at Whitman High School said that a few of the married couples continued to attend school after marriage.

**Caste system.** Another unexpected finding that emerged from the study was that N-B refugees in the U.S. continue to believe in the importance of caste in marriage. The caste system is a hierarchical system of social class based on the profession of the family into which a person is born. Hence, intermarriage between different castes is normatively forbidden. Even though N-B refugees who are Hindu continue to believe in these customs, the younger generation is beginning to diverge from these traditional norms. According to Neel and some of the other participants, there have been incidents when N-B students have eloped and married outside of their caste against the will of their parents, which can create a whole new set of problems.
**Soccer and Sweet Victories**

N-B youth, both boys and girls, have a passion for soccer that has generated a lot of confidence and self-esteem. Anish narrated stories of how they decided to create a team while at high school. He and his friends noticed the attention received by football players at Whitman High School. They wanted to play a sport too, so they recruited a few friends and created a team. Soon Anish became the co-captain of the team and as well as the interpreter for his teammates, because he was the only one who could speak English. He said, “85% of soccer players were Nepali speaking, and since nobody speaks proper English, I had to step up and help out with the translation. So, I was one of the team captains for several years.”

Anish said,

> When it comes to uh, you know sporting events, they [American students] would see us in different ways . . . We [N-B] all play soccer, and they all play football or basketball, and since the football team wasn’t doing good, they started to see us, you know, cause we could kick soccer ball very far . . . then they were much friendlier than what they used to be.

According to Anish, he and his friends were also making progress at schoolwork and getting better grades. Anish said that for the first time in six years their soccer team won against the opposing team, and everybody began to watch and appreciate them because of their victories.

**Tenacity and Perseverance**

Another common thread among N-B participants is tenacity and perseverance.
Anish was not bothered by his lack of fluency in English. He kept trying to better himself and at one point approached his teacher to help him enroll in a higher level of English. He followed his advice and said to himself, “OK, I will challenge myself and I’ll be the highest level by the end of my sophomore year or junior year.” He worked harder to get better grades and admits that he has always viewed himself as a hard worker. His GPA at the end of his high school years was consistently 3.5 or higher. Pari and Madhu also realized how important it was to speak the language even if they were made fun of by their peers. They kept trying and soon overcame their inhibition of speaking the language.

**Educational Aspirations and Altruism**

Four out of six participants in the study will be majoring in STEM fields in college. What makes these students remain committed to school and learning, despite a majority of N-B students falling through the cracks, is quite intriguing. Hard work and a desire to persevere was clearly visible among the participants in this study. Not only did these students want to succeed, but they had a sense of altruism in helping their families. Some of the reasons for the academic achievement and positive sociocultural adjustment of N-B youth in this study point to the fact that they come from very close-knit families, and the families act as a buffer from associating with wayward youth. Participants in this study who did have negative experiences at school did not play victim, instead they channeled their energy to attain their goals.

A sense of activism and empowerment was visible in a couple of the participants. For example, Kumari wants to become a lawyer and is passionate about raising
awareness about rules and regulations in the U.S. She believes she can make a difference in people’s lives by helping them understand their rights to protect and defend themselves. She gave an example of how two of her classmates from her community who were handcuffed and taken away by police had no idea about their rights, like the right to ask for a lawyer. This lack of information and guidance about local laws was worried her. Kumari has scary memories of a situation when she was wrongly served a legal notice for truancy while she was in high school. Even though her father was able to find a lawyer and settle the issue, she still thinks this could have been avoided if her parents and community had some basic programs to inform immigrants of basic rules and regulations, such as protocol when a policeman approaches or the constitutional rights that protect them.

Anish is currently a junior in college and is aspiring for a degree in biomedical engineering. Despite the fact that both his parents were illiterate, Anish persevered and found ways to connect with teachers and mentors who are playing an important role by helping him reach his goals and aspirations. His teachers encouraged him whenever he asked for help, and as a result Anish became confident enough to collaborate with other students and co-found a few clubs, like the International Leadership Club and the Rotary Interact Club. He also won the Best Math Student award one year in the Akron school district.

Pari has chosen dentistry as her career path. Despite her language insecurity and the minimal involvement of her parents in her academic choices, Pari is very goal oriented and hopes to study hard toward it.
Madhu also has high aspirations and is taking science courses at college so that she can attend nursing school. Again, this is a student who had a rough start of being bullied on the streets, but did not let these experiences dampen her spirits.

Another participant in the study, Bikram, who is one of the most traumatized among the participants in this study, was a good student in high school, despite his negative experiences. Bikram said that he took advanced courses in Algebra and Calculus while at school. Currently, Bikram is on a scholarship and is attending a prestigious college in Northeast Ohio. He is still wary about trusting peers and others from the dominant community because of the negative experiences he had as an adolescent; however, he is beginning to adjust to college life. He said it was tough since he is the only N-B student in the entire school. However, this did not deter him from pursuing an undergraduate degree in computer sciences.

**Myth of the American Dream**

According to Neel and Amit, a large number of N-B youth are working while attending school because of financial responsibilities, particularly if their parents are illiterate and cannot work. Others are working daily wage jobs to enhance their lifestyle. Their current salaries are much more than what they could earn in camps. The temptation of quick money and the attraction of a materialistic lifestyle may have lured some N-B away from school. Amit explained,

Our young adults . . . All they care about is money, you know. Because they’re young, you know, they have energy, you know, they have willpower. So, all they care about is making money, and especially my friends. And every, you know,
days when they have the paycheck day, they throw themselves a huge party in the parking lot, you know, buy some beers, you know, drink and drive, you know. Because of them there were a lot of accident some of them dies too, you know, drinking and driving and getting tickets obviously, you know, and going to the jails, DUI, you know.

**High School Dropouts**

According to the participants, teachers, and parents in the study, there are a large number of N-B students who are dropping out of school for a variety of reasons. School-related reasons include language insecurity and frustration with ESL classes, unwelcoming school milieu, bullying and teasing, and a lack of sufficient help from their parents, community, and school. ESL classes are considered a barrier by N-B students that prevent them from taking mainstream classes. Often students are held back until they complete the ESL requirements. When placed in classes that are a level below their potential, they become disinterested and frustrated. On the other hand, if they are moved to the next level, they may struggle with insufficient language skills.

Participants in the study also reported financial responsibilities as one of the reasons for some N-B youth dropping out of school. Typically, this happens when parents are unemployed or when N-B youth enter into early marriage and drop out of high school to support the family. Additionally, participants and community members also reported that N-B youth drop out of high school because of attraction to quick money through minimum wage jobs.
According to Neel, who is an educator at a non-profit organization that resettles refugees, truancy among N-B students is rampant. Illiterate parents are often tricked by students who lie about going to school and instead hang out with their friends on the streets. Manoj, the family liaison at Whitman High School, said that when the school calls the homes of these students, oftentimes the parents do not pick up the phone. In other cases, parents are working long hours and thus do not interact with the school and are unaware of their child’s progress and whereabouts. Manoj explained that on some occasions, he had to go to the homes to speak with their parents.

The following are a few excerpts from interviews with students and members of their school and community regarding truancy, drinking, drugs, and gambling.

Neel:  There are children who have fallen into drugs and alcohol and bad practices and discontinue schools, they get married [early], that has also been happening. Some continue at least up to high school senior, and then they can’t complete because a poor foundation or they give up and they start going to a job, they start working jobs. There are some people they don’t do work; they want to be in a group or association with such bad people.

Pari:  I had some Nepali friends, they don’t speak English because they are new, and they don’t want to study. Maybe they feel bad or embarrassed, because American students, some people like teasing them, and they can’t handle it. It’s so hard to handle it. So, they don’t want to go to school and they start skipping a class, the class, and otherwise they drop
the classes. And they just go to the company. Also, they don’t want to go to school and they say, at home, “I’m going school,” but they are not. They are just hanging around outside, going to the park, chill out. And some, as you said before, some Nepali, one of my friends start to do drugs, also because he can’t handle all the teasing, and all this stuff.

Bikram: Yeah, I do know a lot of Nepali, Nepali students that have dropped out or just graduated from high school, that go straight to drugs. Because, like last week, I was driving through and I saw this, like my former high school student, who . . . went to the same high school in ninth grade, he was just on the side of the road, laying down. Yeah, I feel like it was the effect of the drug. Yeah, I have heard, I have heard stories of them working and gambling.

According to Mr. Patrick, a Whitman HS teacher with 20 years of teaching experience, students that are truant either hang out on streets or go to homes of friends where both parents are away from home and working. On the topic of drugs, he said,

We’ve had some that have gotten into really cheap drugs huffing gasoline, sniffing glue, stuff like that. They would spend the day doing that until school bell rang, and they go home like they’ve been in school all day. And maybe they’re the ones who’re too quick to get arrested. Thank goodness that number is low. But it definitely happens.
Through the above themes I have tried to provide a glimpse of the issues that may have helped or hindered the process of acculturation and sociocultural adaptation N-B youth in schools. The following segment provides an analysis using the narrative lens.

**Summary of Thematic Analysis**

The following mind maps and matrices recap the themes that emerged in this first analysis of the data. Figure 6 presents the different themes that contributed to the positive sociocultural adaptation of N-B participants in this dissertation study.

Table 4 provides a quick outline of positive traits of the NB participants and how they overcame certain challenges during their high school years. The third column consists of excerpts from data collected from participants through interviews. Each comment/statement in that column is separated by the initials of the participant who shared those comments, followed by an asterisk. To allow the voices of the participants to come through, grammatical or syntax issues have been intentionally overlooked.

Figure 7 identifies major themes resulting in various consequences that may have impacted N-B youth in their process of sociocultural adaptation.

Table 5 identifies the major challenges faced by N-B youth in high schools in Northeast Ohio and the effect it may have on these youth. The column to the right includes statements/comments in the voices of the participants in the study. Grammatical errors, and so forth, have been intentionally overlooked in order to maintain the authenticity of their own words.
Figure 6. Intentional sociocultural adaptation of N-B participants
### Table 4

**Matrix of Intentional Sociocultural Adaptation of N-B Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive attributes</th>
<th>How they overcome challenges</th>
<th>Excerpts from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenacity and perseverance</td>
<td>Worked hard to improve language skills despite being teased and bullied</td>
<td>PP: They just teased me… I didn’t even understand them… [Then] I start speaking English with my dad and other friends also, like Nepali friends. Then I start to understand a little bit. And I also watch English video and start to listen to songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Took time for introspection</td>
<td>KG: Like I know English, but they won’t understand my accent… they don’t know what I’m saying, and I won’t understand their accent. Junior year… I was like this is not gonna to help me at all… I started talking to like some people [in English].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Took help to improve grades and do well at school</td>
<td>AP: I left my peers and I went to my Mexican friends you know. And I learn about their culture, their country and how they came to be in the United States you know, and my English wasn’t that good, and their English wasn’t that good so we learned from each other you know.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BS: I could barely pass [science], but then you know, I had to sit down with my teacher, we had to walk through, and then I finally passed with A grade by the end of the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AG: I used to stay after school a lot, so I have memories walking home at night in the snow and all that.</td>
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</tbody>
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*(table continues)*
Table 4 (continued)

*Matrix of Intentional Sociocultural Adaptation of N-B Youth*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive attributes</th>
<th>How they overcome challenges</th>
<th>Excerpts from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Enterprising**     | Started a soccer team with the help of teachers  
                       | Joined different clubs  
                       | Founded clubs  
                       | Desire to leave a legacy |  
|                      |                              | **BS:** In high school I was in chess club, … chess was my favorite game, I had been playing since I was a kid. I also joined soccer team.  
|                      |                              | **AG:** I played soccer all 4 years in high school… I was only one of the student who could speak proper English… I was one of the team captain for several years. So, I told some of my friends they should try, [wrestling] it’s a sport, and they went there and they thought it wasn’t very hard, so they did, a lot of them actually won medals…When I graduated, I was involved in 22 different activities. I was vice president of National Honors Society.  
|                      |                              | **MR:** I joined a soccer team. So, from soccer team, I gained, like, how to interact with other people. in my 11th grade, I like, I got positioned as a captain.  
|                      |                              | **AG:** …we wanted to leave… better opportunity for those students for upcoming generations.  

*(table continues)*
### Table 4 (continued)

**Matrix of Intentional Sociocultural Adaptation of N-B Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive attributes</th>
<th>How they overcome challenges</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empowerment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls spoke up against bullies (when parents were unable to.)</td>
<td><strong>MR:</strong> When we go to school, on the way there would be some American kids, they would throw a stone at me and my friends… they[parents] don’t know English so they didn’t know what to do… my friend and I went and talked to our Nepali interpreter who told the Principal… from then on I knew there is some people who can help you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Premature adulthood</strong></td>
<td>Braced financial responsibilities of parents Acted as Interpreters for parents Volunteered</td>
<td><strong>AG:</strong> So, a lot of them actually dropped out from high school as well, because since they are not progressing well with their English language, that is one. Uh, the second one is, the biggest one is that it’s a financial problem in their home that they’re having. Because you pay so much loans [immigration]. <strong>BS:</strong> I also volunteer a lot, which seriously changed my life. Before, I, I didn’t know what volunteering was. But then after going there, it made me realize that volunteering in one’s life was very important. And I also learned to be selfless.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*(table continues)*
### Matrix of Intentional Sociocultural Adaptation of N-B Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive attributes</th>
<th>How they overcome challenges</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Created buffer groups</td>
<td>KG: New guy [newcomer] comes in you don’t have to best friends but till he gets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Found solutions to problems</td>
<td>comfortable, be with him. Play with him, sit with him and everything. Me and my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>best friends used to be like hey if new girl comes in you gotta- take care of- even</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>though we don’t have to be best friends it’s just that making sure they are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>comfortable enough that they can go out and make their own, like, best friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AG: Yes, a lot of students felt lonely so we would invite them to our groups or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>even our tables so they can learn something, and we can share our homework or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academically inclined</strong></td>
<td>Pursued their strengths and interests</td>
<td>BS: Math has always been my favorite subject, and challenging myself was the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kept themselves occupied with positive</td>
<td>I, I could do in high school. I took hard classes like algebra, pre-calculus,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experiences</td>
<td>yeah, and I have to say that really helped me a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AG: By the end of my freshman year, I had 3.9 in cumulative GPA. Then my teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>… they gave me Student of the year award, just on how I progressed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 4 (continued)

Matrix of Intentional Sociocultural Adaptation of N-B Youth

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parental involvement</strong></td>
<td>Kept track of their child’s progress</td>
<td><strong>AG</strong>: My siblings did help me a lot…parents not so much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transferred them to better schools, when there was a need</td>
<td><strong>BS</strong>: I have to say that my parents, they helped me a lot, they said … like, I have to move forward, if I wanna go forward in life… Every time, like, when there was a parent-teacher meeting, they would go there, they would talk with my teacher…She’s [mother] very, you know, like, educated, there is this thought that school is very important….I have to say, my parents, they played a huge role in my life because I don’t think, without them, I would be here, in college. Without them I would probably be working in some factory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouraged their children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taught them patience and to be focused on their goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7. Unintentional Sociocultural Maladaptation of N-B youth
### Table 5

**Matrix of Acculturation and Sociocultural Challenges of N-B Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N-B acculturation challenges</th>
<th>Effect on youth</th>
<th>Excerpts from data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language insecurity</strong></td>
<td>Barriers</td>
<td><strong>AP:</strong> We had to start the school right off the bat … and they would just like send us to school … and [say] this is ESL class for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teased at school- social barrier</td>
<td><strong>KC:</strong> Students have limited practice [of English] outside of school … default back to native language upon exit of classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication barrier</td>
<td><strong>AP:</strong> We were supposed to call 911 … we didn’t know how to explain it because our English wasn’t that good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Barrier to access mainstream classes</td>
<td><strong>MR:</strong> And I also think the most difficult for us to adjust in America was that the language we were not we were not familiar with the English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Psychological barrier (low self-esteem)</td>
<td><strong>BS:</strong> Everyone made fun of me, everyone would be laughing, like, when I spoke, and even at lunchtime, I would get thrown lunch at. And, like, even in the bathroom, I would get kicked, … I was the joke of the class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Context of reception</strong></td>
<td><strong>BS:</strong> Yeah. I think it [discrimination] was more because of my skin color and language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unwelcoming school ethos</td>
<td><strong>MR:</strong> So I think this was my first year of school, going to middle school. So, when we go to school, on the way there would be some American kids, they would throw a stone at me and my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying, teasing, physical violence</td>
<td><strong>AP:</strong> And the bullying so bad and so severe like, I skipped thirty days of schooling one year because I didn’t want to go to school you know, I was so sad. And I feel like so left out you know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher oversight of bullying students</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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Table 5 (continues)

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<tr>
<td>Parental illiteracy and long working hours</td>
<td>Parental disengagement</td>
<td><strong>PP</strong>: American students, some people like teasing them, [N-B] and they can’t handle it. So, they don’t want to go to school and they start skipping a class, and otherwise they drop the classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uninformed of youth’s academic performance</td>
<td><strong>KC</strong>: Parents don’t seem to check up on their children’s progress through our home access system or by asking child to show them current grades on their chrome books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents working multiple shifts to pay bills</td>
<td><strong>NL</strong>: So they [parents] are working many more hours, and they don’t have time to take care of their children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Uninformed of their youth’s social and anti-social behavior outside of school</td>
<td><strong>AP</strong>: She [Mom] was only person who had an income, a full time and it wasn’t enough for two family members to, you know, survive on that, you know, money because, we had to pay for our, you know, bills and food and stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>NL</strong>: They don’t know the children’s progress. They don’t know their children’s attitude. And there are challenges in the schools. Now, as a result of that two things happens. One is it hampers in their academic achievement...[and] they don’t know what grade they are achieving, what are their hardships, what are the issues they want to discuss with the teacher.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Premature adulthood</td>
<td>Role reversal between parent and youth</td>
<td><strong>NL:</strong> Sometimes the children would take advantage of parent’s simplicity, and innocence and ignorance and as a result of that also students, they fall in the wrong track, maybe drug or alcohol or some sort of things. They don’t continue their regular classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dissonant acculturation</td>
<td><strong>MA:</strong> The parents are complaining about their child being a boss at home because of the language barrier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tricking and cheating parents financially</td>
<td><strong>KG:</strong> I have heard about that, when people, like, kids know more than their parents do and they[parents] are having a problem with like check- I won’t say fraud but it kind a is when you are faking your parents signature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loss of parental control</td>
<td><strong>MR:</strong> …some Nepali, one of my friend start to do drugs, also because he can’t handle all the teasing, and all this stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawn to alcohol, drugs and gambling</td>
<td><strong>BS:</strong> I do know a lot of Nepali, Nepali students that have dropped out or just graduated from high school, that go straight to drugs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(table continues)*
Table 5 (continues)

*Matrix of Acculturation and Sociocultural Challenges of N-B Youth*

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glitz and glamor of American materialism</td>
<td>Dropout of school</td>
<td><strong>AP:</strong> Young adults who has a really good income in job, you know, working in a casino or being a server. They save up money, they buy fancy cars and they show off you know in the community…And all the kids who are graduating from high school sees that, you know, and they get jealous you know, “I want one of those cars” you know, and they stop focusing on their studies and start focusing on earning money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum-wage jobs</td>
<td><strong>AG:</strong> I have seen a lot of students buying new cars when they get started to working at some kind of place and they listen- they earn 12 dollar per hour, they start view themselves in a better way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working at casinos</td>
<td><strong>BS:</strong> I have heard stories of them working and gambling [in casinos]. And, like, most of them have went bankrupt, and I think some of them, they even went homeless because of the gambling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial responsibilities</td>
<td>Youth dropout of school to brace financial responsibilities</td>
<td><strong>AG:</strong> So, a lot of them actually dropped out from high school as well, because since they are not progressing well with their English language that is one. Uh, the second one is, the biggest one is that it’s a financial problem in their home that they are having.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Narrative Analysis

The metaphorical three-dimensional inquiry enabled the study to look at N-B experiences through the lens of temporality, sociality, and place. *Temporality* drew attention to the places and events in their lives, in the past, present, and future. For example, participants shared about their co-curricular activities such as soccer, chess clubs, traveling out of town for competitions, and so forth, which gave us an idea of their sociocultural adaptation at school. They shared about their memories in Bhutanese refugee camp schools, and so forth. *Sociality* drew attention to their existential social conditions such as where they lived, their neighborhoods, and the diversity in them and the surrounding forces. In addition, data on their personal condition relating to their feelings, desires, and moral disposition also helped understand how they feel about their social circumstances. The third dimension is *place* which is the topological or physical boundaries within which the participants live and interact with others. It was observed that most N-B homes were in low-cost housing but safe neighborhoods. Informants shared that N-B families stayed connected to their community members because they resettled into neighborhoods that already had N-B refugees from previous resettlements. As a result, they could maintain close ties with the community and the youth could stay connected with their friends and cousins.

Following the philosophical underpinnings of *narrative inquiry* and the *constructivist paradigm*, I involved the participants with my research by sharing summaries of the data collected from them during interviews. During the interviews I informed them about the study and the process of research, the acculturation strategies,
their own process of sociocultural adaptation, and certain established theories, such as upward mobility and downward mobility. I also simplified some research terms for them, while encouraging them to ask questions. I wrote narrative biographical sketches on each of the participants based on the data collected from interviews, following which I shared the finished narrative with the participants. A few of them wanted a few minor changes to be made while the others agreed on my interpretation of their stories.

A very commonly used phrase in literature on narrative analysis is, “we all live storied lives.” It is these stories that we share. While thematic analysis focuses on the “what” type of topics, narrative analysis focuses on the “how” and “why” questions of a phenomenon. A narrative inquirer therefore poses questions to elicit responses. Following is an analysis of the data collected during the interviews. I was aware of the fact that there may be some bias based on who was telling the story. Similarly, as narrative inquirer I was also aware of my own identity and how I was interpreting the data gathered. The following narratives of participants were written while reflecting upon some of the above-mentioned salient features of narrative inquiry and analysis.

Unraveling Their Lives

This segment of the findings provides the readers with a brief summary of the participants and gives us an opportunity to understand their adaptation to the U.S., their new home, their community, and the host culture through their own unique lens.

The biographical sketches are of different lengths, because not all participants were talkative and had to be nudged to share their inner thoughts. On occasion, it felt as though some of the participants were still processing their lives, and not too sure of how
However, there were also other participants who shared without holding back. These participants without their knowledge, and probably without mine as well, became activists and advocates of change in the attitude of students and teachers towards N-B youth at schools, in their community, and in the larger society. Amit, Bikram, and Kumari wanted their voices to be heard and problems to be addressed. They genuinely hope that this research would enlighten others about their challenges and may initiate positive changes for N-B youth in public schools. Amit was a participant/informant who stayed connected with me and volunteered to help with the data collection, provided names and contacts of a number of potential participants, and went above and beyond his required role. He had meetings with community members to inform them about some of his friends who were getting into bad company. What was heartwarming was that each time a participant canceled an interview appointment and dropped out of the study, Amit was as disappointed as I was, but would start all over again making calls to find contacts.

**Narrative Summaries**

Narratives act as a window to look into the lives of the six high school graduates in the study: who they are, where they come from, and their own personal journey through school and adolescence. I have tried to select the excerpts that would provide the reader with the essence of the theme and the true feelings of the speaker at a particular moment in the interview. Through these narrative summaries I have tried to capture the multiple realities in their lives, their teenage angst during high school years, the dual cultures that engulf them, the conversations that they never shared, the shining moments in their lives, and the dark and hurtful times they wish they could forget. Here are a few
lines that are poignant and powerful that were spoken by some of the participants. The following melancholically poetic lines speak volumes on the outbound journey of a refugee leaving behind their entire world with a heavy heart and a light bag.

You leave your past behind. You leave everything behind. Everybody gets three duffle bags and three carry-ons. That’s it. You start a new life with these six things. (Kumari)

**Madhu: A newcomer speaks up.** I met Madhu at a fundraiser organized by Aid Immigrants Inc. (AI Inc.), a nonprofit organization that helps low-income immigrant communities in Ohio. I was at the event as a volunteer for a silent auction. It was during the dinner break that I got a chance to meet with a few other volunteers, and Madhu was one of them. Before long we began talking about our association with the organization, our volunteer tasks for the event, and so forth. During the course of the conversation I gathered that she graduated from Whitman High School and was a freshman studying nursing at Lexington University. As I began to explain my research topic to Madhu, I was impressed at her genuine curiosity and enthusiasm about my study. Madhu was delighted that research was being done on their ethnic community and was keen to learn more about my project. She promptly agreed to participate in the study. I then met her for an interview at her home. During the conversations, I observed that Madhu and her sister share a close relationship with their mother. As they answered my questions, they often looked at her, as though seeking an affirmation to the conversations.

Madhu was born in Goldhap refugee camp in Nepal. She completed part of her middle school at that camp. She and her family were resettled to the U.S. in 2002.
During the first few years, she found it difficult to adjust to the school system and to the country. Because of the language barrier, Madhu found it difficult to run day-to-day errands, like making trips to the grocery store or just talking to people on the street. While at school, she found it equally difficult to interact with students and teachers. During the initial few months she recalled she made little effort to interact with others especially because she was very nervous with the whole atmosphere at high school. But soon she came to grips with her situation and took a stance of finding ways to cope with the situation and “making something out of her life” in a new country. On many occasions during the interviews with her, I observed how confident and courageous she was. Her will power, grit, and perseverance in some of the described situations were truly admirable.

Even though Madhu was frustrated with the challenges of language barrier, she said she was happy for the opportunity she and her family had to live in the U.S. Madhu was bullied by a few students as she walked to school with her friends. She was unable to get support from her parents because of the language barrier and their inability to communicate with teachers or counselors. Madhu and her friend took the initiative to complain about the incident to the Nepali family liaison, Manoj, who was part of the school staff. Thereafter, the girls complained to the principal as well, who took immediate action against the bullies. The above findings support the literature on refugees that illustrate the qualities of resilience in them. The initiative on the part of girls shows resilience, moral strength, and even a sense of empowerment. Despite looking petite and unassuming, Madhu is a soccer player. As part of the soccer club at
Whitman, she travelled with her teammates to several cities including Cleveland and Canton. Coincidentally, all her teammates are also Nepalese-Bhutanese because none of the American students are interested in soccer.

**Pari: No, I am not Chinese or Korean.** A bubbly and talkative girl, Pari is one of those chirpy youngsters who is overly excited while still surprised about the culture that she has inadvertently become a part of. Even as she shared her most challenging experiences, especially speaking in English, she mentioned it with a sense of abandon. Like many American youngsters, she used the filler word “like” throughout all of her sentences. I was able to build a rapport with her quite easily as I began to listen to her experiences and stories as a newcomer. While I began to settle in the living room of their apartment, Pari’s little brother hovered around the room excited to see a visitor. Noticing this distraction, Pari immediately attended to him and tried to keep him calm. (Her role of a caregiver, in the absence of her mother in the room, was visible in this situation.) When I met her mother, I noticed that her attire was like that of most Americans. However, Pari’s grandmother, who sat quietly by, wore traditional Nepalese attire which included a black and red, long, wraparound skirt that extended to her ankle, along with cloth head dress. I pondered over the eras she had lived through. She was from a generation of Nepalese victims of the Bhutanese persecution, when Nepalese families were forcibly displaced by the Bhutanese king and the ruling elite. She gave me a warm smile as she left for a walk outside with her grandson who was getting restless in the room. Pari’s grandmother’s attire symbolized Nepalese pride and freedom. This
traditional Nepali outfit was banned by the Bhutanese rulers during their call for “one nation, one people” in the early 1980s.

Like most of the participants in the study, Pari was born in Khudunabari refugee camp in Nepal. The medium of instruction in the refugee camps was English, but it was British English. Pari and her family found the American accent very difficult to understand, especially when spoken fast. During her first year, Pari was teased and bullied for not being able to speak the language. In addition, students at her school insisted on calling her Chinese or Korean. This lack of geographic knowledge and ethnic identity bothered Pari. It was only after a year of being at school that she began to adjust and adapt to the school and felt comfortable with the language. Pari narrated multiple examples of cultural differences between Nepali and American students, such as clothing and exposure, value system, physical contact while greeting, and so forth, which were shocking to her. (See also Themes in Chapter 4.) Her positive experiences include interactions with counselors and ESL teachers at Whitman High School who were very helpful in guiding her through her academic decisions. She is a freshman in college and wants to go into dentistry.

Anish: Math wizard. The words that comes to my mind when I think of Anish are the different forms of the word “thrive.” Throughout the interview, he used the word several times. It is certainly the most appropriate word to describe what this young man has made of his life. A highly charged and confident young man, Anish personifies positive attitude and an attitude of looking ahead rather than back on the past.
Anish was born in one of the Nepalese camps called Timai, located in the east of Nepal, very close to the Indian border. He fondly reminisces about his home there on the banks of the Timai River. Anish came to the U.S. at the age of 12. He thought it was like a dream to come to the U.S., but soon realized the differences in culture and language. He admits that in 7th grade, he had a tough time with being the only Asian student in the whole school. Anish and his family were initially resettled in Illinois in 2012 by UNHCR. He recalls that the school administration had no idea about his identity and mistook him to be a Latino student. He was put into ESL classes along with other Latino students where a Spanish interpreter helped all the Latino students with English. Soon the interpreter realized that he was not part of the Latino community and ethnic group. In 2013, Anish relocated to Ohio and was surprised to see the number of diverse students in his new school. There were students from 15 different nationalities who were part of his ESL program. Since Anish was very weak in English, he was put in the lowest level of the class.

_A few kind words are all it takes._ Anish remembers his teachers as being very friendly and highly recommended by other staff members. He admits that they were “very good at understanding us, our feelings, and teaching us that we can thrive and [that is] why we are here today.” Initially, in his middle school in Ohio, he had a hard time because of the language barrier. Even though the school had a Nepali interpreter, the Nepali students could not benefit from them because of the linguistic diversity within Nepali language. There are multiple dialects within the language and even though the
The interpreter did understand the dialects, he still had a hard time translating for students that spoke different dialects.

Anish spoke about his counselors with almost a tone of reverence and with great respect and admiration. On one occasion when he reached out to a counselor on behalf of his friend, who at that point was doing poorly in class, the counselor discouraged his friend from quitting the class or taking lower level classes. Instead, the counselor convinced him to try harder until he got better. This act of being a good Samaritan actually improved his friend’s academic performance.

**Language barrier.** Language barrier was more than just a conversational impediment for him. It led to misunderstanding and miscommunication between N-B students, American students, and schoolteachers. Anish recalls an incident that led to an unexpected consequence. This was how he explained it:

When in my PE class, one of the students from here [national student] said some racist stuff about us, and we went back to the teacher and said he was saying something bad, but the teacher never understood and he actually came and pushed one of my friends, and I went back and argued with him. My teacher called me and sent me to ISS (In School Suspension).

Anish did tell the interpreter about what happened, but the school administrators looked at the video footage and decided to suspend him anyway for three days. He said that the administration paid no attention to his side of the story.
**Intercultural relations.** Anish grew up in a neighborhood that was very diverse. He says with pride, “it is the most diverse neighborhood, I think, in the state of Ohio.” Like his school, his neighborhood is also an example of multicultural diversity. There was an unspoken (both metaphorical and real) affinity that existed among the neighbors. And that affinity, interestingly, stemmed from their commonality of not knowing the English language. He says,

> So whenever they [neighbors] walked to a grocery store or even on the road, they would say hello in different languages, they will smile. And they basically know whenever your neighbor has some kind of events or you have some kind of cultural events, you will call them and they’ll also call you, so that’s how we had shared, lot of people from here [from national culture] also like how we shared our culture with them. So, they truly liked how we are not only here for a better life, but also impacting the sociocultural life out here.

From the above narrative, we get a sense that Anish had positive experiences in his school and neighborhood and was socioculturally well-adjusted.

**Harmony in diversity.** Anish’s parents are illiterate and do not speak any English. Initially, when his parents had potential job opportunities, they were unable to physically get to the job because of a lack of transportation and language barrier. Finally, when they did find jobs, they felt comfortable and were well-adjusted because of the diversity among their fellow workers. Their company had refugees and immigrants from different parts of the world, including Burma, Thailand, Mexico, Venezuela, Afghanistan, India, Europe, and Africa. Anish’s parents felt the company was like a family as they
interacted and shared their ethnic food with each other. What brought this diverse group of people together was their language barrier and their common journey of aspiring for a better life for themselves and their family in the U.S.

**Carpe diem.** Sports are an integral part of high school life, especially in American high schools. Anish created a soccer team and played the sport during all four years of his high school. Interestingly, all the players in the team were foreign born and 85% of them were N-B. Since Anish was one of the captains of the team and was the only player that was fluent in English, he inadvertently became the team’s interpreter as well. He mentioned that there were no American (national) students on the soccer team because none of them were interested in the sport. Anish has become fairly fluent in English, and when asked about how he became this fluent, he responded that he had a strategy of learning from different people and to open up to others when asking for help.

**Networking.** Anish is an enthusiastic learner who did not miss any opportunity to learn. He watched his peers from the majority group and appreciated the work they were doing. Often, he would stay back after school and be friendly with teachers, who encouraged him and recommended him to take courses that may help him. Thereafter, Anish said he just followed the process. As advised by his teachers and counselors, he got involved in many different activities and soon started a club and got his friends involved as well.

**Separation to integration.** During his freshman year, since he was not proficient in English, he was mostly part of different associations with students from his own cultural group. He approached his teachers and asked them how he could improve his
language skills. Anish challenged himself to get to the highest level in his ESL class. He also worked hard in his regular classes and had a cumulative GPA of 3.5 at the end of his high school career. As Anish started taking more regular classes, he noticed that he no longer had N-B friends in his classes.

**Leadership.** Even though Anish missed his friends, he slowly began to work with other students in his regular classes. By the time he was in his sophomore year he was in all regular classes. Anish was given the Student of the Year award as well as the student ambassador for the school based on his academic progress. The principal of Whitman High School asked him to represent the school by attending various activities, like volleyball games, bowling games, and so forth. Very soon, Anish was distracted with other activities and neglected his studies, however his teachers guided him by helping him balance between studies and extracurricular activities. Even though he felt isolated from his old friends, he was still able to help them when they needed him.

Anish exemplifies hard work, positive thinking and attitude, grit and perseverance, as well as an unwavering trust in his teachers and counselors. Because of his accomplishments, the school began to be seen in a positive light and started the academy system, which focuses on career and college preparation for students that were like Anish.

**Legacy.** Inspired by N-B students and how they were thriving at school, a non-profit Christian organization was started by a group of American students. The organization decided to call itself Thrive and was located at a Chapel where they ran after-school programs that provided homework help to students. From here on, the sky
was the limit for Anish, who created the International Leadership Club of Whitman High School to acknowledge the cultural diversity in the school. He also started the Rotary Interact Club and said that “the club is thriving.” Speaking about the clubs and activities that he and his friends started, Anish said, “we wanted to leave, not only leave our names but also leave better opportunity for those students for upcoming generations.” By the time Anish graduated high school he was in a total of 22 clubs/activities and was given the Beacon Journal Star Student Award, Young Mathematician Award, Math and Science Student of the Year award, Best Interview Skills winner, President of the Stem Club, Vice President of the National Honors Club . . . and the list goes on. Anish has *thrived* in so many ways and has become a role model to his community and to other students at school. He turned every impediment into a window of opportunity and succeeded.

**Amit: Spokesman of N-B youth.** I had spoken to Amit over the phone a few times and was very impressed by his forthrightness and his genuine interest in this study. He immediately volunteered to help me with creating a pool of participants. He called me multiple times and kept me informed about potential participants. Before long Amit became an active advocate of this project. He is by far one of the most confident and enterprising young N-B refugee I have met. Amit was always ready to find solutions when potential participants dropped out of the study. He is resourceful and kept his word when he was in a position to help.

I met Amit at a library for the interview and was surprised, in a pleasant way, to see a well-dressed young man with a certain swagger. As the interview progressed, Amit spoke about his family and his life at Khudunabari refugee camp where he was born. The
camp schools, both elementary and middle, were “brilliant” according to him. These schools were run by Caritas Nepal, a non-profit organization. Amit said that the teachers at the school, although they were very strict, were extremely good—by that, he meant that the quality of education was very good. The medium of education was English and even though they were small classrooms they still conducted experiments in some of the classrooms. What stood out in the conversation was that a personal bond existed between him and the teachers, and he mentioned that he continues to maintain contact with his camp teachers.

Amit attended two different high schools in the U.S. He spoke candidly about the schools and the harrowing memories that he had. In the first school, in the Cleveland area, he was teased and bullied for a whole year. Finally, unable to deal with the bullying at school, he moved to another school district. For Amit, just like the other participants, the biggest challenge at school and home was the inability to speak the English language. This lack of understanding of the language inhibited his communication skills and ability to express himself, especially when he needed help.

During the first week of Amit’s stay in the U.S. he was a victim of violence on the street in his neighborhood, and this incident had a deep impact on him. He recalls that there was a small group of African American young adults who tried to mug him on the street as he walked back home with his mother. The boys beat him up and pushed his mother to the ground, as a result of which his mother broke her toes on both feet. Amit and his mother could not report this violent incident to the authorities because of their inability to speak the language. Amit was traumatized with this incident that
psychologically impacted him and he said, “it took me a really long time to recover from that trauma.”

Amit mentioned another incident when he and his friend were sexually abused by an African American girl. He said that the girl would touch them inappropriately at the bus stop. Both boys were unaware that they could report the incident or call 911, especially because they did not realize that it was a crime. Moreover, they were hesitant to report it because of the language barrier. This happened during their first year in the U.S. Additionally, his parents did not want to take any action because culturally their approach is to simply adjust and let things go. Amit said that was the way they were raised, especially boys, who were expected to display machismo and not cry about things. Amit recalls it as the second traumatic experience he has as a newcomer in America.

While he changed schools because of bullying, he still felt lonely and depressed in the new school. During a rough stage of his high school years, he sought help from a school teacher who was also like a counselor. She would listen to him and counsel him on how to deal with the issues he was facing. Unlike his parents’ approach of adjusting and letting things go, Amit also took the initiative of approaching friends at school and asking for help. He said that is how he learned that it was okay to share with others.

Amit was raised by his mother, the only breadwinner of the family, because his father does not live with them. While he was in high school, his mother worked two shifts to keep the family going, but she never burdened Amit with the hardships that she was going through. His mother also went through depression because of loneliness and not receiving much support from her neighbors or Nepalese community members. After
the violent incident when his mother broke her toes, she was restricted to the house. In a very sad voice Amit narrates the hardship that she underwent. His empathy for his mother is noteworthy.

And she was at home. She had no laptop, no WiFi, no movies or anything you know. Just by herself you know. Alone in an apartment in a strange country, you know. By herself, no son. You know no husband. All by herself. She cannot walk outside because her toes are broken. So now she used to cry by herself. She told me [recently] you know. They were on food stamps for about a year, and once his mother was able to work, their financial circumstances were improved.

Amit found peers from co-ethnic communities, like his friends who were Mexican, by ethnicity, to be very helpful, as they encouraged him in his adaptation to the host culture. These interactions outside his community gave him opportunities to mix and mingle with peers from the dominant group as well. As a result, Amit branched out from his own community and began widening his circle of friends. He explained that he soon began to follow the strategy of assimilation by abandoning the traditions and values of his home country and following that of the majority group. According to him, very few N-B youth reach out to people outside of their community and so, he believes that his friends from the community are unfamiliar with the culture of members from the larger society.

As can be expected, he is a young adult who is quite drawn towards the independence enjoyed by American youth. He spoke about how this desire for
independence brought some conflict at home. However, this was soon resolved when his mother, after some negotiation, agreed to let him participate in some decision-making matters, but she chose to have the last word in all the important matters.

On settling into the new school, Amit said that, unlike the previous school, he did not experience racism in the second school because this high school was quite diverse. However, he did mention that because of his skin color and his physical features, he was often asked whether he was from a family of professionals, like most Asian families are. Either that, or he was asked if his family owned gas stations, and so forth. These stereotypes are prevalent and do influence how children perceive each other.

Amit also mentioned N-B youth that had dropped out of high school or were graduating from high school but were not interested in college. He said that these boys were into alcohol and drugs. Some of the boys he knows have been caught for a DUI. In addition, he noted that a few of them were working at casinos and got into the habit of gambling there. Speaking about their lifestyle, he said that these young adults flaunt their fancy cars and in doing so they attract and tempt other boys in the community to follow the same path. While they do not want to pursue higher education, they find it easier to make quick money through low paying jobs.

Amit has his head on his shoulders and is very mature for his age. He is very clear in his mind about the consequences of the actions of such youth. From the time that I met him he promptly volunteered to help with participant recruitment. He provided me with contacts of six potential participants/informants. Even though he had some negative experiences as a newcomer to the U.S., he has an “I can do it attitude.” He has been
meeting with community members to help them organize information sessions which can prevent other youth from going down the same path.

**Bikram: Survived the worst.** Bikram was born in Bhutanese refugee camp Beldangi. Bikram recalls his life in Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal as being hard and with very few job prospects. Even though the schools in the refugee camps did teach math, English, Nepali, and history, he still thinks that they were not as good as the schools in the U.S. He came to the U.S. at the age of 11 and joined middle school. He had a very basic knowledge of English at that time. He remembers that he found it very difficult to understand the language because of the speed at which everyone spoke.

Bikram joined ESL classes that were offered by organizations like Building Hope in the City. This organization provided classes for children from many different nationalities, like Burma, Afghanistan, Sudan, and many other African countries. They helped the children with grammar and homework, as well as with accent problems like losing their strong ethnic accent. Bikram also took ESL classes during the summer organized by Asian Services In Action. The biggest challenge Bikram faced was in English language and the accent of students in the school. To add to that, the school did not provide ESL classes. Based on Bikram’s description, it was a low-quality middle school in an under-resourced school system where the teaching staff was not deeply committed to student learning. Bikram was one of four Nepali students at the school. He recalls his middle school experiences as a nightmare. The teacher did not care about checking homework or about student progress. In the classroom, he was constantly bullied and made fun of by the American students. On many occasions, he was pushed, punched,
and beaten up in bathrooms. He gives credit to a mentor at Asian Service In Action who counseled him by sharing his own experiences as a newcomer to school, and how the counselor eventually turned things around by mentoring Bikram on how to improve his language skills. He advised him to learn many more vocabulary words and take more English classes. However, because of extreme bullying at school, his parents admitted him to a private school between 6th and 8th grade. His private school experience was much better. His classmates were more accepting of him, and the teachers had a very strict policy against teasing and bullying. The teachers were committed to student learning and followed their progress closely. During the two years that Bikram spent at the private middle school, he got better at English and he found the classes to be interesting. This made him study harder and get better grades. However, Bikram soon began to forget his mother tongue, Nepali, and the Nepalese culture. This prompted his parents to move him back to a public high school. As a freshman in high school, Bikram found the curriculum to be challenging. Because he was always good at math, he began to take more difficult courses like algebra and pre-calculus while in high school. These subjects apparently helped him later in making informed academic choices. His biggest fear at school was presentations in English, and he said, “I was always struggling with the presentation, because I always thought that because of the bullying in middle school, I was lagging behind.” Bikram has vivid memories of being beaten up in bathrooms by students from both White and African American backgrounds. He mentioned multiple times that he had suicidal thoughts during this time (see more in themes section).
The purpose of changing schools back from a private to public school was so that he could connect with students from his ethnic community. As a result, Bikram began to spend more time with his Nepalese friends at school. Even though he felt more comfortable in their company, he soon realized that there was a downside to it. By the end of the year, Bikram became one of them. He started picking up bad habits from them, was tardy to school, and his grades plummeted. Once again his parents intervened and decided to return him to a private school to avoid bad company. He found the private school to be very challenging but admits that he learned a lot at this school. Bikram said, “that was when the magic happened.”

His experiences in the new private high school had a very positive impact on him. For example, he became better at speaking the language and at presenting in class. At this high school he was introduced to the idea of volunteering, which he was unfamiliar with and believes changed his life. It made him realize the importance of helping and being selfless. He began to volunteer at an organization called Building Hope in the City, where elderly people were taught English and were provided classes for Citizenship as well. Bikram worked there as an interpreter translating from English to Nepali and vice versa.

Speaking about unpleasant incidents at school, Bikram experienced an incident of racism at school. He recalls an incident in a gym class when a girl said called him an outcast and said he did not belong there because his skin color was brown. However, his gym teacher stood up for him and told them that “ethnicity and skin color were not as important as being a good person.” In the private high school, the teachers were very
strict so there was no discrimination. He said, “So, if someone says something about another student, they would usually get suspended or . . . or, they will just, like, they’d be pulled out of the class.”

His friends in the private school were more academically inclined and competitive, would study every day, do their homework, and play online games and puzzles. This group of friends had a positive influence on him. It gave him a sense of belonging, especially because they did not make fun of him or think of him as an outcast. Bikram was part of the Chess Club at the high school and said that he enjoyed the game a lot. He also joined the soccer team in the high school.

Bikram said that his parents played a huge role in his life. They always attended parent-teacher meetings and talked to teachers about their concerns. His parents are educated and consider schooling very important. He said they always “observed” the schools and their overall goals. He appreciated the support provided by the N-B community members and the degree of exposure to his home culture through his interactions with them. During their first few months of stay in Northeast Ohio, they lived in a primarily Nepalese neighborhood, but later they moved into a community with more African Americans and fewer Nepalese. Bikram recalls that he did not feel his neighbors were very friendly.

Bikram mentioned that the value systems and cultural differences between the majority culture and the Nepalese culture had some unexpected consequences because of misunderstanding, and sometimes they were quite serious. On one occasion in school, a teacher gave him detention for not looking into her eyes and speaking. However, in
Nepali culture it is considered rude to look directly into the eyes of elders. Also, he found physical contact like hugging and kissing in public places to be very unusual.

Bikram wants to start an organization that can help students who are newcomers and want to learn English. Having had many negative experiences in middle and high school, he believes that he can make a difference to such children. Despite his negative experiences in middle school, he still thinks that he would associate himself with the integration approach. He said, “I want to stay with my culture, but I also want to stick with American culture as well.”

**Kumari: Know thy rights.** Kumari was born in Nepal and was from Goldhap refugee camp, but because of a fire in the camp she had to move to Beldangi refugee camp. One of the more confident and expressive participants of this study, Kumari came to the U.S. in 2012 and joined middle school within three weeks of her arrival to the country. I met Kumari at her home in a neighborhood of row houses. What caught my attention was that even though it was a small home, it was extremely neat and well-organized. In most of the N-B homes that I visited during the interviews, there were certain decorations in bright and festive colors like artificial flowers, the colors on the carpet, or prayer artifacts that were identifiably Nepalese or Asian. But in Kumari’s home, it had a certain Western touch to it. It was symbolic of their acculturation and adaptation to the host culture. This observation was based on the décor of the house that had many Western elements and influences. For example, their restroom had color-coordinated towels of various sizes with embellished lace work, neatly placed together on the towel rack. There was no particularly strong or identifiable aroma in the
house. Additionally, I observed that Kumari was the only participant in the study who, within a span of six years, has become fairly fluent in English, with a range of vocabulary and a noticeable American accent. About her experiences in Bhutanese camps in Nepal, Kumari explained that the schools in the camps were not concrete physical structures but rather were temporary structures built out of Bamboo. There was no heating during the winter months, and students were packed together to stay warm, but during the rest of the year they could spread out and sit on the ground. A school could often be interrupted by an unexpected downpour, leading to school closures because of leaking roofs. The medium of education was Nepalese and students were taught math, English, social studies, and so forth. The students did not have any textbooks of their own. The teacher was the only one with a textbook, and students had to take notes off the board. Kumari’s parents were both teachers at the Bhutanese refugee school.

**Challenges on day 1 at school.** Kumari, like the other participants in the study, did not go through a transitioning period before starting school. She was enrolled at a school that did not have newcomer student orientation programs. On her first day at school, she recalls,

I went there, and I would sit outside. I was like looking at people. I was like “I have no clue what I’m even supposed to do . . .” I’m just like a lost kid at a fair or something . . . Like I know English, but they won’t understand my accent first of all, and they don’t know what I’m saying. And I won’t understand their accent. In addition, on the same day, she was asked to take a test, of which she had no idea. She said she could not understand the question, let alone answer it. The following is an
example of how she interpreted the test that she was asked to take on the first day of school.

On the paper [test] it like said on the paper—I think it was like write something and three points. I thought they meant like 3 bullet points. But apparently 3 points meant that that’s how much grade you will get if you get the question right. So, I put three bullet point because I don’t know what they’re talking about. So, you kind of got like little time for me to understand that—because that’s how the things work in here, how the school system works or how the teachers—what they are trying to say or ask. (Kumari)

Consequently, she feels strongly that newcomers should be provided some classes or orientation about school culture, which would be helpful, especially if the parents of the newcomer students are uneducated.

Additionally, Kumari mentioned that she did not feel welcome at the school or the community. She felt that there existed a communication barrier between the host community and her, especially because neither of them tried to communicate with the other. And this, she admits, may have be due in large part to language insecurity.

Even though Kumari had a support system prior to resettling in the U.S., she still found it extremely difficult to relate to the public-school environment. Her relatives were among the first batch of refugees that came to the U.S. in 2008. So, her cousins who had already started school were able to help her and her family acclimatize to the culture and society. They were able to coach and help her to some extent with the language, school culture, and other norms in the society.
During her middle school years, her biggest challenge was presentations in front of a class. This was mostly because her classmates made fun of her accent and her inability to speak the language. It was not until her junior year that she got over this fear. Now, six years later, she admits that middle school children are typically very mean to each other, and that explains their behavior. However, she admits that while she may have been mean as well, it was not like American students who she made personal comments about the smell of their food, hair, and body odor. It was only during her junior year of high school that students stopped behaving cruelly to each other.

Explaining cultural differences between Nepalese and American culture, she found it unusual to watch girls and boys her age dating. This was unacceptable in Nepal and she was shocked at their display of affection, like hugging and kissing in public places. Kumari was not allowed to throw parties or even attend sleepover parties like most students of the majority culture. The only time that they socialized with others was during major Hindu festivals when they had gatherings in their homes. That is when the community got together and celebrated.

Speaking on the topic of social events at school, Kumari said that most N-B students are unaware of socials held at school like Homecoming and Prom night. This is mostly due to lack of access to the information at their schools. However, Kumari attended two such events because of the publicity and the information that was circulated. She really enjoyed the events and would have liked it if her N-B friends from other schools also knew about it. Kumari said she would have liked it if they had played music
from her part of the world as well, so that she and her friends could have participated more. She hoped there was more information about, and inclusivity in, such events.

**Buffer groups.** Kumari and her friends created their own school community within the larger community. She felt more comfortable being with N-B friends because they have the same background, and she said,

I never tried to talk like the others . . . I think that’s what happens when you’re put in a situation where you have like this culture shock, like the whole transition and everything. You tend to go with your people no matter what. It’s kind of—you shouldn’t . . . but you’re kind of, because that’s what you are forced into. Right?

Kumari and her friends in middle school would always look out for N-B newcomers by creating their own inclusive buffer group. They would welcome the newcomers and provide them support until they found their own friends. As a result, they created their own community networks. Kumari felt the need to help new students from her linguistic and cultural background. In her mind it was important for the students from the host culture to show a gesture of acceptance and make the first move to be friends. But when that was missing, the N-B students formed their own groups.

Kumari’s parents made her transfer to another high school that was more diverse. They thought it would be better if she interacted with students other than those who were N-B. Her freshman year at the new school was hard for Kumari. Even though she missed her N-B friends, by the time she was in her junior year, because her classes, she started to interact with more students from national culture and from other ethnicities.
Kumari said, “I finally found my voice.” She found the courage to talk back if anyone made comments.

Not all N-B students from Kumari’s high school were college-bound. Only a few of her classmates completed high school and applied for college. Most of them took up minimum wage jobs.

Kumari lived in a neighborhood which was not very diverse and had mostly White neighbors. She said her neighbors were accepting of them, and some of them were very friendly and they developed cordial relationships with her family. As for her own community members, she believes that they could provide their youth with more guidance before they make poor choices. She said that typically, N-B community members pay attention to youth issues only after they have taken a wrong path and ended up in jail. That’s when they make an example out of those individuals and warn their children against it. Instead, Kumari argues that such incidents could be avoided by providing timely advice and guidance.

Another big concern that Kumari has, as an aspiring lawyer, is that most N-B refugees are unaware of rules and regulations in America. This, she feels, can be detrimental to innocent N-B refugees who can be taken advantage of in case they inadvertently break a rule or law. Kumari had a personal experience where she was served a notice to come to juvenile court for truancy. It was caused because of an error on the part of the school administration. The issue was later resolved, but not without causing some emotional stress to the family and to a hardworking and conscientious girl like her, who had never even missed a day of school.
Additionally, she said that it would help N-B people if they are provided with some kind of training on how to interact with a police officer in case they are pulled over, or even if they knew that the state is obliged to provide a legal counsel if they cannot afford it. The way this could be addressed is through some orientation classes for adults. For example, she said,

I would want somebody to teach us how to do some of the things like file tax returns, pay for bills, or help understand some of the rules and regulations. You know, those kinds of things that are necessary because it’s not something a lot of people teach you about. Your parents have to learn. Sometimes they don’t even know how to read and write . . . And if anybody teaches you, you will be a lot of help to your family and you will be teaching to them. (Kumari)

On the topic of youth taking advantage of their illiterate parents, she did say that there are children who are taking advantage of their parents because they are unfamiliar with the financial and cultural aspects of America. Kumari does know of children who have faked their parents’ signatures, and that they do so out of ignorance, without knowing the legal implications of such acts. However, she quickly adds that such behavior also has to do with how the children have been brought up in terms of their value system, their beliefs, and their morals.

**Interpretive Analysis of Research Questions**

So far, thematic analysis and narrative analysis provided varied and in-depth information on N-B youth and their adaptation on public schools. There are a few additional models or approaches that can be used for data analysis, according to Hatch
These include, *inductive analysis*, *polyvocal analysis*, and *interpretive analysis*. The response to the research questions is done through interpretive analysis. Hatch contended, “Interpretive researchers are story tellers who construct narrative tales with beginnings, middles and ends” (2002, p. 187). The aspect of telling stories was kept in mind while gathering stories from a cross section of people and reflecting upon them and retelling those stories, but from a different perspective. I found the idea of constructing a narrative in interpretive analysis to be a creative process. In essence, it is like the constructivist paradigm, which maintains that there are multiple realities that exist, and these realities are based on who is narrating the story. The participants, parents, and respondents of the dissertation study had their own perspective on N-B youth and their process of socio-cultural adaptation. The answers to the research questions emerged out of themes and have acted as a compass during this empirical research. The information gathered is based on the data collected from participants, informants, parents, teachers, educators at non-profit organizations, and community members. The literature review and theoretical frameworks provided tools to formulate questions that had not yet been asked, and to seek relevant answers and deeper insights.

**Question 1**

What are the perceived challenges that affect the degree of acculturation, especially with respect to immigration policies in the country of settlement, discrimination against immigrants, and their family values?

In recent years, due to the immigration policies of the Trump administration, there has been a change in people’s attitude towards immigrants. This has impacted how
members of the larger society view immigrants. For example, Bikram was told by one of
the students, at his school, that he did not belong in America and that he was an outcast.
He was severely traumatized by repeated incidents of physical violence in bathrooms,
which went unnoticed by teachers and school personnel. As a result, no action was taken
against the bullies. In addition, language barrier obstructed Bikram’s ability to
communicate and report the attacks to his teachers. He believes that he was attacked
because of the color of his skin. As a result of these experiences, Bikram chose to adapt a
strategy of cooperation at school but separation outside of school. He said that this and
other similar acts of discrimination made him feel like an outcast. Amit narrated an
incident (from 2018) when an acquaintance made some negative comments about
immigrants being a drain on society. Here is a brief excerpt.

And there was one incident that happened to me in Dunkin’ Donut. One
American guy came, and he was like “Amit you’re fine I know you came here
legally I know you pay taxes but man these immigrants you know they are
messing up our country.”

Amit said this incident made him very scared. The themes of bullying, violent
harassment and discrimination were prominent in the stories of the N-B youth. Other
participants also encountered similar situation. Their experiences included, not just
unwelcoming attitudes of students in the school, but also severe bullying and teasing.

With respect to family values, based on my observation and conversation with
N-B families, I noticed that the participants maintain very strong ties with their families
and extended families. A certain degree of parental control was accepted by both the
girls and boys. N-B youth appeared to be very respectful of their parents and appreciative of their hard work and struggle in America. All of them accepted the authoritative role of parents. For example, participants never interrupted their parents or corrected them, even if they spoke incorrect English. This observation is contradictory to a lot of literature on immigrant youth that emphasizes the theory that *role reversal* between immigrant parents leads to devaluing parental authority.

The depth of family values came through when Anish and his family were totally preoccupied for a month taking care of his terminally ill grandmother who had been in hospital for a prolonged period. Anish stayed home and took care of relatives from out of town who came to visit his grandmother.

N-B cultural norms were challenged when boys sought more independence from their parents by making their own choices without prior parental approval. This dynamic showed some level of selective acculturation and adaptation of norms from the host culture, such as individualism. Girls in the study also aspired for more freedom, like attending parties and sleepovers. Even though they complained about it, they were more accepting of the rules set by their parents. However, there were yet another group of N-B youth who adopted dating norms and live-in relationships similar to the majority culture. This typically led to conflict in N-B families as dating was considered a taboo in Nepal, their country of origin. Neel (N-B Educator, December 4, 2018) recounted that parental disapproval of their children’s dating habits had led to cases where the young couples eloped and got married. Early marriages among N-B youth, and thereafter dropping out of school and prematurely having children, have become a cause of concern in the
community. Reports from N-B community members state that youth encountered severe financial challenges in such situations, and struggled to make ends meet with low paying jobs.

**Question 2**

Which of the four acculturation strategies/attitudes—*assimilation, separation, integration,* and *marginalization*—are used by N-B refugee youth in Northeast Ohio public schools?

There is a considerable amount of variability in the strategies used by N-B youth as they acculturate in public school. There are some youth, boys in particular, using the assimilation strategy and wanting to follow American culture. Even though their dating norms continue to be within their own ethnic group, an informant, Mr. Patrick at Whitman High School, contends that N-B boys want to be “very Americanized.” However, there was more variation in the stories told by the participating N-B youth themselves. Most girls initially chose *separation* or *self-segregation strategy* as a buffer from being bullied and teased at school. This buffering strategy greatly helped newcomers to slowly adapt to the school system (Kumari). Later they adopted a strategy of *selective acculturation,* which is when N-B girls remained embedded in their own ethnic culture but adopted some of the cultural practices of the majority group to avoid conflict and succeed at school.

Participants shared with the author that their strategies changed with the length of their stay in the U.S. Some of the N-B participants considered their attitudes as
integrationist, where they comfortably navigate between home and host culture (majority culture).

Finally, there are some N-B youth that are beginning to lean towards the marginalization approach. According to reports, they are dropping out of high school or are seeking employment soon after completing high school. It is important to mention here that none of the participants in the dissertation study fell into this group. There are multiple reasons for certain students not completing high school or aspiring for college. (see Themes in this chapter for more details). According to ACS data (see Appendix H), 36.3% of N-B in the U.S. are high school dropouts, making this statistic the highest among all immigrant youth from South Asia and Southeast Asia. Some N-B youth were seen by the participants (Amit, Bikram, Kumari) and Neel (an informant) as distancing themselves from their own ethnic group as well as the dominant culture and following the path of alcohol, drugs, and gambling. This group of N-B follow a marginalization approach, which may have serious negative consequences for them.

**Question 3**

What role does human capital, modes of incorporation, and family structure play into how N-B youth assimilate? How do the above lead to varied trajectories and segmented assimilation?

According to Kumari, human capital, with which refugees enter the country of settlement, is not important to their process of assimilation. Human capital refers to educational credentials, language proficiency, marketable skills, job experience, and economic status. The situation of N-B refugees is no different from any other forcibly
displaced refugee, because all the refugees were forced to leave their homes and homeland with very few resources. From the perspective of parents of N-B participants, there is a diminished value for their educational qualifications within the United States. Similarly, their job experience is not given much weightage by employment agencies. In addition, N-B parents mention that the economic status prior to migration has very little relevance in the U.S. As a result, financial responsibilities force the N-B refugees to take up low paying jobs that typically require long hours at work. Veer, one of the parents in the study, mentioned that most of his jobs were at factories where the work was extremely labor intensive and had a high risk of physical injuries. He said that he suffered minor injuries while using heavy machinery. According to Pew Research (2017) findings, 33.3% of Bhutanese are living in poverty. This may also explain the reason for the financial challenges encountered by some families of school age youth. (See Appendix G.)

The family structure of N-B has been dramatically altered due to resettlement in the United States. The family structure is fragmented due to parents spending long hours at work, and therefore being unable to monitor their children. Consequently, the absence of parental supervision has had an impact on their children. Findings from data reveal that teenagers are taking advantage of the absence of adults and misusing the unintended freedoms that they enjoy in the U.S. Parents are also unable to attend to the developmental needs of their children. This was evident from the reports from school and community members.
Finally, context of reception also plays a role in how youth assimilate into the society. When we try to understand school adaptation of N-B, it is evident from data collected that most N-B youth did not feel welcomed at school, and a few experienced severe bullying and racism. Although they had cordial relations with neighbors and some members of the society, it still did not help them with their adaptation to the U.S.

N-B youth in this study have completed high school and are pursuing a college degree. The six students in the study were able to overcome challenges and remain focused on their academic goals. However, based on reports from interviews, there are a number of N-B youth dropping out of high schools in the U.S. Participants and informants said that the reason for them dropping out include language insecurity, discrimination, academic challenges, financial challenges of the family, and also the desire to make quick money. According to Mr. Patrick, these youth are drawn toward daily wage jobs and do not realize the consequences, in the long run, of insufficient education. In addition, youth are also drawn to alcohol, drugs, and gambling, which keep them out of school. According to ACS data (2013; see Appendix H), 36.8% of N-B youth in America are dropping out of high school. In fact, N-B youth account for the largest number of high school dropouts, when compared to South Asian and Southeast Asian groups. This underscores the fact that the pattern of assimilation of N-B youth is varied. While the participants in this study are college bound and had some kind of family structure that was conducive for their development, the above statistics and data suggest potential downward assimilation of N-B over a period of time. However, more research is needed in this area.
**Question 4**

How do N-B youth and their families perceive the role of schools in meeting the goals on multicultural education?

a. What role do teachers and administrative staff play in acculturation of N-B youth?

Even though literature on multicultural education has contributed immensely to our understanding of the theories and concepts related to it, data collected in this study, however, does not indicate the same. Participants were unaware of any efforts by teachers to accommodate immigrant learning in schools. The curriculum did not mention anything related to equity pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, or culturally relevant pedagogy. Only one participant mentioned that they had culture day celebrations (annually at Whitman High School). This day is when students were encouraged to dress up and share cuisine from their country. Whitman High School teachers mentioned that the celebrations showcased individual ethnic cultures.

Teachers and staff members play an important role during the initial acculturative phase of immigrant youth. ESL classes were a topic that came up often in the responses from N-B youth. A few participants spoke highly about their ESL teachers who helped them integrate into the school system. The common thread among the participants was that their teachers and counselors were extremely helpful and committed to academic development of the students. Anish gave an example where the school counselor advised his friend against switching to a lower-level class. He coached and inspired his friend, asking him to look beyond the present and to think of the future. Consequently, the
counselor discouraged him from finding an easy way out, and as a result his friend worked hard and his grades improved. This example demonstrates the positive impact of inspiring teachers on N-B youth that seek guidance. That being said, a lot of the participants said that because of ESL classes, they felt that they were missing out on mainstream classes, which may keep them behind in curriculum.

School administrators can also provide a lot of support to immigrant youth. A family liaison at Whitman school followed up with parents of N-B youth when students were truant or when they had other issues at school. In the event the parents were illiterate or unavailable to meet during the day, the family liaison went to their homes to speak with the parents. It can be conjectured from the above vignettes that teachers and staff members, especially at Whitman school, tried to help N-B youth to acculturate and adapt to the school system.

In addition, the teachers at this school shared that they did not tolerate bullying or teasing and had a strict policies against it. However, experiences of participants that went to schools other than Whitman were different. Amit and Bikram went to two different schools and recall that, because of severe bullying, they had to transfer to other schools that were more diverse. The boys said that neither the teachers nor administration took strict action against the bullies. Both the boys believe that language barrier exacerbated their situation, because teachers could not understand them and often believed the students that bullied. This kind of miscommunication led to the suspension of both the boys from their respective schools. These incidents suggest that some of the
acculturative stress among N-B youth was associated more with the unwelcoming and mean behavior of their peers rather than attitude of teachers or school administrators.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the geopolitical and economic circumstances of forcible displacement, followed by the history of N-B refugees that lived in a protracted refugee status before they were resettled in the United States in 2008. While discussing acculturation and sociocultural adaptation of N-B participants and their experiences through theoretical frames and research questions, the dissertation study culminates with the conclusion, implications, recommendations, and suggestions on future research.

Globalization and migration have had an enormous impact on society, economy, culture, and education in various parts of the world. Most countries are still trying to figure out how to deal with the consequences of this phenomenon, including the forcible displacement and the resettling of millions of people to different parts of the Western world. Amid these global changes, schools act as a stabilizing force in the lives of students and families. American public schools have always been at the center of debates on who, what, and how to teach students. Public schools have had to address issues related to segregation, school prayers, discrimination, and access to education for minorities and marginalized groups such as women, students with disabilities, and the LGBTQ population. Immigrant and refugee groups are now a part of this debate, and the problem arises when the two are lumped into one homogenous group while addressing their issues. Additionally, even though, scholars of multicultural education have
conceptualized reform models that are culturally responsive and relevant, we have yet to see them consistently implemented across schools in the United States.

An economic, sociological, and political setting was provided at the beginning of this study, while examining the existing literature on refugees and the issues that surround them as they acculturate to a new country of settlement. The literature review and theoretical frameworks provided the study with tools to formulate questions that had not yet been asked as well as tools to seek relevant answers through the process of data collection.

The aim of the study was to capture the acculturation process of N-B students in American public schools and their unique experiences and challenges in a new environment. It is important to remember that N-B youth come from families where the previous generations were forced to leave their homes twice due to geopolitical circumstances. The following is a quick summary on their background and the circumstances of displacement and resettlement to the U.S. As the study progressed, I realized that findings of the dissertation at times concurred, contradicted, explained, and added to the limited literature on this ethnic community.

**Background of Forcible Displacement of N-B Refugees**

Ancestors of N-B refugees left the hills of Eastern Nepal over 100 years ago and settled in the neighboring country of Bhutan. They worked as agricultural laborers who came to be called *Lhotshampas*, Hutt (2005), or the people from the south. Having lived in Bhutan for generations, they became landowners and homeowners. It was around the early 1980s that the King of Bhutan, Jigme Singe Wangchuk, pursued an ultranationalist
ideology of “One Nation One People,” following which the Nepali-speaking Lhotshampas were stripped of most of their rights. They were prohibited from speaking their language or wearing their national outfits. Soon, the Nepalis protested peacefully against such ethnocentric nationalism, but rather than quelling the situation, this only led to further ethnic violence and persecution. The Bhutanese government forcefully evicted them from their homes and their farmland. Approximately 100,000 Bhutanese were forcibly displaced and found refuge in Eastern Nepal (Evans, 2009). Some of the refugees lived in Bhutanese camps for over 20 years before being resettled in various Western countries. Although Nepal was once the home of the Lhotshampas, they were not welcomed back by the people of Nepal. Additionally, the Nepalese government provided N-B refugees with limited rights and imposed restrictions on their employment. Even though N-B youth in this study were born in Nepal and did not directly experience persecution, they may have indirectly experienced the pain and angst of their parents and grandparents that were forcefully evicted from their lands and their homes.

**Related Issues to Immigrant Adaptation**

Following is a quick discussion on some of the issues that were brought forward by participants, their parents, and informants during the course of the interviews. Even though these are tangential to the study, they provide a picture of lives of N-B families and their adaptation during the first few months of arriving to the U.S. N-B families were resettled, in 2008, to countries that are culturally distant from their own. It is evident from the data collected that the dress habits, the food, the values, the urban landscape in these countries, including simple things like traffic rules, are unfamiliar to the older
generation. According to Neel, an educator and informant, some of the seniors had never seen a traffic signal in their lives and found crossing the road to be very stressful.

Adapting to multiple changes in the country of settlement can be challenging. One of the many early adjustments for immigrants in the country of settlement is the food and sometimes even the water. To Amit, bottled water tasted like it was mixed with oil. It took him a while to get used to the taste of water in the U.S. More troubling, however, were encounters with unlawful behaviors and unsafe living conditions. According to informant reports, a few N-B seniors were robbed in their neighborhood, which may have impacted their sense of security in America.

A number of seniors are dealing with isolation, loneliness, language barriers, and illiteracy, as was shared by Neel and other participants of the study. Some of the seniors missed their familiar surroundings back home, like their hills and mountains, the sound of birds in their country and their routine everyday work on the farms. Gautam, Mawn, and Beehler (2018) narrated the isolation of older Bhutanese people in detail and described what the N-B seniors call “little sorrows.” These include yearning for their families from whom they were separated and being unable to attend major festivals and life events, like the birth of a child, coming-of-age ceremonies, and the funerals of loved ones. Some N-B families are even dealing with emotional trauma due to forcible displacement, and there are reports of number of cases of suicide in U.S. (Preiss, 2013).

Cultural distance (Koyama & Bakuza, 2017) from their country of origin is also challenging for youth because schools do not have any specific policies laid down for the special needs of refugee youth. In addition, some N-B refugee may be living in high
poverty, urban areas, that can lead to subtractive assimilation, similar to McBrien’s (2005) research. Separately, national data on the financial situation of N-B refugees indicates that one third of all Bhutanese in the United States are living in poverty. Pew Research Center (2017) reports that 33.3% (see Appendix G) of all Bhutanese in the United States are living in poverty as compared to 15.1% of all Americans and this may have an impact on their assimilation to the U.S.

N-B refugees in this dissertation study encountered harassment and violence in American public schools, which was often not apprehended by the staff and teachers. Discrimination in school played a big part in disengaging youth from school confirming findings in several studies (Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Berry, 1997; Berry & Hou, 2017; Buchanan et al., 2018: McBrien, 2005). Although the participants in this study did find new and creative ways of engaging with school because of other supportive factors, N-B youth did mention that discrimination lowered self-esteem and took a toll on their sociocultural adjustment at school, similar to the findings of Buchanan et al. (2018).

National data indicates that a large number of N-B are dropping out of high school (see Appendix H). Only 5% of N-B youth are college graduates (see Appendix F). This may be due to youth dropping out of school or because of performing poorly at school. Additionally this may also be attributed to inability of schools to provide adequate navigational assistance to refugee students which may lead to narrowed pathways to higher education (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016).
Discussion of Theoretical Application and Research Questions

The literature review in Chapter 2 provided details on theoretical frameworks that inform this study. In this segment, the readers are provided with insights into whether, and to what extent, these theories were applicable to N-B youth and the degree of variability that was observed.

Acculturation Strategies and N-B Youth

Participants in the study had varied acculturative strategies. These strategies, such as marginalization, separation, assimilation, and integration, according to Berry (1997) determine the nature and degree of sociocultural adaptation of immigrants. N-B girls who mostly stayed together to benefit from strength in solidarity initially used separation or self-segregation but soon realized the importance of developing a sense of belonging to the school and the advantages of getting along with peers. Anish is a good example of Berry’s integration strategy. He regularly interacted with his teachers and impressed them through his hard work and tenacity. He was able to make friends with different groups of people. Along the way, he discovered hidden qualities of leadership in himself. Kumari and Amit also made good use of integration strategies confirming Phinney et al.’s (2006) findings that integration can help youth transition smoothly into a diverse society during their adulthood years.

While some N-B youth are using the above strategies to adapt to schools, there are others that are leaning towards marginalization, the least preferred strategy of immigrant adaptation. Based on reports of participants (Amit, Kumari, Bikram, Pari) and informants (Neel, Mr. Patrick), a significant number of youth are dropping out of school.
and getting involved in risky behaviors such as drugs and gambling. This was not reflected in current literature on N-B families in general and more research is required to confirm the information. For convenience, I have presented once again the acculturation diagram (Figure 8) to recap the different strategies used during acculturation as identified by Berry (1997).

**Figure 8.** Berry’s Acculturation Strategies (Berry, 1997)

**Segmented Assimilation and Trajectory of N-B Youth**

N-B participants in this dissertation study persevered and flourished by the end of their high school years. They used creative acculturation strategies to survive in the school environment. Even though, initially they preferred the strategy of separation, they soon chose an approach of *selective acculturation* (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Using this strategy, N-B youth continued to remain embedded in their culture while adapting some
cultural practices of the country of settlement in order to avoid conflict or improve their existing circumstances. For example, the change in acculturation strategies was creatively incorporated in order to improve their language skills, which they believed would advance their academic growth and interaction with peers and teachers. Consequently, their sociocultural adaptation improved over time and some of the participants admitted that their acculturative approach had changed from separation to integration by the end of their high school years.

Dissonant acculturation of some N-B youth has resulted in change of the dynamic between parents and their school age children, as reported by Neel (educator), Madan (informant) and parents and participants (Kumari and Amit), though this was not reported by the participants in this dissertation study. There are reports of N-B youth that they are drawn to exert independence and display oppositional behavior. As a result, they are questioning authority and taking advantage of illiterate or undereducated parents. Their newly acquired skills from the host culture gave the youth an added sense of confidence, which for some can tip the scale of parental control. Scholars have referred to this change in the power dynamic as youth becoming parents’ parents (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), also called forced maturation (Sleijpen et al., 2017) or role reversal (McBrien, 2005). The above behavior is consistent with McBrien (2005) who stated that “many refugee children write checks for mortgages and other payments. Such role reversals between children and parents create identity confusion and conflict between generations” (p. 330). Other reasons for oppositional behavior included frustration with language learning, providing financial support to their unemployed or uneducated parent, a
negative concept of reception, early marriages, and desire to make quick money. This information is consistent with data provided by National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016; see Appendix H) according to which the high school dropout rate of Bhutanese is 36.8% and is the highest amongst Asians. Such a trend of dissonant acculturation can put these youth in a spiral of downward mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993).

This study revealed that there can be positive outcomes of role reversal (McBrien, 2005) as well. Participants in the study did acculturate and acquire cultural and social skills before their parents; however, they used those skills to help their parents in different ways, like taking on the role of interpreters or helping with day-to-day interactions of parents with the larger community. Almost all the participants demonstrated altruism and a desire to help their parents and acknowledged in the interviews the hardships that their parents endured. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) reported that the community and family also act as a buffer in preventing youth from making poor choices.

Although, a nurturing school environment, a welcoming student population, and an academically engaging classroom can make a big difference to student attendance and to keep them in school. However, the context of reception of immigrant youth makes a notable difference to their sociocultural adaptation. Refugee students in addition have to deal with added layers of insecurity due to their forced incorporation into the host culture. Although participants in this dissertation study experienced a negative context of
reception in varying degrees, they did remain in high school and succeeded to the point of pursuing higher education.

**Bioecological Model With Reference to N-B Youth**

The dissertation study tries to understand N-B youth and their adaptation through Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model with its multiple contextual layers, or ecological levels, in the environment (see Figure 9).

*Figure 9. Bioecological Model of N-B Youth Adaptation*
Anish is an example of how proximal processes including teachers, family, school, and peers in the microsystem have a positive impact on development during formative years. He has thrived at school; his school, teachers, and mentors acted as a buffer and were able to guide him throughout his high school years while his parents, who are illiterate, could not. Language barriers and illiteracy among some parents may have acted as obstacles for interaction between parents, teachers, and the school. Such limited communication is bound to have impacted some students in terms of lack of guidance for their academic development. Interestingly, findings in this study demonstrate that, despite minimal interactions between parents and school in the mesosystem level, three participants in this study completed high school successfully based on their own perseverance and grit.

Parental engagement with school and teachers in the micro and mesosystem level does have an impact on the adaptation outcomes of children. When Bikram and Amit were bullied, their parents took action and transferred them to schools that had a welcoming environment. Parents of Kumari and Bikram attended parent teacher meetings and kept them focused at school, despite their negative experiences. This is consistent with the bioecological theory that parental involvement can act as a buffer and help youth achieve their academic potential.

In line with Bronfenbrenner’s theory on the importance of community in the development of a child, the Nepali community was like the village that raised these participants in the study and contributed to their social and academic success. Bikram said that the Nepali community was very supportive during the time that he was bullied at
school. He emphasized the role of his mentor at AI Inc., a non-profit organization, who counseled him and provided moral support when he needed it most.

School is a setting at the microsystemic level, which can have a remarkable effect on a child’s development. As mentioned earlier, the school ethos and diversity climate are equally important for refugee youth to feel welcomed (Schachner et al., 2018). Data from this dissertation study indicate that most of the public schools in this study were not targeting the specific needs of immigrants/refugees. Additionally, religious institutions are also important settings that keep families and communities connected. However, according to the participants, the communal connections to their Hindu temple were limited because of lack of access to transportation. These challenges did weaken the web of N-B community networks that keep ethnic families together.

At the exosystem level, stressors like job insecurity, financial instability, and unemployment of parents may also have impacted N-B youth in their sociocultural adaptation, even though this was not personally experienced by the participants.

Finally, at the macrosystem level, policies of the current U.S. administration (2019) reflect an unwelcoming attitude towards immigrants. Such policies and political rhetoric did create a sense of fear and insecurity among immigrants, including these participants. National education policies can also impact the youth in their academic goals. For example, school tracking and high-stakes standardized testing were considered challenging by N-B participants as well as their teachers.
Cultural-Ecological Theory and Experiences of N-B Youth

Ogbu (1998) argued that school forces play a key role in the development of a child; however, he also notes that the inability of teachers to understand the behavior of minority children can be detrimental to their success at school. N-B participants had varied experiences with their teachers at schools. Participants stated that some of them had teachers that inspired them and coached them to set goals and work hard toward achieving them. In addition, one of the N-B interpreters and school liaison officer at Whitman High school frequently contacted parents and visited them when their school age youth were truant or doing poorly at school. Anish gives credit to his teachers and counselors for his academic success at school. N-B youth and informants said their ESL teachers were very helpful and supportive. Amit was inspired by an ESL teacher who he thought was excellent and with whom he was able to build a good rapport.

Refugees and immigrants need additional attention in order to transition into mainstream courses. Refugee youth need to be viewed individually while assessing their academic skill level. Teachers in American high schools should bear in mind that N-B youth are from six different Nepalese camp schools; therefore, their learning of the English language depended on the camp schoolteachers, the resources, and the curricula. Whitman High School has taken steps by introducing a new program in 2018-19, offering courses in math, science, English, and so forth, specifically structured for immigrant students. It is important here to clarify, however, that Whitman High School’s initiatives are an exception when compared to the absence of such programs in schools attended by the majority of participants.
Research Questions

The four research questions of the dissertation study discuss issues related to perceived discrimination, the impact of immigration policies, maintenance of immigrant family values; acculturation strategies; trajectories of assimilation; and the role of schoolteachers and administrators in meeting goals of multicultural education.

N-B participants had varied experiences in their schools and communities. A few reported anti-immigrant sentiments that they believed were reflective of the national attitude and policies towards immigrants. Some participants experienced discrimination, which they believed was due to the color of their skin. Family values were respected by the participants in the study, but there were nevertheless reports of N-B boys questioning parental authority and taking advantage of their parents’ ignorance. Some adapted to American cultural norms such as individualism and independence in making life choices. Additionally, they also adopted American fashion and music trends.

The acculturation pattern of N-B youth was also varied. Girls initially followed a strategy of separation, later choosing the approach of selective acculturation. Conversely, most boys in this dissertation study described their acculturation approach as being initially separation, followed by a strategy of integration after four years of high school. Based on participant, informant and community reports, there are some N-B that are following the path of marginalization.

According to N-B participants and parents, human capital—which includes their education and qualifications from their country of origin—does not play a role in their sociocultural adaptation. In fact, their human capital is devalued in the United States; as
a result, their potential for employment is constrained to minimum wage jobs. This stifles their opportunities for economic mobility and restricts them to staying in the working class, thereby further perpetuating class reproduction. This economic limitation is exemplified in national data which indicates that 33.3% of N-B are living in poverty (see Appendix G).

In addition to the problem of weakened human capital, there is evidence that the N-B family structure is fragmented due to an absence of parental supervision. According to parental and participant reports, this lack of supervision has led to a large number of N-B youth dropping out of school and getting involved in risky behaviors such as drug and alcohol usage. Equally important to these high dropout rates was their frustration with the language barrier, academic challenges, and financial insecurity that made even low-paying jobs attractive. However, the six participants in this study flourished because of varying degree of parental support.

How youth assimilate is also dependent on their context of reception. Participants noted that the reception of N-B youth was unwelcoming; they were teased and bullied, and some participants were victims of physical abuse that went unnoticed by school personnel. School teachers and administrators played a critical role in the acculturation of N-B youth. While some teachers were extremely supportive and provided valuable mentorship, there were others that did not care sufficiently about the progress of these refugee students. It is to be noted that the administration in Whitman High School is exemplary in its efforts to connect with illiterate parents and inform them about the progress of their youth.
Multiculturalism and Acculturation in Schools

The quest for pluralism, a concept developed in the early 20th century by Horace Kallen (Bennett, 2001), is one of the foundational principles of multicultural education. Pluralism upholds universal human rights and serves as a middle ground between assimilation and segregation. Immigration has problematized the way in which teachers have been teaching in schools, and educators in this era must develop strategies to teach students from across a wide array of cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. In addition, it is important for schools to be aware that refugees and forcibly displaced youth come from homes where grandparents and parents have experienced persecution and discrimination for generations. The environment in such homes creates certain insecurities which may impact N-B refugee children and their ability to adapt to a new environment. Under these circumstances, the problem arises when schools expect refugee youth to adapt quickly to the new school environment, and when they are unable to meet the expectations of the schools a deficit notion attached to their adaptation (Amthor & Roxas, 2016). Some of these issues could be addressed by incorporating different pedagogies to modify teaching to accommodate students from different backgrounds. For example, schools could use various dimensions of multicultural education, such as content integration, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction, and empowering the school culture (Bank & Banks, 2013). However, this dissertation study did not find direct evidence of systemic multicultural education being practiced in the five schools attended by the participants. One school had a token
“culture day” celebration that was held annually, referred to as the tourism approach to multicultural education (Seeberg, 2016).

According to Phinney et al. (2006), some schools are making changes to their curricula to be inclusive and acknowledge the cultures of different groups represented in their classrooms. This dissertation study did not find any evidence of such changes being implemented in the schools attended by participants. Most of the participants did not have a curriculum that included the history of different cultures, traditions, or values. However, there is data indicating to a few N-B participants from Whitman high school receiving guidance, counseling and mentoring from some of their teachers. A culturally relevant pedagogy calls for an equitable student-teacher relationship (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and a glimpse of this was evident as Anish shared his personal interaction with his teachers and mentor at Whitman High School. Additionally, Amit, from another school, has great appreciation for his mentor and said that he continues to stay in contact with the teacher. N-B and other refugee and immigrant youth may benefit by schools incorporating certain features of a culturally relevant pedagogy. Such a pedagogy “is designed to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of the student-teacher relationship, the curriculum, schooling, and society” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 483).

The purpose of these pedagogical models is to inform teachers, educators, and school administrators on the various strategies that they may avail of in order to provide equitable education to a diverse group of students. The absence of incorporating these
models nullifies their objectives and perpetuates barriers to equitable minority education access.

Based on data collected from Whitman High school, that has a large number of N-B refugee youth, there is evidence that N-B interpreters and school liaison officer frequently contacted parents and visited them when their school age youth were truant or doing poorly at school. Similarly, administrators at this school were very strict about their policies on bullying. The above examples indicate the effective role played by the school staff. Participants crediting their teachers, ESL teachers and counselors for building good rapport and facilitating their academic success at school speaks to a personal multicultural education practice in schools.

Multicultural education, with its advocacy for changes like meaningful student-teacher interactions, inclusive curricula and employment of innovative pedagogies, can chart new pathways for adaptation and acculturation of immigrant and refugee youth in American public schools.

Conclusion

During the course of the study, while addressing the overarching question of N-B acculturation into American schools and the strategies that they chose, it was observed that even though N-B participants found the new school environment, culture, language, and peer interactions daunting, they were steadfast in their belief that the opportunities they had in an American high school made their challenges worthwhile. In addition, it was equally evident from conversations with them that there existed a strong drive to succeed. Also, they wanted to make it up to their parents for the trials and tribulations
that the parents had undergone. Lastly, strong family values of the N-B youth were evident through their respect for elders and appreciation of their struggles.

As newcomers, participants in the dissertation study initially followed a strategy of selective acculturation (Portes & Zhou, 1993), but gravitated towards integration (Berry, 1997) toward the end of their high school years. All six participants in the study overcame their challenges and thrived academically during their high school years. Four out of the six participants are currently pursuing STEM career paths. It is worth mentioning that two of the participants successfully graduated from Whitman High School, which is one of the poorly performing schools in Northeast Ohio according to Ohio School Report cards (website) and has a notably high dropout rate. Nonetheless, these two students gave credit to their mentors, teachers, and counselors for achieving their academic potential.

Findings of the study reveal that N-B patterns of assimilation are varied. While some participants in the study are on a trajectory of upward mobility, others, according to participant and informant reports, are at risk of downward mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993). There are also reports of role reversal of N-B youth due to dissonant acculturation. This resulted in a reversal of the power dynamic between parents and youth. According to informant reports, N-B youth have adapted to certain American cultural norms, such as dating, that are taboo in Nepal. According to Neel (informant), Nepalese culture does not permit non-marital live-in relationships, and thus early youth marriages are on the rise within this community in Northeast Ohio. An unexpected and indirect finding revealed unintentional sociocultural maladaptation by some N-B youth,
who may be dropping out of school or entering into risky life choices such as drugs and alcohol as well as gambling. These behaviors align with a marginalization approach/strategy (Berry, 1997).

A negative context of reception, language insecurity, working to support their families, and a desire to make quick money are some of the key reasons for why N-B youth drop out of school. One of the causes for financial insecurity among N-B families is the devaluation of human capital (Portes & Zhou, 1993) for refugees. Their education and qualifications diminish in value when they enter the U.S. As can be expected, these challenges act as a barrier to their upward mobility. In addition, a negative context of reception at school (Portes & Zhou, 1993) adds to their challenges in integration. Some schools may have an attitude of active encouragement towards immigrant youth because of the existing diversity within schools and others may differ. National policies towards immigrants may influence the attitude of schools and school personnel. National policies could range from exclusion to passive acceptance, or active encouragement (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001).

What was the reason that some N-B youth thrived, despite similar challenges, while others became prone to downward mobility? Findings of the study reveal that these six participants kept themselves involved in academic and extracurricular activities. Some of the N-B flourished because they found their niche in school, according to Mr. Patrick, a teacher at Whitman High School. They created soccer teams and joined curricular activities like chess club, wrestling, and volunteering. Anish participated in several math competitions and placed in many of them. Anish is the poster model of a
refugee youth that challenged the stereotype of a vulnerable refugee. In addition, parental engagement and teacher support at some schools acted as a buffer that prevented N-B youth from sociocultural maladaptation. However, I conclude that not all schools in Northeast Ohio are well-equipped to address the specific needs of refugee youth.

Existing literature is in general agreement that educators are not well prepared to teach new immigrants and miss out on the valuable assets that immigrants bring in. Nieto’s (2017) writing about immigrants and newcomers, I think, applies to refugee youth as well. She described these assets as “bilingualism or multilingualism as well as numerous life skills and strengths such as resilience, courage, and grit” (p. 6). Integration of refugees into society is beneficial to them as well as their country of settlement. As refugees settle into their new country, they avail many new opportunities in life such as a safe place to live, a better life for their family, and greater educational and economic opportunities compared to the country that evicted them. According to the Forced Migration Review (2012), resettlement provides some refugees the opportunity to contribute to the economy and society of the country that admitted them. For example, they fill the labor shortage gap, have entrepreneurial qualities and help build the economy through links with their country of origin (“Forced Migration Review,” 2012, p. 7).

McBrien (2005) asked the following powerful question that demands we do some soul-searching:

Will we teach our children to be welcoming to newcomers by accepting the diversity of international cultures that they bring with them, or will we expect new
Americans to cast off their heritage and assimilate into a distinctively “American culture?” (p. 357)

In conclusion, N-B refugee participants in the study demonstrated many positive qualities including altruism, hard work, high academic aspirations, ability to overcome unpleasant experiences and to embark on their chosen pathways. The success of the six students in this dissertation study can be attributed to some parental engagement, enthusiasm of the six participants and supporting teachers at their high school. This group of refugee youth must be seen as role models for youth from their community as well as youth from co-ethnic and the majority culture.

**Implications**

The dissertation study may inform researchers about this group of refugees that are distinct from other immigrants. The study may bring awareness among schoolteachers in understanding the familial dynamic in N-B homes, including parent illiteracy and financial challenges. It may also bring attention to the fact that Asian ethnic groups cannot be lumped into one homogenous entity in order to address their issues.

Teachers and school administrators may become more cognizant of the most important barrier that participants in the study faced: language insecurity. Language insecurity affects N-B youth socially, psychologically, academically, and culturally. This study may further the conversation on the strategies that can be used to integrate immigrant youth into their country of settlement. Separately, it may inform schools of the structural changes that could be incorporated, in terms of having more interpreters
and making the school environment more welcoming and inclusive of ethnic diversity. This study would hope to promote intercultural relations and provide an opportunity to community members from the majority culture, as well as ethnic culture, to relate, in some regards, to each other’s differences and commonalities as human beings.

**Recommendations**

My recommendations call for more school and teacher engagement with refugee youth; implementation of pedagogies of multicultural education; student-teacher engagement; mentoring by adults outside of home; policy changes to further ease financial challenges of refugee families; programs to alleviate acculturative stress; policies to promote equitable testing; facilitation of parental involvement; and need to address the risky choices made by N-B youth.

Schools and teachers can make a big difference to refugee acculturation and adaptation in various ways. For example, they could make efforts to get to know the geographical and cultural background and pre-migratory experiences of immigrants/refugees in their classrooms. The importance of feeling welcomed, by these youth, cannot be emphasized enough. A bad start for a new student can leave many unpleasant memories and deter them from attending school. Therefore, teachers need to know who refugee youth are and what their backstory is. This will allow them to guide the youth in their academic endeavors and show empathy as needed.

Additionally, school administration and teachers can act as a buffer against anti-immigrant sentiments. Such sentiments may be reduced by teachers while teaching in culturally responsive ways, and addressing issues related to racism and bias in
classrooms (Nieto & Bode, 2013). Implementing such policies reinforces the philosophy of multicultural education by initiating a critical dialog on discriminatory policies that are institutionalized and legitimized by those in power (Nieto & Bode, 2013).

In order for multicultural education to be relevant to immigrants and refugees, it needs to be moved from the periphery of curriculum and woven into the fabric of school curriculum including areas such as counseling, leadership and classroom climate among other things (Gay, 2003). Such policies may help build confidence and self-esteem while motivating refugee youth to persevere in the classroom and graduate from high school. Gay, advocates for use of multicultural education using “a variety of teaching techniques that are responsive to different ethnic learning styles” (Gay, 2003, p. 33). This may help ethnic students to be engaged with the curricula, the classroom and learning.

The role of teachers in the lives of students cannot be overstated. A fluid student-teacher relationship must be nurtured while developing a community of learners and encouraging collaboration to enhance student engagement (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In addition, students should also be encouraged to voice their opinions in classrooms. Ngo (2010) advocates for educators to promote conversation in classrooms between teachers and students, and to discuss critical issues of multicultural education. These issues include unequal power relations in society and inequity in access to education. Students should be encouraged to make presentations not just on topics related to their culture, but also on issues that they feel strongly about. Separately, there is a need to promote cultural agency amongst newcomer youth while also abandoning the search for cultural authenticity (Amthor & Roxas, 2016).
Drawing from the findings of this dissertation study, mentorship by adult figures outside of the home can have a tremendous impact on refugee youth, as was the case with Anish and Amit. It would make a big difference to their education if teachers paid attention to their previous learning experiences and helped them transition into current methods in public schools. According to Banks and Banks (2013), through equity pedagogy, teachers must modify their teaching to be inclusive of students from different racial, cultural, and social classes. They also argued that critical thinking may be nurtured among youth, through democratic classrooms and this can help to bridge the gap between ideals and realities. Echoing similar sentiments, Grant and Sleeter (2013), called for active participation of students and making them aware of differential opportunities. Through a social reconstructionist approach, youth can be made aware of social justice education. Kumari, an N-B participant, inadvertently showed signs of advocating for their community. She believed that N-B seniors as well as youth should be informed about their legal rights so that they can deal with certain unexpected situations.

Language insecurity is a significant challenge for immigrant youth. To ease the situation and quell the anxiety of newcomers, schools could try to arrange for more interpreters in schools. Separately, schools can even connect with NGOs for coordinating the transportation of parents to attend important school events.

Equal attention must also be paid to the financial challenges of N-B families that may impact their youth as well. Unemployed parents struggle with financial responsibilities, for example, resettlement loan debt, which is forcing some N-B youth to drop out of high school. Government could introduce policies to ease the financial
burden of refugees with realistic long-term repayment of loans, the absence of which may perpetuate class reproduction. According to Bourdieu (1986), lack of cultural, social, and economic capital can be disadvantageous and could lead to class reproduction. This theory is applicable to forcibly displaced youth as well. N-B youth may experience an achievement gap in comparison to their peers at school and this gap may limit refugees of equitable access to education and potential employment opportunities. Schools need to find ways of bridging this gap through structural changes, increased funding and availability of resources to harness the potential of the refugee youth.

Acculturation stress can have a big impact on the lives of refugees. Unlike immigrant families, refugee families are typically resettled by international organizations that do not give them a choice for their country of resettlement. Findings inform us that N-B seniors possess a deep yearning for their home and the friends from who they were separated. Cultural distance of this group of refugees adds to their acculturation stress and has led to mental health problems and suicide in the past. There exists a need for researchers to understand methods to counteract acculturative stress caused by resettlement, primarily due to language barriers, culture shock, a sense of isolation, a lack of transportation, and limited interaction with their community.

N-B refugee families have been involved in farming for generations. N-B interest in farming continued as they integrated into the United States, and this skill can be tapped and developed by community members. In the Greater Akron Area, for example, N-B are known for their interest in cultivating plants in their yard. With this in mind, the community could provide adults opportunities to grow crops and introduce them to
related jobs in agribusinesses and supermarkets, providing them much-needed opportunities for employment and income.

Schools need to encourage immigrant students to be part of clubs and other curricular activities including sports, music, theater, dance, and debate. These activities create a sense of belonging (finding their niche) and offer a path to forge new friendships with a diverse group of people. Being part of clubs keeps them socially and culturally involved, while simultaneously promoting their self-esteem.

High-stakes testing has been viewed as a barrier for N-B and other refugees to academic advancement. Although these tests are mandatory and have been accommodating immigrant youth by neutralizing, to some extent, the cultural bias within testing, new and non-native students are still finding these tests to be daunting. I recommend a review and revision of current polices to find solutions and programs that promote more equitable testing for all.

Concerted efforts need to be made to create new student orientation programs that require active involvement of not just teachers and staff, but also American students. There needs to be much stricter policies on bullying implemented in all schools. A hotline could be created so that students who have experienced bullying or other social issues can call and receive counseling without fear or embarrassment.

Additionally, cultural advisors, as suggested by Suárez-Orozco et al. (2008), can help build bridges between culturally different youth and provide guidance through culturally relevant techniques.
Based on the academic commitment of the students in this dissertation study, there is a need to look closely at this group of students that have the potential to learn and excel in their studies. N-B students must not be viewed from a deficit perspective.

Similarly, it is equally important to commend Whitman High School for introducing academic courses targeting to newcomers this year (2019). The school is making efforts to promote intercultural relations, but there need to be concrete changes to the curriculum that incorporate pedagogies which reflect and address minority groups.

Parental involvement is important to the success of youth. Despite limited language skills, refugee parents should get involved in the educational progress of their children. This kind of involvement may be facilitated by schools. Koyama and Bakuza (2017) recommended that schools have more inclusive policies to help refugee parents interact with teachers and other staff. Schools can connect with non-profit organizations that already mentor immigrant youth to provide classes for adults. This would help them with their process of integration and may build character, confidence, and a sense of volunteerism.

Finally, there needs to be a conversation with N-B community members who shy away from addressing youth issues related to alcohol, drugs, and gambling because of the social taboo attached to them. This study calls for a timely intervention so that schools and the greater community can pay attention to prevent other youth from following this downward path that is fundamentally detrimental to their progress.
Future Research

More research is required on strategies for refugee students to cope with school during the first few weeks of their academic and cultural transition into a new school system. Research needs to focus on best practices of integrating immigrant youth based on studies conducted by countries outside of the U.S. Such research would help teachers and administrators realign their strategies to meet the needs of their students.

Gender specific studies on N-B youth have not yet been conducted. Such research would allow for comparisons between the academic performance of N-B boys versus girls and would inform us on variations in their outcomes. Current data on dropout rates of N-B include statistical data that is not disaggregated and does not provide statewide information. Specific qualitative and quantitative research on dropout rates of N-B in various states could provide us with more targeted information on their challenges to school adaptation. This could also help us take preemptive measures to reduce dropouts, and disrupt the potential rise in numbers of N-B youth who may unintentionally follow the marginalization approach. Separately, studies on N-B adults who have completed higher education would be valuable to understand their pathways and the key factors for their success.

Finally, the situations underlying the mass movement of migrants is not likely to slow down in the near future; therefore, we need to have a clear vision to address integration of refugee youth in our classrooms and society at large.
APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

E: IRB #18-415 entitled “Sociocultural Adaptation and Acculturation of Forcibly Displaced Nepalese-Bhutanese Refugee Youth in North East Ohio Public Schools: A Narrative Inquiry”

Hello,

I am pleased to inform you that the Kent State University Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved your Application for Approval to Use Human Research Participants as a Level II/Expedited, category 6/7 project. Approval is effective for a three-year period:

November 19, 2018 through November 18, 2021

For compliance with:

☐ DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects (Title 45 part 46), subparts A, B, C, D & E

IMPORTANT:

☐ You must report any external funding or contract to our office (as well as Sponsored Programs) related to this project—some funders require continuing review at intervals less than three years.

☐ A stamped copy of the IRB approved consent form may be attached to this email if the study is recruiting in person. This “stamped” copy is the consent form that you must use for your research participants. It is important for you to also keep an unstamped text copy (i.e., Microsoft Word version) of your consent form for subsequent submissions.

☐ You must file the following as necessary: continuing review requests, submit a closeout form when all interaction/interventions are completed and data is de-identified, and file an amendment form to request a project change. You must promptly report any changes in risk and any adverse/unanticipated events.

The IRB has determined that this protocol requires continuing review and a progress report by the expiration date listed above. The IRB tries to send you continuing review reminder notice by email as a courtesy. However, please note that it is the responsibility of the principal investigator to be aware of the study expiration date and submit the required materials. Please submit review materials (continuing review form and copy of current consent form) one month prior to the expiration date. Visit our website for forms.

HHS regulations and Kent State University Institutional Review Board guidelines require that any changes in research methodology, protocol design, or principal investigator have the prior approval of the IRB before implementation and continuation of the protocol. The IRB must also be informed of any adverse events associated with the study. The IRB further requests a final report at the conclusion of the study. Kent State University has a Federal Wide Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP); FWA Number 00001853.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at Researchcompliance@kent.edu or 330-672-2704 or 330-672-8058.
APPENDIX B

CONSENT LETTER
Appendix B

Consent Letter

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Study Title: Socio-cultural adaptation and acculturation of forcibly displaced Nepalese-Bhutanese refugee youth in north east Ohio public schools: a narrative inquiry

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate at any time. Please feel free to ask any questions if you need clarification. You will receive a copy of this form to take with you.

The purpose of the study is to understand the socio-cultural challenges faced by Nepalese-Bhutanese (N-B) students in Public schools in North East Ohio. Participants for this research include N-B High school graduates (who graduated between 2016 -2018) and their parents. The interview will be for two hours with a follow up session for another hour.

Social workers, teachers, school administrators, and N-B community members will be interviewed as well. Interviews will be recorded and used only for the purpose of research. The identity of the school, of all the participants, and the school administrators will be kept confidential. All the participants will be given pseudonyms. Confidentiality may not be maintained if the researcher realizes that the participant may do harm to themselves or others.

There are no risks expected in this research, other than those encountered in day to day life. You may refuse to answer a question that is personal, or if you feel uncomfortable to answer it. A one-time cash incentive of $10 will be given to participants appreciating their participation in the research. Informants will be given a $10 thank you gift card.

For participants who cannot speak English a Nepali speaking participant will be provided.

Contact Information:
Radha Bodupati - 856.983.6212.
Dr. Vilma Beehag - 330-672-0604

This project has been approved by the Kent State University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or complaints about the research, you may call the IRB at 330.672.2704.

SOCIO-CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND ACCULTURATION OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED NEPALESE-BHUTANESE-REFUGEE YOUTH IN NORTH EAST OHIO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Page 1 of 2
Consent Statement and Signature

I have listened to the text of this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions and seek answers. I know that I can choose not to participate at any time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that a copy of this consent will be provided to me for future reference.

Participant Signature

Date
Appendix C

Resettlement Process of Refugees in the US

Source: Chmura Economics & Analytics. Economic Impact of Refugees in the Cleveland Area (2013). Prepared for Refugee Services Collaborative of Greater Cleveland
APPENDIX D

TOP 10 U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS BY BHUTANESE POPULATION, 2015
Appendix D

Top 10 U.S. Metropolitan Areas by Bhutanese Population, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metro area</th>
<th>Bhutanese population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akron, OH</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus, OH</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond, VA</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burlington, VT</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt Lake City</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas-Fort Worth</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rochester, NY</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX E

BHUTANESE REFUGEES FIND A HOME IN OHIO
Appendix E

Bhutanese Refugees Find a Home in Ohio

The state is second only to Pennsylvania for the resettled population since 2008. Ohio, and especially Akron, has kept welcoming Bhutanese refugees even as their arrivals have dropped off in other states. The International Institute of Akron, a refugee resettlement agency, says they’ve settled more than 3,000 Bhutanese refugees in the Akron area since 2008.

Source: Refugee Processing Center (Schultze, Huffington Post, 2018)
APPENDIX F

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF BHUTANESE POPULATION IN THE U.S., 2015
Appendix F

Educational Attainment of Bhutanese Population in the U.S., 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>High school or less</th>
<th>Some college</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Postgrad degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Asians</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Americans</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The symbol *** indicates insufficient number of observations to provide a reliable estimate. Note: “High school” refers to those who have attained a high school diploma or its equivalent, such as a General Education Development (GED) certificate. “Some college” includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Figures may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Due to data limitations, figures for Bhutanese based on single-race population only, regardless of Hispanic origin. Figures for all Asians based on mixed-race and mixed-group populations, regardless of Hispanic origin. See methodology for more detail. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013-2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS). PEW RESEARCH CENTER
APPENDIX G

U.S. BHUTANESE POPULATION LIVING IN POVERTY, 2015
### Appendix G

**U.S. Bhutanese Population Living in Poverty, 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Bhutanese population living in poverty, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% living in poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. born***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign born</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The symbol *** indicates insufficient number of observations to provide a reliable estimate.

Note: Poverty status is determined for individuals in housing units and noninstitutional group quarters. It is unavailable for children younger than 15 who are not related to the householder, people living in institutional group quarters and people living in college dormitories or military barracks. Due to the way in which the IPUMS assigns poverty values, these data will differ from those provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Due to data limitations, figures for Bhutanese based on single-race population only, regardless of Hispanic origin. Figures for all Asians based on mixed-race and mixed-group populations, regardless of Hispanic origin. See methodology for more detail.

Appendix H

ACS Status Dropout Rate

APPENDIX I

TRAUMA follows refugees even after they arrive in the U.S.
Appendix I

Trauma Follows Refugees Even After They Arrive in the U.S.

Source: Schultze, M. L. (400AD, 00:47). Bhutanese refugees are finding their place in Ohio. Retrieved July 20, 2019, from HuffPost website: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/akron-ohio-bhutanese-refugees_n_59ca88cbe4b0c0c7353640
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