“We came together on the idea of being ‘foreign’”:

Learning from the Educators of Immigrant and Refugee Youth

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Abstract

This qualitative ethnographic study focuses on the stories, epistemologies, and transcultural teaching practices of (New) American educators working with immigrant and refugee youth at a community-based after-school program in the Midwestern region of the United States. The following key research questions guide this dissertation study: (1) How can the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United States contribute to a more comprehensive view of this population in both academic discourse and proverbial narratives? (2) What can educational researchers, schoolteachers, and other practitioners learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of immigrant, refugee, and (New) American educators about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee students? These questions, along with this study’s overall goal of contributing to the discourse about culturally sustaining education, support the following data collection methods: participant observation, reflexive journaling, interviews, and focus group discussions. Data analysis for this study, then, is grounded in the frameworks of small stories and teacher stories.
Dedication

I dedicate this work to my loving mom, BJ Harris, and to my entire family. I dedicate this dissertation, also, to my consummately supportive spouse, Dr. Houmed Garad; our daughter Alsa, who is writing her own dissertation about Elmo; and our daughter Anya, who was my source of joy when the writing was difficult. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my friend, Eyatta Fischer, who started the PhD process with me and is finishing it with me in spirit.
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The powerful women of Conversations in E&V (CinE&V)

Everyone involved in the Diversity & Equity Committee (DECo)

The entire Cultivating New Voices (CNV) family

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Fields of Study

Major Field: Education: Teaching and Learning
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Chapter 1: “It’s important to know where they’re coming from”: An Introduction

Simultaneously vibrant and indistinct, the colors red, white, and blue flood the streets along with stars and stripes, undulating in flags as far and wide as I can see; dancers, dressed in colorful costumes, practice their routines; and a local politician, behind the wheel of a top-down vintage convertible, sits beside two children and a large placard displaying his name. In preparation for the start of the July fourth parade, a large crowd abuzz with anticipation gathers at the intersection of two major streets on the North side of Captown [a psuedonym]. I am there to walk in the parade with a group of “New Americans.” We represent many countries of origin, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Djibouti, Korea, Nepal, Bhutan, Burma/Myanmar, and the United States of America. Yet the children in our group carry signs that say, “We are all American.” We wear hijabs, dhaka topis, heels, high tops, blue jeans, and floor-length woven wrap skirts. We speak Amharic, Arabic, Nepali, French, and, among other languages, English. Some of us wave star-spangled flags, distributing them—along with candy—to the children on the sidewalk along our route. When we reach the middle of the parade route and the master of ceremonies introduces us over the loudspeaker as “proud New Americans,” I wonder if we—a group made mostly of refugees, immigrants, and US-born people of color—are the face and flavor of the new American patriot. [Field Notes, 7/4/16]
The political discourse leading up to and following the 2016 presidential election in the United States provided both the social and political soundtrack for the final stages of the writing of this dissertation. Guided by reflections like the one presented above, in this introductory chapter, I contextualize this dissertation research study by discussing some of the salient social issues and political themes that have shaped the work. Both exemplary of the current political climate in the country and relevant to this research, are questions about national identity and belonging in the United States. Such questions include, but are not limited to, the following: How do political narratives influence ideas
about who belongs in the United States? How can diverse stories of lived experiences challenge certain beliefs about belonging? What does it mean to become and belong in transcultural ways?

President Barack Obama referenced the idea of belonging in his farewell address in January 2017 when he evoked the concept of the “sacred ties” that bind citizens of the same country. He said, “We weaken those ties when we define some of us as more American than others” (“President Obama farewell,” 2017). Yet history and the 2016 election cycle have both indicated time and again that despite the occurrence of a black president, the benchmark for belonging in U.S. society has always been linked to a legacy of inequity. This legacy is couched within a culture of capitalism, patriarchy, imperialism, and white supremacy (hooks, 2009).

Additionally, when President Obama referenced relationships, he used the word “ties” to symbolize and promote the concept of national unity. Politicians have historically played a role in shaping the national narrative about the United States and its people—and one of the most popular assertions, attributed to John F. Kennedy, is that the United States is a nation of immigrants.¹ The attempt to define America(ns) by unifying characteristics makes sense for political leaders with unambiguous agendas, but this approach does little to help clarify the legal, historical, and ideological complexities of citizenship or residency, identity, and belonging in one of the more diverse countries in the world. A compelling counter-narrative authored by critical scholars Tuck and Yang

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¹ President John F. Kennedy gave a speech entitled, “We Are A Nation of Immigrants” in 1963 at the Anti-Defamation League’s 50th Annual Meeting. He then published *A Nation of Immigrants* in 1964 with Harper and Row.
(2012) asserts that rather than a nation of immigrants, the U.S. is a nation of settler colonialists on Indigenous lands. A critical discussion of the settler colonial concept presented in the following chapters helps support the following argument: To live in the United States today is to play a role in the continuous settler colonial struggle. This struggle, which is woven into a story that started with American Indians, European settlers, and African slaves, is characterized by what Tuck and Yang (2012) refer to as the unsettling “triad of relations” found in settler-native-slave. According to this version of U.S. history and current events, the connections to settler colonialism and settler-native-slave relations are the tenacious ties that bind.

As a U.S.-born, Midwest-raised, black woman with a family history linked to the transatlantic slave trade, I occupy a space in the settler-native-slave triad. I am U.S.-university educated, English-fluent, and versed in the cultural ways of knowing of Suburban white America. In other words, I am fluent in what Paris and Alim (2014) call Dominant American English (DAE), I possess an awareness of how to navigate a school culture that has allowed me to succeed academically, and I have leveraged my economic and educational privilege to obtain and use a U.S. passport. My passport, as a real and symbolic indicator of my nationality, renders my national identity undeniable whilst my sense of belonging in the United State remains always questionable.

As I walked in the abovementioned Independence Day parade, I reflected on a national citizenship that has enabled me to travel and cross borders for pleasure, and the comparative economic and political stability that I have experienced throughout my life. I also considered the ways in which my racial and gender identities position me as
“doubly-effaced” according to the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak (1994). A postcolonial reading of my identity as a U.S.-born woman of color allows me to see myself as both privileged and doubly distanced from the ideal humanity of a white male because I am racialized as black and gendered as a woman. As Patel (2016) states, “I experience the spoils and subjugation through the settler colonial project” (p. 7) and “put simply I am both colonizer and colonized” (p. 6).

Indeed, despite the privileges of citizenship and employment (among others), and the ability to pursue life, liberty, and happiness in the U.S., I am passionately reluctant to say that I live completely freely in this country. How can I live freely when one of the most fervent political movements taking place during the writing of this dissertation is the defiant public declaration that black lives matter? The emergence of a movement grounded in the quest for the acknowledgment of black humanity and the survival of black life—that was catalyzed by police brutality and is sustained by racist injustices in education, employment, housing, and healthcare (Day, 2015)—may ipso facto demonstrate that black humanity is still in question. Thus, being black and belonging in the United States is even more dubious.

President Obama’s cogent concern about the detrimental effects of defining some as more American than others is ultimately an inquiry into a colonial ideology that maintains exclusive access to human status to the white, Christian—and in the United States—English-speaking man (see Fanon, 2008). Implicit in his expressed concern is also a position statement (not necessarily enacted by his policies) in response to the anti-immigrant sentiment that has gained traction recently. Studies of anti-immigrant
sentiment as reported by mainstream media (Dizikes, 2010; Ip, 2016; Horowitz, 2016) suggest that the culture, race, and class (or level of education, more specifically) of newcomer populations, are determining factors that shape widespread public perceptions about immigrants. Anti-immigrant rhetoric has also been linked to fears about terrorism, security, and border control in a post-9/11 era (Delgadillo, 2011). Moreover, academic research (Timberlake & Williams, 2012; Bikmen, 2015) has found a link between the public perception of immigrants and political debates at the national level. In their study of stereotypes of U. S. immigrants from Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, Timberlake and Williams (2012) write, “Our findings suggest that views about the characteristics of certain groups of immigrants are strongly linked to national-level debates about unauthorized immigration” (p. 876). Yet Bikmen’s (2015) work shows how political statements that invoke a historical narrative of unity across difference engender more positive perceptions among the public about immigrants and more inclusive ideas about immigration. When viewed through the lens of Bikmen’s (2015) and Timberlake and Williams’ (2012) research, perhaps President Obama sought to calm fears about immigration with his farewell address. However, with his following comment, he also confirmed the United States’ long history of anti-immigrant sentiment: “The stereotypes about immigrants today were said, almost word for word, about the Irish, and Italians, and Poles, who it was said were going to destroy the fundamental character of America (“President Obama farewell,” 2017). I interpret this comment to mean that fears about immigrants have been and continue to be unfounded, yet socially and politically influential.
Through a postcolonial lens, one might see that America’s longstanding anti-immigrant and anti-black sentiment suggests that defining the Other (including people of color, immigrants, and Indigenous peoples) as less American than another, is a founding principle of the nation. After all, constitutional ideals of equality have never included all human beings, particularly racialized people and, as (Romero, 2005) describes, noncitizens. Given the settler colonial and capitalist origins of the nation state, a history of inequality, individualism, and competition have trickled into all aspects of society, including education.

Refrains about limited access to opportunity and knowledge as a limited resource that can be owned and must be protected (Patel, 2016) appear within the social and political soundtrack of the United States. It should come as no surprise, then, that students of color, refugee and immigrant youth, emergent multilinguals, and dominant culture outsiders are struggling to succeed academically in schools throughout the nation. Schools contribute to the discourse on belonging by omitting global perspectives from the curriculum (Merryfield & Subedi, 2003; Subedi, 2013; Subedi and Daza, 2008), and presenting people and societies in the Global South as inferior (Subedi, 2013).

The inferior/superior dichotomy manifests in society with the “mythos of the ‘ideal immigrant’” (Delgadillo, 2011) and in schools with notions about the “ideal student” (Campano, 2007). Not unlike an “ideal immigrant,” who is expected to follow a trajectory of cultural and linguistic integration, an “ideal student” is expected to quickly apply knowledge of a dominant school culture and language. Immigrant youth must navigate through stresses in schools and society, including: (1) Pressures to perform
along a continuum of ideality; (2) Negative public perceptions about themselves and their countries of origin; and, among many others, (3) The dearth of information about their histories in school materials and society. Campano and Ghiso (2011) ask, “What does it mean to be at once ‘invisible’ within a curricular context, while at the same time hyper-visible in the current immigration discourse…?” (p. 166). Similarly, Strong et. al (2014) remark, “Their lives and those of their families are at the center of often vicious public debates” (p. 6). Together, these factors contribute to both implicit and explicit messages about who has value and who belongs in American schools and society against the painful backdrop of who does not have value and, hence, does not belong in these spaces.

Framed by questions about what it means to be American and what it means to belong, the people shown in the picture at the start of the chapter (Figure 1) represent the past, present, and future of the United States. They represent the mutually beneficial aspects associated with diverse and global perspectives and the justification for working toward equity and inclusion in education. As educators and educational researchers grapple with concerns about meeting the needs of diverse youth, it is necessary to consider questions about American identity and belonging, particularly within the context of a contemporary social and political moment marked by uncertainty surrounding the future of public education in the United States. To the extent that the education system in the United States is failing to meet the needs of its racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse groups of students (Banks, 2003; Delpit, 1998; Gay, 2004; Sleeter, 2011), I admit that maintaining the status quo in education is not good enough to educate our youth. As such, I suggest that we follow the lead of the educators who are already doing the work of
meeting the socioemotional and academic needs of their students, including immigrant, refugee, emergent multilingual, and youth of color in schools and other educational settings nationwide.

Statement of the Problem

Racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity is undoubtedly on the rise in America’s public schools. The National Center for Education Statistics\(^2\) notes that within the last fourteen years, the number of white students in U.S. public schools has decreased while the number of English language learners and students of color has increased in 40 out of 50 states. Still, the overwhelming majority of teachers are white.\(^3\) Although the trend of white teachers educating a diverse student body in U.S. public schools does not constitute a problem in and of itself, scholars (Banks, 2003; Delpit, 1998; Gay, 2004; Sleeter, 2011) have long argued that mainstream American schools and teachers—while upholding and promoting dominant Eurocentric cultural norms—are falling short of educating a diverse student body in culturally appropriate, relevant, and culturally sustaining ways.

To the extent that schools have historically struggled to meet the needs of multicultural populations (Banks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Delpit, 1998; Gay, 2004; Sleeter, 2011) it is easy to understand how additional elements of cultural, ethnic, religious, and language diversity—conflated with an influx of students with dissimilar global experiences and trauma-related issues after life in refugee camps—have left


\(^3\) See \url{https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009324/tables/sass0708_2009324_t12n_02.asp} for data about racial/ethnic demographics of schoolteachers in the United States.
educators unprepared for their newly arrived students (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017). In fact, Moinolnolki and Han (2017) indicate that immigrant and refugee students drop out of school at rates twice as high as their U.S.-born counterparts due to issues including poverty, prejudicial treatment from peers, and the negative consequences of educators who do not recognize or value their diverse cultural ways of knowing. More research is needed to better understand the lived experiences and educational needs of immigrant and refugee youth, and to prepare educators to effectively and lovingly work with them. However, existing literature suggests that positive social and academic outcomes result from the relationship between students and educators, and from how educators value students’ ways of knowing (Moinolnolki & Han, 2017; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). Preparing people who work in school systems, from superintendents to teachers and school aides, to positively engage with immigrant and refugee students requires input and action from educational researchers, teacher educators, school leaders, and those working with immigrant and refugee youth in community-based programs around the nation.

An exception to the abovementioned trend of student and teacher demographics (e.g., white teachers working with students of color) is found in community-based out of school time (OST) and afterschool spaces, where educators reflect the racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the youth participants. Recent literature focusing on the positive impact of community-based education programs for immigrant students and emergent multilingual students in the United States presents heritage language schools as sites for empowering students to develop agency and confidence, increasing their bilingual language and literacy skills, and enhancing students’ identity development, and
academic performance and success in traditional classrooms (Pu, 2012; Leeman, Rabin, & Roman–Mendoza, 2011). Recent literature also addresses how community-based organizations can bridge the gaps between home and school with a “hybrid culture/space” that is particularly beneficial for low-income and working-class immigrant families (Wong, 2005; Orellana, 2016). Simultaneously, literature on the positive impact of after-school and OST programs for immigrant students and emergent multilingual students in the United States reiterates the claim that community-based after-school programs and the educators who work in them can be invaluable resources for schools looking to create inclusive and culturally relevant educational environments (Lee & Hawkins, 2008).

**Research Questions**

Building upon existing research and basic assumptions about the rich ways of being and knowing of immigrant and refugee students and educators (Lee & Hawkins, 2008; Leeman, Rabin, & Roman–Mendoza, 2011; Orellana, 2016; Pu, 2012; Wong, 2005), my dissertation research study exists at the intersection of data on the experiences of immigrant youth and adults in U.S. educational settings, and the quest for new understandings about the knowledge landscape of educators in community-based learning environments. I pull from black feminist and postcolonial literature, a range of educational research about equity issues in education (Paris, 2012; Subedi and Daza, 2008; Lee & Hawkins, 2008), and the data of the study in order to do the following: (1) Challenge deficit narratives about immigrants in the current political climate of the country; (2) Contribute new “teacher stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1997) to the literature about the professional knowledge landscape of educators in the United States;
(3) Discuss some of the specifics of teaching immigrant and refugee youth; and (4) Assert that educational researchers and educators can learn a lot about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee students by looking at the work of educators in community-based youth programs.

Focusing on the stories, epistemologies, and transcultural teaching practices of educators and other adults working with immigrant and refugee youth at a community-based after-school program in the U.S. Midwest, I conducted the dissertation study with the following research questions in mind:

1. How can the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United States contribute to a more comprehensive view of this population in both academic discourse and public narratives?

2. What can educational researchers and educators, including schoolteachers and youth workers, learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of (New) American educators about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee youth?

By working with a group of English-speaking adults—including members of the management team, board, and educators associated with the educational programs of Organization [a pseudonym]—the overall goal of my research was (and continues to be, post-dissertation) to participate in the collective production of knowledge about the questions outlined above. Three focal participants who will be introduced in chapters three and four contributed to complex notions about how the social and political context, academic literature, lived experiences, and continually evolving ideas about culture,
identity, and knowledge coalesce to inform our teaching, learning, and engagement as educational researchers and educators.

**The End-Beginning**

As educators and educational researchers committed to understanding and meeting the needs of students of diverse backgrounds, it is important to reflect on our roles in shaping the educational experiences, worldviews, and identities of the youth with whom we work—particularly within the context of the present social and political moment in the United States. In this dissertation study, I synthesize existing literature and theories and analyze data to answer the key research questions. Additionally, I share specific aspects from my own story of being and belonging (as an educator and educational researcher) as I reflect on what it means for a black U.S.-born woman to work with a group of (New) American educators who grapple with questions related to meeting the needs of our students today. I am motivated by the sentiment put forth by Patel (2016) who writes, “As an educator, as an educational researcher, as a citizen of the United States, I consider it my responsibility to use my knowledge and privilege to contribute to the betterment of my ever-changing community” (p. x).

As I conclude, I reference the work of hooks (2009) who also writes about the “ties that bind” in her book titled, *belonging: a culture of place*. For hooks, the binding and sacred ties are to land, family, memories, cultural ways of knowing, history, and (the place of the people back) home. It is worthy of mention that this dissertation before you unfolded in the city of my birth—a city that continues to shape my identity, lived experiences, perspectives, and the trajectory of my professional work. In as much as
hooks’ (1990; 1994; 2009) ideas inform the ways in which I reflect upon and make meaning of the opening vignette, the accompanying picture of the parade participants (Figure 1), and the entire data corpus for this dissertation, so too, is the process informed by my gratitude for and connection to the people and places of whom and of which I write.

Key terms

Immigrant, Refugee, and (New) American

The terms immigrant, refugee, and (New) American are used almost interchangeably in this work for several reasons. First, multiple perspectives even within seemingly similar communities contribute to nuanced understandings of the terms. Also, each person should have the freedom to define his/her/their own identities to the extent possible and despite the limitations of doing so. Secondly, the use of these terms is linked to the dynamics of the situated social contexts in which they are employed and the usage is connected to the relationships between interlocutors. For example, in a setting linked to legal aid or citizenship status, one set of terms might be more appropriate whereas an interaction in an informal social setting might prompt the employment of different terms. Lastly, the circumstances surrounding the (im)migration of groups and individuals are complex. For the sake of simplicity, I have chosen to forgo academic definitions of these terms, preferring to present, instead, the following: (a) Easy to access descriptions that arguably represent the views of a large segment of society; and (b) Definitions that have emerged from the research and from the community in which the research was conducted.
**Immigrant.** According to Martinez and Marquez (2014), “an immigrant is someone who chooses to resettle to another country” (para. 3). As the authors suggest, an element of choice is what differentiates an immigrant from a refugee; immigrants choose to relocate whereas refugees are forced to do so for any number of political, social, and/or personal reasons related to the threat of violence and/or harm. Adding to the multiple layers within this working definition, Martinez and Marquez note that “migrants” often move by choice for economic reasons. Yet we know that the dynamics involved in (imm)migration for opportunity or employment are multifaceted.

**Refugee.** A high school lesson plan associated with the film, *The New Americans*, refers to refugees as “reluctant immigrants” (Israel, 2004), noting that a refugee is a type of immigrant who did not voluntarily or willingly choose to move. Martinez and Marquez (2014) point out that refugees have fled from their home countries because of violence or fear of targeted harm, and they likely cannot return home. A refugee can be an immigrant (in a country with the intention to stay) or a migrant (still in transition to another locale), but not all immigrants or migrants are refugees.

**New American.** The definition of the term New American used herein has emerged from the research project to the extent that it is a widely-used term among the staff and leadership of the organization where this dissertation research study was conducted. According to the research participants and those associated with the organization, New American is an all-encompassing term that does not yet have the negative connotations associated with the words refugee or immigrant. Instead, it is a term that accounts for multiple identities and does not necessarily conjure questions about
citizenship or documentation status. It is a term that could mean, “We are all Americans, but we are the newest” [Field Notes, 10/20/16]. Despite the temporality that could be associated with the word “new,” one research participant offered the perspective that after 20 years in the country he still considers himself a New American; his colleague suggested that he would stop using the term after becoming a citizen [Field Notes, 10/20/16]. Thus, a New American can be someone who recently resettled or recently became a citizen after any length of time. Lastly, I use the term (New) American with the word new in parenthesis to: (a) Denote a constant negotiation with the idea of newness as a linear concept; and (b) Intentionally wrestle with the inclusion of U.S.-born individuals (second generation immigrants or otherwise) in the group. Where the term (New) American appears with the use of parenthesis, I have strategically employed the term to include white U.S.-born educators, and perhaps myself, in a concise way.

In summation, the term New American is an umbrella term irrespective of citizenship or status. The term (New) American is an inclusive, umbrella term that I use in this dissertation without having seen it used within the immigrant, refugee and/or New American community. The term immigrant is also used in this work as an umbrella term that encompasses the refugee community. The term refugee is an exclusive term that is not used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. I employ the term refugee to acknowledge the often challenging circumstances under which many refugees left their home countries and the trauma that some refugee students face in relation to their past and present educational experiences. Additionally, while the term refugee might be the more accurate term in certain contexts throughout this dissertation study, I reserve the
right to prioritize the descriptors used by the research participants. Lastly, the terms “asylum seeker,” “displaced person,” and “stateless person” are additional terms (among others) that are not widely used in this dissertation study, but that can add detail and specificity to the circumstances under which an individual or group moved from one location to another. In most circumstances, an asylum seeker, or a stateless or displaced person, is someone whose status as a refugee has yet to be determined. For the scope of this research, the terms described above, I believe, are sufficient.

**Transcultural(ity)**

The working definitions of transcultural, transculturation, and transculturality that inform this research come from Ortiz (1995), Guerra (2007), and Orellana (2016) who writes: “‘Trans’ is not just a substitute for ‘multi’ or ‘inter.’ It is not just about fluidity or movement, or even ‘just’ transgression. ‘Trans’ suggests a movement beyond borders...it is about the question of the ontologies that hold things apart” (p. 91). Although transculturality is a concept worthy of a dissertation in and of itself, it is used throughout this study to acknowledge the ways in which the (New) American youth and educators associated with this research pull from a range of lived experiences, and cultural and linguistic ways of knowing to exist in ways that go beyond the limits of our understanding. Within the context of this dissertation, transculturality is also conceived of as a process of resistance and a response to coloniality.

**Coloniality**

Terms related to the concept of colonialism figure throughout this dissertation study. While most of the terms require elaboration, my use of the word coloniality is
relatively simple. When I employ the word coloniality, I am referring to the manifestation of innumerable factors that indicate the perpetuity of colonial conditions in myriad forms. Referring to online dictionaries helped me to clarify my intention with the use of the term. Dictionary.com states: “–ity: a suffix used to form abstract nouns expressing state or condition.” OxfordDictionaries.com defines coloniality as: “Colonial quality or character; the fact or state of being a colony.” In this case, the simple definitions serve the purpose of providing a comprehensive enough terminology. Insofar as coloniality is a word I have seen widely used, but not as frequently defined, I put it forth here as a key term with a definition.

**Community Based Organization**

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to the research site, Organization, as a community based organization. My use of this term is informed by Lee and Hawkins (2008) who write about after-school programs that are situated in the same communities as the students they serve and staffed by people from those communities. These after-school programs and the hosting organizations or centers are community-oriented and community based because they provide needed services to local populations. By using this term, I also seek to draw attention to the multiple sites outside of schools where learning occurs. Children spend roughly 20% of their time in school and it is important for researchers to pay attention to the range of environments, including community based organizations where learning is taking place (Miller, 2003 qtd. in Lee and Hawkins, 2008).
Organization of Dissertation

In this introductory first chapter, I sought to do the following things: (a) Contextualize the dissertation research study by referencing the current sociopolitical climate; b) Put forth and poke holes in some popular and public narratives about the U.S. and its people; and c) Raise questions about the connections among belonging, American identity, and the education of immigrant and refugee youth. A postcolonial reading of current social issues and political themes helps set the stage for taking the key questions of this dissertation research study to task. Chapter two further contextualizes the work by outlining postcolonial theory and black feminist frameworks as the two primary lenses through which the research study was conceived, experienced, analyzed, and presented. I discuss the continuing impact of coloniality in education, address the ways in which educators are conceptualizing and enacting a resistance and response to the legacy of colonialism in education, and discuss the connections between culture and colonization. Existing educational research about issues of equity in education help me address two guiding questions: (1) What is the continuing impact of coloniality on education? (2) How are educators who resist coloniality conceptualizing and enacting a resistance and response? Chapter three, then, serves as an exploration of methodological questions surrounding responsibility, reciprocity, and relevancy in educational research. It is a presentation of the methodological approach (influenced by humanizing frameworks and decolonized methodologies) employed for this dissertation research study. In the third chapter, I also introduce the research site, focal participants, data corpus, and approach for data collection and analysis. Then, in chapter four, I introduce three focal research
participants and present their narratives as part of a data corpus that contributes to answering key research questions. I present analyses informed by literature related to views about “small stories” and “teacher stories” and critical perspectives from the frameworks of transculturality and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy. Lastly, chapter five is dedicated to a discussion of the dissertation study, its implications for the field of educational research, and ideas about the future of this work and related research.
Chapter 2: “If we don’t appreciate what they bring, they’ll stop bringing it”

Marginalized Peoples and Perspectives (A Theoretical Frame)

This chapter is a metaphorical ode to the ideas and theories that have shaped my worldview and helped me make sense of the world, my academic line of inquiry, and particularly this dissertation research study. In this chapter, I pay tribute to postcolonial theory and black feminist theories for the ways in which they enable thinkers to demonstrate a commitment to multiple perspectives, engage with nuanced explanations of inequality, and acknowledge the impact of identity and lived experiences when making meaning of and about the world. By starting with an introduction to postcolonial theory and presenting some salient ideas authored by the founding thinkers of the postcolonial canon, such as Aime Césaire, Léopold Senghor, Gayatri Spivak, and Edward Said (among others), I will: (a) Define postcolonial theory; b) Discuss the distinctions among the terms postcolonial, anti-colonial, and decolonial; and c) Address the legacy of coloniality in education. Then, I will present black feminist frameworks, paying close attention to the contributions of black women educators and what they offer to discussions about power, privilege, identity, belonging, and intersectionality in education. Additionally, literature that addresses the legacy of coloniality in the United States schools and society will be referenced throughout this chapter to help me answer the following key questions: What is the continuing impact of coloniality on education? How
do educators conceptualize and enact a resistance against coloniality in their classrooms and work?

**Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Analytical Lens**

Colonialism is characterized by the European pursuit of power and progress. Ethnocentric and epistemologically violent, the colonial project put the white, rational, Christian man at the center of humanity while casting all others aside as the dehumanized and problematized peripheral pawns of the world (Mudimbe, 1988, 1994). In his discussion of colonialism, Mudimbe (1988, 1994) describes a Church-sanctioned endeavor to save and civilize the purportedly inferior peoples of Africa. Those in power presented this effort to the people as a divinely justified moral duty, and an ideological one. Mudimbe (1988, 1994) describes the Africa that emerged as a European idea and invention, noting the long history of inquiry into difference within Western philosophy:

> It was, I think, fifteenth-and-sixteenth-century Europe that invented the savage as a representation of its own negated double. Exploiting travelers’ and explorers’ writings, at the end of the nineteenth century a “colonial library” begins to take shape. It represents a body of knowledge constructed with the explicit purpose of faithfully translating and deciphering the African object…Certainly, the depth as well as the ambition of the colonial library disseminates the concept of deviation as the best symbol of the idea of Africa. (p. xxi)

Thus, as the quote suggests, concepts like deviation, negation, and savagery figured into the ways in which Western philosophers described difference. European theologians and thinkers like Blumenbach, Linnaeus, and Gobineau (see Thiam, 2011) built upon these ideas about difference and offered a moral justification for colonial projects by providing the theoretical basis of European superiority. Western philosophy introduced the master-slave dialect (see Hegel, 1977) and the idea that the civilized European Self is defined in
relation to the savage and uncivilized non-European Other. These simplistic and problematic binaries, placed along a timeline toward modernity, underpin colonial thought. For Mignolo (2007), the “myth of modernity” is part of the dialectical relationship between Europeans and non-Europeans because the pursuit of progress, as an unattainable ideal, is that which perpetuates coloniality and the idea of the European standard of superiority.

Arguably inventing and perpetuating ideas about time, place, and the world within and beyond Europe’s borders, was an intentional exercise in maintaining power (Mudimbe, 1994; Said, 1979; Mignolo, 2007). Although scholars debate the details, similar questions about and critiques of the basic assumptions of colonial knowledge constitute postcolonial theory. Before moving into a discussion of the connections between colonization and education, I will highlight the works of Edward Said (1979) Gayatri Spivak (1998), Leopold Senghor (1964) and Aime Césaire (2011) for their contributions to the canon of postcolonial theory.

The self-definitions found in Western philosophy and colonial thought introduced the Self/Other dialectic that pits the non-European Other against the European Self. In Orientalism, Said (1979) focuses on culture as a marker of distinction in this dialectical relationship. Civility and rationality are among the supposedly superior European cultural values that have contributed to the notion that neutral scientific observation can help make sense of subjects in the “Orient.” The amalgam of factors involved in the processes of producing knowledge from a Western gaze about Eastern peoples is what Said identifies as Orientalism; it is, as a theoretical, economic, and political endeavor,
embedded within a binary of power wherein the former creates a reality about/for the latter. Said suggests that cultural differences made the “Orient” a complex place worthy of academic interest, but scholars did not set out to produce new knowledge. Rather they set out to find more evidentiary support for the claim of European superiority and “Oriental” inferiority. Said further argues that if a truth about the Orient ever existed, it would be buried under the rubble of historical misunderstandings and a constellation of constructed ideas. Indeed, when we as scholars reflect upon the language used in the West to talk and teach about the world (e.g., center-periphery, Global South, developing world), we can identify problematic assumptions about culture, power, and place. Some of these assumptions involve a discourse about the “developing world” that position certain nations as culturally and monetarily impoverished. These worldviews indicate a perspective wherein the goal is to become more like the Western ideal.

With regards to power and identity, Spivak (1998) contributes questions about gender to postcolonial theory. In her oft-cited text, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak describes a center-periphery dichotomy, conceptualizing the Other as the shadow of the Self. She notes that a female is “more deeply in the shadow” or “doubly effaced” within the context of colonialism. She writes: “Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced...If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (p. 82-83). Spivak offers the term “epistemic violence” to describe the harm inflicted upon those whose voices have been silenced and whose histories have been erased within the project of colonialism. Her term,
“hegemonic historiography” (Spivak qtd. in Burney, 2012), highlights the power dynamics involved in the telling and retelling of history. When a homogenous colonial narrative destroys multiple views and versions of reality and history, the destruction has the potential to engender continued silence and domination. Thus, the perpetuity of coloniality is intertwined with the erasure of heterogenous versions of history. Lastly, it is important to note that Spivak believes in the power of postcolonial scholars to rewrite history with a “counter-discourse” (Burney, 2012) that can delegitimize grand colonial narratives. On this latter point, Spivak, like Said, demonstrates how “strategies for the creation of a counter-discourse and techniques to destabilize the dominant narratives are an integral aspect of the critical realm of postcolonial theory” (Burney, 2012, p. 42). To restate this point in my own words, a common strategy within postcolonial theory involves countering dominant narratives to delegitimize them and make room for heterogeneity.

Similar to the ways in which Spivak (1998) enriches the postcolonial canon with discussions of gender, scholars from the African diaspora add nuance to notions of identity at the intersection of critical race and postcolonial theories. Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor are the founding fathers of la Négritude, a political and intellectual movement credited for establishing postcolonial perspectives on race. The Negritude movement enabled black thinkers to articulate unprecedented understandings about race and identity within colonial constructs and beyond. Moreover, the movement signaled a departure from Eurocentrism by valuing black diasporic artistic and literary expression.
In his overview of *la Négritude*, Asante (2000) describes the origins of the movement and Senghor’s and Césaire’s role within it:

The main proponents of Négritude were Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Jean Rabemananjara, and Léon Damas. The school of thought emerged in Paris in the 1930s and 1940s as a reaction to the totalizing idea of culture as presented by French scholars. The French, in the European fashion, considered Africa to be without culture, that is, without self-conscious art or an artistic tradition. As students in Paris, these young continental Africans, South Americans, and Caribbean Africans came together to defend their own historical tradition as legitimate and valid within the global context. They were the first line of resistance to the virulent racism of white supremacy in the area of art, particularly in poetry, drama, and literature. (p. 59)

As the brief excerpt from Asante’s (2000) article affirms, and Césaire (2001, 2011a, 2011b) articulates in his poetry and writings, *la Négritude* is as much a philosophy as a way of being in the world. Even though Western philosophy has constructed ideas about racial difference and established a global culture of prejudice, the truth about race is not based on actual inherent characteristics. Césaire (2011) writes, “*L’idée du nègre barbare est une invention européenne*” (p. 37); (The idea of the black barbarian is a European invention. Translation mine). To engage in and embody the kind of critical perspectives that conceive of racial inferiority as invention not inherence is to enact the principles of *la Négritude*. Just as Césaire advocates for thinking critically and revolting against European reductionist thinking, he similarly furthers the project of undermining European colonial discourse by questioning the very foundation of Eurocentric epistemologies and ontologies.

Like Césaire (2011), Senghor’s (1964) contributions to the Negritude movement challenge colonial ideas about European cultural and intellectual superiority (Thiam,
Thiam (2011) credits Senghor for the creation of a Negro epistemology, a framework that conceives of race as an “epistemic community” created by shared ontologies and “similar epistemic relations” (p. 8). Using Senghor’s framework, races are fluid cultural manifestations and not fixed biological essences. Thus, part of the project of *la Négritude* involved fleshing out understandings of the cultural manifestations of blackness within the confines coloniality.

The authors identified above—Césaire, Senghor, Spivak, and Said—demonstrate how scholars over time have used different points of departure, geographic origins, and central arguments under the umbrella of postcolonial theory to make similar claims about the fallibility of the colonial project and its postulations. Postcolonial theory, broadly defined, enables the examination of ethnocentrism and the limitations of Western thought (Andreotti, 2011). According to Andreotti (2011), postcolonial theory also facilitates non-coercive relationships and “ethical solidarities” in pursuit of plurality, and a “discursive orientation” is one of its key unifying characteristics. This discursive orientation draws from different foci, but it centers around critiquing oppressive structures, grand narratives, imperialism, capitalism, language, and representation.

**Postcolonial, Anti-Colonial, & Decolonial**

Different scholars use the terms postcolonial, anti-colonial, and decolonial differently, and debates within the field indicate a lack of consensus as to their definitions. It is important to note that the definitions and conceptualizations of postcolonial, anti-colonial, and decolonial are not static, even amongst the scholars who have shaped the postcolonial canon. Part of our task as scholars who draw from
postcolonial theories to inform our worldviews and our work, is to participate in
discussions about the ever-evolving concepts and cite the sources that help us to
complicate and clarify our ideas. Patel (2017) eloquently made this point with the
following statement:

Part of what we have to do as being in a larger laboratory together, all of
us who are thinking and writing about these ideas, is take up gatherings of
ideas as they appear, note the places where there is variation in uses, and
see which uses do the most work for the writing at hand. Think of it like
intersectionality. That is a pliable concept and it has been plied. By being
explicit about how and why we are using it in the ways we are, then we
allow for the engagement and possible contesting if someone differs from
that use. That's our job as thinkers—to make our uses explicit, to show

With the goal of putting forth and thinking through the strengths and weaknesses
of my theoretical framework, I aim to make explicit the uses and traces of key
elements of postcolonial theory. While postcolonial, anti-colonial, and decolonial
discourses share common ground in addressing the relationship between
knowledge and power and challenging claims of European superiority (at the
intersections of geography, and gender and racial identity), each concept is
distinct enough to warrant further exploration.

For the purposes of this dissertation research, I have chosen to put forth the term
postcolonial as an overarching term that deals with questions of coloniality. This choice
is justified, at least in part, by arguments put forth by Shohat (1992) in her classic text,
“Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial,’” wherein she discusses the spatio-temporal ambiguities of
the term postcolonial. Insofar as scholars (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989 as cited in
Shohat, 1992) in the past have pushed the boundaries of the term to include all societies
affected by colonialism (including the United States, Canada, and Australia), it is conceivable to think of the concept as a theoretical frame that connects to a wide spectrum of perspectives related to coloniality. To be clear, postcolonial theory is not the foundation from which anti-colonial and decolonial discourses emerge. It is, instead, an entire system of thought concerned with iterations of academic and activist endeavors that seek to consider, critique, and counter the legacy and perpetuity of colonization.

**Anti-colonial.** Conceptually, anti-colonialism falls firmly into the camp of critiquing and countering colonialism. I consider it to be a term grounded in critical perspectives that not only ponder colonialism, but expressly oppose it. While the term itself is lesser used within the existing body of literature that shapes my work, it is an important component of my theoretical framework. Arguably, anti-colonialism gave rise to postcolonial thought (Angod, 2006; Andreotti, 2011). I see anti-colonialism as the critical component of the postcolonial paradigm, although scholars like Angod (2006) see anti-colonialism and postcolonialism as distinct conceptual frameworks. While Angod credits postcolonial thought for its invaluable contributions to anti-colonialism, including discussions about (strategic) essentialism, she also conceives of postcolonial thought as a problematic intellectual endeavor that reinforces its relevance by regulating the academic discourse about colonialism. Angod (2006) writes, “Post-colonialism facilitates this kind of paternalism by demanding that resistance to and reformulation of colonialism be performed in particular ways that re-inscribe the veracity of and need for post-colonial scholarship” (p. 164). Furthermore, Angod (2006) poignantly notes that postcolonial scholarship has the potential to recreate the dynamics of power that enable predominantly
white scholars in majority white spaces to think through colonialism in abstract terms. Like the colonial dynamics described at the start of this chapter, this process allows for “post-colonial scholars [to] become the experts on coloured bodies” (p. 164). Anti-colonialism, by contrast, arguably has the critical roots that the staunchest critics of colonialism desire (Rizvia, Lingardb, & Laviac, 2006).

**Decolonial.** One of the most powerful concepts recently contributed to the discourse on decolonization comes from Tuck and Yang (2012), who warn us (as academics and practitioners) to be weary of decolonization as a metaphor. They argue that the discourse about decolonization can be easily coopted and devalued when the contributions of Indigenous communities are not fully recognized. Decolonization, as a theoretical concept and an action verb, is not a new word or concept to be used interchangeably for any number of (in)equity issues in education. They write:

> When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future. Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks. The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation. When we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor; it is not an approximation of other experiences of oppression. Decolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. Decolonization doesn’t have a synonym. (p. 3)

Not synonymous with other educational endeavors, rather, decolonization is a project in and of itself. It is interlocked with the Indigenous story and its own history of struggle. My choice to focus on a discussion of decolonization that explains the specificities of colonization in the United States and names it as settler colonialism, is purposeful. To
better explain the discourse of decolonization as it relates to settler colonialism, I again refer to Tuck and Yang (2012) who describe settler colonialism as an epistemologically, ontologically, and cosmologically violent process wherein settlers occupy Indigenous lands, and disrupt Indigenous relationships with that land. While making a new home on Indigenous lands, settlers reassert the violence of occupation on a daily basis. Distancing themselves from any ambiguity about the “post” in postcolonial indicating that an end to coloniality has occurred, Tuck and Yang (2012) clarify that within the framework of decolonization, settler colonialism is undoubtedly invasive, violent, and ongoing.

Recognizing the settler colonial roots of the United States, then, we would be remiss if we did not articulate the ways in which a violent erasure of indigeneity is unfolding on a daily and continual basis. While I will not address the issues at length, the Indian Boarding Schools of the 19th and 20th centuries (Bear, 2008) and the recent fight surrounding the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline (Strickland, 2016) are but two historical and contemporary examples of how the state systemizes the dissolution of Indigenous culture and desecrates sacred Indigenous lands in the United States. While Said (1979) describes the colonial dialectic of power in terms of colonizer/colonized, it is arguably myopic to assume that these binary terms are comprehensive enough to make sense of the phenomenon of settler colonialism. Tuck and Yang (2012) present a settler-native-slave triad to account for the relationships among the groups historically implicated in the transatlantic slave trade and settler colonial project in the United States.
They write, “settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave” (p. 1).

Tuck (2013) depicts this triad with a triangle. At the top of the image the words in bold read: “The Settlers/Grabbing the land.” The caption reads: “Settlers live on stolen land and make it their home; Implement their own laws and understandings of the world onto stolen land (not immigrants).” Then, the caption continues, “Make slaves and Indigenous peoples inhuman to get their labor and land; Settlers are not a particular group, are defined by their actions; Settler supremacy as the context for the invention of race.” At the bottom right corner, the bold text reads: “‘Chattel’ Slaves/Bringing in slaves in chains.” The subtext says, “Chattel means property of the owner; Slaves were not allowed to own land; Labored on stolen Indigenous land; Bodies were valuable, but not the person; The person was seen as in excess of the body; The person was ownable, punishable, murderable.” The subtext continues, “Prison industrial complex as extension of chattel slavery, Urban spaces/spaces with high concentration of people of color as sites
of dispossession.” The bottom left text in bold says, “(Eradicating) Indigenous Peoples” and then in smaller print: “Settler colonialism wants Indigenous land, not Indigenous people; Indigenous people are cleared out of the way of colonial progress; Indigenous people are made into savages.” The text is concluding with the following phrase: “Story is that Indigenous people are extinct, disappeared, made into ghosts; Indigenous people are erased from valuable land.” Tuck’s (2013) depiction of the settler-native-slave triad with the image of a triangle highlights the interconnectedness of the relationships. The accompanying text explains how the settler colonial project dehumanized slaves, stole Indigenous lands, and built a racist and capitalist system upon the values attached to bodies as chattel and land as possession.

Decolonization, and the notion of settler-native-slave, are ideas that I will continue to examine in the following chapters as they play significant conceptual roles in, and add important value to, my dissertation study. My continued discussion of the concept of decolonization reflects how my learning about the concept has evolved throughout the process of collecting data and writing this dissertation. Keeping Patel’s (Personal Communication, February 13, 2017) abovementioned comment in mind, to the extent that my use of the term decolonization reflects any incongruity, I assume this possibility as a part of the intellectual process. In the sections that follow, I will engage in a discussion of coloniality in education that reflects my view of postcolonial theory as an encompassing term that accounts for anti-colonial and decolonial frameworks.
Coloniality In Education

Assumptions about the superiority and universality of European culture underpin the colonial project. As European colonizers proceeded with a project of “salvation” through “domination” (Mignolo, 2007), they silenced and colonized non-European ways of knowing from around the world. Although European explorers often explained differences with unfounded suppositions about the inferiority of the Other with little more than ethnocentrism as the basis for their perspectives, the central assumptions of colonial thought continue to shape how we teach about the world and its peoples in the United States.

Scholars have addressed the relationship between colonialism(s) and education by identifying the marginalization of Indigenous academics, epistemologies, and languages (Dei, 2000; Kaomea, 2006; Spivak, 1998; Thiong’o, 1995), eurocentrism and cultural domination in school and society (Anzaldúa, 1987, 2012; Said, 1979; Smith, 2012), and the lack of global perspectives in the curriculum (Banks, 2003; Merryfield & Subedi, 2003; Subedi, 2013; Subedi and Daza, 2008). By exploring what it means to produce knowledge within the context of a global power structure, Said’s (1979) work also suggests that the relationship between colonialism(s) and education is, in part, a question of who controls the production and dissemination of knowledge.

Some studies focus on teachers as gatekeepers of white cultural domination in schools, but Subedi and Daza (2008) explain that concerns about identity and authority are central to postcolonial studies in education insofar as students and teachers of color can be positioned in opposition to school culture and academic discourse. Subedi (2013)
suggests that colonial notions of European and American cultural supremacy are responsible for the marginalization of global perspectives and the people who represent them in the curriculum. When history is taught solely from the perspective of the powerful, the slow killing of alternative viewpoints occurs. Teachers can play a role in perpetuating dominant or colonial views, but the problem is structural.

Looking for evidence of structural coloniality in education led me to consider the narratives about intelligence and ideality that exist in educational research and public discourse. A “deficit discourse,” ideas about the “ideal student” (Campano, 2007), and depictions of dominant school culture support the supposition of Eurocentrism in the U.S. education system. In the subsections that follow, I will expound on these three themes.

The Ideal Student and Deficit Discourse

Campano (2007) describes the “ideal student” as someone with command of the language of instruction, background knowledge about school culture, and a familiarity with school literacy practices. Those who do not meet these standards because of different styles of communication tend to be disproportionately African American and immigrant students (Hymes, 1996 qtd. in Pahl & Roswell, 2005; Campano & Ghiso, 2011). These non-ideal students are viewed in terms of their assumed deficits and not their differences, and they are seen as representative of problems for which teachers must do extra work to move along.

Ideas about the ideal student and a deficit discourse contribute to the particular kinds of knowledge that are valued in schools. Nocon and Cole (2009) offer insight into the background of deficit discourse by writing, “The deficit model has been used by both
conservatives and liberals to explain the apparent inability of children from certain
cultural groups to achieve academically and is code for their lack of motivation, cognitive
following argument to this conversation:

Deficit approaches to teaching and learning, firmly in place prior to and
during the 1960s and 1970s, viewed the languages, literacies, and cultural
ways of being of many students and communities of color as deficiencies
to be overcome in learning the demanded and legitimized dominant
language, literacy, and cultural ways of schooling. (p. 93)

Both quotes suggest that a deficit approach to teaching and learning has existed for
decades and stake holders in education, across the political spectrum, have talked used a
deficit discourse to explain the academic performance of certain cultural groups. Instead
of changing their minds about the youth and learning to see their cultural and literacy
practices as rich and legitimate, these stake holders change words to muddle up the
meaning of their analyses.

Following Paris’ (2012) quote and the notion of the perceived deficiencies in
communities of color, it is interesting to consider the recent legal case Fisher v.
University of Texas, the court case for which Abigail Fisher challenged the University of
Texas at Austin (UT Austin) for their affirmative action policies linked to admissions.
The basis of the argument of Fisher, a white woman, is that race was, but should not have
been, a deciding factor in her being denied admission to the UT Austin (Liptak, 2016).
Underpinning Fishers’ actions is the declaration that she deserves admission; she belongs
at UT Austin and others have taken what is rightfully hers. Supporting her stance against
race as a factor in admissions, Justice Antonin Scalia’s comments of dissention against
the decision in favor of UT Austin, are evidentiary of a deficit perspective that suggests that black students are not deserving of admission. His comments are quoted below:

There are—there are those who contend that it does not benefit African Americans to get them into the University of Texas where they do not do well, as opposed to having them go to a less advanced school, a ... slower track school where they do well,” he said. “I’m just not impressed by the fact that the University of Texas may have fewer. Maybe it ought to have fewer. (Epps, 2015, para. 2)

Couched within the court case and Scalia’s argument are examples of deficit thinking and the narrative of intelligence and ideality that I referenced in chapter one. Similar to the way that postcolonial theories counter colonial thought, deficit narratives are often met with resistance. In response to the court decision, the trending hashtag #staymadabyy enabled many black graduates to respond with images of themselves in graduation caps and gowns, depicting academic achievement and excellence within the black community. This social media response is indicative of the discursive ways people of color acknowledge the deficit perspectives in academia and school culture.

School Culture

Researchers and teachers have long documented how a dominant Eurocentric school culture persists (Banks; 2003; Delpit, 1998; Gay, 2004; Sleeter, 2011). What Banks (2003) describes as school knowledge, Kumashiro (2009) and Apple (1971) call the hidden curriculum, and Street (2003) labels hegemonic literacies; these all relate to a culture of power in schools (Delpit, 1988). Characterized by a dichotomous relationship between the powerholders and those who enact their own power subversively and discursively, school/classroom culture involves ways of being and knowing that reflect the values and views of a dominant culture (Delpit, 1988).
Subedi and Daza (2008) offer a framework for applying postcolonial theory to make meaning about questions of power and inequalities in education. They suggest the critical study of curriculum, inquiries into how diversity and difference are addressed in U.S. education, and a focus on identity and authority in schools and society. Some of the authors’ key questions are: How does education perpetuate colonial notions of culture, difference, and power? How can educators make room for multiple and global perspectives? And, how can teachers and scholars challenge problematic ideas at the intersections of culture, identity, and authority? Even before we have the answers, the questions alone indicate a counterstance to the pervasive deficit discourse.

Many opponents of multicultural and polycentric perspectives in education support standardizing the curriculum with “value-free” content (Sleeter, 2011). Yet, Sleeter and Stillman (2005) argue that the standardization movement is an exercise in power of the dominant group; it is a quest to maintain the status quo in education. Sleeter and Stillman’s study of California’s curriculum shows a bias toward a European American point of view. Thus, what some consider to be value-free content is actually akin to a curriculum of white ethnic studies (Sleeter, 2011).

In the United States, the implicit code of conduct, a hidden curriculum, and a Eurocentric bias marginalize polycentric perspectives and versions of history. Students of color effectively experience culture clashes along class and linguistic lines because the culture of power in schools differs from their home cultures. Immigrants, English language learners, African American students, and students from lower socio-economic statuses struggle with school-sanctioned expectations in part because cultural
misunderstandings are correlated to academic success and performance (Enciso, 2011; Sleeter & Stillman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Despite evidence of coloniality and examples of eurocentric educational culture, there is more to the story: many students and teachers (at every level) strategically engage in discursive ways to accept and reject school rules and expectations. Those who follow, break, and bend school rules, see and experience school as a site of both oppression and emancipation. Ultimately, the scholarship, the curricula, and those who write, design, and teach them, have a role to play in supporting and/or silencing subjugated knowledges.

Rizvia et al., (2006) eloquently articulate this point when they write:

Postcolonialism’s contentions surrounding the relationship between knowledge and power are linked directly to education, both as an institution where people are inculcated into hegemonic systems of reasoning and as a site where it is possible to resist dominant discursive practices. In this way, education has a systematically ambivalent relation to postcolonialism. On the one hand, it is an object of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism’s continuing hold on our imagination. (p. 257)

This quote highlights that within the relationship between knowledge and power, systems of reasoning are central to resistance. Anzaldúa (1987, 2012) suggests that cultural extinction can occur if difference is ignored, and if diverse histories and perspectives remain absent from textbooks and teaching materials. However, Anzaldúa further argues that people with hybrid/mestizaje identities must honor and teach their own histories. If the textbooks and the teachers are not well informed enough to convey the cultural (and spiritual) ways of knowing of people of color, the people themselves have a role to play
in teaching children and young adults. Through dialogue, people from underrepresented communities can contribute to cross-cultural awareness among teachers and students.

In response to the relationship between the legacy of colonialism and educational inequalities, scholars (Subedi and Daza, 2008) continue to articulate non-dominant epistemological frameworks and educators continue to work towards decentering the West with decolonized pedagogies and critiques of coloniality. In the pages that follow, I will address how black women educators (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2001, 2009; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Roberts, 2010; hooks, 1990, 1994, 2009) respond to and resist coloniality in education. Their actions indicate an agreement with Anzaldúa’s (1987, 2012) argument about education as a paradoxical space between oppression and emancipation. Black women have been and continue to be at the forefront of the resistance against coloniality.

**Limitations of Postcolonial Theory or Postcolonial Theory as only one point of departure**

Critics of postcolonial theory (Rizvia et al., 2006; Angod, 2006) argue that the emphasis on colonization reaffirms its dominance and the framework is not critical enough to account for the ways in which coloniality perpetuates (Rizvia et al., 2006). Angod (2006) criticizes postcolonial theory for requiring the counter-discourse to be performed in ways that are welcome in the academy, and addressing, inadequately, the politics of “race, class, and nation” (p. 164). Angod quotes Gandhi (1998, qtd. in Angod, 2006), who writes, “The language of race, class and nation is commuted into a universal crisis of ‘identity’ that makes these vexed issues more palatable within the academy” (p.
Thus, from this perspective, post-colonialism would not be a radicalization of postmodernism or Marxism, but a domestication of anti-colonialism and anti-racism” (p. 164).

Taking these observations to heart, I reconcile Angod’s (2006) critiques, at least in part, by presenting postcolonialism as a system of thought that includes anti-colonialism. Yet, in order to employ a theoretical frame that adequately attends to unsettling discussions of race, gender, class, and the notion of “nation,” it is necessary to supplement postcolonial theory with a framework that prioritizes intersectionality over identity (as an ambiguous term). Black feminist theoretical frameworks provide an additional point of departure for thinking through the pervasive, entrenched coloniality that continues to shape our education system and everyone who is implicated therein.

**Black Feminist Frameworks for Epistemological Intersectionality**

Intricately included in the colonial project are theories about the incivility of black men (Fanon, 2008), and while the Negritude movement made much progress in the realm of theorizing blackness, postcolonial critiques of dominant racist narratives have historically left something to be desired in terms of comprehensively addressing how colonial power dynamics impact black women. Black feminist frameworks provide a theoretical point of departure for intersectional critiques of coloniality. Employing these frameworks facilitates an analysis wherein race, gender, class, sexuality, and any number of identity markers are relevant for making meaning of diverse lived experiences, stories, and ways of knowing.
In subsequent chapters, I will identify the three focal research participants who help to answer the key questions of this dissertation research study. Each of these focal participants are women, and two of the three are considered women of color within popular racial and ethnic categorizations in the United States. While I do not intend to imply that a black feminist framework is the only appropriate lens for understanding their lives and experiences, I do contend that it is a lens that facilitates the interrogation of lived experiences and knowledges at the intersections of gender, racial, and ethnic identities. Strong enough to stand alone, black feminist frameworks, for the purposes of this study, are rendered even more effective when coupled with postcolonial theory, which affords additional lenses for understanding interconnected global structures of power.

Each of the scholars identified in this discussion of black feminist theories (Collins, 1991; Cooper, 2015; Crenshaw, 1993; Dillard, 2006; hooks, 1990, 1994, 2009; Nash, 2013; Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, and Howard, 2016; Phillips, 2006; Walker, 2004, 2006) recognize the central role of race and gender in shaping ways of knowing in a Eurocentric and male-dominated context. In part, the ability to take these multiple identity markers to task comes from the intersectionality inherent in a black feminist analysis. In her advocacy for intersectional perspectives, Crenshaw (1993) critiques feminist and antiracist frameworks for not paying more explicit attention to the experiences of people of color. She writes:

The failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of
women. These mutual elisions present a particularly difficult political dilemma for women of color. Adopting either analysis constitutes a denial of a fundamental dimension of our subordination and precludes the development of a political discourse that more fully empowers women of color. (p. 1252)

Thus, as Crenshaw suggests, where antiracist, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives (within the scope of this study) fall short of offering comprehensive critiques of oppressions at the cross-sections of sexuality, gender, ability, class, geography, and race—black feminist frameworks persist.

Like decolonization, the term intersectionality has been taken up, widely applied (sometimes problematically), and critiqued (Cooper, 2015) in the decades since Crenshaw penned the above-referenced article and others on the topic. While Nash (2013) calls for a move beyond intersectionality altogether, arguing that black feminism has erroneously become synonymous with intersectionality in a way that limits theorizing about and recognizing black women’s lives and political contributions, Cooper (2015) reservedly cautions against reducing black feminism to its theoretical contributions on intersectionality. She writes:

Treating Black feminism as primarily an anti-racist intervention within feminism continues to render it as a disruptive and temporary event...We must resist this framing because it leaves Black feminism in its own suspended state of interruptus wherein our sole contribution to feminist discourse is reduced to the theorization of intersectionality. (p. 16)

With Cooper’s (2015) and Nash’s (2013) critiques in mind, I still find intersectionality useful for analyzing and understanding the stories of women of color. My stance is grounded in the idea that intersectionality is a concept that predates Crenshaw’s (1993) discussion of it in the academy (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Instead, as Collins and Bilge
(2016) suggest, “multiple narratives of intersectionality” have been central to the social and political expressions of women of color since the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, as a counterexample to the idea that intersectionality is indigenous to black women, Collins and Bilge (2016) suggest that the inclusive framework has been authored by women of color across contexts. They write:

Given the historical discrimination against women of African descent, it is tempting to grant African-American women ownership over the seeming discovery of the then unnamed intersectionality. However, as stated earlier, in the United States, African-American women were part of heterogeneous alliances with Chicanas and Latinas, Native American women, and Asian-American women. Though their experiences and the social movements they engendered took different forms, these groups were also at the forefront of raising claims about the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, and sexuality in their everyday life experiences. (p. 71)

With an acknowledgment of the multicultural origins of the multiple narratives of intersectionality offered by the quote above, I return to my suggestion (made in the second paragraph of this section) that black feminist frameworks provide an appropriate lens for interrogating the lived experiences and knowledges of a diverse cross-section of women, like the focal participants in this study. In the context of a dissertation focused on the stories of educators and their transcultural teaching practices, I will continue to examine black feminist frameworks for their unique contributions, inclusive ideologies, and relevancy to issues of belonging, becoming, and working with immigrant and refugee youth.

**Black Feminist Frameworks**

In the article, “Love No Limit: Towards a Black Feminist Future (In Theory),” Cooper (2015) begins with the following quote: “I have decided to start with the past in
this inquiry because it is not at all clear to me that Black feminism has a future” (p. 7). I share Cooper’s concern that part of what puts the future of black feminism at risk is the indefatigable devaluation of the intellectual work of black women scholars within the academy. Cooper argues that black feminism has been diminished (both by outsiders who question the value of ethnic studies and insiders who have moved into the realm of social critiques without tending to very real roots of the theories), leaving black feminist theoreticians with a lot of work to do to establish what black feminism means and what it has offered.

Taking up Cooper’s (2015) call to action with a slightly more optimistic view of the future of black feminist theory, I find it important to discuss the history of black feminist theory in order to construct its future. It is my contention that this dissertation could not exist without black feminist frameworks. Firstly, these frameworks represent the body of knowledge upon which I stand and lend credibility to me and my work as a black woman academic. Secondly, in a dissertation framed partly by theories of decolonization, it is important to acknowledge the contributions of black women scholars to the intellectual work of Indigenous women scholars, like Linda Tuhiwai Smith. After citing Patricia Hill Collins and crediting black women for their contributions in shaping her work, Smith (2012) says: “The writings of African American women in particular have been useful for Maori women in legitimating, with literature, what Maori women have experienced” (p. 170). As such, black women and black feminist theories, in conversation and community with a larger intellectual, social, and political discourse with
other women of color have been involved (directly and indirectly) in shaping concepts that challenge colonial discourse.

In the sections that follow, I will discuss the foundational ideas and basic assumptions of black feminist frameworks before engaging in a discussion about the practical application of and potential future for black feminist frameworks in the field of education. I use “Black Feminist Frameworks” as an overarching label for black feminism, womanism, and an endarkened feminist epistemology. Each of these three frameworks acknowledge a global culture of gender oppression, the ‘legacy of struggle’ (Collins, 1991) that is core to the experiences of black women and girls, and a common drive toward self-determination, self-expression, and space for spiritual ways of knowing (Walker, 2004, 2006; Dillard, 2006). Collins (1991, 2006) and hooks (1990, 1994, 2009) focus on feminism and the impact of structures of oppression on the individual and collective whole, whereas Walker (2004, 2006) and Phillips (2006) write about womanism and how to dismantle oppression with interpersonal interactions. Additionally, Dillard (2006) and Dillard and Bell (2011) make space for spirituality in the epistemological work and research of black women scholars.

**Black Feminism.** Scholars like Patricia Hill Collins (1991, 2006) and bell hooks (1990, 1994, 2009) have developed theories centered on racial identity in order to articulate the “authentic” experiences of racialized peoples. Within a black feminist framework, experiential knowledge contributes to theoretical assumptions because experiences are epistemologies. Black feminist thought provides a platform for interrogating global forms of oppression against women that occur at the intersections of
sexuality, race, class, and gender (Collins, 2006). In her description of the dangers that black women and girls face in our homes, (impoverished) neighborhoods, and places of work, Collins (1991) suggests that the white male dominated workplace is analogous to society-at-large because patriarchy affects African American women even in the private places where we should feel a sense of ownership or belonging. Patterson, Kinloch, Burkhard, Randall, and Howard (2016) expand upon the notion of black feminist thought (BFT) by highlighting a stance of opposition and a focus on embodied ways of knowing:

…BFT is a necessarily oppositional stance to the features of mainstream society that keep oppressive power dynamics in place and render black women systematically inferior. BFT provides a self-defined lens through which black women can be seen and our experiences understood. According to BFT scholars, black women’s knowledge is acquired through our various experiences living, surviving, and thriving within multiple forms of oppression. It is a self-defined, embodied way of knowing. In other words, black women’s subjective knowledges represent a standpoint epistemology. (pp. 57-58)

In the quote above, Patterson et. al (2016) did not define black feminist thought in relation to white feminism. However, black feminism disrupts the notion of whiteness as the norm with regards to women’s oppression. Black feminism, as part of a political movement for women’s rights, is different from white feminism in that it is concerned with racial politics as an element of gender (in)justice. hooks (2009) links the common struggle of black women to the history of an “imperialist white supremacist capitalist culture” (p. 44)—a culture defined by the separation of the center and margins of society. Insofar as the divide occurs across racial lines, a black woman must knowingly maintain the separation in order to survive. She must also resist, because according to hooks (1990), we cannot occupy the center and dismantle oppression. Rather, when we take
dominant discourse and apply local ways of knowing (often rooted in spiritual values), we gain the double consciousness of seeing the world from the perspective of those who occupy the center and those who occupy the margins. From the margins, we have the power to enact counter-hegemonic discourse and work towards change.

**Womanism.** Working toward change is arguably what led to womanism. Alice Walker, the foundational thinker of womanism, introduced the term “womanist” in 1981 when she found existing language and its corresponding labels to be insufficient to describe the loving relationships among black women (Young, 2012). With the concept of womanism, Walker sought to incorporate more inclusivity in understandings of womanhood, particularly where mainstream feminism or white feminism fell short. Young writes:

> Walker found dissatisfaction in the narrow and exclusive stance of the feminist movement of the 1970s—a social movement that had as its major objective the abolishment of the sexual, political, and economic oppression of women, a movement that tended to subsume the intricate realities of non-Anglo women within it, thus rendering them invisible. This led her to search for a more inclusive ideology. (pp. 142-143)

In addition to the inclusivity of womanism, which is exemplified in its emphasis on welcoming global perspectives of women of color and building upon principles of social justice and love, Phillips (2006) further describes womanism as uniquely anti-oppressionist, vernacular, non-ideological, communitarian, and spiritualized.

Regarding the vernacular and quotidian, within this framework there is also an emphasis on dialogue attached to place: the kitchen table. In this informal setting (associated with food and fellowship), the tasks of caring and mothering, offering hospitality, nurturing, listening, and confronting everyday oppressions can occur. Artist
Carrie Mae Weems captures the concept of the kitchen table as a womanist space in a collection from the early nineties entitled *The Kitchen Table Series* (Stephens, 2016). Insofar as womanist frameworks discuss the importance of the kitchen table as an informal setting for dialogue, it is important to note the ways in which certain community settings provided a backdrop for my conversations with the research participants. Each of the group interviews took place in a community setting over food or drinks. Creating an ambiance of informality within a womanist framework set the stage for inwardly focused and simultaneously community-oriented, community-building dialogue.

**Endarkened Feminist Epistemology.** Dillard's (2006) endarkened feminist epistemology offers a framework for focusing inwardly on black consciousness and black community while honoring the works of people with diverse ways of knowing. Dillard credits Patricia Hill Collins, Sandra Harding, and Parker Palmer for the ways in which their contributions to black feminist thought, feminist psychology, and spirituality in education have shaped her epistemological identity. In recognizing how race, class, and gender are connected to an identity associated with the spirit, Dillard (2006) makes a case for spirituality as a transformative element in academia and educational research. Dillard & Bell (2011) write: “At the core of Black feminism (Collins, 2000; Steady, 1981) and endarkened feminism (Dillard, 2006) is the recognition of the expertise that Black women acquire through our lived experiences and specific to our lived conditions.” (p. 345). Indeed, part of what an endarkened feminist epistemology seeks to do is to connect the expert (scholar) to the spirit.
Black feminist frameworks provide a platform for plurality by prioritizing individual experiences as the basis of a shared epistemology. While the embodied/lived experiences of black women may be similar, each individual understanding of those experiences is as unique as the people themselves. The importance of a black woman’s epistemology, however, is in the recognition that individual experiences constitute patterns of struggle that shed light on what it means to be a black woman in the world. Black feminism, womanism, and an endarkened feminist epistemology are frameworks that seek to increase the visibility of diverse ways of knowing within a defined but diasporic cultural community. Black feminism provides a platform for interrogating global forms of oppression against women (Collins, 2006), womanism emphasizes an inclusive link between the perspectives of black women and women of color worldwide (Phillips, 2006), and the centrality of spirituality in an endarkened feminist epistemology connects it to African and Indigenous spiritual ways of knowing. Resistance to coloniality manifests itself in these black feminist frameworks by providing a platform for plurality within a common epistemology.

Writing about her years as a university student in Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom, hooks (1994) recalls, “At that time, I found, white women professors were not eager to nurture any interest in feminist thinking and scholarship on the part of black female students if that interest included critical challenge” (p. 6). Becoming an educator allowed hooks to reclaim the power of the classroom as a space for critical thinking. Part of her transgressive pedagogy entails building and working with a community of likeminded teachers. Her work begs the
question: What would happen if the academy became a place that no longer sought to or succeeded in silencing the critical thinking of women and girls of color?

Black Feminism and Education: The Concept of Critical Care

While there are many entry points for a discussion about the legacy of colonialism in education and the ways in which black women educators respond and resist, many profound ideas such as taking political risks with and for our students, making space for spirituality in our work as educators, and loving our students, are found in the literature related to countering coloniality with critical care. An ethic of care has long been central to pedagogies of successful black teachers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Roberts, 2010), harkening back to the days when caring and community-oriented teachers ensured high-quality education during segregation (Irvine & Irvine, 1983; Moss, 2009; Walker, 1996). Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) presents a caring pedagogy, built on principles of womanism, which includes embracing a maternal role, enacting “political clarity” (or teaching students about the politics of injustice), and assuming the risks of teaching for justice. This model of caring also emphasizes a commitment to the community.

In learning contexts with students of color, enacting a political clarity—or teaching them about and preparing them for the inequalities that exist in the world—is part of a caring approach. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) argues that black teachers working in their own community care critically because there is a collective commitment to progress as a people. Unlike notions of caring linked to white feminism, critical caring with womanist underpinnings accounts for institutionalized racism, and structural inequalities that cannot be challenged on an individual level. The institutionalized racism
and structural inequalities that exist are manifest in deficit discourse about students of color. Part of practicing critical caring involves recognizing the races, cultures, and classes of students without making assumptions about their home lives or circumstances.

Affirming and cultivating the talent and potential of every student, while expecting academic excellence, is key to critical caring. Nieto’s (2012) critical caring framework commits teachers to knowing children and their communities on a personal and political level by becoming active participants in their lives beyond the schoolhouse. Nieto (2008) argues that it is important to see each student as both an individual and as a member of a cultural and/or racial community. Then, instead of making concessions about students’ academic performance because of a larger deficit-oriented discourse that oftentimes circulates about who students are and what they can and cannot do, teachers can hold students of color to the highest standards of excellence with an understanding of their unique hardships, or lived conditions (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Nieto, 2008). Coming to know students in these ways is preparation for teaching a culturally relevant or culturally sustaining curriculum. How can we teach our students critical truths about the world if we do not understand the worlds from which they come?

The black women teachers that Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2002) works with may practice critical caring in their communities without crediting postcolonial philosophers for their pedagogical approaches, but they attack racial bias, oppressive relationships, and the gender stereotypes that are characteristic of coloniality. Even when it is not articulated as such, critical educators and proponents of decolonized pedagogies recognize education as a vehicle for emancipation from the chains of colonization.
Limitations of Black Feminist Frameworks

One of many things that black feminist frameworks add to the discourse of feminism is the notion that feminist thought must account for the experiences of women of color. While the concept of intersectionality makes room for multiple perspectives, and womanism conceives of itself as inclusive, even when the ideas are dissimilar or conflicting, there is space within black feminist thought to include a wider range of experiences and perspectives.

First, in “Sisters and Brothers: Black Feminists of Womanism,” Collins (2006) describes black feminism in more political terms than womanism. She discusses a global feminist agenda concerned with women’s rights and laws about voting, family and marriage issues. Black feminism, as part of a political movement for women’s rights, is different from white feminism in that it is concerned with racial politics as an element of gender (in)justice. Black feminism also disrupts the notion of whiteness as the norm with regards to women’s oppression. Collins questions certain claims about womanism, wondering if Walker’s work has contributed to a dynamic of separation and ethnocentric superiority. She argues that feminism has been perceived as a white woman’s philosophy particularly among black nationalists and that black nationalist women lean toward womanism in order focus on gender equality while rejecting white feminism. Collins concedes that womanism allows for collective action among black women and men, while feminism runs the risk of marginalizing male counterparts. However, Collins argues that both womanism and black feminism do not adequately attend to sexuality and homophobia. Furthermore, Collins questions if the African American intelligentsia are
attending to the issues of the masses. What good are elusive academic terminologies when the goal should be to establish a sense of solidarity and a shared epistemological standpoint for black women?

Finally, in an attempt to explore ideas at the intersections of feminism and postcolonial theory, it is necessary to honor the contributions of Native feminist theories to the discourse on decolonization. Native feminist theories highlight the unique concerns within Native communities that are not comprehensively addressed within existing feminist frameworks (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013), including black feminism. The authors write:

While Indigenous peoples do form important alliances with people of color, Indigenous communities’ concerns are often not about achieving formal equality or civil rights within a nation-state, but instead achieving substantial independence from a Western nation-state—Independence decided on their own terms. The feminist concerns of white women, women of color, and Indigenous women thus often differ and conflict with one another. (p. 10)

While I do not center Native feminist theories in my theoretical framework, I welcome it as another point of departure for thinking beyond existing frames of reference. Additionally, black feminist frameworks that express a commitment to multiple perspectives must remain open to the contributions of African feminist theories, Third World feminisms, and Native feminist theories, particularly for the ways in which these frameworks help clarify the colonial project on a global scale.

**Chapter Conclusion**

Within postcolonial theory and black feminist frameworks is space for multiple perspectives. These theoretical frames give us the lenses for looking into power, culture,
belonging, and the coloniality that impacts teachers and students with diverse linguistic
and cultural backgrounds. As some of the scholars (Andreotti, 2011; Smith, 2012; Subedi
& Daza, 2008) referenced in this chapter suggest, postcolonial theory provides a platform
for critiquing the legacy of colonialism in education, and working toward making room
for multiple ways of knowing and diverse ways of being in school and society. This
theoretical framework, coupled with black feminist theory, lay the groundwork for
thinking about how academics, activists, and educational practitioners are doing the work
of creating new research methodologies, and teaching and learning approaches not rooted
in coloniality. Similar to the concepts of the “ideal immigrant” (Delgadillo, 2011) and
“ideal student” (Campano, 2007) referenced in chapter one, the narratives of intelligence
and ideality in education are wrought with coloniality, but collecting and sharing the
stories of immigrant educators and other educators working with immigrant and refugee
youth is but one way to contradict the problematic discourse of coloniality that shapes
educational spaces today. In the two subsequent chapters, I will discuss the research
methodologies, teaching and learning approaches, and stories from the collected data of
educators who are intentionally critiquing and resisting coloniality with critical care and
through the production of (counter)narratives.
Chapter 3: “Not very many people would care about an opinion coming from a refugee”: Decolonized Methodologies, Relationship Building, and Reciprocity in Educational Research

I attended the staff meeting at ORG today. Toward the end of the meeting, I was invited to stand at the front of the conference room to introduce myself, my dissertation research topic, and ask for participants. I read the following official script:

I am Brooke Harris Garad, a PhD Candidate from [University]. I am a volunteer tutor at this organization, as well as a volunteer member of the curriculum design team at the main office. While volunteering, I witnessed the emphasis on language and culture, and became interested in the personal and professional background of educators at ORG. All adults associated with ETSS (volunteers, tutors, site coordinators, office staff, and others) are eligible to participate in this research study.

Some of the questions that will be explored in the research study include the following: What do you know about working with immigrant and refugee youth? How does your schooling experience compare to the experiences of the students you teach? What do you think schools and classroom teachers in US public schools could learn from you about working with immigrant and refugee youth? Specific goals of the study are to explore the previously stated questions, and produce knowledge about the research topic identified above.

After I spoke, the staff was receptive and encouraging. It reminded me of the day I met with Dr. T [a pseudonym], the Executive Director of ORG, to ask for his blessing to conduct the research. We met in the conference room along with Gabriel [a pseudonym], the Youth Programs Director, who had arranged the meeting for us. We had a very professional meeting where I explained my key research questions and expressed my admiration of the work, educators, and youth at ORG. Dr. T expressed his approval for
the research and confirmed that I was taking up questions that are important to immigrant communities. Toward the end, I told Dr. T and Gabriel a bit about what brings me to the work: in addition to being a doctoral student and educator concerned with improving the educational strategies for kids of multicultural and multilingual backgrounds, I am married to an immigrant educator from Djibouti. I told them that we have a child, and another on the way, who we are raising to be multilingual and culturally connected to both parents’ cultures. [We speak French and English at home, and my spouse speaks Afar and Somali too. He comes from a predominantly Muslim country on the Horn of Africa]. In other words, I do this work for me, my family, and our larger community too. Dr. T looked at me and shifted in his seat. The air in the room started to feel more familiar and I could not decide if I had just gained credibility or lost it in his eyes. Either way, I knew that I had moved along the insider-outsider continuum [(Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000)]. After the meeting, Dr. T invited me to join a few of the staff that were congregating in the space behind the front entrance. I was offered coffee, popcorn, and a spicy injera. As we sat around and shared pictures and stories of our children, I felt a sense of belonging and contentment. [Field Notes 1/8/16].

Introduction

In this chapter, I will describe in detail the methodological approach that underpins my dissertation, including a discussion of the paradigmatic and epistemological lenses that frame this dissertation research study. I will address the influence of humanizing frameworks and decolonized methodologies on contemporary educational research practices and the methodology-informed decisions I made during the
process of data collection and analysis. Also, I will attend to salient issues in educational research, including questions of ethics, trust, and friendship in the research process. In addition to the tasks identified above, describing the research site and context, introducing readers to the focal participants of the study, and outlining the data collection and analysis procedures enable me to use this third chapter to highlight how the very specific terms, “responsible,” “reciprocal,” and “relevant” shaped my research from conception to completion. Lastly, in this chapter as I engage in a discussion of the importance of humanizing research practices, I acknowledge the colonizing history of the qualitative ethnographic methods upon which I rely for this dissertation, and address how I am trapped within this colonizing history while simultaneously working against it. The use of humanizing practices for collecting and analyzing the stories of the research participants becomes increasingly relevant when contextualized within a discussion about the continual impact of the perpetuation of coloniality in education and educational research.

**Research as Responsible, Reciprocal & Relevant**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) asks researchers to consider the risks associated with conducting studies with human subjects. Age, ability, and identity are factors to consider when determining whether a population is deemed particularly vulnerable. Yet researchers who focus on documenting and understanding the human experience know that vulnerability and responsibility go hand in hand. As evidenced by some of the scholars in this chapter (Green, 2014; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; Patterson et. al, 2016) contemporary educational researchers are engaged in the challenge of
determining ethical ways to work within the constraints of the IRB while also critically attending to the valuable insights only research with human subjects can provide.

Although it seems inconceivable today to write about a population without involving and consulting that population, social scientists and explorers did just that for much of the 19th Century (Said, 1979). Within this problematic research model, subjects of study were the means to non-symbiotic ends, observed from a distance by researchers concerned with objectivity and scientificity. Debates about power dynamics between the observer and the observed and discussions about the possibility of collaborative knowledge production were not reflected in their approach to research. Nonetheless, these historical endeavors in social science research set the precedent for canonized understandings of how to conduct research on/with/about human beings and they continue to shape many contemporary research practices.

Decades after the Tuskegee syphilis study (Thomas & Quinn, 2000), while conversations continue about the rights of Henrietta Lacks and her family (Griffin, 2012; Skloot, 2010; Shah, 2010), critical researchers are engaged in seriously considering the impacts and long-lasting effects of research—medical and otherwise. In the former example, researchers intentionally obscured information from 600 black men (400 with syphilis and 200 without the infection/disease) involved in a study about the effects of untreated syphilis (Thomas & Quinn, 2000). Despite the increasingly common use of penicillin as a treatment, the deaths of men who were involved in the study but denied care, and widespread condemnation of research crimes committed by Nazi doctors, the U.S. Public Health Service continued to conduct the study and keep it a secret for 40
years (Thomas & Quinn, 2000). From the latter example, questions have emerged about the ethics of utilizing and compensating the impoverished family of the late Henrietta Lacks, the young black woman whose HeLa cells have been instrumental in finding cures for polio, leukemia, influenza, and other diseases (Skloot, 2010; Shah, 2010). Moreover, in her discussion of Skloot’s (2010) *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, Shah (2010) reviews what this historical example of research ethics at the intersections of race, class, and power meant and continues to mean:

*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, is no romantic celebration of the medical revolution HeLa cells unleashed. It’s a richly observed portrait of Lacks and her descendants, the conflict between scientific culture and that of impoverished, rural African–Americans, and the potent dangers of ethical violations in medical research. (Shah, 2010, p. 1154)

This historical example of the story of Henrietta Lacks shows how controversies in research explain, in large in part, why marginalized communities and vulnerable populations are so skeptical of research today (Smith, 2012; Thomas & Quinn, 2000; Shah, 2010). Insofar as social science research has been shaped by the missteps of many of our academic predecessors, we have learned that research should not be a zero-sum game wherein academics assume positions of power to postulate, publish, and profit from questionable interactions with O/others. Rather, sound research should attend to issues of reciprocity, relationship building, and responsible interactions with research participants (Dillard, 2006; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017). Instead of methodologies that maintain a unidirectional dynamic of vulnerability, contemporary researchers (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014) wonder and write about researcher vulnerability. When both parties (researcher and research participant) are invested and
essential to projects of inquiry, then each party is susceptible to risk and stands to benefit from the process and potential results.

Decolonized Methodologies (Patel, 2016; Smith, 2012; Tuck, 2009) and Humanizing Research (see Bartolome, 1994; Paris & Winn, 2014) provide critical insight into issues related to engaging in contemporary research. More than ideals, these methodological frameworks provide theoretical and practical strategies for collaborative knowledge production and the collective ownership of knowledge. As we move away from research processes that marginalize, silence, and disempower many people, more examples emerge that demonstrate how maintaining the status quo in educational research will not enable us as social scientists to sufficiently examine the realities and understand the stories of contemporary people of color with transcultural ways of being and knowing.

**Decolonized Methodologies**

The impact of colonization on education around the world has been the topic of much debate and discussion for several decades, but scholars like Linda Tuhawai Smith, Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln, Eve Tuck, and Leigh Patel, among others, have been influential in shaping the ways we think about the impact of colonization on both qualitative methodologies and educational research. These scholars show how Western thought has undermined and upended Indigenous ways of knowing by infiltrating the social systems and educational institutions in (former) colonies. Western ways of thinking have also shaped the ways we have come to know what we know, through research. The questions we ask, the language we use to describe what we see, the notions
that knowledge can be owned or lands, peoples, or things can be discovered; these ideas exist within the limitations of settler colonial constructions (Patel, 2106).

Decolonized methodologies call for culturally sustaining and ethical strategies in research. Everything within the research design, from negotiating entry (which should involve a consultation with the elders or community leaders), to exiting the site (which should be preceded by making a meaningful contribution to the community) should be mutually beneficial, relevant to, and respectful of the cultural views and values of the research community. Ethical research within a decolonizing framework goes above and beyond the stipulations of minimal risk outlined by the IRB and moves into the territory of making a consequential community-oriented contribution.

Smith (2012) reminds researchers to consider the socio-historical context of a research site, noting how previous experiences with researchers may have been exploitative. As a Maori researcher working in her own community, Smith wrestles with the value of Western research practices and articulates an indigenous research agenda. This agenda centers survival, recovery, development, and self-determination as goals to be sought through decolonization, transformation, mobilization, and healing (p. 121). To meet these research and community goals, Smith engages in her cultural community as both an insider and an outsider. Doing so allows her to remain intimately connected to the community and to conduct ethical, non-exploitative research within a familiar space in ways that position her as insider and outsider.

To understand an academic approach to research and apply elements of it to one’s home (non-academic) context is to struggle with the shifting positions of insider-outsider
Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) describe insider-outsider research as metaphorically changing hats in different contexts. Researchers can be “regular” members of a community one minute; they belong and they are welcome. Yet, the minute they attempt the academic gaze of a “serious” scholar, they engage with outsiders.

When researchers find themselves feeling like outsiders when doing research inside their own communities, (Mutua & Swadener, 2004) it is often because they are struggling with requests for rigor from the academic research community and dealing with demands for research that is relevant to their cultural community.

Despite efforts to do responsible and relevant research, no insular or entirely decolonized methodologies exist. No paradigm is innocent or perfect for the research process. Even critical indigenous and scholars of color who engage in academic research within their own communities do so within the socio-historical constructs of academia and resultantly run the risk of telling stories in ways that document the damage of a people or community. While the original goal of this approach might have been to identify the problems in order to work toward solutions, Tuck (2009) warns against repeating the mistakes of Western research with ‘damage-centered research’ that contributes to depictions of Native people and people of color as not fully human, healed, or whole. The damage-centered research about which Tuck and Yang (2014) write sheds light on the issues associated with collecting and retelling stories in problematic ways and for problematic reasons. They write, “Academe’s demonstrated fascination with telling and retelling narratives of pain is troubling, both for its voyeurism and for its
consumptive implacability” (p. 227). Furthermore, hooks (1990, qtd. Tuck & Yang, 2014) makes the point with piercing clarity:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer the speaking subject and you are now at the center of my talk. (p. 343)

As these quotes suggest, there is a dynamic of power with the academy that prioritizes pain as a captivating topic of study. Additionally, there is a dynamic of power that allows a researcher to observe and write about a research “subject” without truly hearing and honoring his/her/their version of their own story. Thankfully, as both hooks’ (1990; 1994; 2009) body of work and this dissertation chapter suggest, those of us researchers who are concerned with decolonizing methodologies are increasingly using our voices to tell our own stories. For many communities with a negative historical relationship with Western philosophical, educational, social, and even behavioral forms of research, a critical inquiry into the past and the telling and retelling of our own stories is part of a healing process (Dillard, 2006; hooks, 2009; Smith, 2012) to deal with damaged-centered research.

Tuck (2009) and Tuck and Yang (2014) put forth “desire-based” frameworks in place of “pain-centered narratives,” for understanding the complexities of the human experience. Part of this approach sometimes involves a refusal to collect and tell certain stories, or a refusal to share stories that might bring shame each time they are retold.
Refusal in research also recognizes that some stories are sacred and not all knowledge is meant for academic consumption.

Part of employing the principles of decolonized methodologies is having the following: (1) An awareness of the dirty past of research in postcolonial places; and 2) A consciousness of the dysfunctionality of research in current settler colonial contexts (Patel, 2016). Patel’s work addresses educational research in relation to/with ‘racist capitalist settler societies’ (p. 61). The idea that resources are scarce and not available for all, and the trend toward privatization of community-controlled spaces, like public education, are some of the many factors that contribute to the concept of conducting educational research in a settler colonial context.

In the situated socio-historical settler colonial context within which many people currently conduct educational research, a focus on human relationships in research is arguably paramount to upending problematic research practices. Researchers (Patel, 2016; San Pedro & Kinloch, 2017) committed to decolonizing methodologies recognize that knowledge is not about ownership and research relationships are not inherently oppressive. Humanizing Research, a methodological framework similarly concerned with decolonizing the research processes, focuses on the conceptualization and realization of research centered on experiences and interactions that humanize researchers, research participants, and communities.

**Humanizing Research**

Defining humanizing research by what it is *not* may be just as elucidating as describing what it is. Practicing humanizing research is not: being closed to the idea of
friendships because some say it is unethical; avoiding political research because it is risky; and failing to care for someone because it is inconvenient. Humanizing research is a framework that challenges scholars to listen, engage, and act with other people in mind, which includes their lives, literacies, and community knowledges.

Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) discuss listening as a key component of humanizing research. Listening is one dimension of dialogic engagement that requires researchers to use contextual knowledge about a speaker in order to understand his/her/their utterances. Paying attention to social, cultural, and nonverbal context clues and cues, while listening, helps researchers keep their own preconceived ideas in check. When we listen intently and move closer to fully understanding one another, we are more likely to respond genuinely and with empathy. This helps develop trust among speakers. Kinloch and San Pedro’s methodological approach highlights the space between listening, “storying,” and authoring. Within those spaces, there are opportunities to construct fluid identities that are positioned in relation to those with whom we exchange stories. This positioning allows our identities to be informed by how others see us, but it also encourages us to recognize that the stories we tell are embedded in the dynamics of how we are being positioned and how we wish to be positioned. This is dynamic. This is dialogic engagement. Thus, listening situates us as researchers, advocates, and human beings who work with and because of others.

Listening can also be a transformative act, particularly when working with vulnerable communities that frequently feel misunderstood and/or neglected. Researchers are often removed from the situations that the research participants face, so listening
means feeling and relying on emotional ways of knowing (Strong, Duarte, Gomez, and Meiners, 2014) to engage with empathy. For example, the undocumented youth with whom Strong et. al (2014) work face discrimination and the dangers associated with deportation. For many undocumented individuals, varying levels of fear and depression characterize the experience of being undocumented. Reflecting on the emotions involved in working with undocumented youth, Strong et. al write, “We were depressed thinking about how little we could offer. Sometimes our engagements triggered memories of our own immigration experiences of separation, anxiety, fear, and loss” (p. 5). Of course, the work also involved hope and feelings of exhilaration and motivation, but they questioned if they were “too close to the work” (p. 5).

The LGBTQ youth about whom Blackburn (2014) writes face threats of harm, homelessness, homophobia and transphobia. Reflecting on having already gone through a long process of coming out and being in a position to support herself financially, Blackburn no longer faces the same pressures to conform as some of the LGBTQ youth with whom she works. However, her knowledge of the dehumanization associated with implicit and explicit pressures to hide as well as the threat of physical assault and verbal abuse, motivate her to engage in humanizing research that demonstrates how the state of dehumanization can be temporary.

In my work with educators working with immigrant and refugee youth, I was acutely aware of instances where I might be asking them to share a more painfully personal story than I myself could share. I did not seek out stories from the refugee camps or memories of those first painful months in the United States. I focused on their
work and allowed the stories to emerge at their discretion. Although listening to the interviewees was a genuine gesture of respect (not necessarily a nod to my training in qualitative methods), I knew I had gotten it at least partially right when one of the focal participants gave me a handwritten card and thanked me for being a good listener. [Field notes 7/716].

Sometimes researchers break the “rules” of scientific research to engage on a personal level. Relationships of reciprocity are central to humanizing research and reciprocity sometimes means valuing the relationship over the research. It also involves being vulnerable and willing to participate in each aspect of the research process with the participants. As a U.S.-born individual with no personal history of being displaced, living in a refugee camp, or immigrating, I made a concerted effort to share parts of my life that might highlight my vulnerability and sense of solidarity. For example, I my reflections about interacting with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) during the immigration process of my spouse, the struggles we have faced during his underemployment, and our concerns and fears about educating our emergent multilingual and second generation immigrant children of color.

As a qualitative educational researcher, I recognize the critical importance of wrestling with the ideas and issues associated with research involving human participants. Some of the challenges involve honoring the humanity in each person with whom I work, including a willingness to refuse to ask certain questions or share certain stories; working toward reciprocity by allowing myself to be vulnerable; prioritizing research relationships built upon ethics and trust; and debunking myths of neutrality and
objectivity by articulating my positionality and including the personal. Part of employing a model of responsible research is knowing that my work is not devoid of ideology, but highly influenced by it.

With the aforementioned ideas in mind, an interesting model of how to do, or engage in, humanizing research as a black woman educator comes from Greene (2014). In her discussion of Double Dutch Methodology (DDM), Green reminisces about playing double-dutch as a girl and what it taught her about how to be both a good qualitative researcher (particularly as she navigates being a participant observer and a member of a group). She writes that DDM involves (1) Learning the ropes (critically exploring positionality); (2) Planting both feet (understanding the theoretical standpoints of research that would work well with such a model); and (3) “Keeping time and rhythm” (knowing that participant observation is complicated stylized and improvisational). This specific methodology was influential for me in part because the three research participants in this dissertation study are women and because I played with, or shifted between, the positions/roles of scholar and sister-friend. For example, I recall talking with research participant Luula on the phone, and we were catching up about life. At some point, she started talking about education and politics and I said, “Hey, can I record you?” Once she agreed to allow me to record the conversation, an immediate shift happened, one that reflected the movement between occupying a position of sister-friend and then of researcher/scholar. As further discussed in the data/findings chapter, this is an important shift to name and account for in critical qualitative research that is grounded in, and guided by, humanizing perspectives.
Table 1 Decolonized methodologies + Humanizing Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decolonized Methodologies</th>
<th>Humanizing Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“insider-outsider research” - Bryan Brayboy</td>
<td>“Double Dutch Methodology” - Keisha Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TribalCrit</td>
<td>Black Feminism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Settler-Native-Slave**

- Rigorous academic research + culturally relevant for community geographically, politically and genealogically framed identities (Smith, 2012)
- Place-based identity (hooks, 2009)
- Land occupation + #NoDAPL
- Police Brutality + #blacklivesmatter
- ghettos, reservations, gentrification, police brutality, systematic oppression…
- “research’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary” - L. T. Smith

**Decolonized methodologies, humanizing research, black feminist frameworks**

Both Decolonized Methodologies and Humanizing Research frameworks exemplify how and why to do personal and political educational research. While putting methodologies into practice, I engaged in reflection upon how black American values and black feminist or womanist principles are reflected in the frameworks. Considering that much of the literature about decolonized methodologies and humanizing research is authored by scholars of color, it is not surprising that I might see myself in the writings. I believe that the theoretical and conceptual grounding of educational research in decolonizing methodologies, humanizing research, and black feminist frameworks lends itself well to scholarship on identity and ways of being. The table below (Table 1) depicts
the connections I drew among decolonizing methodologies, humanizing research, and the cultural values of my community. I drew on the ideas, scholars, and values depicted in the table to frame my dissertation study.

As evidenced by Brayboy (2006), Smith (2012), Arvin et al. (2013), Indigenous scholars have been in dialogue with and influenced by the contributions of black thinkers. Of course, the reverse is also true. Despite obvious points of departure and the limitations of proverbially cutting and pasting one framework for use within another cultural context, Indigenous and black feminist epistemologies share lots of commonalities.

Lastly, in their discussion of Black Feminist Theory (BFT) as methodology and the challenges associated with employing a black feminist methodology, Patterson et al. (2016) suggest that desiring to disrupt traditional methods is not enough to actually disrupt them. There must be a movement from desiring toward acting and enacting critical, humanizing practices in work that is concerned with acknowledging the often untold stories and often unacknowledged ways of being of many people of color. This idea, the ideas put forth by Indigenous scholars, and the others described in the section above greatly influenced my research.

**Paradigmatic and Epistemological Framings: Positionality as Personal and Political**

As the section above suggests, my methodological approach is value-laden. Both my methodological approach and positionality are interconnected because my worldview shapes my research. Part of being responsible and engaging in responsible research is being transparent about who I am and how I think about the world and other people. To
answer questions about the impact of identity and questions of ownership in research, it is imperative to identify, articulate, and accept the limitations and unique affordances of our fluid positions. A discussion of the fluid positions within the role of a researcher and within research relationships is taken up by Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) in their discussion of insider-outsider research, Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) in their discussion of being and becoming in research relationships, and Greene (2014) in her discussion of Double Dutch Methodology. In her discussion of the importance of addressing paradigm proliferation in teaching educational research, Lather (2006) advocates for young scholars to develop “an ability to locate themselves in the tensions that characterize fields of knowledge” (p. 47). In this section, I seek to identify the paradigmatic lenses and fluid positions that color my worldview. A historical understanding of the impact of research in my cultural community (the same community as Henrietta Lacks and the Tuskegee research subjects) explains in part, my desire to locate myself within paradigms that recognize the role of power and identity in research.

Although briefly addressed above, the sordid past of social science research has led to unending debates about what constitutes “good science” or relevant research (St. Pierre, 2007). Related scholarship has progressed from the paradigm wars of the 1980s and the paradigm dialogs of the 1990s (Denzin, 2008) to today, but there remains a divide in values among qualitative researchers and the many actors (government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private entities, educational institutions and others) implicated by the results of the research. On one side of the paradigmatic spectrum is a preference for rigorous, scientific research, skeptical of critical and expressly ideological
perspectives. On the other side of the spectrum are culturally relevant research models that seek to increase the visibility of diverse experiences and perspectives. A neat and linear depiction of the paradigms, shown in Lather’s (2006) chart (Table 2), arguably

Table 2. Revised Paradigm Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predict</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Emancipate</th>
<th>Brk</th>
<th>Deconstruct</th>
<th>Next?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Positivist</em></td>
<td><em>Interpretive</em></td>
<td><em>Critical</em></td>
<td>Poststructural</td>
<td>Postmodern</td>
<td>Neo-positivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>Naturalistic</td>
<td>Neo-Marxist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; Feminist &gt;</td>
<td>Queer theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenological</td>
<td>Critical race theory</td>
<td>Praxis-oriented</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discourse analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic</td>
<td>Freirian participatory</td>
<td>&lt; action research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic/interaction</td>
<td>Postcolonial</td>
<td>Post-theory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive mixed methods</td>
<td>Post-Fordism</td>
<td>Neo-pragmatism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gay and lesbian theory</td>
<td>Post-humanist</td>
<td>Citizen inquiry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical ethnography</td>
<td>Post-critical</td>
<td>Participatory/ dialogic</td>
<td>Postparadigmatic diaspora (John Caputo)</td>
<td>Post-everything (Fred Erickson)</td>
<td>Post-post</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

distorts their historical and material complexity, but the chart also renders accessible a complex web of ideas. For the sake of simplicity, it is helpful to think of positivism and neo-positivism along a continuum of the aforementioned spectrum. While positivism (and neo-positivism) value objectivity and the process of finding one truth or reality, the critical and poststructural perspectives are built upon the idea of multiple truths and the construction of realities (Sipe & Constable, 1996). I contend that these latter paradigms
are better equipped for examining power structures at the intersections of multiple identities and complex social issues. In fact, these paradigms are better equipped for examining shifting positions and diverse perspectives with humanizing methods. By locating myself within the critical and postcolonial paradigms, I can begin to address the tensions related to rigor and relevancy, objectivity and ideology, that characterize these fields of knowledge.

A legacy of positivism is evident in both the critical and postcolonial paradigms. Firstly, many critical researchers continue to follow a modified version of the scientific method and concern themselves with issues of validity and rigor (Lather, 1986). Also, the competition for funding and/or recognition in the academy often constrains creativity. St. Pierre (2012) argues that neo-positivism maintains a positional superiority because money for research is often rewarded to those following the protocol for scientifically based research. Additionally, language itself limits scholars’ ability to describe the world beyond categories, characterizations, and established binaries (Smith, 2012). Lastly, many scholars spend their time working to debunk the findings of their predecessors in order to set the record straight or to challenge accepted misinformation (Gordon, Miller, & Rollock qtd. in Tyson, 1998).

Positivism and its legacy have produced many painful misconceptions about the world and its people (Smith, 2012). Critical and postcolonial scholars argue that research conducted across the paradigmatic spectrum is highly ideological. When they engage in “openly ideological research” (Lather, 1986) and accept that knowledge is situated, partial, and perspectival, they can begin to identify the biases that underpin a history of
misinformation. Despite the ways that adhering to a paradigmatic position or using “paradigm constructs to say things about the world” (Nespor, 2006, p. 115) can be limiting, placing my research within a paradigmatic context enables me to discuss my positionality and the epistemological and methodological framings that influence my work. The authors referenced throughout this chapter draw from and contribute particularly to the critical and postcolonial paradigms with which I align ideologically. In the section that follows, I will identify the scholars who have articulated black feminist and Indigenous epistemologies with particular significance to my work.

An Epistemological Identity

In this section, I aim to articulate my epistemological identity (Dillard, 2006) as a black woman scholar with an interest in black American/African and Indigenous ways of knowing. Even in this articulation, I recognize that those labels are changing, fluid, and hold different meanings at different times for different people. Still, my identity is linked to cultural ways of knowing that are not universal. My identity is historicized, politicized, and cultural; and it is linked to the inherent bias of experiential knowledge. When engaging in educational research, I invariably bring my biases and all that being me entails, to my work.

Scholars have written about the ideological biases that affect research (Lather, 1986), but Scheurich and Young (1997) specifically addressed the racially biased epistemologies that underpin educational research in their controversial article, “Coloring Epistemologies: Are Our Research Epistemologies Racially Biased?” The phenomenon that Scheurich and Young refer to as “epistemological racism” and Mudimbe (qtd. in
Mills, 1997) calls “epistemological ethnocentrism” identifies racism as innate to modern ways of knowing. Both terms identify the racial bias built into the research process and inspire me to pose the following question: If the very questions we ask and the language we use to discuss our data are wrought with problematic initial assumptions, particularly about culture, race and power, then how can we (as educational researchers) purport to present any version of the truth or a truth?

With questions about bias in mind, it is worth noting how bias begins and manifests within the academy. Black feminist perspectives suggest that certain versions of truths are taken up with greater veracity and given more credibility depending on the author of the argument or the nature of its delivery. In her response to Scheurich and Young (1997), Tyson (1998) asks why it takes a white male scholar to rally a debate around and validate claims of racist epistemologies when people of color have already made such arguments. Echoing Tyson’s critique, Collins (2006) wonders why the comparatively static ideas, but not the dynamic minds and bodies of black women are invited into classrooms. She writes, “We must be attentive to the seductive absorption of black women’s voices in classrooms of higher education where black women’s texts are still much more welcomed than black women ourselves” (p. 57).

**Black Feminist, African, and Indigenous Epistemologies in Research**

Building upon the discussion of black feminist frameworks in chapter two, paying homage to the Indigenous scholars that have extended my thinking around the limitations of race-based power dynamics in settler-colonial contexts, I identify the set of assumptions presented in this section as they denotes some of the biases embedded in my
positionality. Black feminist frameworks provide a platform for plurality by prioritizing individual experiences as the basis of a shared epistemology. Black feminism and womanism focus on the work that can be done to honor shared experiences as indicative of a larger pattern of struggle.

While alternative perspectives are often marginalized within the academy, researchers who are willing to include the personal and address the political can challenge and deconstruct many taken-for-granted truths. Multiple and global perspectives call attention to the biases and increase the visibility of diversity in educational research. Within many black feminist and Indigenous knowledge frameworks (Brayboy, 2006; Collins, 1991; Dillard, 2006; Griffin, 2012), lived experiences become the basis for alternative epistemological assumptions. For Brayboy (2006), “Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory and are, therefore, real and legitimate sources of data and ways of being.” (p. 429). In same vein, Dilliard (2006) calls for basing “patterns of epistemology” on cultural consensus, writing:

when we begin to move beyond race/ethnic and gender as biological constructions to more culturally engaged explanations of being human, and when we seek to examine the origins of such knowledge constructions as to the very nature of how reality is known (its patterns of epistemology) (1), we will find that what constitutes knowledge depends profoundly on the consensus and ethos of the community in which it is grounded. (p. 2)

Thus, according to Dillard’s (2006; 2016) endarkened feminist epistemology and Brayboy’s (2006) Tribal Critical Race Theory, epistemologies with origins outside of dominant frameworks include elements of reflection, self-study, and community-consensus. Data-rich stories help shape these frameworks.
Indigenous epistemologies view personal narrative and experiential knowledge as legitimate sources of data (Brayboy, 2006). Despite the dominance of Western scientific thought in the academy, subjectivities and stories poke holes in static assumptions about the world and its people because stories about lived experiences are more than folktales; they are the foundation of systems of thought. Striking a balance between experiential knowledge and theory, or activism and intellectualism, is also part of the academic experience of many black and Indigenous scholars who identify a sense of responsibility to their cultural communities and a feeling of marginalization in the academy (Brayboy, 2006; Dei, 2000; Koamea, 2004; Smith, 2012).

Echoed by Arvin et al. (2013), Brayboy (2006) argues that while inquiry into race is essential in academia, American Indians are not often part of the discussion. Established Western theoretical frameworks (including those authored by [other] scholars of color) do not account for the unique sociopolitical situation of American Indians. In the Indigenous context, race needs to be understood in relation to colonization, land issues, and the politicization of people. In the American Indigenous context, a white/black binary is replaced by a guardian/ward relationship or an infantilizing parent/child binary wherein the government is the father, and the American Indian is the child.

The fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline illuminates the struggle over land ownership and power dynamics among American Indians and the United States government. Linked to the source of the struggle, from the Indigenous perspective, is also the valuation of spiritual ways of knowing. Spiritual knowledge is sometimes linked to a
respect for nature and the connection between natural spaces and cultural identity. Insofar as Indigenous scholars often attach their cultural identity to natural spaces, respecting those spaces is one way of respecting one’s heritage and community. Smith (2012) writes about this in the following quote:

For Maori there are several ways of identifying one’s Indigenous ‘community’. One commonly used way is to introduce yourself by naming the mountain, the river, the tribal ancestor, the tribe and the family...you locate yourself in a set of identities which have been framed geographically, politically and genealogically. (p. 129)

In addition to this sense of responsibility to community, Smith’s quote highlights the importance of political and genealogical knowledge (particularly where oral traditions supersede written records). This epistemological assumption is akin to the Ashanti adage, “If you understand the beginning well, the end will not trouble you.” Indeed, Indigenous ways of knowing stress having a historical sense of self or an individual and collective experiential knowledge. Yet, similar values are expressed by writers within the African diaspora.

African and Indigenous epistemologies include spiritual ways of knowing because there are multiple ways to know the natural world (Deloria, 2001). Knowing and honoring the historical significance of nature is one component of African and Indigenous perspectives. African and Indigenous researchers often attach their cultural identity to natural spaces. Spiritual knowledge is sometimes linked to a respect for nature and the connection between natural spaces and cultural identity. African and Indigenous scholars also identify a sense of responsibility to their cultural community but a feeling of

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4 See http://www.flocabulary.com/african-proverbs
marginalization in the academy. The quest for academic decolonization and self-determination are additional elements of African and Indigenous epistemologies.

Striking a balance between experiential knowledge and theory, or activism and intellectualism, is part of the Indigenous academic experience and Indigenous ways of knowing (Koamea, 2004). While the academy expects theory, the community requires more of a past and future commitment. Koamea argues that Indigenous researchers cannot present findings and walk away (like foreign researchers) because there are ethical considerations involving community dynamics, expectations of humility, and the cultural requirement of showing respect for elders (p. 38). While it might not take a foreign researcher long (either through intuition or experience) to appreciate local values, what motivation does s/he have to respect the rules if s/he is only passing through?

In Western academia, younger scholars often lead the charge for changes in scholarship, but age is associated with wisdom and leadership in African and Indigenous epistemologies. This respect for elders does not mean non-European epistemologies cannot change. In fact, Dei (2000) argues that Indigenous ideas are situated and ever changing, unlike the static scientific objectivity of Western thought.

Despite the dominance of Western scientific thought in the academy, how precise is a perspective that does not include ancient wisdom, spiritual and metaphysical ways of knowing? Subjectivities and stories poke holes in static assumptions about the world and its people because stories about lived experiences are more than folktales; they are the foundation of systems of thought. Brayboy (2006) highlights the importance of narrative
and experiential knowledge in Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Tribal CRT, noting that stories are legitimate sources of data.

The quest for academic decolonization and self-determination—which prioritizes non-Western research methodologies, Indigenous languages, anti-colonial literature, and storytelling—are central to African and Indigenous epistemologies. In sharing their stories and working in solidarity, scholars grow more determined to deconstruct detrimental research models and systems of thought. Now is the time to articulate alternative epistemologies and methodologies that reflect cultural ways of being, knowing and inquiring into the unknown.

**Context**

**City**

Captown is a cosmopolitan Midwestern city whose international profile is part of what characterizes the city. In recent years, the New York Times has published several articles about Captown that focus on the city’s business and downtown real estate development (Schneider, 2016), the eclectic arts district and local restaurant scene (Duffy, 2012), and the local Major League Soccer (M.L.S.) team whose stadium has hosted high-profile international games in recent years (Borden, 2016).

According to the Pew Research Center, Captown is located in one of the top 10 states that resettled the most refugees (more than half of all refugees to the U.S.) in the 2016 fiscal year (Radford & Connor, 2016). Additionally, the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), offers the following statistics: 1) the total population in Captown was just over 850,000 people in July 2015; 2) 11.4% of the total population in Captown were foreign-
born between the years of 2011-2015; 3) and 14.4% of the population (5 years old and above) spoke a language other than English at home between the years of 2011-2015. In addition, 88.5% of the population in Captown (25 years and older) had a high school degree or higher level of education between the years of 2011-2015; the median household income, 2011-2015, was $45,659 and; 21,926 businesses in Captown in 2012 were listed as minority-owned firms. While I will not repeat all the statistics, it is noteworthy that sixteen years ago, the U.S. Census (2000) reported that 6.7 percent of the total population (711,470 people) in Captown was foreign born and 10% of the population spoke a language other than English at home.

The statistics indicate the globalization and increasing diversity of the city. Like Orellana (2016) suggests, my perspectives about the changes in my city are partial. Yet, the feeling that things have changed is something that I share with the friends with whom I grew up in Captown. Similar to the way Orellana reflects on the diversity of her research site by analyzing photographs that capture the multilingual signs and multicultural businesses and shops in her students’ neighborhoods, Captown (the city where I was born and reared), I have taken note of the changes in my city.

I lived just off the major thoroughfare that took me to both after-school program sites A and B during the data collection phase of my study. It is one of the cross-streets where we met for the Fourth of July parade referenced at the start of the dissertation. Within the stretch of a few miles on this road, one can find a Senegalese restaurant, a Somali restaurant, a Nepali restaurant, a Mexican grocery store, and a shopping mall
dedicated to importing and selling East Africa and the Middle Eastern goods. None of these businesses existed during my youth.

### Organization

The ethnic diversity in Captown is reflected at Organization, the dissertation research site. Organization (ORG), is a non-profit organization that provides social services for a diverse group of immigrant, refugee, and low-income youth and families in Captown. In addition to adult programs, including but not limited to citizenship and English classes, job skills training, and legal counseling, ORG provides after-school academic and cultural enrichment programs, summer camps, and community-oriented events for youth. To date, the organization has served youth and families from more than 30 countries including Bhutan, Burma, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, and Tanzania. The map (Figure 3) provides a visual representation of the countries of origin of the youth and families served by ORG.

![Map of Countries Represented at ORG](image)

**Figure 3. Map of Countries Represented at ORG**
Organization’s youth work focuses on education, cultural enrichment, and wellness for a diverse cross-section of youth at six locations in the city and surrounding suburbs. While most sites have one majority cultural population (based on neighborhood demographics), taken together ORG is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse organizations with which I have worked. Young people with origins in countries from around the world attend the after-school programs where multiple languages, ethnicities and religious backgrounds are represented by the students and staff. The programs’ diversity is most obvious when citywide events, like the annual youth summit, bring together students from every site for a day-long conference complete with workshops, performances, lunch, and a keynote speaker. The growth of ORG—evolving from one site in the year 2000 to six locations today—indicates the specific and ongoing out-of-school needs (such as socioemotional support, cultural enrichment, nutrition and fitness, and recreation), of young people in a city that is more diverse than a decade ago.

Access

My connection with ORG began in January 2015 when one of my professors introduced me to the organization’s Executive Director via email, and recommended me as a volunteer for the youth program. After being put into contact with the Director of Youth Programs and the Youth Programs Manager, I received a pamphlet about the programs and filled out a volunteer application wherein I indicated my availability and the things that I could contribute to the program. Given my background working with high school students and my familiarity with students from East Africa, I originally asked
to work with the older youth at Site E. Many students at Site E, ORG’s first afterschool program site, are of an Ethiopian background, and they range from elementary to high schoolers. However, my hours of availability led me to the site nearest my home where I volunteered for roughly two hours a week on Friday afternoons from January to June 2015.

When I began volunteering with the organization, I wanted to work with young people and I wondered if a research study would develop from our interactions. However, I quickly became interested in learning more about the heritage language and cultural enrichment aspects of ORG’s youth programming. More specifically, after my first conversation with Luula (a focal participant to be introduced in subsequent sections and chapters), I wanted to learn more about the educators. I met the three people who would become my focal participants during my time as a volunteer tutor with the youth programs.

In April 2015, I expressed interest to my supervisor, Tabitha [a pseudonym], and Annie (a focal participant to be introduced in subsequent sections and chapters) in conducting research at the organization. Annie introduced me to the Director of Human Resources who: (1) Approved my initial request to continue volunteering in different capacities with ORG; and (2) Set up a meeting for me to share my research proposal with the Director of Youth Programs. The Director of Youth Programs agreed to my initial proposal and organized a meeting for me to propose my research ideas to ORG’s Executive Director. From these meetings, I agreed to work with a team on the youth program’s pre-and post-tests and curriculum. Additionally, from these series of meetings,
one of my most significant contributions to ORG’s after-school program unfolded. I facilitated a meeting among ORG’s Executive Director and Director of Youth Programs and a professor at State University [a pseudonym], who oversees a community internship program. From there, a partnership between State University and ORG developed that enabled university students to intern at ORG’s after-school program in exchange for course credit. In my capacity as a graduate teaching assistant for State University, I then supervised these student interns at ORG during my data collection.

**Research Site: Main Office**

ORG’s main office is located in an urban area near downtown where nearby streets are named for African American icons and the neighborhood is steeped with black history. The roots of the historically black neighborhood are reflected in the population that can still be seen working, living, and shopping in the area. Social service agencies and other businesses that exist in the area point to a comparatively lower socio-economic status in the neighborhood, but examples of investment and urban development projects are also widely apparent. Large historic homes, some of which are dilapidated and many of which are rehabilitated, also occupy the streets near ORG’s office. Symbolically located near the intersection of at least two major highways, the neighborhood is at the crossroads of history, culture, and community change.

The office itself is a basement bureau with a dozen individual offices, a boardroom, a break room, and a large room for storage space. To enter the office from the street, one must descend a set of concrete stairs and ring a bell to gain entry. As soon as my face became recognizable by office staff, I was warmly greeted (often hugged),
asked about my personal life and professional work, and encouraged to continue keeping well. I was a little late for meetings a few times because I did not want to rush my interactions with the front office staff.

In my visits to the main office, I was invited for coffee a few times. I also participated in staff meetings, a lunch celebration for a departing staff member, meetings related to curriculum design, meetings related to my capacity as a supervisor of student volunteers from my university, and interviews connected to my research. My final visits to the main office before finishing the writing of this dissertation involved sharing my data with the staff for the purposes of “member checking” and group feedback (see Appendices B and C).

**Research Site: After-school program sites A and B**

During my time as a volunteer tutor, both sites A and B met on Fridays in the same location for the cultural enrichment component of their youth programs. The host site was a United Methodist church located in a residential area on the Northside of Captown. Organization’s relationship with the church consisted of the business relationship of paying rent to use the space. Although ORG had limited access to the entire church, using upstairs spaces for occasional activities and heritage language classes, most of the after-school program activities occurred in the basement where a kitchen, cafeteria, and several classrooms are located. During my time as a volunteer, I observed that only adults had access to the kitchen for snack preparation and cleaning supplies. In the large cafeteria, large group activities like snack time, art projects, and on an occasional rainy or snowy day, physical activities. Recreational activities took place in
the parking lot adjacent to and behind the church, where groups of students from both sites A and B had the opportunity to mix together for outdoor play.

My decision to focus my study on these two sites developed alongside the relationships I built with the staff of these sites while volunteering. First, focal participant Annie, about whom you will learn more in subsequent sections and chapters, worked at both sites A and B in a leadership role. Her connection to both sites provided a congruity for me when looking for things to compare across sites. Second, these two sites were closest to my home and consequently became the sites where I volunteered the most. Lastly, after gaining some understanding about the diversity represented at the sites, I was consciously drawn to sites A and B because they serve a comparatively newer community of refugee youth. To engage in the process of learning about these communities, I embraced the idea of entering a setting wherein most of the students came from a background different from my own and wherein I felt uncomfortable with my lack of understanding. To the extent that I envision my research contributing to teacher education literature about working with immigrant and refugee youth, I wanted to note what I learned about the youth and their cultural and linguistic practices. Although the focus of my study is the educators, not the students, my experience working with the students shaped my ability to ask informed questions. I was mindful of the questions that might arise among teachers when we first encounter unknown ways of knowing and being. Some of those questions include: What languages do the students speak at home? What religions do the students practice? What, if any, are dietary restrictions that impact the after-school snack?
**Site A.** During the 2015-2016 academic year, the after-school program at site A met at a church connected to the dominant cultural community served by the program. Despite some issues with the building—cold temperatures in the winter, and a temporarily displacement because of renovations and concerns about the safety of the building—using this church was ideal in some ways. Community members, parents, and young people already spend a lot of time at this location for church services, events like weddings, and other social gatherings.

Most of the students at Site A (comprised of around 60 students) are from the Zomi community. In a newsletter created and distributed by ORG’s staff and students, a 4th grader explained that the Zomi are from the state of Chin in Myanmar (Burma). He described the Zomi people as soccer lovers and Christians. Indeed, according to Sherman (2013) in predominantly Buddhist Burma or Myanmar, Christian Zomis are a religious minority. Sherman states that despite ethnic and linguistic diversity within the community, Zomis have been Christian for about a century. Most of the population currently living in the United States is comprised of political and/or economic refugees. Refugees from Burma represent just 4.5% of the total population in the country where Captown is located (US Together et al., 2015).

**Site B.** During the 2015-2016 academic year, site B’s after-school program took place at a public school in Captown that serves middle and high school students. With access to a cafeteria, an indoor gym, and a public library (temporarily housed at the school during the renovation of its primary building), Site B students enjoyed a space well suited to their needs. Site B also benefitted from the contributions of three
undergraduate student interns from State University who taught classes and helped run the after-school program. As referenced above, in addition to visiting site B for interviews and classroom observations within the scope of my research, I also visited Site B in my capacity as a graduate teaching assistant and supervisor of these interns with my work for State University.

In the same aforementioned newsletter created by ORG’s staff and students, a 6th grade student from Site B described Nepal as “small,” “beautiful,” “nice,” “clean,” and “good.” She also referred to Nepal, not the United States, as her country. The majority of students at site B (which served a total of roughly 50 youth) identify as Nepali or Bhutanese Nepali. The nuance in the difference between those identities is linked to personal choice and the migration story of this population, which will be better addressed in chapter four.

According to a recent report (US Together et al., 2015) there is discrepancy regarding the size of the Bhutanese-Nepali community in Captown. While one source has reported as few as 1,863 people, another source suggests upwards of 15,000 people from this community have resettled in the capital and surrounding counties since 2002. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) more than 100,000 Bhutanese-Nepali refugees have been resettled around the world, including more than 84,000 in the United States (Shrestha, 2015). The vast majority of people from this community passed through one of seven refugee camps in Nepal that have been in existence since the early 1990s. With that history in mind, it makes sense the many of the Nepali youth at ORG were born in and began their schooling in refugee camps. My work
with ORG allowed me to learn a lot more about the Bhutanese-Nepali and Zomi populations in Captown.

Recruitment

After getting official permission to conduct my research at ORG, from both the leadership of the organization and the university, I attended a staff meeting in January 2016 to begin the recruitment phase of the study. I introduced myself as a volunteer tutor of the organization and a doctoral candidate from State University. I mentioned meeting educators from around the world that sparked my interested in the personal and professional background of educators at ORG and the ways in which they contribute to the mission of teaching language and culture. I identified some of the questions I would explore in the research study, including: (a) What do you know about working with immigrant and refugee youth? (b) How does your schooling experience compare to the experiences of the students you teach? (c) What do you think schools and classroom teachers in US public schools could learn from you about working with immigrant and refugee youth? Before I ended, I identified paths to participating in the study. Although everyone who participated in the study is someone with whom I had previously worked in some capacity, highly instrumental in my ability to obtain participants was the expressed support of the Youth Director who allowed me to talk to the staff during work hours. Word of mouth among participants (not at my request) and face-to-face follow up invitations rounded out my recruitment efforts.
Focal Participants

The three educators who became focal participants in this study emerged naturally by demonstrating an eagerness or willingness to participate, even contacting me to share ideas about the research or follow-up about things we had discussed. With some of them more than others, our interactions developed into friendships that involved social interactions, social media interactions, phone calls, and coffee dates outside the scope of the research.

Annie. I first met Annie while volunteering at the youth programs. My first impression of her was that she is professional beyond her years. Although she is close to the same age as many of the staff, and younger than some of the people she supervised, she dressed like and conducted herself as a person with a position of authority. As a supervisor, Annie was simultaneously approachable and kind.

Annie is a white woman in her mid-to-late twenties. She was born in a small town in the US Midwest and moved to Captown to attend State University. Although anecdotal, Annie regularly wears henna instead of nail polish on her nails. This is arguably symbolic of her globalmindedness and a nod to the ways in which she embraces the culture of the students with whom she works. In the after-school programs newsletter referenced above, there is a picture of Annie wearing a bright pink sari and standing in between two students at a birthday party. Annie’s vignette, presented in chapter four, adds background information to the picture of who she is and why she wore a sari; it also adds more insight into her passion, in her own words, for the work to which she is committed. From an outside perspective, one might wonder if, superficially, Annie is
appropriating certain aspects of the students’ cultures—by wearing a sari and henna. However, I contend that she is a passionate educator who is invested in getting to know her students and their families as well as their food customs, musical preferences, and cultural ways of being and knowing. This picture is symbolic and evidentiary of Annie’s passion for getting to know her students’ families, culinary customs, musical preferences, and cultural ways of being and knowing, and to making meaningful connections with them.

**Bunu.** I also met Bunu while volunteering for ORG. At first I was not sure if she was a high school student in the after-school program or a tutor. She is a college student in her early twenties who works with the youth programs and does some translation work for ORG. Bunu also regularly speaks as a panelist for ORG’s “cultural competency” teacher training workshops. Bunu was born in Nepal and moved to the United States as a middle school student. She talks about having an appreciation for Nepali food, music, and culture that is different from many of the young Nepali people she knows in the United States. Her knowledge of and appreciation for her home culture, conflated with her lived experiences in the United States, add to the diplomatic and deeply humane Bunu.

**Luula.** The word *luul* means pearl in Somali. During one of our conversations, Luula likened being an immigrant or refugee to the complex beauty of a pearl. In nature, the rare and alluring pearl is hidden inside a hard exterior, and adversity (the task of self-defense and preservation) is literally the catalyst for the pearl to manifest. Many refugees have been hardened by life experiences, but they represent the beautiful human spirit.
As her metaphor suggests, Luula is a poet and a storyteller. The first time I met Luula, also at the after-school program, we exchanged stories of growing up “worlds apart” in the same city. We were both born in Captown within the span of a few years, but Luula was born into one of the first Somali families to resettle in our hometown. She is ethnically Somali but her family lived in Ethiopia before moving to the U.S. My initial conversations with Luula sparked my desire to learn more about the educators working at ORG.

Data collection

This qualitative, ethnographic dissertation research study focuses on the stories, teaching practices, and epistemologies of immigrant educators and other adults working with immigrant youth at a community-based after-school program in the U.S. Midwest. To address the key research questions and to pursue new and/or additional understandings about the stories, pedagogies, and cultural ways of knowing of the research participants, my data collection methods included participant observation, reflexive journaling, interviews, and focus group discussions.

As a volunteer after-school program tutor during the spring semester of 2015, I spent two hours each Friday afternoon assisting with varying tasks related to helping the program run smoothly. I primarily assisted with snacks, outdoor activities, and art projects, and I helped students with reading, language arts, and social studies homework. I was also involved in helping students with pre-/post-testing. During my time as a volunteer, I learned about the organization, programs, and staff, and I also developed relationships with the educators who would contribute to my research.
I obtained IRB approval in December 2015 and began recruitment and data collection in January 2016. My experience as a volunteer with ORG’s youth program shaped my research questions and design, but my actual data collection methods included classroom observations; interviews (semi-structured individual interviews of no more than 90 minutes each and group interviews of no more than 120 minutes each), focus group discussions (of no more than 120 minutes each), and reflexive journaling. With my three focal research participants, Luula, Bunu, and Annie, I conducted six individual interviews, three classroom observations, two group interviews, and countless conversational interviews that are documented in field journals. I also interviewed six additional educators directly involved with the youth program and community education initiatives. In addition to interview transcripts and field notes, my data corpus is rounded out with copies of lesson plans and other curricular materials, newsletters, and reports shared with me by the research participants.

**Interviews**

Clandinin and Connelly (1997) discuss the professional knowledge landscape of teachers, identifying “teacher stories” that speak to the knowledge and practice of teachers in and beyond the classroom. Teacher stories complement and often contradict larger societal narratives about teachers, schools, and students. The adults involved in my study are educators with a knowledge landscape linked to the specifics of working with immigrant and refugee youth, English language learners, and students of color. By documenting formal and informal conversations and interactions with these educators, I
collected their stories and contributed to a data corpus that sheds light on their cultural ways of knowing and pedagogical practices.

**Conversational and semi-structured interviews.** First impressions, informal interactions, and extended conversational interviews with research participants were documented in my research journals and referenced to inform subsequent semi-structured individual interviews. The questions for the individual interviews were primarily open-ended questions about the stories, experiences, and teaching/learning practices of the research participants (see Appendix A). Questions included: 1. Tell me a little about who you are. 2. Why did you enter your chosen profession? 3. Did you consider entering into a teacher education program to earn certification to teach in schools in the United States? 4. What do you know or what have you learned about working with immigrant youth? 5. What do you think schoolteachers in US public schools could learn from you about working with immigrant youth?

**Group interviews and focus group discussions.** Group interviews and a focus group discussion were additional data collection methods that produced information for my data corpus. The group interviews involved educators who had previously participated in an individual interview, while the focus group discussion provided a forum for anyone from the organization to learn about and give feedback about the research. The primarily open-ended group interview questions included: 1. Tell me about the population of students specific to your site. 2. What makes your site unique? 3. Can you tell me more about the cultural enrichment activities and heritage language instruction you provide? 4. In what ways are the cultural enrichment activities and
heritage language instruction responsive to your specific community? The focus group
discussion, however, centered on the information presented in poster I created as a
summary of the research (see Appendix B).

**Observation & Reflexive Journaling**

My observations consisted of classroom observations and participant observation
in and beyond the classroom. I observed Luula and Bunu in their classrooms and
observed Annie in her role as a supervisor. Reflexive journaling enabled me to document,
self-reflect on, and critically analyze my experiences and interactions with, and
observations of research participants. Journaling also enabled me to reflect on my
experiences as a researcher, including the fluid positions I assumed, and any ethical or
ideological questions that arose. Lastly, I used my journal to record field notes during
interviews.

**Data Analysis**

**Coding as Qualitative Analysis**

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe “three concurrent flows of activity” (p. 10)
in the process of qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion
drawing/verification. They argue that the choices and actions made throughout the
research project, from conception to completion, constitute qualitative analysis. Each
decision, from designing research questions and employing methods to choosing a
conceptual lens with which to view and describe the project and data, is analytical. With
this in mind, I put forth my coding process, inspired by Saldaña (2009), as constitutive of
one element of my qualitative data analysis approach. While data reduction, data display,
and conclusion drawing/verification provide the conceptual and longitudinal backdrop, my coding choices constitute the analysis. While certain actions, like the initial coding, sits firmly in the camp of data reduction, choosing to code with different colored pens and printing out the data corpus relates to data reduction and the display of data. Also, doing a poster presentation of my research at an academic conference and with the staff of the research site, relate to data display and drawing and verifying conclusions, in conversation with others. As the diagram (Figure 4) indicates, the process of coding as analysis is constitutive but fluid.

![Data Analysis Depiction](image)

Figure 4. Data Analysis Depiction

I engaged in pre-coding activities (Saldaña, 2009) during every interview as I took handwritten notes of new questions and areas of literature to explore. Then, during the transcription process, I typed detailed notes (activity logs) for every interview. I transcribed key portions of the interviews word for word as I listened, marking certain ideas in bold, highlighting others, and writing new questions as footnotes.
After completing the phase of data collection, I created a “clean” copy of my data corpus, removing the boldface, highlights and pre-coding notes. Then, I printed out the data corpus and did a first round of coding by hand. I coded the data corpus with different colored pens that corresponded with different codes. Retrospectively, although Saldaña (2009) argues that codes become categories and themes, my first round of coding arguably generated categories that I further broke down into subcategories or codes. The initial coding generated the following codes: pedagogy, perception, language, culture, immigrant experience, and home country.

A few things fell under the idea of ‘home country,’ namely: (a) The idea of cultural differences between “back” home versus in the United States; (b) Cultural expectations of schooling in the two different locations; (c) Lived experiences that address what it was like living in a refugee camp or living in a multi-lingual/cultural setting; and (d) Stories of migration and the sociopolitical circumstances that lead to their arrival in the U.S. The ‘immigrant experience’ notion encompasses (among other things) the experience of finding work in the United States and negotiating interactions with other immigrant families in the United States despite language and/or cultural barriers. ‘Culture’ and ‘language’ produced many subcodes, including how the complexities of race, class, and identity manifest when recomposed in the context of the United States. Language also generated lots of information related to cross-cultural communication. With ‘perception,’ I wanted to highlight the fact that there is a connection between how teachers view a community and what pedagogies they use. This idea also relates to how
parents view teachers and vice versa. Lastly, ‘pedagogy’ linked ideas related to classroom and community strategies for engaging students and parents.

**Narrative Analysis**

In addition to incorporating feedback from research participants, my approach for analyzing the data comes from the field of narrative studies, which offers rich perspectives for the analysis of teacher stories. De Fina and Georgakopolou (2012), Ochs and Capps (2002), and Georgakopolou (2006), write about small stories and conversational narratives that contribute to the production of knowledge in situated social practice. By offering broad and nuanced definitions of what constitute a story and the social practice of storytelling, these resources provide a theoretical framework for identifying and making meaning of even the most informal interactions with research participants at my research site. More details about how the notion of small stories shaped the data analysis can be found in subsequent chapters.

Although some narrative analysis (Wortham, 2001) involves detailed discourse analysis that takes every utterance and silence into account, my approach to narrative analysis recognizes that both the dialogic interactions made apparent through transcripts and the interactions involved in crafting a vignette with transcriptions, are meaningful. In the following chapter, I present a narrative analysis approach that accounts for narratively constructed personal and professional stories with “moral, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000, p. 318), and small stories that include ongoing
tellings and refusals to tell (Georgakopolou, 2006), in the form of vignettes (Seidman, 2006).

**Theoretical Analysis of Data**

The final element of my data analysis involves looking at the data through the complementary lenses of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014; Puzio et al., 2017) and transculturality (Guerra, 2007; Keating, 2007; Orellana, 2016, Ortiz, 1995). These two conceptual and pedagogical frameworks value the rich and constantly changing cultural and literacy practices found in communities of color. In chapter four, I cite academic literature related to these frameworks in order explain how I see them manifested in the teacher stories and classroom practices of the study’s focal participants.

**Limitations**

The guiding principles of my dissertation research study provided parameters for my decisions during data collection. Insofar as I was committed to the concept of reciprocity and the idea that participation in the research needs to be mutually beneficial to some extent, I was mindful of a potential participant’s initial willingness or reluctance to participate. All my research participants agreed to be interviewed the first time they were asked. I took that willingness as an indication of their trust in me, support of my work, and a sense of openness to sharing. Arguably, this willingness to participate is linked to our friendship. All the people who resisted, refused, or left my request to participate unanswered were not born in the United States. They were also old enough to have not completed most of their schooling in the United States; in other words, they
came to the U.S. as adults. The inclusion of their voices would have added more depth to the data.

Although I had permission through IRB to employ the use of videorecording, I chose not to do so. This method has an indubitable potential to enrich a data corpus by providing more context for how and why research interactions occur, but the focus of my inquiries as well as my data analysis methods were well served by the content of the research participants’ comments. More importantly, given my commitment to research as a naturally occurring process, I wanted interactions to feel as much like normal interactions as possible. Meeting to have a recorded conversation complete with prepared interview questions is already contrived. I wanted to make the interviews as conversational as possible. A relatively inconspicuous audio recorder placed on the table was enough to interrupt the dynamics that I wanted to create. Additionally, many of the interviews occurred in public places around the city. Rhetorically, I ask: to what extent is it permissible or invasive to the community to record in a public space?

The last limitation of my study doubles as a strength. I originally began the project wanting to learn from immigrant educators about how to teach immigrant youth. As the project developed and my focal participants emerged, I noticed that I was learning from educators working with immigrant youth, but not necessarily only immigrant educators. This realization came as a relief, to a certain extent, because I was concerned about solely focusing on a group of people of which I am not a part. Insofar as my research participants are educators who work with immigrant and refugee youth in the United States, I am studying one of my own communities.
Conclusion

The Ewe people of West Africa say: “Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story” (Speake, 2015, p. 185). According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, variations of the proverb replace storyteller with historian, and I would argue that the same ill fate could befall a lion without its own researcher. The negative experiences of marginalized peoples with Western research models have inspired alternative research frameworks that challenge Western ways of studying, learning, and talking about the world. Many guiding principles exemplify the research approaches of scholars in search of a better part of the proverbial story, including: being transparent about who we are by articulating both epistemological and cultural identities; learning and respecting cultural norms for entry and exit into a research site; becoming actively involved in the community of a research site, for an extended time; listening; practicing reflexivity; writing and publishing academic papers with research participants; and doing work that positively impacts communities. These are all ways toward decolonizing methodologies and conducting humanizing research with responsibility, reciprocity, and relevancy in mind.

While I have explained the methodological guiding principles and methods that have shaped my views about and approach to conducting research, I recognize the critical importance of continuing to wrestle with the ideas and issues associated with research involving human participants. I continue to be motivated by the desire to honor the humanity in those with whom I work, debunk myths of neutrality and objectivity by articulating my positionality and including the personal, and learn from the wrongs of
past research. In conclusion, I refer to a quote from Kinloch & San Pedro (2014) who write, “While we are fully aware that research studies have ending points, we also understand that the connections, conversations, and teaching and learning encounters we construct with others will always impact our work and our human interactions” (p. 40). Indeed, the connections, conversations, and teaching and learning experiences that shaped this dissertation will continue to influence me and endure.
Chapter 4: “We were from two different worlds, two different religions, but we came together on the idea of being foreign”: (New) American Educator Narratives

Prelude

I am the first to arrive at the coffee shop for a group interview with Annie, Bunu, and Elise [a pseudonym]. The hiss of the espresso machine, the buzz of voices, and the clinking of coffee cups cause me to look for the quietest place to talk. I try one table before settling on a high bar table near the entrance. I sit and look around.

The modern-meets-industrial décor and large windows of the shop are fitting for a part of town known for the convergence of culture, history, and art. Creative, hip, grad student-types chat in clusters while others sit alone, interacting with their own thoughts or the outside world via laptop computers. The website says this coffee shop has a social justice mission and I know that’s why Annie and Elise suggested that we meet here.

I like that our work together and the research can contribute to the mission of a locally-owned business in our community. Is this part of what it means to do community-oriented research? What would it mean to meet at a local library, where we could interact with the immigrant and refugee community, instead? As I review my interview questions and the preliminary findings I want to share with the group, I think about what it means to engage in responsible and relevant research in public community spaces.

When Annie and Elise arrive, we order with detailed specificity the tea and coffee drinks that will accommodate both our dietary restrictions and aesthetic desires. Clearly,
we are well versed in coffee shop culture. (I wonder if the parents of the youth with whom we work frequent places like this.) Knowing that Bunu is en route, we settle into our chairs and wait to be called to collect our cups. Then we get down to the business of the interview. [Field notes 4/7/16].

**Introduction**

The backdrop to this dissertation research study is the portrait of a city, shaped by homegrown talent and influenced by international flair. Throughout the dissertation process, I met new people, discovered new places, and expanded my understanding of what it means to live and work in the ever-evolving city of my birth. The city streets I have long memorized looked new to me when I found myself at a familiar intersection but inside a place I had never been. I regularly experienced that feeling of driving down the same old street and seeing something new. My research participants helped me discover local businesses owned by members of the immigrant and refugee community. They also inspired me to be find more ways to live in line with my values by supporting businesses, organizations, and people oriented toward social justice.

As I continue to reflect on the guiding concepts of responsibility, reciprocity, and relevancy in research (as discussed in chapter three), it is interesting to note the importance of how *and* where we, as educational researchers, engage in research. The observations and interviews for this study occurred in homes, offices, churches, cafés, and classrooms around the city; yet there is a mostly untold story about how the community spaces we frequented during the study also shaped this dissertation.
In this chapter, I will provide more background information about the context of my research site, including a discussion of the immigrant and refugee populations in Captown. I will again take up the discussion of how to define immigrants, refugees, and (New) Americans by referencing the perspectives of the research participants in dialogue with other related resources (particularly photographs). Then, I will focus on the heart of the data corpus by presenting the three focal research participants’ narratives, small stories, and accompanying analyses. With the vignettes, interspersed quotes from interviews, and reflections from classroom observations, I seek to answer the following key research questions that were outlined in previous chapters and that are restated here:

(a) How can the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United States contribute to a more comprehensive view of this population in both academic discourse and public narratives? (b) What can educational researchers, schoolteachers, and other practitioners learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of immigrant, refugee and (New) American educators about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee students?

**Immigrants and Refugees in Captown: A snapshot**

According to the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, more than 16,000 refugees resettled in Captown between 1983 and 2014; Somalia, Bhutan, Iraq, Burma, and Ethiopia are the five countries from which the highest numbers of refugees have originated (US Together et al., 2015). These statistics represent only a small number of the people who are displaced around the world. Recent data from United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) indicate that the world is witnessing the highest numbers of displacement ever recorded. In addition, as the graph below (Figure 5) shows,
there are more than 65 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, nearly 21.3 million refugees, and the United States is not one of the top hosting countries for the world’s displaced population.

![Figure 5. UNHCR Graph](image)

With documentary films, videos, and photography, artist-activist Tariq Tarey shares vivid “small stories” (Georgakopoulou, 2006, 2007) about the refugee population in Captown and globally. Tarey’s documentation of the refugee population proves that
even the smallest of stories, a narrative in caption form, can speak volumes, particularly when accompanying a puissant photograph. His body of work adds a human element to the statistics mentioned above and defies the misperceptions and dehumanizing discourse that exists about refugees today. Freedman (2015) identifies some of the unfounded fears or misperceptions about refugees and asylum seekers by writing, “In recent years, asylum seekers have made headlines of many newspaper and television reports in European countries and other richer nations around the world, like Canada, the US or Australia” (p. 3). Freedman goes on to describe that it is too regularly the case that “asylum seekers and refugees are often seen as a problem and a threat to these societies” (p. 3). Furthermore:

…particularly since the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the US, and subsequent terrorist attacks in Madrid and London, fears have been raised about the connections that might exist between asylum seekers and terrorists. All of these fears can be argued to be without foundation in fact buy they have become part of the everyday understandings of what an asylum seeker is. And at the same time, our televisions and newspapers show us images of refugees massed in camps in African, the Middle East or Asia, living in tents or makeshift shelters, lacking sufficient food supplies, drinking water or basic washing facilities. The people in these camps have fled conflicts, massacres or natural disasters and fine themselves still vulnerable and dependent on foreign aid. (p. 3)

For the sake of clarity, it is important to remember that an asylum seeker has not yet received status as a refugee in any country. It is therefore sad, to say the very least, that the material circumstances of refugees and asylum seekers are exacerbated by the narratives described by Freedman above. Thus, my ambivalence about using the word refugee in a context with no legal or political implications, Tarey’s choice to respond directly to negative perceptions, and focal dissertation research participant Bunu’s
rejection of the word arguably come from a similar acknowledgement of existent negative narratives. Bunu expressed her dislike of the word refugee, saying:

“When someone hears the word refugee they have a negative image. They don’t really think we had a house. They don’t really think we have a home. We just exist for no reason, but that’s not true. We did had a house. We were removed from there. And that’s the main reason why I don’t like using refugee. I define myself mostly as Nepali and I don’t need to explain [to] anyone.”

The negative, public images and misguided understandings of refugees—who they are, what they have and/or do not have—encouraged Bunu to define herself based to her own terms of identification (“as Nepali”). Her self-definitions connect with the selected images presented below from Tarey’s Instagram feed, for they both represent active, critical, and dialogic efforts to define what it means to be a refugee within a global climate.

In some ways, Tarey’s photographs serve a similar purpose of avoiding explanation while allowing both pictures and personhood to speak for themselves. His focus on the full range of human emotions that are found on the faces of the people in the photographs serve to dismiss problematic perspectives related to who refugees are and what they represent in larger narratives of belonging and globalization. In the first photograph (Figure 6), Tarey’s closed frame composition requires viewers to meet the arresting eyes of the person in the photograph. The following caption accompanies the image: “Refugee is someone who have been persecuted or fear they will be persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, and/or membership in a particular social group or political opinion.” While unfounded fear of threats underpins negative narratives about
immigrants and refugees in the West, the legitimate fear of persecution is a huge factor in characterizing the lived experiences of refugees.

In the second photograph (Figure 7), a mother stands surrounded by her children, holding the smallest in her arms. Although the evidence of life, love, and humanity is captured in the image, Tarey adds a humanitarian element to the message by referencing the internationally recognized Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The caption reads: “68 years ago today, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was
adopted. The Declaration arose directly from the experience of the Second World War and represents the first global expression of what many people believe to be the rights to which all human beings are inherently entitled.” With this quote, perhaps Tarey is suggesting that refugees, as human beings, have rights to which they are inherently entitled, and supporting refugees is not an individual problem, but a global human rights issue.

Figure 7. #somalimother
The third paragraph (Figure 8) captures a far too common element of the immigrant experience. Along with the possessions and property that are rarely permitted to cross borders, credentials and professional experience are often declared nontransferable by the countries receiving and accepting refugees.

The caption of this photograph reads: “I was a respected professor in Bhutan. Now I work in a meat packing plant.” No one chooses to be a #refugee.” While one of the more popular anti-immigrant narratives suggests that immigrants take American jobs (Chomsky, 2007), the research participants in this dissertation study confirmed the
commonality of the experience of losing work and professional credibility, and the
difficulty of finding employment when immigrating to the United States. For example:

- Bunu said, “My dad was a teacher back home but couldn’t get a job here.”
- Luula mentioned, “My dad had an education. As soon as my parents came
to America his degree was not accepted.”
- Maryan remarked, “My parents did come as refugees. Dad was a
bookeeper. My father couldn’t keep his bookkeeping job.”
- Gabriel explained that he tried to work in his field in order to pay tuition
to obtain locally-recognized credentials, but he could not find a job.

Like the research participants mentioned above, my spouse (who I mentioned in chapter
three) also faced underemployment for several years after immigrating to the United
States. Sometimes the small stories of many people taken together speak louder than
statistics and individual stories that appear singular and isolated. Yet, we need both
sources of data to create a comprehensive composition of who people are and what their
various (and often shared) lived experiences mean.

In the final image shared here (Figure 9), Tarey uses statistics to make a case for
why America could and should admit more refugees. The statistics show how refugees
have made positive contributions to the local community through economic contributions
and entrepreneurial ventures, and with the pursuit of education. The caption reads, in
part, “Through entrepreneurism, self-sufficiency, refugees overall networking, and job
skills, local refugees are able to build social capital, which can have a positive impact on
the region.” Again, instead of the trope about immigrants taking American jobs (Chomsky, 2007), statistics tell a different story.

Statistics, stories, photographs, and captions contribute to the construction of identities and ideas both within and beyond immigrant and refugee communities. In the sections that follow, I will show how ORG and its staff—particularly the research participants of this study—are actively involved in thinking through what it means to be an immigrant or refugee, and changing the narrative about their communities. Their stories help us, as educational researchers and educators, know how to do the work of
decentering deficit discourses and valuing multiple and marginalized ways of knowing and being while learning about ourselves, our students, and our communities.

Stories, Narratives, and Vignettes

Stories and Narratives

Clandinin and Connelly (1997) discuss the professional knowledge landscape of teachers, identifying “teacher stories” that speak to the knowledge and practice of teachers in and beyond the classroom. Teacher stories complement and often contradict larger societal narratives about teachers, students, and schools. The educators involved in my dissertation study have a knowledge landscape linked to the specifics of working with immigrant and refugee youth, emergent multilinguals, and students of color in the United States. By documenting formal and informal conversations and interactions with these educators, I have collected their stories and produced a data corpus that sheds light on the cultural ways of knowing and transcultural pedagogical practices of a group of educators working with immigrant youth in this country.

Before moving into the data and analysis, it is important to explicitly address what I mean by “story” and “narrative.” There are whole bodies of existent literature that expand the canon about these two concepts, but I rely primarily on Clandinin and Connelly (1997) for their discussion of ‘teacher stories,’ Milner (2008) for his succinct literature-based discussion of narratives and counter-narratives in teaching and research, and Georgakopoulou (2006, 2007) for her innovative work around “small stories.”

Clandinin and Connelly (1997), Milner (2008), and Georgakopoulou (2006, 2007) support the notion of narratives as grander, more developed, and/or linear stories, but
Georgakopoulou is explicit about the value of the small stories that have historically been overlooked and devalued by narrative inquiry scholars and analysts. She suggests that small stories are “under-represented narrative activities” and “allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell” (p. 123). For Georgakopoulou, narratives-in-progress (which account for discussions of recent, ongoing, and imagined future events) are serious sources of insight into the identities of interlocutors: these identities-in-interaction that are crafted, contested, performed, and far from static. Inspired by Georgakopoulou, I also like to think of small stories as the truths speakers share when their proverbial guards are down; they could also be the things listeners hear when listening for something else. Since my data analysis approach is not grounded in discourse analysis, my use of Georgakopoulou’s small stories framework is primarily philosophical.

To link the ideas about small stories to the academic discourse on teachers’ stories, narratives, and counter-narratives, I reference Clandinin and Connelly (1997) because they show how teacher stories complement and often contradict larger societal narratives, as well as Milner (2008), who puts theory into practice by demonstrating how “the counter-narrative can be used as an analytic tool to counter dominant perspectives in literature” (p. 1577). Together, Clandinin and Connelly (1997), Milner (2008), and Georgakopoulou (2006, 2007) help me to think deeply about the stories shared with me from participants, and how those stories are filled with realities of lived experiences and multiple, shifting identities. Lastly, Enciso (2011) and Medina (2010) suggest that storytelling (as a situated social practice) and stories (as social critique) provide profound
insight into students’ perspectives about their worlds, but the same could be said of teachers or educators. In telling stories, educators, too, are engaging in a complex process of negotiation to be heard and valued.

**Vignettes**

As I mentioned in the third chapter, the process of culling the data began before I officially started collecting them. The sifting through and prioritizing of data sets began when I created and continuously refined my research questions, and continued during the interviews as I commented, scribbled notes, and asked clarifying questions. In this section, I present vignettes in the manner described by Seidman (2006) who writes, “telling stories is a compelling way to make sense of interview data. The story is both the participant’s and the interviewer’s. It is in the participant’s words, but it is crafted by the interviewer from what the participant has said.” (p. 120). I interpret this quote to mean that no matter how I craft and present a vignette, I have undoubtedly shaped the story presented therein. Seidman also writes:

I have found that crafting a profile or a vignette of a participant’s experience is an effective way of sharing interview data and opening up one’s interview material to analysis and interpretation…A profile in the words of the participant is the research product that I think is most consistent with the process of interviewing. It allows us to present the participant in context, to clarify his or her intentions, and to convey a sense of process and time, all central components of qualitative analysis. (p. 119)

Crafting and using these vignettes allow me to do the following with the data: (a) Highlight salient themes; (b) Concisely capture and present a participant’s view on a particular topic or theme; and (c) Decenter my researcher voice while playing an active role in telling a data-based story along with the research participants. I have downplayed

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the conversational nature of the interactions by omitting most utterances such as “um,” “you know,” and “like” and by removing my interview questions (see Appendix A) from the vignettes (as suggested by Seidman, 2006) with the goal of honoring the intended message of the speaker. I have not, however, eliminated my role in co-authoring the conversations.

Firstly, the interview questions can be found in the appendices and the connections between the interview questions and the participants’ comments can be easily drawn. Secondly, the vignettes are arguably testaments to the research relationships between the participants and me since the open-ended questions and the answers reflect the level of familiarity between us (research participants and me). Although I was not willing to ask invasive questions, as bell hooks warns against (2009), I was intentional about reciprocating stories that may position me as equally vulnerable or giving as much of myself as I was asking to receive from participants. Lastly and equally importantly, my manner of editing and crafting the vignettes—then inviting the research participants to read and approve them—means both research participant and researcher have always been and remain part of the story.

**Focal Participants: Luula, Bunu, and Annie**

Luula, Bunu, and Annie, the three focal participants in this dissertation research study, represent ORG very well. They are diverse in age, race, ethnicity, and religion. Luula and Bunu also speak two of the most widely used languages within the immigrant communities in Captown and at the organization. This is particularly noteworthy because of the value that ORG places on the collaboration between the bilingual educators and the
US-born English-speaking staff. Although all three focal participants are women, they represent key components of the cultural and linguistic diversities within the community of people native to and working with the immigrant and refugee communities in Captown.

While the collective stories of Luula, Bunu, and Annie play a central role in this dissertation research study, it must also be noted that each of the research participants who contributed to this project has a compelling narrative of their own. Throughout the research study, I learned that most of the staff at ORG have a personal connection to the immigrant and refugee communities either by birth, marriage, or adoption. Only a few of the staff members I encountered came to ORG simply in search of employment, and even they, over a short period of time, developed a stronger commitment to the immigrant and refugee community and social justice and/or social service work.

In the subsections that follow, I will introduce Luula, Bunu, and Annie in more detail through vignettes that highlight the most important themes that emerged from the data corpus. Then, in the analysis that follows, I will draw on the academic literature on the concepts of transculturality (Guerra, 2007; Keating, 2007; Orellana, 2016; Ortiz, 1995) and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014; Puzio, Newcomer, Pratt, McNeely, Jacobs & Hooker, 2017) as well as the theoretical foundation laid by postcolonial theory and black feminist frameworks that I initially discussed in chapter two. Then, I will turn to the methodological orientation that frames this project, as explained in chapter three. Building on the literature review, theoretical framework, and methodological orientation allows me to do the following four things: (1) Challenge
deficit narratives about immigrants in the current political climate of the country; (2) Contribute new “teacher stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1997) to the literature about the professional knowledge landscape of educators in the United States; (3) Discuss some of the specifics of teaching immigrant and refugee youth; and (4) Assert that educational researchers and educators can learn a lot about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee students by looking at the work of educators in community-based youth programs.

Luula

The first time I met Luula, we were both outside on the parking lot-turned-playground behind the church where ORG’s afterschool program (both sites A and B) met on Friday afternoons. Luula and I had been assigned to oversee the playground while the children played ball and skipped rope. When Luula and I locked eyes we began to chat, but the conversation got personal very quickly. That day, I learned that Luula is a single, thirty-something year-old Somali American woman who works as an after-school instructor at ORG. I learned that while we both grew up in Captown and had many things in common, our childhood experiences represent the idea that multiple worlds can co-exist within the same city. While Luula grew up in a culturally diverse urban environment, I grew up in predominantly white suburbia. We both experienced similar cultural milestones of coming of age in the Midwest, U.S., but the moments that maintained our daily lives were notably different. In the vignettes that follow, Luula provides a glimpse into her life as an immigrant, “foreigner,” and educator of immigrant and refugee youth.
Luula’s cultural ways of knowing have shaped her into a person with appreciation for conversing with a friend over a cup of tea. Luula is a poetic, critical thinker, a storyteller, and someone who values feeling as well as thinking her way through a question or quandary. Perhaps these characteristics are cultural or perhaps she has been shaped by her studies in sociology, but she has a talent of telling a personal story, linking it to social phenomena, and summarizing it in an artistic way.

The vignette presented below attends to the themes that most frequently occurred in the individual and group interviews with Luula. The themes of “immigrant experience,” “perception,” and the code for “immigration story” embedded within the other recurring theme of “home country” showed up most frequently in Luula’s narrative. She also spoke explicitly about her identity, which is a code within the larger theme that I call “culture.” In the analysis that follows the vignette, I will further explain how certain lines of the vignette relate to the themes and Luula’s contribution to the key questions of this dissertation research study.

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<th>Table 3. Luula’s vignette</th>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>apples. We would pick worms and we would get like two pennies for a</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>worm, but it was so much fun. Our neighbor, he had a motorcycle and he</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>used to ride us around the cul-de-sac of the area. My parents trusted them—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>had so much trust in them and they had so much trust in us. We used to</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>barbeque together. We used to play outside together and we were from two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>different worlds, two different religions, but we came together on the idea of</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>being foreign. We came together on the idea of being different…We were all</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>different and that’s why we all came together because we knew we had to</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>stick together because we had nobody else…until people thoroughly</td>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>understand what it is to be an asylee and to be a refugee they can’t</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>understand why these groups of people stick so closely to themselves. The</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>asylee didn’t want to leave. They were—political strife—they were either</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>going to be killed. Their livelihood was at risk. They could not productively</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>live in that country with their family so they became asylees. They</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>immediately up and left. When you’re a refugee you are put in crazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>circumstances…extremely dehumanizing…it’s degradation at its finest.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>They wanted to kill my father… during Mengistu era…my mom says she</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>was pregnant with my brother and she remembers officers coming into the</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>house looking for my father. Someone told her my father was in jail. They</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>put my father in jail and my mom said all she could pack was her gold and</td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>her kids. She had two younger girls—my two older sisters—three and four</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>[years old], and she was pregnant. She packed up and ran. She fled to</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Djibouti…she got on a train and had to fight a police officer to get on a train.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>She gave her two older kids to a stranger to hold them while she literally had</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>to fight. An officer slapped her and threw her off the train. And she had to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>sneak back on from the back. She was pregnant with my brother the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>time. And this is what my parents went through to come to America. To</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>come to this land of opportunity. Just the idea of opportunity…it was so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>much more for them to risk everything. My father walked on foot from Addis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>to Djibouti…I wasn’t even born yet…and even though I was born here, the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>stories I’ve heard so frequently to where I feel like sometimes I was there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>I think our parents did a good job of imbedding those ideas and those stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>I don’t have the story of coming to America because I was born here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>I’ve never been back home.</td>
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In the first line of Luula’s vignette, the juxtaposition of housing projects with the image of childhood play allows for an immediate acknowledgment that this story is not centered in pain (line 1). Her memories of playing with neighbors within her compound (lines 4–7) evoke sentiments to which many people could likely relate, but her experience
becomes more specific as she identifies the specific cultural influences that impacted her childhood (lines 2-4). Besides being a funny account about a child with a case of mistaken cultural identity, the idea that Luula’s sister believed herself to be Cambodian is profound for *at least* one reason. Within the context of a white-dominant society, racial/ethnic identities are often implicitly constructed in relation to whiteness. Luula’s story indicates that it was possible, at least in this regard, to live outside of white America. The notion of identity in relation to Americans returns, however, as Luula ventures into the territory of addressing the immigrant experience with a little more specificity. She talks about the differences among her family and the neighbors being bridged by the shared experience of foreignness (lines 10-11). The idea of coming and sticking together within a community of foreigners (lines 9-13) is important because this mentality has arguably shaped Luula’s identity as an empathetic educator who works with children from an immigrant/refugee community different from her own. Considering my interest in Luula the educator, I will address her ideas about education in more detail below. For now, I will discuss what I consider to be a request for empathy and understanding (found in lines 14-21), where Luula seems to be speaking to and/or referencing a larger community that does not relate to the idea of being foreign. In those seven lines (again, 13-20), Luula not only presents discursive definitions of what it means to be a refugee or an asylum seeker to the “people” who do not understand these experiences, she also highlights how the power of perception has shaped her sense of self. In the transcripts, I coded these kinds of comments with the word “perception” because they speak to the participants’ awareness of an externally constructed gaze and discourse.
about their community. This “perception” theme of is not unlike W.E.B. Du Bois’ (1994) concept of “double consciousness” (see also Bruce, 1992), which he describes as the ability of black people in America to see themselves within and/or through a white gaze.

Writing about Du Bois’s idea of double consciousness, Bruce (1992) asserts that Du Bois, himself, used the term to reference three specific, different, and interrelated concerns. He explains:

> Although in the essay Du Bois used “double consciousness” to refer to at least three different issues-including first the real power of white stereotypes in black life and thought and second the double consciousness created by the practical racism that excluded every black American from the mainstream of the society, the double consciousness of being both an American and not an American-by double consciousness Du Bois referred most importantly to an internal conflict in the African American individual between what was “African” and what was “American.” It was in terms of this third sense that the figurative background to “double consciousness” gave the term its most obvious support, because for Du Bois the essence of a distinctive African consciousness was its spirituality, a spirituality based in Africa but revealed among African Americans in their folklore, their history of patient suffering, and their faith. In this sense, double consciousness related particularly to Du Bois’s efforts to privilege the spiritual in relation to the materialistic, commercial world of white America p. 301

While the perceptions about which I write herein are not primarily race related, Bruce’s (1992) quote evokes the “African” vs. “American” or “American” vs. “non-American”/“foreigner” conflict that Luula’s vignette identifies. When Luula refers to the “people” (line 13), she is talking about those who do not understand the immigrant experience. The intended audience could be Americans across all spectrums who ascribe to deficit perspectives about immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and the people within these communities.
In the latter part of Luula’s vignette, she recounts more personal details about her family’s immigration story. When she discusses her mother’s dramatic departure from Ethiopia (lines 21-31), she identifies both the physical and socioemotional fight for life (28-30) that characterizes many migration stories. Even in the absence of physical violence, the stories collected during this dissertation research study point to the phenomena of an abrupt end to one’s former life “back home.” Part of what is particularly insightful about Luula’s story is that her identity as a foreigner is inextricably linked to her family’s experience (lines 34-38). Her life started in the United States, but she feels a sense of loss and longing for another place. This longing is profoundly elucidated by her comment, “I was born here. I’ve never been back home” (lines 38-39).

Luula’s understanding of the immigrant experience and her memories of solidarity across cultural differences within a community of foreigners has significantly influenced her identity as an educator who works with immigrant and refugee youth. Although Luula is a cultural outsider in the community of students with whom she works at ORG’s afterschool program, part of what is embedded in her larger narrative is the idea that her positive perceptions of her students—and an understanding of their lived experiences as immigrants—shapes her pedagogical approach. Most of Luula’s elementary school students are Zomi and Christian; they speak a language and practice a religion different from what Luula speaks and practices with her family as an English and Somali-speaking Muslim.
Despite these differences, Luula’s perception of her students does not denote a deficit discourse. When talking about the young people with whom she works, Luula’s eyes light up. Here is what she says about them:

These kids are—it reminds me, when I was a kid I was poor. We were really poor, but I didn’t know it. My mom worked at McDonalds. She worked there to buy us shoes. My mom never bought shoes for herself. She would wear what we didn’t like anymore. And I look at the kids—they’re struggling but they don’t even know it. I have children who wear flip flops in the winter, but they’re so happy. They’re so sweet. And if they’re cold, one of the boys will take of his sweater and give it to her. And these are kindergartners and first graders. So when you see that sense of togetherness. It’s so wholesome. It’s so sweet. They translate for each other. There’s this one girl who—I swear she speaks English. She just doesn’t want to talk. But a kindergartner translates for her. A kindergartner. He’s a genius! He doesn’t even know it yet. He’s a genius because at that age you’re able to jump in between two different worlds and he’s doing it just to help. The way they love to help each other is so amazing and that reminds me how we grew up. It was so beautiful.

Luula referring to her student as a genius and recognizing his bilingual literacy skills indicates an appreciation for his transcultural ways of knowing. Yet, she is primarily concerned about highlighting the kindergartner’s willingness to help a fellow classmate.

The “sense of togetherness” is what Luula considers to be a special cultural characteristic with which she can relate. In addition to seeing her students’ bilingual talents and helpfulness, Luula speaks of the places and relationships related to her students’ religious lives as a common frame of reference when she says:

We went to madrassa. Islamic school. But the Islamic school we went to was so diverse…I remember my teacher being Pakistani…my brothers and sisters [had] an African American male who was their teacher. We would call each other brother and sister. There was so much closeness and it reminds me of the Zomi community when I was a child.
In the above passage, it is evident that Luula cherishes and values the experiences, practices, and perspectives of her students. She references a “closeness” that enables her students to be themselves and connect with each other as “brother and sister” within an educational community. Luula believes that the local community contributes to who her students are and the type of familiarity both her students and their families have with each other.

When I conducted my classroom observation of Luula, the afterschool program was being held in the upstairs classrooms of the church where the Zomi students worship. During our group interview with Maryan [a pseudonym], Luula talks about the church as the center of the community, noting that in addition to worshiping at the church, people in the community get married, attend cultural celebrations, and engage in recreational activities at the church. According to Luula, “The Zomi church is like the YMCA.” She also describes the church van as both a school bus and a private car for families who do not have transportation, but who regularly need to go shopping. Luula recognizes the importance of resource sharing. Reminiscing about her childhood, Luula jokes that her family never owned matching tableware or cutlery because her mother gave nearly everything away to newly arriving families. Again, Luula’s ability to understand the experiences of her students is due to her being the daughter of refugees. Luula’s quote, “We came together on the idea of being ‘foreign’” (line 10-11) highlights a central tenet of her worldview and suggests a solidarity across differences that helps exemplify how her experiences and those of focal participant, Bunu, converge.
Bunu is a college student in her early twenties. She was born in Nepal and moved to the United States in adolescence. When I first saw Bunu at the after-school program, I wondered if she was a high school student, but quickly learned that she is a vital part of ORG’s staff. Over the time that I have known Bunu, I have come to understand the leadership role she plays in the young Nepali community in Captown. Although I do not know a lot about her family, I have met a few of her younger cousins and some of her friends. When interacting with her students, family, and friends, Bunu emotes a perceptible level of socioemotional awareness and care that partly characterizes her movement in the world.

From a distance, Bunu is à la mode in the way that many college students are. She is confident yet transparent about some of the uncertainty of figuring out her future. She also has a critical awareness of the challenges facing people in her community, and she openly talks about those issues as well as the innumerable cultural gifts and talents of people from the Nepali community. Part of Bunu’s work at ORG allows her to speak as a panelist in teacher training workshops related to cultural competency for public school teachers in and around Captown. In this role, she is instrumental in shaping public perceptions about her community.

Of the three focal participants, Bunu is the only one who was born outside of the United States. Her participation in the study is invaluable because of her reflections about being an immigrant student, then working as an educator with immigrant students. Many of Bunu’s students call her didi or sister, and she lives and works within the same
geographic and cultural community as many of the young people with whom she works. Living in the community, being young, bilingual, and seeing her students and their parents in the neighborhood helps Bunu build the meaningful connections that have come to define her work as an educator.

Bunu’s vignettes were crafted using portions of her individual and group interviews. To amplify the ideas that seem to be important to her, I focused on the thoughts she reiterated in more than one context. The recurrent themes of “language” and “perception” emerged most frequently from my interactions with Bunu. These themes are reflected in her immigration story, her identity as an educator, and her approach with her students. In Bunu’s first vignette (Table 4), I focused primarily on her reflections about the challenges of being a new non-English speaking student in a U.S. public school.

Before I present my analysis of Bunu’s first vignette, I would like to describe the context for our individual interview. Before our first individual interview, I met Bunu at her after-school program site and joined her at a table near the front door to the school where the program runs three days a week. Bunu regularly sits at the table, greets every student, and takes attendance as they enter. I observed as elementary and middle school-aged students greeted Bunu. Some of them called her didi or sister. Other students used phrases that indicated their level of English, like “me go?” to ask permission to enter the school. On the audiorecording from the interview, one can hear the many instances where I stood up to unlatch the door to let students into the school. There is a brief conversation where a co-worker stopped to talk to Bunu about her new braces. In other words, our conversation is punctuated with many distractions, but the experience also allowed me to
see Bunu interact with the youth, including those she does not teach, in the school setting. I learned how Bunu’s role managing the door and the roster contributes to her knowledge of the students’ names and attendance. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that at the time of our first individual interview, Bunu was the focal participant who I knew the least. Listening to the recording and analyzing the data highlighted how the relationship between researcher and research participant impacts the outcome. While Luula listened to my questions then told me related stories, Bunu answered my questions. Luckily my open-ended questions enabled Bunu to tell part of her story as an immigrant to and educator in the United States.

Table 4. Bunu’s “Immigrant Experience” vignette

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Transcript Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I’m Anuradha…I came to the United States 6/7 years ago. It’s going to be 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>years in February [2016]. I went to middle school here and high school, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>now I’m in College. I’m also a tutor here [at ORG] for the afterschool program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>and I tutor middle school students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>At first I used to volunteer at [ORG], like right after I came here. I started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>volunteering and I started getting involved in all these things. At first I didn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>even know who I was tutoring. I just knew I was going to tutor a bunch of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>kids…after I started coming here I saw they were kids form my own</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I didn’t know how to speak English when I came here first. It was really hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>for me to understand anything at all. Back in my country I was done with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>seventh grade and I was supposed to be in eighth grade. When I got here they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>put me into sixth grade. It was so much struggle. When I came here first there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>weren’t many Nepali. The community wasn’t big, so it was really hard for me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>to do anything at all in school. I wouldn’t understand what teachers were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>saying. And the technology, the computers and stuff, I had never seen them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>back in my country. So I didn’t even know what I was doing and I had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>computer class! So that was my main purpose of teaching here, so that these</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>kids wouldn’t have to go [through] what I went through. I would go back home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>and I would cry about it. There was nothing I could do…and my parents, my</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>dad, he was a teacher back in my country but he couldn’t get a job here so he</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>had to work like every other person here now. He didn’t had any time to teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>me or anything. It was really hard and I don’t want these kids to go through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>what I went through.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I was so scared. Everyone was American. No one was from my country. Now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>if you come here you’ll see a whole bunch of Nepali kids. But when I first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>started there was no one and I remember my dad dropped me off and it was</td>
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Table 4 Continued

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>my first day I just didn’t wanted to go in…it was really really scary. I don’t want to go back to that!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>When I came here first…there were two girls—I’m still connected with them—and they literally helped me through all of my sixth grade. I did not know any English. I did not know anyone…I feel like that really helped me a lot because I was more open with them than my teachers…It really helped having them around.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Bunu came to the United States from Nepal seven years ago (line 1). In seven years, she has learned to speak fluent English and successfully navigated her way through middle and high school in an education system that was initially incomprehensibly different than her experiences back home (lines 2 and 10-17). When Bunu arrived, she was a middle school student, and she now works with the newly arrived middle school students in her role as a tutor at ORG. The struggles that she faced upon her arrival to the United States—not knowing English (lines 10; 31-32); being placed in a lower grade level (lines 11-12); not having parents be able to help in the ways that they would have been able to help back home (lines 20-23); being unfamiliar with the technology (lines 15-18)—motivates Bunu to help younger students. Bunu’s experience of benefitting from peer support (lines 30-34) and her experiential knowledge of having moved to a new country and starting at a new school in a new language and culture motivate her to
do the work. She says, “that was my main purpose of teaching here, so that these kids wouldn’t have to go [through] what I went through” (lines 17-19).

Although the vignette presented above is useful for introducing Bunu and her story of immigration, it is also useful for understanding Bunu’s larger narrative about how her lived experiences have shaped her view of her students and her identity as an educator. My classroom observation of Bunu illuminated a caring approach in her pedagogical style. In my field notes of the class observation, I wrote the following:

“If you guys keep talking when I’m talking that’s really rude.” Bunu says at one point during the class. I asked Bunu about this observation, noting that I expected her to end the sentence with a threat: “If you guys keep talking when I’m talking”… “we’re going to sit in silence” or “I’m not going to give you candy this week.” Instead of threatening them, she identified how their behavior was unkind or, to use her words, “really rude.” Bunu confirmed a desire to focus on building strong relationships with her students and evoking empathetic responses that encourage them to behave and be attentive. [Field Notes, 3/4/16].

An awareness of how others feel or perceive a situation showed up in another way in Bunu’s work. My interest in the idea of perception as a theme in the data emerged from observing Bunu in the classroom. When she talked to her students about Buddha (see the slide from her presentation, Figure 10) she said, “Buddha is really famous. When someone says Buddha is God, he’s not. People think he’s a god but he’s not. Why not? Because he’s a human being. Tell them he’s a prince.” [Field notes, 3/4/16]. Her use of the words “someone,” “people,” “them” and her active advice to “tell them he’s a prince”
indicated Bunu’s awareness of an external gaze and an external misinformation about the people and figures from her culture. The idea of teaching students about their own culture and how to talk about it to a larger world is found in literature about Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, which insists that it is important to “support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

I wrote my preliminary analysis of Bunu’s class and shared some of it with her via email a few days after the class. I wrote:

Thank you so much for allowing me to observe your class!

First of all, you’re so cool. Please never underestimate how impactful it is for the students to have a role model that speaks their language and values their culture!
Secondly, I’m reading a book called *Immigrant Children in Transcultural Spaces: Language, Learning and Love* by Marjorie Faulstich Orellana. She has a whole set of vocabulary [sic] for talking about what you do. When you go back and forth between Nepali and English, when you talk about your schooling back in Nepal, and when you validate the cultural history with the kids, you are crossing linguistic, cultural, and geopolitical borders. You are doing what she calls “transcultural,” “translingual,” and “transnational” work!! I can tell you more if you are interested…” [personal communication, 3/7/16].

Bunu informed me that she was, indeed, strategic about addressing the students’ behavior by telling them how their actions affect people. She tells students when they are hurting her feelings because she wants students to know that she’s a human being not a “machine.” She believes this approach works and enables her students to see her as more than an authority figure. Instead, it helps Bunu build good relationships with her students. [Field notes 3/8/16]. As evidenced by the following vignette, making connections or building good relationships with her students is central to Bunu’s pedagogical approach. Seeing students in a positive light and understanding where they are coming from are similarly paramount to Bunu’s approach as an educator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Bunu’s “Pedagogy” vignette</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Line</strong></td>
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<td>35.</td>
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<td>36.</td>
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<td>37.</td>
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Table 5 Continued

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>care about all the assignments or anything. So building a connection would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>be the most challenging. If you have a connection, even if the kid is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>hyperactive or something, you know how kids are—they run around, they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>don’t want to do any work or anything—but they will listen to you and do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>what you ask them to do out of respect, out of the love…once they get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>comfortable around you, they will start opening up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Me living in the same community as them, I guess that helps a lot…I see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>those kids all the time outside of school…I have met some of their parents.</td>
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<td>46.</td>
<td>So I guess that me being involved in their life outside of school that helps a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>lot as well. And also, we have sometimes when it’s just me and them, one-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>on-one, talking. It’s not all the time, but there are times when you get to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>to that person and learn stuff about them. And even their parents. Talk to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>their parents. I wouldn’t say there is a strategy to knowing each and every kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>but it happens over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Knowing [the] story of kids…they came from refugee camps where there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>was limited education and even though education wasn’t really good or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>anything—no one really cared about education honestly. They were basically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>living in poverty, and coming here, knowing the culture is a big, huge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>challenge…I feel like sometimes the American tutors at our site don’t really</td>
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continued
The first few lines of Bunu’s pedagogy vignette sets the stage for a counter-stance to negative perceptions about what it means to work with immigrant and refugee youth. In this case, however, perhaps I was the one to whom a counter-stance needed to be
directed. I asked Bunu, “What are some of the challenges of working with immigrant and refugee youth?” Retrospectively, one way to interpret the question is, “What is challenging about immigrant and refugee youth?” whereas I wanted to ask, “What are some of the challenges that immigrant and refugee youth face?” Either way, Bunu never suggests that the students themselves are challenging. Instead, to a certain extent, she challenges educators by encouraging them to make connections with their students and to improve their pedagogical practice by exhibiting care and concern for their students and for their students’ learning. Her response, “Making a connection would be the biggest challenge for anyone because even if they aren’t really good at reading or if they’re great at reading, if you don’t have a connection they will just not care about you” (lines 35-37).

The thread of teacher responsibility in learning how to meet the needs of students persists throughout the vignette. When I asked about Bunu’s strategies for working with immigrant and refugee children, she encouraged me to think beyond a prescriptive approach, saying, “I wouldn’t say there is a strategy to knowing each and every kid but it happens over time” (50-51). Throughout the vignette, Bunu evokes larger ideas about caring, building connections (lines 37-39), and even love [“It’s about love” (line 42)] to describe her philosophy of education. Bunu’s pedagogical approach is more than a set of strategies, rather it is a way of being, in relation to her students, in the world. Here, Orellana (2016) provides a research-based framework for understanding Bunu’s stance. Orellana writes:

Love—not as a “thing,” but as a quality of being and moving in the world—is foundational for teaching and learning, as it is for nurturing the best in human development. It is not really possible for human beings to enter into the kind of close relationships that teaching and learning demand without
feeling deep human connections with each other. Likewise, it is not really possible to learn from and with people if we don’t believe they care about our learning, or about us (p. 48).

Like Orellana’s quote suggests, Bunu’s deep human connection with her students is apparent in the way that her feelings get hurt (“I was kinda hurt but I didn’t really say anything,” line 70-71) when other educators express negative perceptions about her students. To the extent that Bunu feels connected to her students, both culturally and interpersonally, perhaps she perceives other educators’ hurtful comments to be a slight against her as well.

Bunu’s perceptions about US-born educators looking at the students as a burden (lines 56-64) is supported by the literature on deficit perspectives among teachers of students of color or students from marginalized cultural groups (Nocon & Cole, 2009; Paris, 2012; Paris and Alim, 2014). As negative perceptions are concerned, Bunu says: “If the tutors know where they came from and what they’ve been through—like the struggles—just to come here, I feel like they’d be more effective and they wouldn’t just look at them like a burden.” To improve the tutors’ perceptions, Bunu makes a case for learning the story of the students (lines 52-57).

Throughout the research process, I too, learned the story of the students and wrote about it in my research journal. Below is an excerpt from an entry in my journal where I documented what I learned after attending a panel discussion at one of ORG’s cultural competency trainings for teachers. The topic of the training was the Bhutanese Nepali community:

*Panel discussion with three girls (2 MS and 1 HS Nepali girls). They explain what it was like to go to school in a refugee camp with bamboo*
roof school houses, sitting on the floor and rain coming through when it rains. I learn more about parents being Bhutanese because they lived in Bhutan but they are ethnically Nepali. They were expelled because of ethnic cleansing, then lived for 10 years in refugee camps in Nepal because Nepal couldn’t accept a huge influx of refugees. 10 years with no one doing anything to repatriate them! After 10 years, humanitarian agencies finally participated in the (imm)migration processes.

I feel uneasy by the direct questions people [the audience] pose about living in a refugee camp. Let them tell what they want us to know. The kids talk about having iPhones and technology here and how nice it is...they call people—before they just decided to meet places.

One of the girls cried while talking about what her parents had been through. The past is a source of pain and trauma for many. At the same time, she has such a positive outlook because things are so much better now. The girls expressed a desire to go back to Bhutan—they didn’t realize that they didn’t have the right to go back. They were kicked out of the country so their families are not welcome. They admit to having romantic ideas about the beautiful country that their parents talk about.

Raises questions about belonging and home. Are they American now? Is this ever going to feel like home? The refugee camps don’t exist anymore so their sense of home, where they grew up doesn’t exist. I think of all the factors that play into their sense of identity and behavior. That’s a lot to carry around everyday...[Field notes, 2/11/16]

As my reflection indicates, hearing directly from the youth allowed me to develop an empathetic understanding of some of their lived experiences. ORG’s approach—often initiated by Bunu who speaks on these panels and brings different Nepali youth along—towards “creating room for kids to be experts” (Orellana, 2016, p. 95) is reflected in who they invite to be panelists, and the strategy is mutually beneficial. Young people experience the feeling of being experts and teachers gain necessary insight into the stories of their students.

In an article about schools in American Indian communities, Brayboy (2006) quoted a research participant who said: “We need teachers who look like us, talk like us
and think like us. To know what it means to be [tribal name] is an important part of this.

We can change the ways our children think about schools” (p. 426). This quote demonstrates that students are affected by the actions and positive or negative perceptions of their teachers inside and outside of the classroom. For children to think positively about schools and educational spaces, their teachers need to know what it means to be from where their students are from. With that said, is it possible for teachers that do not look, talk, and think like their students to engage in teaching and learning with empathy, a desire to build connections, and an understanding of their students’ stories? If so, what does it look like and what does it mean? Focal participant, Annie, helps provide an answer to these very questions.

**Annie**

From a small-sized city in the U.S. Midwest, Annie is a U.S.-born, college-educated, globally-minded white woman in her mid-20s. My first impression of Annie was that she seemed very “polished” and professional for someone her age. Although she is around the same age as some of the staff at the after-school program, she held a supervisory position—and she dressed and carried herself in a way that matched her position in the organization.

As a fellow feminist, I could envision Annie questioning my choice to mention her appearance, but it is noteworthy insofar as certain elements of her style also exemplify an aspect of her character. While there are many ways to describe Annie, let me offer this: Annie is someone who sometimes carries cherries in her purse (as a snack), brings her own insulated glass mugs to our meetings at the coffee shop, and wears
handwoven scarves made by women from the local immigrant community. Annie’s commitment to a lifestyle that reflects her global and environmental values and ethics is something that comes across in a noticeable way. Her academic background in women’s and gender studies and her lifestyle as a vegan give additional insight into her personal, political, and ideological convictions.

The vignette presented below is composed from the individual and group interviews and field notes from participant observation with Annie. The most salient themes from Annie’s individual and group interviews are “pedagogy,” “perception,” and “language.” While Annie’s stories indicate a strong connection between how the perceptions of one’s students informs pedagogical practices, they also demonstrate specific links between how relationships with educators and youth shape their interactions in and beyond the context of a classroom.

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<th>Line</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>My name is Annie. I’ve been at ORG for going on 5 years now in various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>positions…starting as a volunteer and now I’m one of the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>coordinators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Before I started working at ORG I didn’t really know a lot about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>immigrant or refugee communities here in [State] or in general, so I’ve been</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>thankful to get to know about that.</td>
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Table 6 Continued

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<td>7.</td>
<td>I’ve learned a lot about the cultures just by…you know the day school teachers are really fundamental in the education of the students, but our program is a little bit more flexible in terms of really getting to know their cultures, and getting a chance to go into their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>If you’re a day school teacher, you might have to sign like four forms to be able to do that and make it appropriate, but I can just do it every day. That’s what’s amazing about this work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>It’s so important to see what they eat and to see how they do their homework.</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>To see the dynamics between mom and dad and brother and sister.</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>I’ve seen on report cards, “[student] falls asleep during class. He needs to stay awake.” Well now I know why he falls asleep, because he’s up waiting for his mom to come home because she works third shift and they sleep in the same bed and he can’t sleep without her. It gives you an insight that is really important and really helps you relate to them. But I also have to remind myself because you know what they do at home or how they live at home, you can’t always give them a pass. That’s not in their best interest…it’s not helping them when you give them a pass all the time. It’s a really fine line.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>What I’ve noticed is that when you build these connections with them, going to their home, taking your shoes off when you enter, saying Namaste to them, continued</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>you will see—guaranteed—see results in the classroom. They are more</td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>respectful, make eye contact more, call you Miss more (instead of just saying</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>your name). And ask for help, because I do feel like that’s important that they</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>can reach out to someone and ask for help.</td>
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<td>30.</td>
<td>They can teach me so much more and I’m very curious about their culture.</td>
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<td>31.</td>
<td>Selfishly I spend a lot of time with them so I can learn about their culture and</td>
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<td>32.</td>
<td>just listen to them speak in their language. I have no idea what they’re saying</td>
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<td>33.</td>
<td>for the most part, but it’s really helpful to me to be around that…I get to</td>
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<td>34.</td>
<td>learn about them.</td>
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<td>35.</td>
<td>Because some of them come from adverse childhood experiences like being</td>
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<td>36.</td>
<td>in a refugee camp or family being split up for long periods or having to move</td>
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<td>37.</td>
<td>around a lot, sometimes it’s challenging for them to be in our classrooms</td>
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<td>38.</td>
<td>because we have pretty high [student to teacher] ratios and you may have</td>
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<td>39.</td>
<td>some kids who don’t have those challenges. It’s really hard to balance it. Our</td>
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<td>40.</td>
<td>staff isn’t always knowledgeable enough to deal with that. Or, on the other</td>
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<td>41.</td>
<td>hand, the staff comes from same situation and they don’t recognize it as a</td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td>problem or as a challenge.</td>
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<td>43.</td>
<td>Some of the strategies that I use probably aren’t that different than the day</td>
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<td>44.</td>
<td>school teachers. Just contact with the parents and knowing also which parent</td>
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<td>45.</td>
<td>to contact. Whether it be mom or dad or uncle or older brother. That’s one</td>
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<td>46.</td>
<td>strategy that I definitely utilize.</td>
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<td>47.</td>
<td>Even just telling the kid that you’re having trouble with, the parents name.</td>
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<td>48.</td>
<td>Using that. “I’m gonna call Chandra [pseudonym] and tell ‘em how you’re</td>
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<td>49.</td>
<td>acting.” I feel like that’s really important and I don’t know if the day school</td>
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<td>50.</td>
<td>teachers are able to have the time to get to know the parents.</td>
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<td>51.</td>
<td>Parent involvement is really important in our program—even what’s</td>
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<td>52.</td>
<td>important is just saving their number in your phone and just having that. A</td>
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<td>53.</td>
<td>lot of times kids don’t have phones but they’ll need to call and it’s really</td>
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<td>54.</td>
<td>great for them to dial the number and it already be saved. And their mom or</td>
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<td>55.</td>
<td>dad’s name pop up.</td>
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<td>56.</td>
<td>It’s hard for me to get out of the mindset that maybe what I did or what I was</td>
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<td>57.</td>
<td>taught or what I saw wasn’t the right thing and maybe that’s not how</td>
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<td>58.</td>
<td>education should be. I feel like there’s very little room in our education</td>
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<td>59.</td>
<td>system to incorporate different ways of learning or cultural practices, which</td>
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<td>60.</td>
<td>is upsetting. Some teachers are able to do it better than others, but I think we</td>
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<td>61.</td>
<td>critically need to look into bringing different ways of doing things that the</td>
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<td>62.</td>
<td>students are used to and comfortable with.</td>
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<td>63.</td>
<td>I’m much more patient and way more understanding now that I spend more</td>
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continued
64. time in the community. Knowing the aspect of parents work, I’m way more forgiving of kids falling asleep. I used to get really angry when kids would come late. I don’t care if they only show up for 20 minutes because they’re here and I’m not going to yell at them or make them feel bad for being late. I used to get really angry when kids would come late. I don’t care if they only show up for 20 minutes because they’re here and I’m not going to yell at them or make them feel bad for being late because I understand how critical their time is. And for them to walk to the program? After they’ve been at school all day? It’s amazing to me.

65. Because I spend a lot of time with them outside of my required time with them I feel like I gain the respect from them and their parents and up the expectation for them...When you show yourself in the community and have dinner with them and do things that are very clearly outside of what you’re “supposed” to be doing...you gain that respect and you’re able to find that thin line.”

66. I’m really interested in overturning the idea that immigrant and refugee families are not involved in the child’s education...we (speaking from the perspective of a North American) do not value or see their contributions as equal...for a parent to be involved, we say that they must attend PTA meetings and help their child read every night and study for spelling tests, but we don’t acknowledge the other ways they contribute to their child’s educational success. Like getting meals every night. I mean the food and the

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<td>83.</td>
<td>meals that they’re eating are better than what I ate when I was a kid. Walking</td>
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<td>84.</td>
<td>their kids to the bus station, sending the older sibling to retrieve them from</td>
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<td>85.</td>
<td>school. Coming to parent meetings at afterschool programs. All of these are</td>
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<td>86.</td>
<td>contributions that we don’t acknowledge or recognize as important, but</td>
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<td>87.</td>
<td>they’re so important…and that’s something that I can see by going into their</td>
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<tr>
<td>88.</td>
<td>homes. I see the contributions.</td>
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One of the first things to note about Annie’s story is the length of time she spent at ORG (5 years) (lines 1-3). During my two-year tenure as a volunteer and educator at ORG, there were changes in the site coordinator positions at sites A and B. This phenomenon is not surprising since ORG often hires recent graduates for the positions. One site coordinator left with plans to travel overseas. Another sought a position related to her field of study but maintained contact via volunteer work. Many of the staff that stay at the organization are in administrative, managerial, or bilingual staff positions and come from the community within which they work. Thus, they have a deeper connection to the job. Annie was one of few staff at ORG that did not have a connection to the immigrant and refugee community through marriage, adoption, or birth. Her reference to learning a lot (lines 4-7) and the desire to learn about the culture of her students is reflected in her comments, “They can teach me so much more and I’m very curious about their culture. Selfishly I spend a lot of time with them so I can learn about their culture” (lines 30-34). Annie’s explanation of what she means by culture is reminiscent of what
Orellana (2016) calls “Everyday lived practices” (p. 89). In other words, Annie’s understanding of culture incorporates how family dynamics impact the lives of her students (lines 14-20). She believes that insight into the factors that shape her students’ behaviors (like parent’s work schedules and the sleeping patterns and rhythms at home that conflict with the demands of school) all constitute a culture about which educators should learn. She notes that past experiences are also important sources of knowledge since past experiences continue to impact students’ abilities: “some of them come from adverse childhood experiences like being in a refugee camp or family being split up for long periods or having to move around a lot, sometimes it’s challenging for them to be in our classrooms because we have pretty high [student to teacher] ratios and you may have some kids who don’t have those challenges” (lines 35-39).

In the vignette, Annie also addresses how knowing the history and home lives of students helps paint a picture of their humanity. Having details of their past and present home lives, however, does not justify lowering standards based on any adversity or hardship they might face. Annie’s perspective is found in academic writings about critical care in education (Nieto, 2012) and Gay’s (2007) discussion of teaching children who have experienced catastrophes. In “Teaching Children of Catastrophe,” Gay writes about the issues related to educating displaced children in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. In her critical analysis of the ways in which schools and society have responded to the educational needs of children displaced by the hurricane, she puts forth several lessons under the following subheadings: 1) Charity is Not a Viable Foundation for Effective Pedagogy, 2) Good Intentions are Not Enough 3) Out of Sight, Out of Mind 4) The
Pervasive and Pernicious Nature of Racism 5) Children Left Behind. I point to this paper as a lens for thinking of refugee students as displaced children who have survived catastrophes. Despite the various points of departure, Gay’s lessons are appropriate when thinking about ways to meet the needs of immigrant, but more particularly refugee students in U.S. public schools. To be a refugee because of political, economic issues, ethnic cleansing, state sanctioned violence or the threat of violence is not an “everyday educational issue,” but is a circumstance that will continue to be an issue as more children (im)migrate to the United States and more schools look for the best ways to accommodate them.

Within Gay’s (2007) lesson that states, “Charity is Not a Viable Foundation for Effective Pedagogy,” it is conceivable that the problem with charitable approach to educating refugees is that charity is not sustainable or humanizing. Refugees are not guests, but new members of a community that have the right to equal participation and ability to shape shared public spaces and ways of being. In the case of Katrina, schools were not prepared to accommodate the displaced students and families. The first response was one of charity. It was an altruistic approach that supports a narrative about Americans as benevolent, good, or giving. However, in a static helper-helped relationship, life cannot go back to normal because the uninvited guests are not going back home. At some point they will become a nuisance within a charitable pedagogical framework. Although educators and school systems cannot prepare for natural disasters, we cannot prepare for the influx of immigrants and refugees. Even where we cannot
prepare for each student’s specific story or set of circumstances, we can prepare teachers to teach in ways that honor multicultural, multilingual, and polycentric perspectives.

Another one of Gay’s (2007) lessons states, “Good Intentions are Not Enough.” Nieto (2012) has mentioned elsewhere that “nice is not enough” (p. 28). Nieto’s (2012) critical caring framework commits teachers to knowing children and their communities on a personal and political level by becoming active participants in their lives beyond the schoolhouse. Nieto (2008) argues that it is important to see each student as both an individual and as a member of a cultural and/or racial community. Then, instead of making concessions about students’ academic performance because of a larger deficit-oriented discourse that oftentimes circulates about who students are and what they can and cannot do, teachers can hold students of color to the highest standards of excellence with an understanding of their unique hardships, or lived conditions (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Nieto, 2008). Coming to know students in these ways is preparation for teaching a culturally relevant curriculum to our multicultural cohorts. How can we teach our students critical truths about the world if we do not understand the worlds from which they come? Annie’s statement, “it’s not helping them when you give them a pass all the time. It’s a really fine line” (lines 20-23) is supported by Nieto (2008) who writes:

I have seen numerous cases in which “nice” teachers expected less of their students of color, believing that by refusing to place the same rigorous demands on their students of color as they do on white students, they were making accommodations for the students’ difficult home life, poverty, or lack of English-language proficiency. Such “accommodations” may unintentionally give students the message that teachers believe these students are incapable of learning. (p. 29).
That “fine line” deals with how to care for students without granting concessions. The caring goes both ways.

Annie further explains her critical caring approach with students when she talks about getting to know and involving parents in the program. She mentions that knowing which person to contact, “whether it be mom or dad or uncle or older brother” (line 45) is an important way to build relationships with students and their families. It is also a strategy for showing students that they are important, their participation in the program is important, and they are accountable to both the educators and their parents if they’re absent or misbehaving. Annie makes this point concrete by saving the numbers of her students’ parents in her mobile phone. She says, “A lot of times kids don’t have phones but they’ll need to call and it’s really great for them to dial the number and it already be saved (lines 52-54). Saving the numbers is a powerful way to show students that the relationship between their family and their educators has been established and it is important.

As Annie and Bunu both suggest, maintaining high standards and having a caring approach contributes to getting results in the classroom in terms of student behavior, engagement, and academic performance. Annie suggests that when educators and youth build these connections the youth become more respectful (lines 24-29). Annie and Bunu are supported by Nieto (2008) who confirms the importance of caring relationships between students and educators if either party is to become and remain genuinely invested.
The final key element to Annie’s vignette highlights how she acknowledges and values the contributions her students’ parents make to their child(ren)’s education. Annie argues that there is a deficit narrative about immigrant and refugee parents that minimizes what they do to support their children. She suggests that a set of expectations exist in North America that equate parental involvement with participation in parent-teacher meetings and helping children study (lines 76-82). However, several factors, including language and cultural differences, mean that immigrant and refugee parents do not always participate in the same way U.S.-born, English-speaking parents do. Annie says, “we (speaking from the perspective of a North American) do not value or see their contributions as equal…I see the contributions.” (lines 77-79; 88). Annie suggests that her students’ parents make invaluable contributions by feeding their children good food, coming to meetings at the afterschool program, and making sure someone in the family will accompany the children to and from school. Annie’s ability to recognize and value the unique cultural practices of her students and their parents is key to being an effective educator of immigrant and refugee youth.

As with any educator, Annie’s approach to educating and building relationships with her students is characterized by complexity. As a white woman, her voice is particularly valuable to the study because she represents the demographic majority of schoolteachers in the United States today. She also embodies some of the strengths and limitations involved in working outside one’s own cultural community. Despite her expressed commitment to the community and her active pursuit of knowledge about the cultures of the youth with whom she works, Annie is a community outsider with the
ability to leave her job, and therefore the community, at her discretion. What does it mean about Annie’s level of commitment to her student’s community (in comparison to a community insider) if she has the freedom to leave? Additionally, unlike the ORG staff connected to Captown’s immigrant and refugee communities by birth, marriage, or adoption, part of what brought Annie to ORG was a desire to gain the professional experiences that would prepare her for the Peace Corps. For Annie, learning about and working with different cultures is a means to professional ends. While Bunu and Luula also build their resumes by working at ORG, there is an inevitable element of individual advancement attached to Annie’s role at the organization. In this case,

Data Analysis: A Transculturality Lens

The concept of transculturality provides a lens for looking at the work of educators like Annie, Bunu, and Luula. The literature about transculturality in education is emerging. My search results in the university library database for books and articles that address this concept returned a large body of literature related to transcultural care in the nursing field. Alternatively, the term transculturation, coined by Ortiz (1995) in the late 1940s, returned a rich set of resources in literary and cultural studies. Although they use different terminology, critical literacy scholars (Haddix, 2010; Kinloch, 2011; Paris, 2011) examine the notion of crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries to articulate identities, sociocultural theorists discuss cultural hybridity and the notion of third space (Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007; Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland, & Pierce, 2011), and Anzaldúa (1987, 2012) writes extensively about redefining notions of borders and inhabiting cultural, linguistic, sexual, and spiritual borderlands as part of an expression of a mestiza
identity. Each of these explorations into the contextualized dialogic and discursive positioning and repositioning of ourselves and others based on the leveraging and use of language, culture, and literacy practices, indicate the value of examining how the concept of crossing boundaries contributes to understandings of the stories and lived experiences of contemporary peoples.

While I pay homage to Guerra (2007) who writes about “transcultural repositioning” and Keating (2007) who discusses transcultural classroom dialogues, my primary resource on the precise concept of transculturality in education comes from Orellana (2016) and her discussion of the transcultural dispositions and competencies of the youth with whom she works at an after-school program in a multilingual, multiethnic, and multicultural setting in Los Angeles, California.

Orellana (2016) demonstrates an appreciation for the myriad ways that children demonstrate what they know about themselves and the people and places in their communities and the world. Although there has been debate about appropriate terminology, Orellana uses translanguaging, transliteracies, and transculturation to discuss her students’ dynamic work. As I mentioned above, the term transculturation was coined by Ortiz (1995) 70 years ago. Ortiz writes:

I am of the opinion that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word acculturation really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. (p. 102)
Orellana acknowledges the historical importance of Ortiz’s (1995) definition of the term transculturation, but she also writes, “‘Transculturation’ is now being used in somewhat different ways—with less of an emphasis on the ‘death’ of the original culture, and with more of an emphasis on the creative possibilities in the creation of the new” (p. 91).

Thus, by referencing the ways that scholars have begun to redefine the term transculturation, Orellana echoes Guerra (2007) who raises valid questions about Ortiz’s original use of the term and offers “transcultural repositioning” as a more comprehensive terminology. Guerra writes:

> Although the notion of transculturation focuses on the processes the disenfranchised inevitably experience each time they are confronted with a new set of social, cultural, or linguistic circumstances, by itself it does not capture the rhetorical work they must do to establish new hybrid identities as they move from one social site to another. (p. 139)

Indeed, as Guerra and Orellana suggest, there are levels and layers of labor and creativity that enable an individual to create new forms of identity and cultural expression across social linguistic lines. This labor is part of a process of resisting and a responding to coloniality. Lastly, it is important to note that Orellana is calling for an ontological repositioning with transculturality. She writes: “Trans’ suggests a movement beyond borders...it is about the question of the ontologies that hold things apart” (p. 91).

Thus, with my use of the concept of transculturation as a lens for analyzing the data, I acknowledge that the educators embody transculturality in ways that I might not have the language to comprehensively address.

As dialogic concepts, I am drawn to Orellana’s (2016) notions of transcultural dispositions and growing transcultural competencies. Regarding transcultural
dispositions, Orellana explains how children who do not fit into categories based on set racial and/or ethnic identity markers are disposed to explain themselves. In so doing, these young people engage in “transcultural perspective taking” (p. 92), translating cultural differences using other peoples’ frames of reference and basing their explanations on what they think another person knows or thinks about them. This is something that I observed Luula do.

Luula embodies transculturality and a transcultural dispositions when she talks about her racial, ethnic, religious, and national identities. In our first individual interview, the following exchange occurred.

Brooke: but were your parents born in Ethiopia?
Luula: Yes, my mom and dad were born in Ethiopia
Brooke: Did their parents immigrate from Somalia or they’ve always just been…
Luula: Their parents were born in Ethiopia
Brooke: Alright, so they are Ethiopian just of Somali origin, like ethnicity, it’s different than nationality.
Luula: Yes and no
Brooke: *laughs*
Luula: I get what you’re trying to say but it’s so sad because it’s actually more complex than that
Brooke: Yeah, tell me. Break it down!

Luula’s refusal to break it down is an example of a small story (Georgakopolou, 2006) with big meaning. Her unwillingness or inability to break down her identity in terms that are easily transferrable across context is part of what constitutes Luula’s identity. That said, she did plenty of transcultural communication describing the dynamics of her family to help me know her better.

Although she has siblings and parents who were born in Ethiopia, Luula was born in the United States. Yet, she refers to an idea of home that is not encapsulated in an
existing nation state. Her family is three generations removed from Somalia, but she is Somali. This identity is sometimes questioned by Somalis and placed upon her by African Americans. Luula informed me that she identifies as a “perpetual foreigner” because she has been made to feel like an Other by African Americans and comparatively newer immigrant/refugee arrivals from her cultural community. Recounting a memory of an interaction with a Somali woman in the store, Luula says, “We were going to the [grocery store]. I was with my sister [name] and some lady needed help. First she was like Cali [come here, translation mine] “Tell me your lineage…what’s your blood line?”…being Somali sometimes isn’t enough.” Conversely, she has been told by African Americans, “You people need to go back to your country. Learn how we do things here,” and she thinks to herself, “Baby! I was here witchu! We’re together. It’s us!” Luula summarizes her sentiments around being made to feel different with the following remark:

I’ve always identified as a foreigner even though I was born here because I’ve never been given the chance to identify as anything else. Even if it was non-Somali. If I ran into a Caucasian person or an African American person the first thing they say is where’re you from?...I always say, “what do you mean?” because you always want a little more information. “What country are you from? Are you from Panama? You from …?” No. I’m Somali. I identify as something different. I’ve always been something different. From elementary school and my mom wearing a direh to school and “Why she look like that?” “Why your mom dress like that?” or “Why you smell like that?” (laughs) I guess I’ve grown used to it so it’s become an armor. It’s just become my veil to be honest with you.

As a member of marginalized cultural, religious, and linguistic groups in the United States, Luula’s comment highlights some of how it feels to embody spaces that are not centered within dominant school and community culture—a culture marked by

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monolingual and monocultural norms (see Paris, 2012; Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). The feelings of displacement are another aspect of the immigrant experience that Luula has in common with her students.

As a U.S.-born black or African American woman without a birth-family history of immigration, I became cognizant of how my and Luula’s identities converged and diverged at different points in our conversations. We embodied the concept of identities-in-interaction, particularly while talking about race and Luula’s experiences with U.S.-born people, whether white or black, that “do not understand what it is to be” a refugee (Table 3, lines 13-15). Sometimes Luula’s comments positioned me as a partial insider in her Somali community. For example, in the excerpt above, her use of the word “direh” unaccompanied by an explanation that it is a casual dress worn by many Somali women, indicates her awareness of a shared understanding about that element of her culture. From previous conversations, Luula knows that I have both studied the Somali language and worn direhs during my time living and working in Djibouti. Other examples, however, indicate how Luula plays with positioning herself transculturally in relation to the people with whom she is interacting. In response to African Americans questioning her identity and belonging, Luula uses language resembling African American Vernacular English, saying, “Baby! I was here witchu! We’re together. It’s us!” This language, just like Somali, is Luula’s. Knowledge about when and how to use the most appropriate language across contexts is part of what exemplifies transculturality.

Luula’s transcultural expressions are not limited to language. The first day I met Luula she was wearing a hijab, covering her hair with a modest black scarf. She told me
that she had recently started wearing her hijab after having experienced many mainstream American cultural milestones in high school and college. She explained that her religious affirmation attracted positive attention within her own community and negative attention from non-Muslims. Over the course of our friendship, I have seen Luula cover her hair less frequently. I asked about it one day and she replied that she had forgotten to put it on. Luula’s relationship to her hijab is a small story symbolic of her place in the world. Using her words “veil” and “armor” from the excerpt above, I wonder to what extent Luula’s hijab is like a protective armor. Some days require more armor to exist in a country where political narratives indicate a large-scale lack of understanding of “what it is to be” a refugee. Perhaps some days require more armor to keep painful perspectives at bay or to protect one’s heart from those who do not embrace non-dominant ways of being.

**Data Analysis: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Lens**

The literature about culturally sustaining pedagogy provides the perfect link for extending my data analysis through the lens of transculturation into an examination of how educators embody a respect for their students’ multiethnic, multicultural, and multilingual ways of being and knowing. Paris (2012) offers the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) as a framework for educators to acknowledge, support, and foster their students’ multilingualism, multiculturalism, and linguistic and cultural flexibilities.

Rather than prioritizing dominant white, middle-class cultural and linguistic practices, CSP calls for an equal value to be attributed to the flexible and evolving language and literacy practices of youth of color. Paris (2012) and Paris and Alim (2014)
do not devalue preparing students for success in schools by teaching them to communicate in Dominant American English (DAE), yet they challenge ideas about the centrality or comparative value of those dominant practices. Furthermore, they reject pedagogies that fail to similarly support students to communicate in ways that reflect their dynamic cultural practices and pluralistic literacy practices. Paris and Alim (2014) write:

Notwithstanding the continuing need to equip all young people with skills in Dominant American English (DAE) and other dominant norms of interaction still demanded in schools, we believe equity and access can best be achieved by centering pedagogies on the heritage and contemporary practices of students and communities of color (p. 87)

Along the lines of “centering pedagogies on the heritage and contemporary practices of students and communities of color,” (Paris and Alim, 2014, p. 87) ORG’s commitment to offering cultural enrichment classes and heritage language instruction indicates an ideological alignment with the principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy. Reflecting on the cultural enrichment class that I observed on March 6, 2016, Bunu acknowledges the competing factors of her students’ contemporary interests, dominant school-based expectations of literacy, and the strategic prioritization of her students’ heritage culture. She says:

“It’s a Nepali enrichment class so I usually focus on everything about Nepal. The places…all these leaders and famous things, like what Nepal is famous for and all those things. I don’t really like to focus on language and writing because they do it all the time…I like to teach them more about the Nepal itself because after moving here they don’t really care about it. It’s just, ‘oh, okay, whatever.’ They’re more into Pokemon Go.”

I interpret this quote to mean that Bunu does not want to focus on dominant language and academic writing in her cultural enrichment class because her students have to write,
read, and speak at school all the time. Thus, instead of teaching her students dominant literacy practices, Bunu focuses on cultural heritage instruction. Bunu problematizes her students’ waning interest in their home country and culture without disparaging the contemporary literacy practices in which they are already engaged in, like being “into Pokemon Go.” In this case, Bunu is practicing culturally sustaining pedagogy by ensuring that students have exposure to the multiple elements that will allow them express themselves with a cultural and linguistic expression that honors their multiple ways of knowing.

Paris and Alim (2014) challenge readers to recognize but not romanticize the language and literacy practices of the youth with whom they work. They identify and value the evolving and flexible literacies of youth of color while recognizing that even these counterhegemonic forms of youth literacies can be regressive and/or oppressive with homophobic, racist, misogynistic elements. Paris and Alim (2014) write, “What if, indeed, the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms but to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their heritage and community practices?” (p. 86). As the quote suggests, exploring, honoring, and extending the students’ heritage and community practices is central to culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), yet Puzio et. al (2017) argue that educators working toward employing CSP are met with several challenges. They write, “One common misconception is thinking that classrooms must match or duplicate students’ home environments. Some teachers feel they simply cannot get to know each and every student’s background in order to teach in culturally sustaining
ways.” (p. 223). Puzio et al. (2017) further suggest, “Some concrete ways that teachers can enact culturally sustaining pedagogy are to honor and incorporate students’ histories and language practices in the classroom.” (p. 224). I interpret these two quotes to mean that teachers do not need to feel overwhelmed with the task of knowing everything about their students’ cultures. Instead, they can rely on their students to teach them by creating a classroom environment where students can share their stories.

As I write this chapter, I am anxiously awaiting the release of the book, *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*, Edited by Paris and Alim (2017). The insight from the authors in the edited volume will undoubtedly add more detail to the theoretical and practical application of culturally sustaining pedagogy. In the meantime, I am content to know that culturally sustaining pedagogy has a meaningful role to play in the pedagogical practices of the focal participants at Organization.

**Chapter Conclusion**

The data presented in this chapter helps develop a larger narrative about what it means to be a refugee, an immigrant, a member of a marginalized cultural community, and an educator of youth from refugee and immigrant backgrounds. Told in small stories, captions, or snapshots, the data suggests the importance of sharing our stories to challenge the anti-immigrant narratives and ideas about identity and belonging within the current social, political, and educational landscapes described in preceding chapters.
Chapter 5: “When they go home they live their own culture. When they go to school they live American culture. This is like living in two different countries in the same day”: The Implications of Transcultural Teaching and Learning

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I reflected on the thought-provoking experience of walking in a Fourth of July parade with a group of self-described New Americans. Together, we represent nearly a dozen countries of origin, a handful of languages, countless cultural ways of knowing, and diverse lived experiences. Despite our differences, we share an understanding of what it means to live and work within the immigrant and refugee community of Captown. We also each have a story to add and a role to play in constructing a grand narrative about what it means to be a (New) American in the United States today.

My role to play in constructing a (New) American narrative is enveloped in the contribution I hope my research will make. In this final chapter I discuss the importance and implications of the dissertation, and its futurity. Guided by my reflections of the vignette presented in the introductory chapter, I also revisit some of the salient social issues and political themes that have shaped this study. Informed by the theoretical and methodological frameworks (from chapters two and three), and the data (from chapter
four) that round out this dissertation, I also address how historical and contemporary political narratives influence identities and ideas about who belongs in the United States.

Part of my story now involves the memory of participating in last year’s July 4th parade. The experience heightened my awareness (even more acutely) of multiple factors—like citizenship status, self-identification, and the political discourse about immigration—involved in shaping transcultural identities and discursive ideas about belonging. In a country with a settler colonial history like the United States, on a day when patriots celebrate the nation’s independence, I was naturally inspired to consider what freedom and belonging means for the people with whom I walked in the parade—and for the spectators.

As we walked along a street that I have frequented since my childhood and passed one of the local libraries where I supervise student interns, we were a stone’s throw away from both the private parochial school my childhood friend attended, and Site B of ORG’s afterschool program. In short, the parade took place in a neighborhood I know well. Yet all along the parade route, onlookers in stars and stripes and folding aluminum lawn chairs repeated, “Welcome!” While I wondered if the message was intended for me too, I became conscious of the paradox of perception, that feeling of double consciousness, and the fluidity of being an insider-outsider.

Like Luula, I have been asked about my origins often enough for the question to have become part of my consciousness: where AM I from? With a head of full, free coiled hair, café au lait skin, and mouth full of words in French, I have fielded the question, “Where are you from?” often enough to have considered its implications and
practiced several versions of an answer. *I am from here. I am from right here. So, is your “Welcome to the United States” message for me? And, upon what are your articulations of inclusion contingent? What if we put down our flags and raise our fists? What if we tell unsettling stories? My patriotism, deep and dissenting, might be quite different than yours.*

My take on the Fourth of July parade certainly differed from that of a local reporter whose media coverage claimed that the parade, “reinforced that America is a nation of immigrants” [Field Notes, 7/6/16]. Granted, the reporter likely wanted to be kind and inclusive by repeating this common refrain, but let us be honest: the “U.S. is a nation of immigrants” narrative is a symptom and strategy of settler colonialism. When any among us repeat this refrain, we become expressly complicit in the erasure of indigeneity by failing to acknowledge the spiritual and cultural roots of the lands upon which we walk. With the notion of the erasure of indigeneity in mind, what does it mean for a group of immigrants and refugees to carry and wave the United States flag? Those stars and stripes symbolize freedom for some, while also symbolizing oppression for many.

When thinking through my questions about the parade in community with likeminded scholars, my professor and committee member, Dr. Subedi, offered insight that confirms the need to reckon with our personal and collective past to understand ourselves in relation to the nation’s non-innocence at present. He also suggested that refugees, like any marginalized group in the United States, wave the U.S. flag with a
mindful awareness of the implications of its meaning for self and society. Subedi (2016) offers the following:

The identity (refugee) is not only being but more of becoming. [It involves being] always careful of [one’s] refugee past and what lies ahead, knowing that US humanitarianism is not innocent. The flag waving is seeking a sense of place and belonging. It is ambivalent but is also strategic. And 4th of July is that time when marginalized people contest the narrative of nationhood (Fredrick Douglas, etc)...(Subedi, personal communication, 7/4/16)

Thus, with the idea of contesting the narrative of nationhood strategically, with ambivalence, and with an awareness of its past and future implications, Subedi’s (2016) comment also inspired me to 1) discuss the connections between my research and Frederick Douglas’ speech 2) consider examples of strategic expressions of immigrant and refugee identities 3) refer back to Kinloch and San Pedro (2014) for their discussion of becoming and belonging. Before moving into the discussion and implications section of this final chapter, I will attend to each of these ideas, connect them to the data, and address what they offer as conclusions to this dissertation.

First, Frederic Douglas. He gave the speech, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” in 1852. In their historical context, Douglas’ remarks criticize a nation celebrating freedom while simultaneously enslaving black people. He criticizes a church that justifies slavery. He denounces the hypocrisy of condemning the behavior of other countries while failing to acknowledge slavery as an inhumane and institutionalized atrocity that occurs on American soil. Reading Douglas’ powerful words confirm that there has been a long history in the United States of debating who has access to full humanity and belonging:

Fellow-citizens, pardon me, allow me to ask, why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your
national independence? Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar, and to confess the benefits and express devout gratitude for the blessings resulting from your independence to us? ...I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. — The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me...This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn...Fellow-citizens; above your national, tumultuous joy, I hear the mournful wail of millions! whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them... Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future...What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. (Foner, 1950)

Douglas’ words, spoken more than 150 years ago, highlight the durability of injustice in the United States. Although the institution of slavery that Douglas discusses has been abolished, the dynamics of entanglement within the settler-native-slave triad persist. To understand the enduring settler coloniality of United States, we as residents, citizens, and otherwise concerned individuals should confront our shared past. The narrative of a nation is expressed in words and deeds. Institutions, laws, political debates tell a story about who belongs, but, these institutions, laws, and debates do not have the final say.

Second, I wish to examine the strategic expressions of immigrant and refugee identities found in the data and other resources like Nayeri’s (2017) article “The ungrateful refugee: ‘We have no debt to repay.’” Similar to the helper-helped dynamic I described in chapter four, based on Gay’s (2007) discussion of how to include children
displaced from Katrina Hurricane, Nayeri writes about the perpetual expectation of gratitude:

As refugees, we owed them our previous identity. We had to lay it at their door like an offering, and gleefully deny it to earn our place in this new country. There would be no straddling. No third culture here. That was the key to being embraced by the population of our town, a community that openly took credit for the fact that we were still alive, but wanted to know nothing of our past...The problem, of course, was that they wanted our salvation story as a talisman, no more. No one ever asked what our house in Iran looked like, what fruits we grew in our yard, what books we read, what music we loved and what it felt like now not to understand any of the songs on the radio. No one asked if we missed our cousins or grandparents or best friends. No one asked what we did in summers or if we had any photos of the Caspian Sea. (para. 17).

Like Nayeri, Douglas evoked this idea of gratitude, asking if he had been called upon to bring an offering of gratitude before a national alter. Both authors identify the longstanding expectation that U.S. benevolence be met with constant grateful humility. Perhaps immigrants and refugees waving flags is a performance of gratitude and utterances of welcoming are a performance of power wherein the speakers have control of borders and admittance. Still, every effort to welcome New Americans is mired in the deeper narrative of belonging.

On January 27th, 2017, the Trump Administration released an executive order entitled,” Executive Order: Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States.” Under the guise of protecting the nation against terrorism, the language in the executive order positions immigrants and refugees as threatening to the safety and security of the nation (Executive Order 13769, 2017). The decision to temporarily suspend (for 120 days) the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, and the desire to reduce the number of refugees that the nation will accept in the future are also spelled out in the
executive order (Executive Order 13769, 2017). Below is some of the language that characterizes the political perspective that positions immigrants and refugees as threatening:

Numerous foreign-born individuals have been convicted or implicated in terrorism-related crimes since September 11, 2001, including foreign nationals who entered the United States after receiving visitor, student, or employment visas, or who entered through the United States refugee resettlement program. Deteriorating conditions in certain countries due to war, strife, disaster, and civil unrest increase the likelihood that terrorists will use any means possible to enter the United States. The United States must be vigilant during the visa-issuance process to ensure that those approved for admission do not intend to harm Americans and that they have no ties to terrorism. (Executive Order 13769, 2017)

Although it is not an intellectual response, reading the executive order makes me think of ORG and its staff, particularly Bunu and Luula, who might not be in the United States if similar policies had been enacted when their families moved to the U.S. However, Bunu, Luula, and I each belong in the United States along a continuum contingent upon a set of fluid factors. Like Subedi (2016) suggests, we contest the narrative of nationhood and telling our stories is one way to speak truth to power.

Belonging along a continuum of behavior and respectability requires refugees, like any marginalized group, to perform gratitude. There has always been contention about how to engage with power, express oneself, and define liberty and equality because these things mean different things to different people—just like notions of who has access to full humanity and belonging in the United States. However, in the educational spaces that Bunu, Luula, and Annie are helping to shape, there is evidence of the transcultural ways of being and knowing that contest dominant narratives about the
United States and its people. In these educational spaces, the cultural and literacy practices of immigrant and refugee youth are being honored, valued, and embedded into powerful narratives.

The history of the nation is contentious, particularly for those who ask critical questions, acknowledge the violence of settler colonialism, and refuse to participate in the erasure of indigeneity. As I conclude the writing of this dissertation, not quite a year has passed since last year’s parade. The 2017 Four of July parade has already been announced on the host organization’s website. A new administration occupies the White House along with a new official political narrative about belonging that has been told through executive orders that directly impact asylum seekers, immigrants, and refugees in our nation. These moments in time represent the social and political soundtrack of the United States that is playing a different tune than that which typified the last eight years. Some things are changing. Other things, like the ties to the triad of relations settler-native-slave within the settler colonial context of the United States have not changed.

Discussion

The research is guided by two key questions and four goals. With the goals of challenging deficit narratives about immigrants in the current political climate of the country and contributing new “teacher stories” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1997) to the literature about the professional knowledge landscape of educators in the United States, I asked the first research question: How can the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United States contribute to a more comprehensive view of this population in both academic discourse and public narratives? Then, with the goal of discussing some of the
specifics of teaching immigrant and refugee youth and asserting that educational researchers and educators can learn a lot about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee students by looking at the work of educators in community-based youth programs, I asked the following: What can educational researchers and educators, including schoolteachers and youth workers, learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of (New) American educators about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee youth? I will use this discussion section of the dissertation to recap how I set the stage to answer and/or provided an answer to the key questions in each chapter.

**Research Question One: How can the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United States contribute to a more comprehensive view of this population in both academic discourse and public narratives?**

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I contextualized the study within a dynamic political climate and couched my key questions within a larger academic discourse that provided the common language and ideological groundwork. Regarding question one, as I mentioned in chapter one, studies have shown that political discourse at the national level can impact public perception about immigrants (Timberlake & Williams, 2012). More specifically, when political leaders or presidents present historical narratives that highlight any discord that occurred with the influx of new groups, they incite angst and anti-immigrant sentiment (Bikmen, 2015). In short, the versions of history that we tell matter. Like Obama’s statements about immigration (referenced in chapter one) wherein he references history to challenge the validity of anti-immigrant sentiment, the language used in the Trump administration’s executive order—calling for a rethinking of the U.S.’s
reception of refugees (referenced above in this chapter)—matters. Political commentary impacts public perceptions of immigrants and refugees. Conversely, to the extent that narratives can serve to minimize intolerance (Jetten and Wohl, 2012 qtd. in Bikmen, 2015), the stories we (as educators and educational researchers) collect and share with our students, colleagues, and the world—also matter.

To provide a context for understanding the deep historical roots of narratives about difference, I turned to postcolonial theory in chapter two. A discussion of the epistemological origins of deficit perspectives in schools and society can arguably be found in Eurocentric colonial perspectives (Subedi & Daza, 2008). The theoretical discussion of decolonization in chapter two also provided a prelude to chapter three wherein I discussed humanizing research and decolonized methodologies.

In the third chapter, a methodological discussion underpinned by postcolonial theory and black feminist frameworks developed. I took up questions like, what can ethical, culturally sustaining research that focuses on relationships, reciprocity, and responsibility look like in practice? I discussed how to move beyond the mistakes of past research with the common ideas found in African, Indigenous, and black feminist epistemologies. I also talked about the personal and political reasons that brought me to the work, my fluid positionalities as a researcher, and my ideological place within the paradigms. My discussion of a humanizing methodological framework and decolonized methodologies contributes to my ability to answer my first key research question.

Chapter four was dedicated to analyzing the knowledge that the research participants and I produced within the expressed theoretical and methodological
parameters outlined in the preceding chapters. I put forth vignettes, shined the spotlight on small stories, and discussed how involving participants in the process of checking the content of the data helped to shape the data corpus. One way to answer a question about the value of the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United is to highlight Georgakopoulou’s (2006) discussion of small stories. Bunu’s comment about being a refugee and not needing to explain herself, Luula’s discussion about the ongoing positioning of her identity as a foreigner, and the ways in which Luula repositions her statements and herself in relation to the people with whom she is speaking are examples of identities-in-interaction and contested identities. In this final, fifth chapter I conclude the dissertation by revisiting my reflections about the dissertation’s introductory vignette, the questions it evoked, and how the dissertation data can help us, as educators and researchers, think of new ways to make meaning about our lived experiences and identities, and those of the youth with whom we work.

Research Question Two: What can educational researchers and educators, including schoolteachers and youth workers, learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of (New) American educators about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee youth?

Now, I will focus on what each of the chapters enabled me to say in response to research question two [What can educational researchers and educators, including schoolteachers and youth workers, learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of (New) American educators about meeting the needs of immigrant and refugee youth]. I used my introductory chapter to suggest the importance of educators learning
about and valuing the cultural and linguistic practices of their students (Paris & Alim, 2014). I also cited Moinolnolki and Han (2017) to indicate that while immigrant and refugee students have higher school dropout rates, the relationships they build with educators who value their ways of knowing can positively impact their performance at school. Furthermore, I referenced Lee and Hawkins’ (2008) research wherein the authors make a claim about how educators who work in community based organizations with youth can be invaluable resources for schools that want to create inclusive and culturally relevant educational environments.

In chapter two of this dissertation, framing the study with postcolonial theory and black feminist frameworks enabled me to address how multiple factors at the intersections of identity, global systems of power, history, and politics inform educational research, and this study. Postcolonial theory enabled me to discuss the deeply rooted colonial thinking that permeates the curricula and school cultures in implicit and explicit ways. Black feminist frameworks enabled me to highlight how educators of color are countering coloniality with critical care and working toward decolonization. In the United States, one only needs to inquire into racial inequities in education to recognize how assumptions about race and ability privilege white cultural ways of knowing (Sleeter, 2011; Paris & Alim, 2014). Students of color are disproportionately punished for misbehavior and marginalized (Gay, 2004) because perceived ability, often determined along a continuum of deficit, devalues non-white youth. That said, I have written elsewhere about my own educational experiences and the long-term impact of interactions with caring educators (Harris Garad, 2013). With the idea of interactions in
mind, in chapter three, I took up issues of how to learn from the (New) American educators with research methodologies focused on reciprocity, respect, and relevancy. Then, Annie’s, Bunu’s, and Luula’s vignettes in chapter four, helped me answer this second research question by shedding light on the pedagogical practices and dispositions that have helped them be effective educators of immigrant and refugee youth. In the following section I will describe in greater detail the implications of this study and what I believe educational researchers and educators, including schoolteachers and youth workers, can learn from the educators of Organization.

**Implications**

The implications of this dissertation research study primarily relate to interrelated discussions of teacher education, praxis, and ongoing theorizing about culturally sustaining pedagogy and transculturality in schools, community based organizations, and other sites of learning. This dissertation research presents an organization that prioritizes heritage language instruction, cultural enrichment for their youth, cultural competency trainings for the community, and the development of job and language skills that will serve adults, children, and entire families. Their approach to providing social services and education in classrooms and within the community speaks volumes about the ideological orientation of the organization as an entity that values sustaining cultural ways of knowing and being. To address these implications that stem from ORG and its educators, I will present three answers my abovementioned question about what educational researchers and educators can learn from the educators of immigrant and refugee youth.
To that end, I will draw on the insight offered by Annie, Bunu, and Luula, and reference the academic literature to support my points.

The first implication that can be drawn from the data involves the importance of going into the communities of our students to learn about their histories and cultural and linguistic practices. This approach engenders identifying and developing an appreciation for the rich literacy practices of the youth with whom we, as educators and educational researchers, work. Annie’s willingness to go into the homes of her students for the birthday parties and events to which she is invited, is exemplary of the learning educators must continually do; the connections Bunu develops slowly and naturally with her students is linked to her presence in the community and her interactions with her students’ parents; Luula’s appreciation of her students’ cultures based on her experiences as an immigrant are central to her pedagogical practices. Learning about the community, valuing their ways of being and knowing, and allowing that knowledge and appreciation to influence pedagogical approaches is paramount to effectively working with immigrant and refugee youth, emergent bilinguals, and students of color. Once educators have taken steps to learn about their students, they can create learning environments where diverse histories and cultural and linguistic practices are welcome. When educators learn to center the narratives of students alongside different texts, experiences, and literatures they help students to see themselves in their schoolwork.

The second implication and practical application from the data involves transculturality and the ways in which the educators at ORG model transculturation for their students. When Bunu speaks Nepali in the classroom, when Luula discusses her
identity and refuses to use only one label, and when Annie allows her globalmindedness to influence both her personal and professional decisions, they embody transculturation. Educators who are not versed in transculturality themselves can bring it into their classrooms and learning communities by giving students opportunities to be experts about their lives, exposing their students to other adults that model transculturality, and welcoming students’ multiple languages and cultures into the classroom with educational materials that depict and honor diversity. Educators can bring these concepts into their praxis by cultivating transcultural dispositions and inviting transculturality to exist in their classrooms.

The third implication and practical application that emerges from the data involves the notion of contesting narratives by telling our own stories and those of our families and friends. To the extent that postcolonial theory and academic research (Bikmen, 2015) argue in favor of counter-narratives to contest coloniality and homogenous versions of history, educators can work toward effectively meeting the needs of their immigrant and refugee students by focusing on stories that center multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual characters and heroines. These stories can come via literature, films, guest speakers, or from the students themselves as they blend their own narratives with existing texts.

One of the things that Paris (2012) considers paramount within this pedagogical framework is for educators to work toward “extending their students’ repertoires of practice to include dominant language, literacies, and other cultural practices” (Paris, 95). This is quote highlights the importance of showing students how to navigate the existent
school system by using their own ever-evolving language and literacy practices and developing the ability to use the dominant language and literacies of an academic *lingua franca*. This endeavor involves uncovering the mysteries embedded in a hidden curriculum (Apple, 1971; Kumashiro, 2009). It also involves “creating room for kids to be experts” (Orellana, 2016, p. 95) by recognizing and showcasing the value of their ways of knowing.

**Conclusion**

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I raised questions about what it means to belong in a country with a history of settler colonialism and a political narrative of exclusion. Despite my non-negotiable national identity, my lived experiences and the historical narratives that have become part of my consciousness, have taught me that my sense of belonging—like people from marginalized groups—is questionable and contestable. However, this study shows that within the borders of the United States, there are many spaces where people like me, and the staff of ORG, and the research participants with whom I worked, and the immigrant and refugee youth with whom we work, are creating spaces of belonging.

As I conclude, I again reference Kinloch and San Pedro’s (2014) discussion of becoming and belonging in research. Their discussion of fluid positions in research suggest that while knowledge is being constructed with research relationships, so, too, are we as researchers, ever-changing in the processes of researching, teaching, and learning. The theories, methodologies, articles, and data that are discussed in this research are a testament to how the study has shaped me. When I started the study, I was concerned
about doing research outside of my cultural community. I discovered that I was at home within a community of likeminded individuals working in solidarity toward social change. I found one place where I belong.

In June Jordan’s essay, “We Are All Refugees” the acclaimed poet and essayist asks, “What if we declared ourselves perpetual refugees in solidarity with all refugees needing safe human harbor from violence and domination and injustice and inequality?” (Jordan, 1998). She continues, “We are all refugees horribly displaced from a benign and welcoming community. And the question is: Can we soon enough create the asylum our lives will certainly wither without?” More than a question, Jordan has put forth a call to create ideological, physical, and heart spaces where everyone can belong. The key to creating those spaces can be found in our stories.
References


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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Interview questions

One-on-one interview

1. Tell me who you are.

2. Why did you enter your chosen profession?
   a. Did you consider entering into a teacher education program to earn certification to teach in schools in the United States?

3. What do you know or what have you learned about working with immigrant and refugee youth?
   a. What are some of the special aspects of working with immigrant and refugee youth?
   b. What are some of the challenges of working with immigrant and refugee youth?
   c. What are some of the teaching strategies that you use?

4. How does your knowledge of your students impact your teaching?

5. How does your schooling experience compare to the experiences of the students you teach?

6. How has your teaching style changed (if at all) since you started working at this organization?
7. What do you think schools and classroom teachers in US public schools could learn from you about working with immigrant and refugee youth?

8. What questions and ideas should I consider with my research at this organization?

**Group Interview (site-specific)**

1. Tell me who you are.

2. Tell me about what you do here at the organization.

3. Tell me about the population of students specific to your site.
   
   a. What makes your site unique?

4. What are some of your strategies for working with your students?

5. Can you tell me more about the cultural enrichment activities you do here?

6. Can you tell me more about the academic activities you do here?

7. What do you think schools and classroom teachers in US public schools could learn from you about working with immigrant and refugee youth?

**Focus Group (for group interviews across sites)**

1. How do your stories compare to the stories of students with whom you work?

2. What makes this group of educators unique?

3. How does the focus on cultural enrichment differ at the different sites?

4. What do you think schools and classroom teachers in US public schools could learn from you about working with immigrant and refugee youth?
Appendix B: Focus Group Follow Up Handout - Side A

| "Global Pedagogies: Learning from Immigrant Educators about Teaching Immigrant Youth" |
| OR Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning with the "(New) American" Educator |
| Brooke Harris Garad |

| ABSTRACT |
| This study focuses on the stories and teaching practices of educators working with immigrant and refugee youth at a community-based program. With the goal of contributing to the discourse about culturally relevant and culturally sustaining pedagogies, my data collection methods include participant observation, reflexive journaling, interviews, and focus group discussions. My theoretical framework is informed by postcolonial and black feminist theories while my approach for analyzing the data is grounded in critical narrative analysis. |

| GOAL |
| Practical applications for teacher education: What do teachers need to know about working with immigrant and refugee youth? |

| RESEARCH DESIGN |
| Focus on 2 sites and 3 focal research participants. Present the stories of 3 focal participants in conversation with everyone who participated, field notes, and external sources. |

| LIMITATIONS |
| Scale: Focus on only 2 sites Participants: Relationships affected participation. Everyone who chose not to participate was born and spent considerable time outside of the United States. This begs questions about cross-cultural communication and insider/outsider positions in research. |

**Make notes here:**
Appendix B: Focus Group Follow Up Handout - Side B

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What can educational researchers, schoolteachers, and other practitioners learn from the pedagogies and epistemologies of immigrant, refugee and (New) American educators about meeting the needs—and sustaining the cultures—of immigrant and refugee students?

2. How can the stories of immigrant and refugee educators in the United States contribute to a more comprehensive view of this population in both academic discourse and proverbial narratives?

**KEY TERMS**

- Who are you?
- Who are we?
- What does it mean to be an:
  - Immigrant
  - Refugee
  - New American
  - (New) American

**FOCAL PARTICIPANTS**


3. Maiti: non-US born, identifies as Nepali. Maiti’s voice is an important voice in her community, but it is one among many. The experiences and perspectives in New American community are diverse.

**THEMES FROM THE DATA**

- pedagogy
- perception
- language
- culture
- immigrant experience
- home country
- family

Make notes here: