

**The Perceptions of High School Students from Refugee, Immigrant, and Visiting
Professional Families about Their School Experiences in Pittsburgh**

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This phenomenological investigation examined how high school students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families perceived their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh. For more than 4.8 million (9.5%) students in the United States, English is not the language that they speak, read, or write. This statistic does not include the many students who were born abroad, have learned English, but stand out amongst their American classmates because they remain ethnically and culturally diverse. This study had two main foci. The first was to understand these students' lived experiences from their own perspectives with an emphasis on their interpretations of the school contexts in which they participated. The second was on how the conceptual perspectives of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging provided frameworks for analyzing and contextualizing students' perceptions.

Seven high school students, who attended four public schools in Pittsburgh, were involved in three in-depth phenomenological interviews and ongoing two-way text conversations during a six-week period. Using these data, I created portraits of each student, foregrounding their voices and experiences while also integrating my own observations. I present suggestions for the educational community to consider in order to address some of the difficult issues and obstacles these students identified. By creating awareness of these, I anticipate that some solutions might be developed and then implemented. If this occurs, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse

students might feel that their needs are recognized, discover that they are valued by their school community, and also achieve academic success.

Key words: refugee students, immigrant students, visiting professional students, phenomenological study, portraiture, student perceptions, high school students, family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, translanguaging

Table of Contents

Preface.....	xiii
1.0 Introduction.....	1
2.0 Review of Literature.....	4
2.1 Criteria for Exclusion and Inclusion of Research Studies.....	4
2.2 Family Literacy.....	5
2.3 Funds of Knowledge.....	11
2.4 Third Space.....	21
2.5 Translanguaging.....	37
2.6 Other Issues in the Literature.....	38
2.6.1 Visiting Professionals.....	38
2.6.2 Investment vs Motivation.....	40
2.7 Existing Obstacles for ELLs.....	43
2.8 Possible Supports.....	43
2.9 Potential Innovations and Initiatives Informed by Student Perceptions.....	44
3.0 Methods.....	48
3.1 Phenomenology and Portraiture.....	48
3.1.1 The Role of the Researcher in Portraiture.....	50
3.2 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives.....	51
3.3 Participants and Contexts.....	52
3.4 Data Sources.....	57
3.4.1 Interview protocols.....	57

3.4.2 Key Informants	61
3.4.3 Informal two-way text conversations	61
3.5 Data Analysis	63
3.5.1 Constructing the Portraits.....	64
3.6 Connecting the Perspectives	66
3.7 Researcher Positionality	66
4.0 Findings.....	69
4.1 Westbrook High School	69
4.2 A Portrait of Brisha.....	71
4.2.1 Daughter of a Nepali Refugee Family	71
4.3 Brisha’s Perceptions	74
4.3.1 “Just me in the corner...”	74
4.3.2 Nepali Connections	78
4.3.3 “I wish [my teachers] could like talk to me in person”.....	80
4.3.4 “Fire some teachers.”	82
4.3.5 “Just recognize us...”	83
4.3.6 “I wish they knew...”	84
4.4 A Portrait of Yashmeet	84
4.4.1 Son of a Nepali Refugee Family	84
4.5 Yashmeet’s Perceptions	87
4.5.1 “All of my computer teachers I have great relationships with...”	87
4.5.2 “If I just get respected, I don’t care if I get accepted or not.”	89

4.5.3 “They don’t prepare us for the future. We just have to learn for ourselves.”	94
4.6 A Portrait of Femi	97
4.6.1 Daughter of a Rwandan Refugee Family	97
4.7 Femi’s Perceptions.....	99
4.7.1 “We only have a little bit of time, but the time you have, make everyone understand.”	100
4.7.2 “But they just tell you the answer and walk away...”	104
4.7.3 “...But now that you see me, now you are going to have a good day.”	106
4.7.4 “If they are born here that they have to help the people not born here....”	108
4.8 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives for Students’ Perceptions and Experiences at Westbrook High School.....	110
4.8.1 Funds of Knowledge.....	110
4.8.2 Third Space.....	111
4.9 Chandler High School	112
4.10 A Portrait of Mariana	114
4.10.1 Daughter of a Guatemalan Immigrant Family	114
4.11 Mariana’s Perceptions	118
4.11.1 “I don’t feel safe in school.”	118
4.11.2 “This is a really good girl. She’s from Guatemala.”	119
4.11.3 “You’re ugly, you’re black, and you’re Hispanic.”	122
4.11.4 “I don’t like being friends with Hispanics.”	125

4.12 A Portrait of Esperanza	127
4.12.1 Daughter of an immigrant family	127
4.13 Esperanza’s Perceptions	128
4.13.1 “The problem was that I didn’t know English either!”	129
4.13.2 “Yeah she is from the same continent, from Costa Rica, and I’m from El Salvador.”	131
4.13.3 “Say hi to me, greet me, and try to talk to me more...”	132
4.13.4 “There was one that when he heard me speaking in English would make fun of me.”	135
4.13.5 “There came a moment when I didn’t want that anymore.”	136
4.13.6 “The States is like a mosaic of different people...”	138
4.14 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives for Students’ Perceptions and Experiences at Chandler High School.....	139
4.14.1 Translanguaging.....	139
4.14.2 Funds of Knowledge.....	140
4.14.3 Third Space.....	140
4.15 Fairfield High School	141
4.16 A Portrait of Mansur.....	142
4.16.1 Son of visiting professionals	142
4.17 Mansur’s Perceptions.....	144
4.17.1 “That’s a big way they do segregation these days.”	144
4.17.2 “I wouldn’t be able to survive living in one city for my entire life.”	147
4.17.3 “I mean immigrants, we kind of got this bond going on.”	153

4.17.4 “I wouldn’t call that diversity.”	154
4.17.5 “How am I actually going to fix things?”	156
4.18 Kingsfield High School.....	157
4.19 A Portrait of Riku.....	158
4.19.1 Son of a visiting professional family	158
4.20 Riku’s Perceptions.....	161
4.20.1 “First I was scared. I was scared to death.”	161
4.20.2 “I think my most responsibility is for to study.”	162
4.20.3 “My brain just kind of almost blows up”	163
4.20.4 “I wish my teachers knew I can’t speak English very well.”	165
4.20.5 “Just don’t be shy. American people were so much friendlier than I thought.”	166
4.20.6 “Oh my God, I have so many more Indian friends than U.S.-born friends.”	170
4.21 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives for Visiting Professional Students’ Perceptions and Experiences	171
4.21.1 Translanguaging.....	171
4.21.2 Lack of Funds of Knowledge and Third Spaces.....	171
5.0 Discussion.....	173
5.1 Themes and Recommendations.....	173
5.1.1 Racism and Intolerance	173
5.1.2 Academic Support.....	177
5.2 Conceptual Frameworks.....	179

5.2.1 Family Literacy	180
5.2.2 Funds of Knowledge.....	180
5.2.3 Third Space.....	181
5.2.4 Translanguaging.....	181
5.3 Teacher Professional Developments and Education Preparation Programs.....	182
5.4 Limitations and Importance of This Work	183
5.5 Data Sources and Analysis.....	184
5.6 Portraiture.....	186
Appendix A: Interview Protocols (7-12 th grade – secondary students).....	189
Appendix B: Texting Prompts Protocol.....	196
Appendix C: Interview Protocol with Key Informants	198
Bibliography	200

List of Figures

Figure 1: Student participants and schools	55
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Preface

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1.0 Introduction

For more than 4.8 million (9.5%) students in the United States, English is not the language that they speak, read, or write (Allison & Rehm, 2007; Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Davies, 2008). The languages that these students do speak are diverse. According to the National Center for Education Statistics: “Spanish was the home language of 3.7 million ELL students in 2014–15, representing 77.1 percent of all ELL students and 7.6 percent of all public K–12 students. Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese were the next most common home languages (spoken by approximately 114,400, 101,300, and 81,200 students, respectively).” (<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=96>).

Many of these students are immigrants and refugees or the children of immigrants and refugees who often experience discrimination and other cultural or linguistic obstacles at school (Allen et al., 2016; Allison & Rehm, 2007; Bigelow, 2008; Davies, 2008; Duff, 2001; Park, 2011; Van Sluys & Reiner, 2006).

Allen et al. (2016) discussed ways that Somali, Hmong, and Latino youth experienced discrimination and cultural obstacles at a school in Minnesota. The researchers conducted focus groups with these young people and also with the teachers and adults who worked with them. Sometimes students did not feel that their cultures were respected and understood. For example, if they were not able to complete their homework because of a family funeral that lasted three days, they wanted their teacher to understand and give them an extension. Some students also mentioned how teachers showed intolerance for their religious practices. They reported times where they requested to leave class to pray, but the teacher would insist that they not leave until class was done.

Refugee or immigrant students also experienced linguistic obstacles, and Duff (2001) discusses how this often occurs when they are in mainstream classes. They are rarely called upon in class and “they were likely to be placed in ‘low track’ mainstream classes, that were academically less demanding and also intentionally less varied than ‘high track’ classes” (p. 107).

There is research suggesting that refugee and immigrant students would greatly benefit from instructional approaches that support their academic achievement and sense of belonging to their school community (Allen et al., 2016; Cummins, 2005; O’Brien et al., 2014; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Pryor, 2001; Sugarman, 2010). For example, Cummins (2005) describes an instructional approach that supports linguistically diverse students in multilingual classrooms in Toronto, Canada, by being allowed to create “identity texts.” The students were able to make choices in their learning experiences by choosing the type of project to create, the topic that interested them, and the choice to collaborate with other students. They would often create bilingual products that the teacher would have them publish online or present them to the class.

Pryor (2001) explained how refugee and immigrant families enjoyed sharing their stories which helped their classmates develop an understanding of who they are and what they have been through. Understanding some of the hardship and trauma the students had suffered helped their teachers and classmates relate to them more, which helped them feel more like they belonged to their school communities.

There is an urgent need to address the linguistically and culturally diverse student population because by the year 2020 almost half of the students in U. S. public schools will be students who come from families for whom English is not their first language (Nieto, 2002). This reality is critical for educational administrators and teachers as well as for teacher educators who need research to inform their understanding of these students and to suggest ways to facilitate full

participation in their school communities. This need motivated the present investigation which focuses on the perceptions of high school students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families about their school experiences in Pittsburgh. There is a growing population of ELL students in Pittsburgh, who are mostly from Nepal, Burma, Latin America, and Africa.

In order to understand the perceptions of these students, I reviewed literature providing conceptual perspectives for framing them.

2.0 Review of Literature

I conducted a review of literature in order to answer the following questions:

1. What research has been conducted with students who are immigrants, refugees, and children of visiting professionals for whom English is not their first language in order to identify their perceptions and describe their experiences of the instruction and support they receive in public schools?
2. What conceptual perspectives inform investigations of such perceptions and experiences?

2.1 Criteria for Exclusion and Inclusion of Research Studies

I conducted searches for the most relevant information needed to answer these questions using Google Scholar, the University of Pittsburgh's library search engines, and the ERIC database. The key words used in these online searches included: ESL students, ELL students, refugee students, immigrant students, multilingual students, visiting professional ESL families, sojourner students, ESL families' perceptions, and ESL in U.S. schools/classrooms.

My initial search produced a corpus of 75 articles. I triaged the set using four criteria. The first criterion was that articles had to be written in English- with a focus on the U.S. school system. There were a few notable exceptions with studies featuring ELL students' experiences in Canadian schools. A second criterion was that articles had to focus on K-12 ELL students' and/or their parents' experiences with the U.S. school system. A third criterion for inclusion was that articles had to be published within a 20-year period. A fourth criterion was that articles had to be published

in respected peer review journals, with the exceptions of a few educational/technical reports. Applying these criteria resulted in a corpus of 33 articles.

My initial review of these articles revealed four important conceptual frameworks informing the design and conduct of the reported research. These frameworks were family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging. These frameworks are particularly relevant to my study because refugee and immigrant students continuously negotiate differing experiences in their homes, communities, and American schools. They also recognize how refugee and immigrant families are often marginalized by society due to racism, poverty, and low proficiency in English, and provide counter-narratives to prevalent deficit perspectives that still exist in American schools. The frameworks inform the literacy practices and educational context of culturally diverse students. The following sections provide descriptions of the frameworks, as well as the methods and findings of relevant studies that made use of them in investigating the perceptions and experiences of immigrant and refugee students who attend public schools in the United States.

2.2 Family Literacy

Family literacy is a construct used to describe parents and children--or more broadly--adults and children- learning and building skills together. It can apply to all families and all literacy activities that take place within the home and community, and is not limited to school-like activities. A family literacy perspective recognizes that children begin to learn literacy prior to formal schooling, and that family contexts shape literacy development.

Representative of this focus are five studies of importance to this literature review.

It is important to note that studies specifically focused on family literacy are relatively new, taking place over the last three decades. However, Morrow et al. (1993) provided a historical perspective on earlier approaches to family literacy and stated, “that as early as 1908 in the United States, Huey suggested that children’s learning in school begins with parents reading to them at home” (p. 194). They argued that while it was important for parents to help their children learn to read, that “with vast changes in the demographics of schools and communities, family literacy needs to be approached in a much broader manner” (p. 194). The purpose of their article was to draw attention to family literacy so that the educational research community would recognize the importance of the family’s role in children’s literacy development. They claimed, “If we do not attend to the home when we discuss literacy development, whatever strategies we carry out in school will never be completely successful...Schools need to view family literacy as part of the curriculum” (p. 194). According to Morrow and her colleagues, “family literacy must be studied from the widest possible perspective by respecting cultures, for instance, in which no books exist but in which storytelling is a common practice...” (p. 195).

In a review of initiatives related to family literacy, Morrow et al. identified three distinct categories: (1) home-school partnership programs, (2) intergenerational literacy programs, and (3) research that explores uses of literacy within families. One conclusion from their investigation was that some seemingly well-intentioned programs functioned within a deficit view focused on how to stop what they identified as a “cycle of illiteracy,” and did not take into account family literacy events that are not school-like (p. 196). Morrow et al. concluded that across all kinds of initiatives, the richness of refugee and immigrant families’ heritages and experiences were not being taken into account. Rather, they emphasized that “schools strongly emphasize how parents can learn from the school but give little attention to how schools might learn from the parents” (p. 197).

Morrow and her colleagues posed a question of particular relevance to this review which was: How can schools provide programs that take into account the needs of culturally diverse families, whose literacies may not look the same as school-like activities? (p. 200).

The impact of family culture on children's literacy development was a critical insight in Heath's (1983) ethnographic investigations of literacy practices in three communities in the Carolina Piedmonts. Heath spent ten years (1969-1978) living and working in the communities she was studying. She conducted countless observations in the homes and communities, interviewed various participants, and recorded and interpreted conversations between adults and children. Heath discovered that the ways in which white middle class families used literacy at home were the ways most valued by schools. Therefore, the children from these families experienced more academic success than the families from the white and black working class communities.

Like Morrow and Heath, Auerbach (1989) proposed a "broader definition" of family literacy that acknowledged the family's social reality and focused on the family's strengths. She presented the dilemma of Rosa, a composite individual meant to represent the voices of many immigrant and refugee parents who try to help their children succeed in school even as they are struggling to adjust to a new culture and language. Auerbach critiqued the narrow definition of family literacy focusing on "school-like activities within the family setting," and asserted that the notion of family literacy should instead include "a range of activities and practices that are integrated into the fabric of daily life, [and in which] the social context becomes a rich resource that can inform rather than impede learning" (p. 166).

Echoing Heath, Auerbach claimed that "one explanation for the relative success in school of middle-class Anglo students is that their home environments provide them with the kinds of

literacy skills and practices needed to do well in school” (p. 168). She discussed how family literacy programs run by schools often have an agenda to transmit the culture of school into the families’ literacy practices. Recognizing how “a transmission of a school practices” model didn’t match the realities of the participants’ lives, Auerbach (1989) identified five false assumptions that contributed to a deficit hypothesis. These include: (a) language-minority students come from homes where education is not valued or supported, (b) family literacy involves a one-way transfer of skills from parents to children, (c) success is determined by the parents’ ability to provide school-like activities and experiences in the home, (d) school practices are adequate and that home factors determine who succeeds, and (e) parents’ own problems get in the way of providing positive family literacy contexts.

Edwards and Turner are two respected family literacy researchers who experienced the reality of Auerbach’s five false assumptions first-hand during a collaboration with Baker Elementary, an underachieving urban elementary school. Their focus is on conducting studies which examine culturally responsive literacy education with minority students and their families. For the duration of their three-year study at Baker, Edwards et al. (2001) could not mobilize this school community to foster an authentic partnership between teachers and parents that would benefit the students’ literacy development. One of their interventions involved asking teachers for the names of students they were the most concerned about, and then creating “parent stories” from those students’ family members. These “parent stories” were personal narratives gained from open-ended conversations or interviews about traditional and nontraditional early literacy activities and experiences in the home” (p. 148). Showing teachers the videos of these stories was intended to highlight the positive practices and unique assets of each household. However, even though the teachers and school community seemed open and well-intentioned toward this

intervention, the researchers' efforts failed because the teachers did not use the information about the families to impact their instruction or change their mindsets. Instead, researchers found that teachers had deep rooted beliefs in folk theories, which can be related to Auerbach's false assumptions that place the responsibility and blame for the students' at-risk status on the students and their families. In particular, the beliefs of the teachers and administrators at Baker Elementary reflected Auerbach's fourth false assumption that school practices are adequate, and that home factors determine who succeeds.

Although Edwards and her colleagues observed a lack of organization for instruction and an absence of coordination between grade levels, the teachers remained resistant to the notion that they should make any adjustments to their instruction methods and strategies. Teachers would comment how they "did everything possible and nothing works with these kids' or that they had 'already discussed this with the parents and nothing happened'" (p. 149).

After three years of observations, Edwards et al. found that despite the numerous resources that Baker Elementary had access to, the school was 'stuck' because there was a disconnect in the instructional network, the continued belief in folk theories, and a lack of shared vision for change. They emphasized that "the most important lesson we learned as professionals who would like to be of some assistance to schools like Baker is that attending to cultural issues and practices is every bit as important as worrying about curriculum, classroom practices, or professional development activities" (p. 149).

The results of a five-year ethnographic study conducted by Orellana et al. (2003) in four immigrant communities addressed Auerbach's second assumption, by claiming that family literacy was not a transfer of skills from parents to children, but rather that many U.S. immigrant children use their knowledge to translate texts and "speak" for their parents who are still learning English.

Orellana and her colleagues examined the family literacy practice of translating and meaning-making that frequently occurred in immigrant and refugee households in order to understand the contexts of when and how children took on the role of translator for their adult family members. They created the term “para-phrasing” which “deliberately invokes a play on the Spanish word *para* and its English translation (‘for’), to name what children do when they ‘phrase’ things for others and in *order to accomplish social goals*” (p. 15).

Although some scholars (Auerbach, 1989; Panferou, 2010; Tilghman-Osborne et al., 2016) suggest that the roles of parents and children become complicated because parents are dependent on their child to translate for them, Orellana et al. presented this phenomenon as a type of partnership where meaning-making is done co-operatively, and has a distinct purpose. Their focus was to study a variety of private and public situations when eighteen youth, who identified as “designated translators” for their families, would translate documents or spoken language. The researchers used qualitative methods to collect data through observations, interviews, surveys, and journal entries kept by the participants. When they reported their findings, they provided detailed samples of these entries to help the reader understand what was involved in these para-phrasing practices.

Orellana and her colleagues then categorized these data into different domains and genres. Some examples of domains in which students translated for adult family members are: educational, medical, financial, religious, and legal/state. Some examples of genres of family literacy para-phrasing were letters, forms, advertisements, labels, news, and reference guides/manuals. To illustrate how they analyzed the data, the researchers provided a detailed description of a situation in which Adriana, one of their young participants, tried to translate a jury summons her mother received in the mail. Although she was more proficient in English, “her mother knows more about

what juries are and how they work” (p. 25). Between the two of them, they were able to decipher the text, and this demonstrates how these daily family literacy practices differ from those of typical middle class white students, and are not a one way transfer of skills from adult to child. The findings from this study point to the importance of bilingual students developing multiple literacies, and the researchers advocate for teachers to make use of this ability at school as part of the curriculum. If their specialized funds of knowledge (to be discussed in the next section) are used in the classroom, it can create a supportive learning space for them.

The researchers concluded that “family literacy programs that focus on effective and frequent use of activities such as shared book reading and language play in contexts that build on ecologically valid family routines can make a meaningful contribution to closing the vocabulary gap” (p. 409).

A family literacy perspective has largely disappeared from the literacy literature. Once this framework advocated for educators to move away from the deficit perspective and instead to focus on the strengths and assets culturally diverse families have to contribute to the academic achievement of the children, funds of knowledge has become the preferred and more comprehensive perspective.

2.3 Funds of Knowledge

As a conceptual framework, funds of knowledge is especially relevant to this literature review as it provides a counter to the deficit view of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The common belief is that immigrant and refugee students lack resources such as language proficiency and parental support which would contribute to their children’s academic success (De

Gaetano, 2007; Gonzalez et al., 1995). In contrast, “Funds of knowledge refers to the families’ historically developed and accumulated strategies (skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household’s functioning and well-being” (Gonzalez et al., 1995, p. 446; Kinney, 2015, p. 4). Examples of such funds of knowledge range from information about “types of trade, business, and finance on both sides of the U.S./Mexico border to how families develop social networks and share resources with each other” (Gonzalez et al., p. 447). A funds of knowledge perspective emphasizes the reality that family literacy practices within the households of refugee and immigrant students are valuable and important for schools to build upon.

Moll has conducted numerous studies which have significantly contributed to the funds of knowledge framework (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005; Moll, 2015). He is a prominent researcher in this field, who has frequently collaborated with fellow University of Arizona professor Gonzales (Gonzales et al., 1995). His research on funds of knowledge emphasizes the study of household and classroom practices with working class Mexican families in Arizona. The primary purpose of this work is “to develop innovations in teaching that draw on the knowledge and skills found in local households... (and) organize instruction that far exceeds in quality the rote-like instruction these children commonly encounter in schools” (Moll et al., 2005).

Funds of knowledge emerged as an important construct with the publication of an extensive ethnographic study conducted by Gonzalez, Moll, and their colleagues (1995). In addition to that study, I chose four studies which provide important information about how this conceptual framework informed research efforts.

Gonzalez et al. (1995) recognized that a deficit perspective of immigrant students served as a way for teachers and schools to justify lower expectations for their academic success, and designed a study to see if such attitudes might change as a result of their experiences in an

intervention. The participants were four female elementary school teacher-researchers who conducted household visits with two to three of their students, ranging from kindergarten through grade five. All four teachers were fluent in Spanish; two were Mexican-American and two were Anglo.

Researchers and classroom teachers used qualitative research methods such as field note writing, interviews (using a questionnaire as guide), and informal conversations to collect, identify, and document the funds of knowledge in students' families. A secondary goal was that the teachers would form meaningful relationships with the students' families that would challenge deficit-based attitudes and behaviors. In addition, teachers were asked to keep personal journals to document their experiences, and the researchers set up study groups where teachers could freely discuss their changing views and opinions about their students and their families.

Gonzalez and her colleagues used excerpts from teacher journals and interviews to share emerging changes in teacher attitudes, and provided four detailed case studies to present their findings. The teachers emphasized that their purpose for being involved in the study was to become better educators. Although the researchers noted that they did not focus on the classroom application of funds of knowledge in their study, they observed how the teachers used information that they had discovered about their students' households to find elements that could be used in math, science, language arts, and history units. As a result of Gonzalez et al.'s research on the funds of knowledge, other teacher-researcher studies have been conducted to learn more about this conceptual framework in order to inform educational practices.

A project involving refugee and immigrant students engaged them in creating *identity texts* and was described by Cummins et al. (2005). This project took place in several multi-lingual classrooms in Toronto, Canada. To create an identity text, students select any topic relevant to

their lives or that they are interested in. They research the topic and produce a product that demonstrates their learning. Usually these projects are lengthy and require substantial time to complete, so it helps to make them interdisciplinary with time allotted for work in more than one class. The projects can be written, spoken, visual, musical, dramatic, or multimodal. Students have choices, and can even work collaboratively with their peers, especially if they can support each other in their native languages. Examples were provided of how *identity texts* could be successfully implemented with elementary, middle school, and high school students. Once finished, students often publish their works online or as a book.

Through excerpts from interviews, Cummins et al. described how immigrant and refugee students often described feeling left out, and struggled to participate in learning activities. Creating identity texts is a dramatic contrast to what Cummins and his colleagues called “that scripted transmission-oriented pedagogy which tends to be both superficial and passive, [and] fails to build on ELL students’ pre-existing cultural and linguistic knowledge” (p. 38). The researchers contrast this culturally responsive approach to approaches that involve “scripted reading programs that tightly control all aspects of teacher-student interaction to ensure that teachers and students stay ‘on task’ because of high stakes testing. This results in a “one size fits all program that will not provide what they need because it reduces the opportunities for literacy engagement in the classroom” (p. 3-4). The researchers argued that ELL students’ cultural knowledge and language abilities are important resources in eliciting academic engagement. Students will engage academically to the extent that instruction affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning.

Studies by Pryor (2001), Kinney (2015), and Moje and her colleagues (2004) also advocate for the use of culturally and linguistically diverse students’ funds of knowledge in the classroom.

Pryor's (2001) study took place in a small school district where the two largest immigrant and refugee populations were Eastern European and Arab. Her primary focus was on the voices of these immigrant and refugee parents and their children, and how they described their experiences in U.S schools. The research team visited schools and agencies in this community for more than a year, interviewing 35 recent immigrant and refugee adults, 40 children of immigrants and refugees (both elementary and high school students), 13 established residents, 15 staff, and 10 community leaders.

From the data collected during observations, interviews and focus groups, Pryor explored several themes, and described the data drawn from and the perspectives of the parents, children, community, leaders, and school leaders. Upon completion of the study, she stated that, "While immigrant and refugee students need to learn from us, they also have much to teach us about other countries, customs and peoples" (p. 282). She acknowledged that the hardships many of these immigrant and refugee families have faced enabled them to develop resiliency and the ability to overcome obstacles and hardships. Pryor's findings point to the importance of using their funds of knowledge to benefit the classroom, school and district in significant ways. For example, the refugee and immigrant families who were interviewed enjoyed sharing their stories with others, and found it liberating and affirming. These types of personal stories are educational, and can benefit all students who hear them. Pryor mentioned that these valuable stories could also be incorporated into a schoolwide project.

Being made aware of some of the hardships and traumas refugee and immigrant students have experienced, can also help their classmates develop an understanding of who they are. One instance when this understanding would have proved helpful was a situation Pryor described,

“When the school bell rang, a startled Arab refugee girl darted under her desk; she had been conditioned by the air raid drills she had experienced in her homeland” (p. 277).

One sixteen-year-old mentioned that she appreciated that her school was so diverse, and how she wanted to be friends with everyone to learn about their countries and cultures. High school students on the Multicultural Council petitioned the school board and established a peace education course, which highlighted local and global current events. This was an exemplary case of how culturally diverse students used their funds of knowledge to not only express themselves, but to “tackle oppression and injustice head-on through nonviolent activism” (p. 281). This council went on to launch a statewide campaign to have a peace studies curriculum in every school. In addition, Pryor discussed how all the district elementary schools hired bilingual parents as paraprofessionals to welcome newly immigrated families and serve as interpreters. This not only accessed the funds of knowledge of the parents, who could use their language skills to help others to communicate, but also enabled them to feel valued at the school campuses.

Kinney (2015) designed a case study with five participating families designed to answer two research questions: (a) What funds do culturally and linguistically diverse elementary students and their families possess? (b) How are these funds of knowledge employed by household members and for what purposes? This study took place several miles outside a large city in the Midwestern United States, with participants from a middle and working class suburb in two elementary schools. Approximately 10% of the student population in the district was born outside of the United States, with the majority being from Latin America or Asia.

The five third and fourth grade participants were former students of the researcher, and she employed ethnographic observations of her participants in home, school, and community contexts in order “to create a complex portrait of each household which served as her unit of analysis” (p.

12). Four codes emerged from her analysis: (a) The Strategizing Household (behaviors and activities to sustain the household), (b) Interactional Patterns (social and familial networks), (c) Domains of Knowledge (knowledge, skills and talents), and (d) Cultural Practices (linguistic, literate, religious, and cultural traditions and events (p. 14).

Kinney discovered that all the households possessed a range of knowledge and skills that were related to labor histories or those of extended family members, and provided several examples. For instance, there was one family that had a background in farming, with several relatives running their own farms in Mexico. In addition, some of the fathers in the households were proficient in computer programming and repair and grant writing, while others were experienced in construction and car repair. Some of the mothers in the households were skilled in cooking, sewing, gardening and herbal remedies, while others had knowledge in the area of nursing, and the ability to read, write and speak in English and Spanish. Also, one of the mothers had been trained to cook for the family restaurant at a young age, and insisted on using all fresh food when preparing meals for her family.

Another important observation that Kinney made was that two of the boys in the study were not being given the same educational opportunities as native English speakers, and this had to do with them being labeled as English Language Learners. She provided the example of two students (both classified as ELLs), who demonstrated success in school according to their standardized test scores and their report cards. Even though they had shown progress, they were still being pulled out of class for intervention services and were placed in below grade level reading groups. Kinney was aware that this might be occurring because the school district was concerned about the state standardized test scores for their ELL subgroup, which had previously been the

lowest. She felt this illustrated that “there were practices in place at an institutional level that were rooted in deficit perspectives” (p. 19).

Kinney also discussed how most teachers across the country still do not tend to share the same culture as the refugee and immigrant students they teach, as their socioeconomic, cultural, racial, and linguistic experiences and backgrounds often differ greatly from those of their students. These are “other people’s children” (Delpit, 1995), therefore it is important for them to understand the funds of knowledge that exist (p. 8). She views this as being accomplished through intentional professional development.

Moje and her colleagues (2004) took the conceptual framework of funds of knowledge and connected it to the third space conceptual framework in their study of 30 middle school Latino/a middle school students. They examined how students’ funds of knowledge “shape ways of knowing, reading, writing, talking—what Gee (2006) called Discourses—that youth use or try to learn in secondary schools. Moje et al. wanted to integrate the funds of knowledge and the Discourses drawn from different spaces for the “construction of ‘third space’ that merges the ‘first space’ of people’s home, community, and peer networks with the ‘second space’ of the discourses they encounter in more formalized institutions such as work, school, or church (Moje et al., 2004, p.41).

The bilingual and biliterate participants (20 females and 10 males), ages 12-15, lived in different low income or working-class neighborhoods within a Latino/a community in Detroit, Michigan. They volunteered for the 5-year study in which the researchers enacted science curricula in their two-way bilingual (Spanish/English) immersion school.

Moje et al. collected data in the classroom and in the community, using interviews, field observations, surveys, and documents such as curriculum materials, artifacts and photos of city,

home, and school spaces. The researchers' data analysis took place individually and at weekly team meetings, and their findings demonstrated that "everyday funds of knowledge and Discourse could be further expanded into *family, community, peer, and popular culture* funds of knowledge and Discourses" (p. 50). Moje et al. sought to connect these four everyday funds of knowledge to the students' experiences in science class. Throughout the study, the researchers found instances when these connections were present. For example, during a science class discussion on environmental issues involving air and water quality, two young women used their family funds of knowledge and Discourse to mention how their fathers worked as landscapers and how these issues affected them. Two other students joined this discussion based on their knowledge of the farms their families in Mexico owned, which also showed how their funds of knowledge were transnational.

Community funds of knowledge and Discourse were evident in a case where the connection was made between activism and science learning. Moje and her colleagues discussed how a neighborhood alliance created a survey on the quality of air in order to gather information for a lawsuit against an industry that operated nearby. Students not only saw community members engaged in science-related community activism, but they also saw how the activism directly related to their science unit about air quality.

Peer funds of knowledge and Discourse were seen as particularly helpful in creating a third space in science class. Moje et al. provided an example about how teenage boys would perform dramatic stunts on their bikes when their parents were not around. This connected to the science unit that addressed the physics of wearing bike helmets, but the facts didn't contribute to them changing their mind to wear the helmets if they didn't want to. Another example provided was how students often 'messed around' on the Internet with their friends, but often did not know how

to use Internet tools to locate relevant information for science projects. It was suggested that teachers “bridge their out-of-school knowledges and strategies to in-school activities, but also serve to demonstrate how different Discourse communities rely on different communication conventions” (p. 58).

The fourth everyday funds of knowledge that Moje and her colleagues discovered was popular cultural funds of knowledge and Discourse. Music, print magazines, news media, and television and movies were the ones they specifically discussed. Television and movies were the popular cultural fund that researchers saw an obvious connection to the science class. Students would refer to movies such as *Erin Brockovich* (Soderbergh 2000), while discussing air and water quality issues. They would also make references to a segment on Fox News called “Problem Solvers,” in which reporters would identify and help to solve community problems. Even an episode of *The Simpsons*, which was based on a topic in an article about growing square watermelons, was discussed in science class. Moje and her colleagues mentioned “that the dominance of popular cultural texts in our data set alone suggests that building third spaces via popular cultural funds may be beneficial” (p. 64). They recognized the challenge that teachers, researchers, and curriculum developers have in trying to incorporate the many different knowledges, Discourses, and texts that teenagers bring to school.

Even if teachers try to incorporate these different funds of knowledge in their instruction, their students often will not use these everyday funds of knowledge during classes. Moll et al. addressed that teenagers may not feel that these types of knowledge will be valued by teachers in the study of their different academic subjects, and because students may subscribe to the binary between academic and everyday activities and literacy practices. In addition, Moll and his

colleagues suggested that anyone working with young people will need to attend to the virtual spaces that they are exploring.

Moje et al. presented the case that students' four different funds of knowledge and Discourses should be included in classroom instruction in a meaningful way. They suggest that this could create a hybrid third space, where students would find the instruction more relevant and engaging, and that this would contribute to their academic achievement.

The above studies examined the rich funds of knowledge that culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families possess. They all provided counterevidence to the deficit perspective that claims that these children do not come into the classroom with worthwhile knowledge and experiences. The studies I reviewed investigated school-initiated projects and home visits, and the researchers provided suggestions as to how teachers could identify and then incorporate the strengths and assets students bring from home into the classroom culture and curriculum. This provides a place where children feel liberated to learn in ways that validate their cultural identities. Intentionally including the elements of home, community, and school present in these educational contexts create places of refuge for students which have been referred to as a "Third Space."

2.4 Third Space

As a conceptual framework, third space is especially relevant to this literature review as it illustrates how educators can create engaging and transformative learning environments for refugee and immigrant children. "Third Space" emerged as an important construct with the

publication of recognized studies conducted by Gutiérrez and her colleagues (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2008)

Gutiérrez and her colleagues conducted a three-year ethnographic study of the literacy practices at Bell Elementary, a two-way Spanish immersion language magnet school. Bell Elementary was created as a response to a district mandate to desegregate their schools, which resulted in the school having a diverse student population with varying degrees of proficiency in Spanish and English. There were a number of middle-class Anglo and African American students, as well as working class Latinos from the neighborhood where the school was located.

Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejada focused their attention on Ms. Rivera's classroom to analyze how "the discourse and literacy practices of the teacher and students, how hybrid activities, roles and practices could lead to productive contexts of development" (p. 286). Rivera, who was fully literate in Spanish and English, strategically chose texts that bridged home and school cultures, and used moments of conflict as an opportunity to expand learning. The researchers explained how in any classroom there could be an official space, an unofficial space, and a hybrid third space. They provided the example of how in class a teacher may call on students by name to answer questions in the official space. However, in the unofficial space there could be name calling and giggling about sensitive topics, such as human reproduction. Finally, there is the more ideal third space, where "conflicts lead to shared and negotiated understandings of human reproduction" (p. 301).

A third space perspective values elements of home, family life, and community, and incorporates those elements to create meaningful and relevant educational experiences that contribute to students' academic achievement (Cairo et al., 2012; Cummins, 2005; Gutiérrez, 2008; Mendenhall et al., 2017; Van Sluys & Reiner, 2006).

Third spaces are significant for culturally and linguistically diverse families as they often face challenges adjusting to their new home and culture. While attending U.S. schools, English language learners (ELLs) often have difficulty communicating in English and in understanding how American schools function differently from the schools in their native countries (Allen et al., 2016; Cairo et al, 2012; Danzak, 2015; Duff, 2001; Mendenhall et al., 2017). ELL students may feel isolated, confused, and frustrated in a traditional classroom environment, especially when taught by a teacher using a traditional curriculum. On the other hand, a third space perspective emphasizes the importance of these students belonging to a learning community where they feel safe, accepted, and comfortable enough to contribute in class by using their funds of knowledge (Allen et al., 2016; Davies, 2008; Gutierrez, 2008; Mendenhall et al., 2017).

Creating a third space requires teachers who understand the home cultures of their students, and then use this understanding to create relevant and academically rigorous learning experiences. According to Hull and Moje (2012), “third space literacy research that seeks to build ‘third spaces’ rests on teachers’ facilities for hearing, seeing, and incorporating children and youths’ literacy and language practices into academic literacy and language instruction in an attempt to build connections from home to school discourses” (p. 5).

In the sections that follow, I describe the work of five research initiatives that demonstrate nurturing third space learning environments for diverse refugee and immigrant students and their families.

Gutiérrez (2008) conducted an empirical case study of the Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) at the University of California, Los Angeles. The participants were high school students from migrant-farmworkers backgrounds who attended a four-week summer residential

program. The MSLI enrolled primarily Latino students (with a small number of Filipino, Vietnamese, and Hmong), who engaged in daily literacy activities from 8:00 a.m. to midnight.

Drawing on the construct of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978), the researchers worked with teachers in the program to reorganize everyday concepts into school-based concepts to make learning relevant for culturally and linguistically diverse students. For example, the work of the institute "did not focus on students' linguistic or academic deficiencies but on sociohistorical influences on their language, literacy, and learning practices, as well as on their social, economic, and educational realities" (p. 154). Gutiérrez described how the students' learning was organized in varied participation structures such as "tutorials, comprehension circles, writing conferences, *teatro*, mini-lectures, and whole-class discussions" (p. 154).

Gutiérrez also drew upon the construct of social dreaming, a concept rooted in Freire (1970), which served as a central conceptual metaphor throughout the MSLI course. The instructors encouraged students to work together, and emphasized that this is how they could achieve their dreams. They collectively problem solved and built new identities as members of the UCLA community.

One of the key points Gutiérrez shared was that "The Third Space provided tools, one of which included ways to understand better how to respond to oppression and to the consequences of poverty" (p. 156). The students also discussed "how these societal structures and the social system could impede their progress toward a new social reality" (p. 159), topics which would rarely, if ever, be taught in traditional academic contexts.

To illustrate her key points, Gutiérrez uses a case study of Ave. She used Ave's varied experiences throughout the MSLI program to discuss the methods and approaches that educators

could incorporate into a curriculum that created a third space for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

For example, she described the critical autobiography- known as a *testimonio*. A *testimonio* is a hybrid text in which instructors “use traditional conventions of academic texts as well as help students develop a new understanding about themselves and their relations to the immediate and larger social world” (p. 149). Ave wrote about her personal history, which included traumatic events such as arriving into the U.S. in the trunk of a car and feeling insignificant and ridiculed at her school. The MSLI course helped Ave to see herself as a historical actor who had a bright future. With the rest of her peers, she also participated in “social dreaming: the collective and difficult work of imaging and creating a more just world” (p. 159). According to Gutiérrez, although the migrant students in the program had to return to the same schools and communities where they suffered discrimination and gross inequalities, they had developed critical social thought which would help them navigate through these difficult circumstances.

As a result of their involvement, students began to reconceive who they were and imagine the possibilities of what they might be able to accomplish academically and beyond. In fact, many of them were inspired to enroll in universities and were accepted to Berkeley or UCLA.

Gutiérrez and her colleagues worked mostly with Latino high school students from migrant-farmworker backgrounds in California. Allen et al. (2016) focused on Somali, Latino, and Hmong (SLH) youth in Minnesota. Their research not only explored the perspectives of teachers and youth workers, but also asked the SLH youth to describe their perspectives related to their schooling experiences.

The research team included two academic researchers, and four community researchers from an organization accustomed to working with these refugee and immigrant families in

Minnesota. Allen et al. chose to use a community-based participatory research approach for their 2-year study, as this particular approach values the knowledge, expertise, and resources of communities, and engages community members in the research process as full partners. Although interviews were also conducted with teachers, the summary below describes results from the four focus groups of SLH middle school and high school students.

Student participants were recruited through the school or from their after-school programs. The two required criteria for participant eligibility were (a) they self-identified as SLH, and (b) they attended public middle or high school (grades 8-12) in the targeted region, or had dropped out of these schools within the most recent school year. There was a total of 71 youth (20 Somali, 25 Hmong, and 26 Latino) who were separated into nine focus groups.

Analysis of the transcripts from the focus group sessions revealed four key themes which described what the SLH students considered to be important supports in school. These were: (1) an authoritative teaching approach where teachers hold high expectations for student behavior and achievement, (2) building trusting educator-student relationships, (3) conveying respect for students as individuals, and (4) a school infrastructure characterized by a supportive and inclusive environment.

The first key theme was demonstrated when several students mentioned how they felt it was important that the teachers had high expectations for their academic achievement and behavior. Students valued teachers that “‘straight talk’ with them, hold them to high expectations for achievement, manage the classroom with authority, and explain to students the consequences of their actions” (p. 78). They considered high expectations to be connected to an environment of caring, and appreciated when teachers believed in them enough to provide rigorous academic instruction. There was a cultural difference between the perspectives of SLH youth, as the Hmong

students preferred teachers to be very strict during class, while the Latino and Somali students preferred encouragement and positive reinforcements.

The second theme was the importance of trusting relationships with teachers. The SLH youth emphasized how much they appreciated when teachers were “expressing support, offering encouragement, and demonstrating willingness to help students overcome academic or personal obstacles” (p. 78). For example, students identified teachers who were willing to provide extra help outside class time as being committed to seeing them succeed. Also, the students expressed how they felt more connected to teachers who would “go out of their comfort zone” and share personal stories with them, because they felt the teachers trusted them as well.

The third theme that emerged was how important it was for teachers to convey respect to their students as individuals. SLH students felt respected when teachers positively acknowledged their cultural and religious backgrounds, and created opportunities for them to teach their peers more about where they came from and what they believed. Illustrating this point, one Hmong student mentioned the struggle he felt between the home and school cultures at times. For example, he mentioned how attending a Hmong funeral over the weekend takes a full three days, rather than a traditional American funeral that may occur over one day. He knew the school wouldn't understand that he might have to be absent or unable to finish his homework during the funeral. One Somali youth also mentioned how some teachers will allow them to go and pray while others demanded they wait until class was over. Another student stated how students appreciated simple courtesies such as when teachers were able to pronounce their names correctly. The youth felt resentful when they felt teachers prejudged them based on their appearance and clothing or media stereotypes. In contrast, they respected the accommodating teachers who did not judge them, but recognized when they struggled financially or when their home and school values clashed. For

example, some high school students worked night shifts to help support their family, while others took care of their siblings and had difficult chores to complete each day. They appreciated when teachers were open to providing extra time to complete or redo assignments when these types of circumstances arose.

The fourth theme that emerged from the analysis of transcripts was that it was important to the SLH students that their school environment was open to cultural diversity. Students valued the role of school counselors and cultural liaisons who supported them and their families as they navigated through an unfamiliar school system. These individuals also provided families with access to community resources that were helpful.

Cairo et al. (2012) participated in the development of the Families and Communities Educating (F.A.C.E.) Time program, which was offered through a collaboration with the University, the state Humanities Council, the school district, and the local public library in Lexington, Kentucky. Based on their research about the status and needs of the refugee and Latino migrant children in the school system, the team developed a project called F.A.C.E. Time.

The F.A.C.E. Time project was urgently needed because many smaller districts were inexperienced and not equipped to handle the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. They did not have access to the necessary resources, and the English as a Second Language (ESL) staff had not been trained adequately. Initially these new populations were concentrated at certain schools in the district because of where the refugee resettlement agency placed them, but because some families had moved to other areas of the city, it was important that resources and services were available at all the schools.

The goals of the F.A.C.E. Time program “included language and academic adaption support, cultural and social emotional support, family support, and community support” (p. 2).

With the combination of community, family, and school support, this program helped construct a third space for newcomer students and their parents. The program location, the library of a high school, was intentionally chosen to make it accessible for their participants as it was within walking distance for the families. A diverse group of ELL students participated in this program, which took place over the course of six weeks in the summer, and also in an after-school format.

The F.A.C.E. Time after-school program was designed for students in grades three through five and focused on developing students' academic skills as well as their social/behavioral adaptation and cultural expression. On Mondays, students would take music lessons, and then Tuesday through Thursday they received an hour of academic instruction. This was followed by an hour of social/behavioral adaptation or cultural expression. Cairo and her colleagues did not explain the specifics of what the social/behavioral adaptation or cultural expression sessions entailed. However, as the rest of the program was culturally sensitive to the refugee and immigrant families, it likely involved clarifying school procedures or providing explanations about different aspects of American culture.

The staff involved were student volunteers from the University of Kentucky (a service learning class which was developed at the university to contribute to this project) and a local high school. They invited community volunteers to come and give special presentations. For example, an African drummer performed, and a librarian came to tell stories. Parent support groups were also organized, and the program staff organized a family community picnic.

The F.A.C.E Time Summer program ran for 5 weeks in June provided instruction in writing, music, mathematics, social studies (focusing on the countries the students came from), art, physical education, and cultural expression.

There were several ways in which the F.A.C.E. Time educational programs helped to create a positive change for this newcomer population of refugee and migrant students and their families. Having the support of the district, the school principals and collaborating with university staff, and community volunteers was instrumental in their success. “A significant focus was placed on the importance of building community...which directly contributed to the children’s’ sense of safety and belonging” (p. 57). Once the staff built this sense of community within the group, they focused on building it outside the group as well. For example, European-American school parents who had previously expressed concern about the incoming refugee and migrant students, were included in the community activities. They were invited to attend the Family Fun Festival, where children presented their photography projects, as well as to the community family picnic. Being given opportunities to interact with the newcomer families during these enjoyable activities helped in their acceptance of them.

Cairo et al. discovered that “the building of community and the sense of belonging have directly contributed to tangible behavioral outcomes” (p. 57). In fact, the refugee and migrant students’ social behavior in school improved and they seemed more outgoing and confident after participating in the program. The most important lasting result of this study was how the school’s perception of the refugee and migrant students changed, and even how they began to address their challenges more productively. For instance, if a student acted out, rather than reacting in frustration or anger, teachers and administrators knew to ask if they needed space, to redirect them, or talk with them.

The F.A.C.E. programs for refugee and migrant newcomer students and their families created a type of third space for them. Not only were students provided with instruction on American culture, but there was also an emphasis on including their cultures in some of the

instruction, as well as opportunities for them to express their cultures to those who were unfamiliar with them.

Van Sluys and Reiner (2006) conducted a year-long ethnographic investigation that differed from the previously mentioned studies because it involved a researcher-teacher collaboration that focused on studying diverse students in a multilingual classroom. Having regular access to this class, where students were taught by an expert teacher (Reiner), allowed Van Sluys to closely examine an exemplary third space context.

Reiner's class consisted of twenty-eight culturally and linguistically diverse 4th-6th graders in an English dominant public school in a Midwest university town. Van Sluys' and Reiner's purpose for the investigation was to learn from, with and about the students in a multilingual classroom setting in order to "understand different ways a monolingual teacher and a multilingual community of students co-constructed a literacy environment that embraced complex, critical notions of becoming literate and anchored practices in the lives of its members" (p. 323).

Because Van Sluys and Reiner worked with students who spoke languages other than Spanish and English, adjustments were made to the classroom so all the students felt comfortable and included. They also relied on the help of parents, the students' abilities to self-translate, and community resources to enable them to understand the students' thoughts. Picture books written in Arabic, Spanish, Hebrew, and Korean were made available in the classroom library. There were also nonfiction texts with photographs, diagrams, and images of different homes and communities around the world. The teacher even had a world map "with student traced routes of immigration and slave trade" (p. 323). Twice a week, Van Sluys audiotaped and transcribed interactions, took field notes, collected student artifacts, regularly debriefed with Reiner, and occasionally interviewed students.

Van Sluys and Reiner highlighted the stories of four English language learners- Sara, Nina, Ana, and Gino, who had just begun their first year in a multi-grade classroom, in an American school, and living in the United States. Their educational experiences revealed how sharing multilingual perspectives in a diverse class community led to their growth as individuals, as well as enriched the experiences of their English-speaking classmates. For this literature review, I chose to focus on Sara's and Nina's experiences.

The writer's notebook that Reiner provided for each student played an important role in Sara's academic and social growth. Reiner explained to the students that it was acceptable to write about their thoughts in whichever language they felt like using. At first, Sara simply observed others in class, and filled up pages in her notebook with Arabic text. However, she gradually began writing headings in English, and included different observations and learning experiences she was having. The musings in Sara's notebook led to conversations with her classmates about the differences between schools in the United States and Algeria. Classmates also discovered that Sara knew some French and had a great appreciation for poetry. In fact, she would use published poems as inspiration for themes and topics she wanted to write about, and with the help of her father, teacher, and classmates, was able to translate and publish a poem of her own. The use of the writer's notebooks helped Sara's peers and the teacher to understand more about her cultural background and interests. As the school year continued, Sara built up enough confidence to spontaneously write thank you letters to classroom visitors, and inquired about making class birthday posters. Other students worked on this task with her, and asked if they could list the months of the year in Spanish, Arabic, Korean, Hebrew, and English.

Nina, who was from Israel, was very adept at using technology, and her skills were recognized as valuable by her classmates. She was able to help contribute to the learning of her

peers by teaching small groups how to create and use PowerPoint, how to navigate spellcheck in other languages, and how to pull down certain menus and adjust page settings. Even one of the confident English dominant boys, who usually played the role of leader in small groups, realized he could learn more about technology from and with Nina. When presenting her social studies project, Nina developed a PowerPoint, and even recorded her voice into her presentation. She was naturally a quiet and timid student, so this helped her voice be heard. Throughout the year, Van Sluys and Reiner noticed how the native English speakers in the class expressed interest in learning to speak and understand other languages, and were comfortable providing feedback to Sara, Nina, and other ELL students when they asked for help.

Van Sluys discussed how Reiner “was able to create a community of readers, writers, thinkers, and communicators who worked together from day one” (p. 321). They provided numerous examples of how students collaborated to construct knowledge. One example was a description of how three English language learners and four English dominant students co-authored a digital photo book about their school. They all contributed using their first languages, and this project exposed them to other languages and resulted in helping them get better acquainted.

As students were given the opportunity and freedom to make choices about their learning activities, they became adept decision makers who were trusted to decide who they could best turn to and learn with. Van Sluys and Reiner asserted that “No child enters school empty-handed. Students carry with them diverse experiences as inquirers, readers, writers and speakers of languages.” (p. 326).

Mendenhall et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study examining how an “international” high school in New York City responded to the emotional and academic needs of refugee and

immigrant students. This study took place at Brooklyn International High School (BIHS), which was known for the academic success of culturally and linguistically diverse youth from all over the world. BIHS is part of the International Network of Public Schools, which focuses on teaching English language learners who have been in the United States for 4 years or less. The school's demographics included Latino, Asian, Black (African and Haitian) and White (European) students, and it “boasts a graduation rate and college acceptance rate just below 90%-- much higher than the dismal 50% rate for the broader ‘English language learner’ category across the city” (p. 5).

To recruit participants, the research team consulted with school personnel and teachers who shared the opportunity with their classes. Out of the youth who self-identified as refugees or asylum seekers, a total of 8 culturally and linguistically diverse refugee students from Guinea, Ivory Coast, Iraq, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, and India chose to participate in the study.

A unique way in which Mendenhall et al. collected data was by using a participatory visual methodology, “through which students were provided digital or disposable cameras and asked to take photographs of the people, places, and/or things that contributed to their schooling experiences” (p. 1). This led to photo-cued focus group discussions and interviews, allowing the participants to become the producers of knowledge. The researchers conducted three focus groups of students in different grade levels, where each student introduced the images they captured, and explained why they had chosen that person, place or thing. Other students then discussed if their experiences were similar or different. Afterward, Mendenhall et al. asked the teen participants general questions “about the challenges they faced, their personal recommendations for improving the educational experience for resettled refugee and asylee youth, as well as the specific advice they would offer to students with similar backgrounds” (p. 6). This visual methodology was particularly effective because it enabled students with limited English proficiency to share their

schooling experiences, and helped students to initiate and guide conversations. In addition to the focus group discussions, the researchers also conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with teachers and administrators.

Mendenhall and her colleagues identified 5 key themes that emerged from their data analysis and that seemed to contribute to the academic inclusion and success of refugee and asylee students. These included: (a) educator support, care, and encouragement, (b) linguistic support from teachers, (c) learner-centered pedagogical approaches, (d) flexible and responsive curricular approaches, and (e) assessment strategies.

Mendenhall and her colleagues provided several examples for their first theme by demonstrating how BIHS teachers strategically supported and encouraged their students. One example was that the teachers formed interdisciplinary teams, and were responsible for and to a set of students. The teams used their prep time to discuss the needs of specific students, and often the school counsellor would attend the meetings as well to contribute insights about how to support them.

The second theme that emerged was how every teacher was a teacher of language and content, rather than having a specified ESL teacher. BIHS provided their educators with extensive professional developments on strategies and approaches to integrate language and content instruction. The language of instruction was English; however, teachers encouraged their students to use their home languages on their own or in groups.

The third theme Mendenhall et al. observed was that the BIHS teachers were required to use a learner-centered pedagogy, because the student population represented as many as 60 countries and 40 languages. They reported how some students were able to perform at grade level while others had never attended school. As a result of this diversity, teachers designed a curriculum

that provided all students with multiple opportunities to read, write, speak, and listen in their native languages and English. The teachers stressed that they were able to differentiate their instruction based on their knowledge of the individual students in their classes. They found engaging topics for students to explore, incorporated the students' prior knowledge into their instruction, and scaffolded the students throughout the steps of each academic task.

The fourth theme, flexible and responsive curricular approaches, was evident in BIHS's use of portfolio assessments. Since students were not required to take the high-stakes Regent tests in New York (except in English), portfolios were an effective alternative to observe their on-going progress. Teachers from different disciplines planned an interdisciplinary curriculum together, so that students could work on extensive individual and group projects. Mendenhall et al. stressed how teachers received relevant training, were provided with access to instructional tools online, and could attend professional developments and conferences.

Finally, in regard to assessment strategies, the teachers at BIHS generally did not emphasize summative assessments, but instead assigned group projects, developed individual student portfolios, provided modified assignments depending on language proficiency, and gave small quizzes rather than longer tests. Students occasionally had the option to orally present the information to the teacher, rather than taking a written quiz. This way they could explain what they learned, and use their native language as needed.

Mendenhall and her colleagues suggested that the academic success of BIHS students could be attributed to the ways in which this school's approach differed from more traditional high school approaches. BIHS also did not "track students based on academic ability, linguistic ability, race, ethnicity, grade level, gender, or membership in an ELL subgroup" (p. 5).

Overall, BIHS strived to provide third spaces for the refugee and immigrant high school students. Mendenhall and her colleagues mentioned how students participated in complex group projects, and contributed based on their skill level, linguistic level or personal preference. The groups also navigated through problems, developed creative solutions, and often used technology to help translate their ideas. The teacher's efforts to differentiate instruction and modify assessments helped students adjust to a new school environment and culture, while still supporting their academic success.

These four studies demonstrate that providing authentic third space learning environments requires careful planning, many resources, collaboration with the community, and hard work and creativity on the part of teachers and school staff. The potential payoff can be traced to students' academic success and improved school and community understanding and collaboration.

2.5 Translanguaging

Many third space learning environments use translanguaging theory to incorporate the use of culturally and linguistically diverse students' native languages as a part of the learning process in the classroom. Orellana and Garcia (2014) define translanguaging "as the ways bilinguals draw on their full linguistic toolkits in order to process information, make meaning, and convey it to others" (p. 386). They also discuss how a positive representation of translanguaging is not often how the native languages of refugee, immigrant and visiting professional students are viewed.

There are many possibilities about what translanguaging could look like in the classroom context, and it is important to consider how different languages can work together. Orellana and Garcia emphasize that translanguaging is a pedagogy that builds on the diverse and fluid language

practices that bilinguals have, that allow them to read in one language and then discuss in another, or to read in one language and to write in another. If a teacher asks English language learners to look up a topic, the students can investigate this online in their native language. Afterward, they could share with other students about what they discovered in English. Next, they might work separately on a story in their own language, and then come together in groups again to rework the stories into English or create bilingual stories.

Orellana and Garcia discussed how through these types of classroom activities, students are building their learning in one language and transferring it into another. This helps them improve their academic learning in both languages. Translanguaging has significant benefits for learners in terms of their own language development, their English development, their content learning, and their social development. Also, every student in the classroom is seen as an important contributing member to their learning community, and this helps create an engaging and safe third space environment for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

2.6 Other Issues in the Literature

2.6.1 Visiting Professionals

Another type of culturally and linguistically diverse population which needs to be acknowledged more by schools are the many international visiting professionals. These students, scholars, and people with expertise travel to English speaking countries temporarily for work or to study at universities, and often bring their families with them for a set period of time. A gap in the research became apparent during my search for studies that investigated the perspectives of such

families about their children's schooling experiences in the U.S. and Canada. I located only one relevant study by Kanno and Dermer Applebaum (1995) that involved three middle- to upper-middle-class Japanese student participants who attended secondary schools in Toronto.

They were the children of Japanese businessmen who were on temporary overseas assignments in Canada. Kanno and Dermer Applebaum emphasized that although the ESL curriculum focused on the development of the students' academic skills, that there was not enough support to help them integrate into the school community. Over the course of three years, Kanno and Dermer Applebaum conducted in-depth interviews with the students. These revealed that for these visiting professional students, "the ESL curriculum was never just about learning English. Rather it involved critical issues such as their identities in school and their interpersonal relationships with other people" (p. 34).

It could be useful to study how visiting professional families view the supports and obstacles in U.S. public schools, and then compare their experiences to those of immigrant and refugee families. For example, does their socio-economic status affect ELL students' educational experiences in U.S. schools, and if so in what ways? Does knowing they will not be staying permanently in the U.S. affect the visiting professional students' motivation in learning English? Would integrating them more into their school communities significantly affect their motivation, and if so, would similar initiatives be used that schools have developed to work with refugee and immigrant students? Investigating the differences and similarities in the perspectives and situations of refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students could raise awareness about how the needs of all these diverse students could best be met.

2.6.2 Investment vs Motivation

Whether English language learners come from refugee, immigrant, or visiting professional families, a review of the research revealed that these students can feel socially isolated and marginalized at their schools. This can affect their motivation, or what Norton Peirce (1995) identified as being their *investment* in learning and speaking English.

Norton Peirce (1995) has conducted valuable research on second language acquisition (SLA). The findings from her ethnographic investigations with immigrant women in Canada argued for a “conception of *investment* rather than *motivation* to capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it” (p. 9). One of her central arguments acknowledges how SLA theorists have not yet developed a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context. In addition, Norton Peirce recognized “how relations of power in the social world affect social interactions between second language learners and target language speakers” (p. 12).

One significant social environment where these inequitable relations of power occur with refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students is at their schools. These inequities limit the opportunities these ELLs have to practice their English inside and outside the classroom. Just as Norton Peirce’s immigrant participants often experienced a lack of power in their work places with bosses and coworkers, often ELL students cannot choose under what conditions they will interact with members of the target language at school. For example, some ESL programs can be isolating, with English language learners spending a substantial part of their school day separated from target language speakers. Even if they mostly attend mainstream classrooms, refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students may still feel they are outsiders. During group activities in class, native English speakers may not seek out English language learners to work with. Or, if the teacher

groups them together, ELLs may feel uncomfortable if their native English speaking classmates seem impatient or disinterested in communicating with them. Norton Peirce described how other challenging situations in the classroom may include the quick pace of whole class discussions, instruction on unfamiliar academic concepts and vocabulary, the mention of unknown cultural references, and the risk of being ridiculed by native speakers. These and other circumstances often hinder culturally and linguistically diverse students from being able to participate in a meaningful way with their classroom community.

Norton Peirce suggested that as a result of circumstances, such as those described above, teachers may then see ELL students as being unmotivated, inhibited, and introverted even though this is not an accurate portrayal. Rather, they may feel too embarrassed or uncomfortable to contribute to the class learning activities. Specifically, the ELLs' lack of participation in class does not necessarily indicate that they are not motivated to learn and speak English. It is likely that they, like the women in Norton Peirce's study, see English as providing beneficial future opportunities for them to advance to attend college or obtain a high paying job. However, they do not want to *invest* in communicating with their native English speaking classmates, under what feels to them to be intimidating or overwhelming circumstances.

Outside the classroom, ELLs may live in communities where they might not encounter many native English speakers, so this would also severely limit the opportunities they have to interact and practice speaking English with target language speakers. Also, any employed high school students may find that they are motivated to speak English with their co-workers, but if they feel they are being put down, left out, or marginalized, then- they will not feel invested in doing so.

Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, Darwin and Norton Peirce (2015) relate such circumstances to the immigrant experience which includes the right to speak and is determined by the power that comes from possessing economic, cultural, and social capital. They describe that there is a social context for establishing communication, and "Agents are positioned in the social space based on the volume, composition, and trajectory of their capital" (p. 44). Since refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students often do not possess these three types of capital, they may feel inferior, and this will likely affect how invested they are to communicate in English and participate in different social contexts at school.

Norton Peirce (1995) found that some of the women in her study felt a great social distance between their cultures and that of native Canadians, and that often the Canadians did not seem to want to speak with them and get to know them. She provided the example of one Polish woman, Eva's, struggle to relate to a coworker when she did not understand the cultural reference made to Bart Simpson from the popular U.S. television show that she was not familiar with. She felt humiliated, which increased her anxiety to speak with other target language speakers as she struggled to feel accepted in Canadian society. On the other hand, positive interactions with native speakers helped to motivate the women to want to speak more with native English speakers and their self-confidence in their communication abilities.

An implication from Norton Peirce's findings that could relate to the schooling experiences of ELL high school students is that educators must help facilitate these students' language learning outside the classroom so that they have ample opportunities to speak to target language speakers. This would help them to build their self-confidence, so they can assert their right to speak. She suggested five practical objectives that teachers could implement that would help ELLs to invest in speaking English: (a) investigate opportunities to interact with target language speakers, (b)

reflect critically on engagement with target language speakers, (c) reflect on observations in diaries or journals, (d) pay attention to and record unusual events, and (e) compare data with fellow students and researchers.

2.7 Existing Obstacles for ELLs

The findings from research studies that have been conducted with refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students from various states across the U.S. and in Canada show that they continue to face discrimination as well as cultural and linguistic obstacles at school. The family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging conceptual frameworks that I used as lenses to review the research exposed the reality that refugee and immigrant families in the U.S. continue to be marginalized by society due to racism, poverty, and low proficiency in English. This reality influences teachers, administrators, and school districts who may view English language learners with a deficit perspective, especially when concerned about state standardized test scores for their ELL subgroup.

2.8 Possible Supports

While a deficit perspective of culturally and linguistically diverse students still exists in U.S. schools, some past research studies have also shown educational contexts in which refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional high school students have benefited greatly from culturally

responsive instructional approaches and being invited to feel a sense of belonging to their school community.

Family literacy, third space, funds of knowledge, and translanguaging are relevant conceptual frameworks that confirmed the importance of sharing refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional student voices about their school experiences. All four conceptual frameworks are instrumental in providing counter-narratives to the prevalent deficit perspectives that continue to adversely affect these students' educational opportunities. They also recognize how skillfully many of these students continuously negotiate differing cultural and linguistic experiences in their homes, communities, and schools, and choose to focus on the families' strengths and the various assets that these youth and their family members possess. Findings from the research clearly recognized that parents cared that their children succeeded in school, even while they struggled to adjust to a new culture and language.

2.9 Potential Innovations and Initiatives Informed by Student Perceptions

Much of the research presented initiatives and programs that schools implemented in an attempt to support ELL students' academic achievement and sense of belonging. However, these studies frequently focused on what the schools and teachers assumed would benefit these culturally and linguistic diverse students and their families, rather than on what students themselves identified as important or meaningful to them.

An exception to these types of investigations was Duff's (2001) study. She not only included detailed descriptions of her observations of ELL students in two different social studies high school classes in a Canadian high school, but also highlighted students' perspectives from the

semi-structured interviews she conducted. It was thought-provoking to read how the teachers seemed largely unaware of the struggle that ELL students experienced during debates, dramatic enactments, and spontaneous current event class discussions.

Duff included interview excerpts of students expressing how they did not understand pop culture references which were brought up during these whole class discussions. For example, ELL students were not familiar with references to famous actors and actresses, and did not know who the Vancouver Canucks were. This lack of understanding Canadian pop culture references made it very difficult for them to actively participate and demonstrate their knowledge during these spontaneous current event class discussions. The ELL students also mentioned that they often felt too anxious to speak during discussions because they had been laughed at before by local students if they misunderstood an idea or mispronounced certain words in English. Duff suggested that teachers need to encourage and empower ELL students to become more than onlookers or marginal participants by “writing the topics on the board as they arise, with key names, vocabulary, and a note about the nature of the issue” (p. 121).

Researchers like Duff are revealing practical considerations and instructional strategies that educators can implement in their classrooms to support ELL students. She does this based on the students’ perceptions of their experiences in the social studies classes, and is mindful of how English language learners may lack understanding during a discussion or learning activity which makes them feel frustrated, isolated and confused.

Duff- and other researchers who advocate for the educational rights of culturally and linguistically diverse students- point out the importance of teachers noticing what funds of knowledge these students have to contribute to their learning communities. This requires that teachers seek to understand the home cultures of their refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional

students and then use that understanding to develop meaningful learning experiences that are relevant, as well as academically rigorous. By doing this, teachers create a third space where all students feel they are accepted and valued members. When the elements of home, community and school are incorporated in these third space educational contexts, learning becomes engaging and transformative for refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students.

With the rising population of refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students in the United States, more studies are needed that focus on their stories and how they make meaning of their schooling experiences. These resulting significant insights can then inform the educational community on how to create and develop effective, research based initiatives that will provide an equitable education for these often marginalized students.

What was noticeable from this literature review was the absence of refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students' voices from the conversation about ELL students' schooling experiences in the U. S. The studies that do exist are limited in number and most focus on Latino students and their parents who live in certain regions in the United States. Not enough information about the schooling experiences of refugees or immigrants who came from other countries or spoke languages other than Spanish was available. There is even less information pertaining to ELL students from visiting professional families, or how U.S. schools are attempting to meet their specific social and academic needs.

Based on my review of the literature, I investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of high school students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families about their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh?
2. How do the conceptual perspectives of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging provide frameworks for analyzing and contextualizing those perceptions?

My goal was to capture the perceptions of these students and to consider how the conceptual frameworks might support an understanding of those perceptions so that administrators, teachers, and teacher educators could become aware of the challenges and supports these students experience in their daily school lives. Based on that understanding, I hoped that those who had influence over the educational experiences of these students could potentially become advocates for them.

3.0 Methods

3.1 Phenomenology and Portraiture

The first research question for this investigation was “What are the perceptions of high school students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families about their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh?” In order to address this questions, I made use of a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is an approach concerned with understanding people’s lived experiences from their own perspectives and interpretations, and recognizes that these experiences are only understandable in their contexts (Husserl, 1970, Morse & Richards, 2002; Seidman, 2013; Van Manen, 2016). Schutz (1967) argues that “meaningfulness does not reside in the lived experience itself, but is the ‘act of attention’ which brings experiences that would otherwise be simply lived through into our ‘intentional gaze’ and opens the pathway to meaningful” (pp. 71-72). By asking participants to reconstruct experiences and then reflect on their meaning, interviewers encourage participants to engage in that ‘act of attention’ that then allows them to consider the meaning of the lived experience

The purpose of a phenomenological approach is to “come to an intimate awareness and deep understanding of how humans experience something” (Saldaña, 2011, p.7-8). For this investigation, I used four of van Manen’s foundational phenomenological research activities as the general framework: (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world, (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it, (3) reflecting on the essential themes (or meanings) which characterize the phenomenon, and (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting (Van Manen, 1944, p. 39). In order to present

the findings in a meaningful yet informative way, I decided to create portraits of the students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families which depicted their perceptions of their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh.

Portraiture is a methodology that is framed by a phenomenological lens and shares many of the techniques, standards, and goals of ethnography (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). This methodology is used in qualitative research to learn and understand people's lived realities and the social settings of their lives (Waterhouse, 2007).

A unique feature about portraiture is how it combines elements of both the scientific and artistic in order to capture the lived realities of the participants, which can then be accurately presented to the reader (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2016). According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), "the boundaries that we draw between scientific and artistic representations of reality not only produce distorted caricatures of each realm but also blind us to the similarities and resonances between them" (p. 13).

Another distinct way that portraiture differs from traditional forms of qualitative research is that the investigator's voice is purposely woven into the portrait, which is created as a result of the researcher's interactions with the actors in the research setting (Hackmann, 2002, Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The portraitist's voice should be restrained and carefully controlled, so as not to dominate or overwhelm the participants' voices in the portraiture. Instead any interpretive voice used should only help illuminate the actors' experiences (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

3.1.1 The Role of the Researcher in Portraiture

The researcher, who is the portraitist, plays a critical role in the process of creating the portraits of their participants and they make many important decisions. They must (a) choose the most appropriate questions that address their research focus, (b) examine data to decide what should be included and excluded as findings, and (c) provide helpful interpretations in the (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Waterhouse, 2007).

The positionality of the researcher is important to consider because their history, race, class, gender, and other aspects of identity affect how they relate to their participants and view the contexts of those participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Waterhouse, 2007). Related to this, researchers need to actively guard against their biases as not to not distort the portrait since “the identity, character, and history of the researcher are obviously critical to the manner of listening, selecting, interpreting, and composing the story” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 13).

An example of when I recognized one of my biases during this study was when the students, some who are still receiving ESL (English second language) support, told me about how some teachers were not making much needed accommodations and modifications in their instruction. Because of my experiences as a teacher in a middle school which served a large population of English language learners, I found myself feeling judgmental toward these teachers. However, after identifying the bias and reflecting, I recognized that I was hearing only “one side of the story,” and was able to sympathize with mainstream teachers who suddenly found themselves with students who could not understand, speak, read or write English. It also occurred to me that these teachers may not be provided with the helpful trainings that I had access to. This instance demonstrates the importance of how the portraitist needs to recognize and address any

biases they are experiencing as they create the portraits, and consider the counter examples and exceptions that occur in a participant's lived experiences.

My main focus during this investigation was on the perceptions of refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional student participants about their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh. I wanted to “see” and “hear” the students and allow others to “see” and “hear” them as well. Lawrence-Lightfoot described her goal in developing portraiture (2005): I wanted the subjects to feel “seen” like I had felt seen—fully attended to, recognized, appreciated, respected, and scrutinized. I wanted them to feel both the discovery and generosity of the process as well as the penetrating and careful investigation” (p. 6).

A secondary focus for seeing was on the high schools the students attended. The high schools were significant contexts in the students' lives and were the location of the experiences they described. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1994) emphasized the importance of context and its impact:

“Context becomes the framework, the reference point, the map, the ecological sphere; it is used to place people and actions in time and space and as a resource for understanding what they say and do. The context is rich in clues for interpreting the experience of actors in the setting...Portraitists, then, view human experience as being framed and shaped by setting” (pp. 41-42).

3.2 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives

The second research question for this investigation was “How do the conceptual perspectives of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging provide

frameworks for analyzing and contextualizing those perceptions?” In order to address this question, I reviewed the perceptions of each participant in order to determine any opportunities to connect those perceptions to the conceptual perspectives of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging. That is, I looked for specific examples from the students’ experiences that could be related to these perspectives in meaningful ways

3.3 Participants and Contexts

High school students from refugee, immigrant and visiting professional families were the participants chosen for this study using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). It is worthwhile to note the differences in background among these groups.

Refugees are people who have been forced to leave their home countries and are at risk for or have experienced persecution. There are many reasons people might leave their country in search of protection, and some of these include war, race, religion, and nationality. They cannot return home unless the situation they fled from has improved.

Immigrants are people who choose to resettle in another country. Often they make this choice to seek out a better life with more opportunities for themselves and their families. There are some immigrants who become residents or citizens of their new country, but others do not have proper documentation and could be subject to deportation if discovered. An immigrant is always free to return home at any time.

Visiting professionals are people who have the opportunity to live in another country temporarily because they will be participating in business activities of a commercial or

professional nature there. They usually demonstrate that they have a residence in their home country and other binding ties that ensure they will return once their employment visa expires.

For the present investigation, I recruited seven student participants: three refugees, two immigrants (one with illegal status), and two students from families of visiting professionals.

Figure 1 provides information about each student.

Westbrook High School Public Suburban School- 1387 students				
Demographics:				
White- 81%		Economically Disadvantaged: 36%		
Asian- 9%		ESL students: 6%		
Black- 5%		State Test Results:		
2+ races- 3%		Math- 83%		
Hispanic- 1%		Reading- 86%		
American Indian- 0.1%				
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander- .1%				
Participant Name/Gender Ethnicity/Status	Country of Origin	Age/Grade	ESL Services	Years in U.S.
Brisha Female Asian Refugee	Nepal	16/11 th grade	No	8 years
Yashmeet Male Asian Refugee	Nepal	16/11 th grade	No	9 years
Femi Female Black Refugee	Rwanda	15/10 th grade	Yes	2 years

Chandler High School

Urban public school/ ESL regional site/magnet- 1479 students

Demographics:

White- 39%	Economically Disadvantaged: 72.8%
Black- 38%	ESL students: 21%
Asian- 12%	State Test Results:
2+ races- 6%	Math- 32.7%
Hispanic- 5%	Reading- 46.5%

Participant Name/Gender/ Ethnicity/Status	Country of Origin	Age/Grade	ESL Services	Years in U. S.
Mariana Female Hispanic Immigrant	Guatemala	17/11 th grade	No	5 years
Esperanza Female Hispanic Illegal Immigrant	El Salvador	17/12 th grade	Yes	3 years

Fairfield High School (4.5% ESL students)

Urban public school/ESL regional site- 1483 students

Demographics:

White- 48%	Economically Disadvantaged: 52%
Black- 42%	ESL students: 4.5%
Asian- 4%	State Test Results:
2+ races- 4%	Math: 62%
Hispanic- 3%	Reading: 77%
Native American- 0.1%	

Participant Name/Gender/ Ethnicity/Status	Country of Origin	Age/Grade	ESL Services	Years in U.S.
Mansur Male Biracial (Black and White) Visiting professional	France and West Africa	14/9 th grade	No	6 years

Translate app for our text message communications. Because I have a functional mastery of Spanish, I was able to catch many of the glitches and errors that sometimes occur with Google Translate and could recognize the nuances of meaning in our text conversation.

Additionally, the length of time that students and their families lived in the U.S. ranged from 2 to 9 years. Femi's family arrived in Pittsburgh only two years ago, this provided valuable insights into the perspective of a refugee who is still a newcomer and adjusting to life in America. Equally important, Yashmeet arrived in the U.S. nine years ago with his family, and he provided a different type of perspective after being in the public school system here for an extended time.

Some of my participants were easier to locate than others. Locating three refugee student participants was not difficult because I volunteered with a community organization, The Student Success Center, in Pittsburgh as a mentor with a group of high school refugee girls. Finding immigrant students was very challenging although there are several community organizations that serve them. Although I did not have influential contacts within these organizations. I was finally able to connect with the director of one of a local organizations who works closely with the Hispanic community and she provided contacts. I also had difficulty locating students from visiting professional families, but was able to rely on colleagues and friends and a post distributed on a local Japanese listserv.

Initially, the context of this study was going to be at one public high school or at schools located in one school district in Pittsburgh. However, this proved to be a challenge due to the differing socio-economic statuses of the students and their families. A more feasible context for this investigation resulted in the participants attending four different public schools (two urban and two suburban) in the Pittsburgh area, within three different school districts.

All of the high schools offered ESL (English second language) services, and two of the schools, Chandler High School and Fairfield High School, offered concentrated language instruction for all ranges of English Language Learners in their district. Both of these schools are considered ESL Regional Centers, which were described on the district's website, "These ESL Regional Centers typically have many students learning English at a variety of levels, and students take ESL, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education, and other classes with other students." Additionally, the district states that the teachers at these various locations have extensive experience with English Language Learners.

Pseudonyms were used for the local schools and school districts. More detailed information about participants' high schools is provided with their portraits in Chapter 4.

3.4 Data Sources

The two data collection periods for this investigation occurred during April-June, 2018 and October-December, 2018. Data sources included: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) an interview with a key informant (a coordinator for refugee youth mentoring program), and (c) ongoing informal two-way text conversations with students. I describe these data sources in the next sections.

3.4.1 Interview Protocols

Using Seidman's (2013) in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing approach, I conducted three interviews with each of the students over the period of 5-6 weeks focusing on

(a) the participants' life histories, (b) the details of their present schooling experiences in Pittsburgh, and (c) their reflection on the meaning of these experiences. (See Appendix A for the interview protocols.)

In order to better understand the refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional teenagers' perceptions of their schooling experiences, the interviews for this study were modelled after what Spradley (1979) describes as "the friendly conversation," rather than resembling a more formal and rigid interview. A friendly conversation occurs when participants are asked questions in a friendly and relaxed manner. Spradley specifically discusses using descriptive questions, which are typically open-ended, and require detailed answers in the participants' own language. Examples of these types of questions are: "Could you walk me through what you do during a typical school day?" and "Describe the types of relationships you have with your teachers."

These open-ended descriptive questions provided participants with the opportunity to reconstruct their lived experiences by providing the details they felt were most important. Spradley emphasizes that although the conversation of the interview should be friendly, that researchers still need to be mindful of the purposes for their ethnographic investigations. To do this, they must identify the distinguishing features of the interview that differ from a friendly conversation. These features include: (a) recognizing that turn-taking is less balanced, with the researcher asking almost all the questions, (b) repeating replaces the normal rule of avoiding repetition with the researcher asking similar questions over and over, (c) the researcher expressing interest or ignorance in order to better understand the participant's experiences, which is not typical in friendly conversations, and (d) the researcher requesting elaboration and more details.

Before interviewing any participants, I spent three months attending a mentoring group for high school refugee girls. This was helpful in developing a good rapport with the refugee students

who participated in this study. However, I did not have the opportunity to get to know the students from immigrant and visiting professional families before obtaining consent from them as well as their parents. Despite this fact, these students were unexpectedly open in describing their schooling experiences with me. Using the text message conversations, which is a preferred way for teenagers to communicate, also helped to cultivate a friendly relationship with the high school students.

The length of the interviews ranged between 30-90 minutes, depending on how long and detailed the student participant' answers were. Some questions were omitted, added, or combined depending on the answers of the interviewees and the data that was collected during the earlier interviews and text message conversations. Most of the interviews took place at neighborhood libraries, but due to the students' busy schedules others occurred at a student's home (while a parent was present), a pizzeria, and a tea house. My priority was that participants would feel comfortable, and that they would have sufficient privacy to openly discuss their perceptions of their schooling experiences.

The purpose of the first interview was to focus on inquiring about the students' interests, family backgrounds, and memories of their first year attending school in Pittsburgh. Asking these questions was especially helpful in developing a rapport with the students I had just met, and also provided me with important details regarding their backgrounds. For example, Esperanza told me about how she arrived in the U.S. as an undocumented immigrant. Knowing this information was critical, and as a result I omitted some questions I would have asked and added others.

The purpose of the second interview was to focus more on the participants' current schooling experiences. These questions addressed their current relationships with others (teachers, classmates, administration), as well as what their classroom, after-school, and out-of-school experiences and social interactions were like.

The third interview had four components. The first component was to focus on having the participants imagine the possibility of being able to openly discuss their perceptions about their schooling experiences with the principal, teachers, and classmates at their schools, and what they wanted them to understand about how they feel their success is supported or hindered. Another component was to ask students to clarify or expand on some of their perspectives from our ongoing text conversations in order to gain more insight into their daily lived experiences at school. A third component was to have the students perform a ranking task which focused on the academic and social elements of their school experiences.

On index cards, I wrote 10 elements that might affect students' academic and social experiences at school. An example of one of the academic elements was, "I want more teacher support to help me with homework that my parents can't help me with." An example of one of the social elements was, "I want teachers at my school to talk and relate to me as much they do to US students." I read aloud the elements and then the students chose the three elements he or she considered to be the most and the least important, arranged the index cards to represent this order, and explained the reasons for their choices.

The reason for using the ranking task was mostly to understand what aspects of school they prioritized and why. Additionally, I wanted to see if their choices would align with our text conversations and the discussions during our three interviews. Finally, the fourth component of the interview was to ask all participants questions about the methodology of this study, and how they felt about participating in the interviews and the text message conversations.

3.4.2 Key Informants

Interviewing two key informants provided me with helpful information about ESL services for English language learners (ELLs), and which local community resources are available for refugee and immigrant families. The first interview was a teleconference with a key informant who was the director of the ESL program for a school district in Pittsburgh, and he discussed the current ESL services and resources available for the students who were enrolled in the high schools in his district.

The second interview was done in person with a key informant who was a youth coordinator from the Student Success Center, which is a community organization that works with refugee students. Katie, the youth coordinator, discussed how various local organizations in Pittsburgh help refugee and immigrant students and their families, and about how they occasionally partner together. She had worked in the same neighborhood for several years with many of the same refugee families. As a result, she was able to convey important details about how the teens navigate between their home and school cultures. (See Appendix C for the key informant interview protocol.)

I chose not to interview the students' parents since the focus of this investigation remained solely on the perspectives of the students.

3.4.3 Informal Two-Way Text Conversations

Because text messaging and cell phone use play a central role in the lives of today's youth, some researchers and clinicians have sought to use the medium as a tool for interventions and data collection (e.g., Johansen & Wedderkopp, 2010; Walsh & Brinker, 2016, West et al., 2015).

Researchers who have collected information from young adults through text messages have found that the response rate is high (e.g., Aujla, 2009; Coffey et al., 2006; Johansen & Wedderkopp, 2010, Kew, 2010; Ravert, Calix, & Sullivan, 2010).

Informal two-way text conversations were an important data source. Semi-structured interviews have their limitations in accessing the *everyday* experiences of participants, so these text conversations were in line with the phenomenological approach, which seeks to understand a person's everyday lived experiences in a deeper way.

By texting, the students were able to answer my questions and thoughtfully describe their school day to me. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe this as being “surrounded by the familiar, they can reveal their knowledge, their insights and their wisdom through action, reflection and interpretation” (p. 43).

For example, one of my questions asked students what they wished their U.S. born classmates understood about them. Their answers ranged from how they sometimes can't understand enough English in class to that they wished U.S. born students would try to talk to them more. The students later told me that they had never previously reflected on this and other aspects of school before, and that it really made them think about how they related to the U.S. born students.

Since refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional high school students have access to cell phones with texting capability, texting conversations served as an alternative to traditional weekly written reflection logs, and were used to capture students' thoughts about their school experiences three to five times during the week. I used a texting prompts protocol to gain insights into students' perceptions of how they were feeling about the supports and obstacles they faced at school. (See Appendix A.) The prompt questions focused on both the academic and social aspects of their

schooling experience. If there were answers I wanted students to elaborate on, I incorporated follow-up prompts into my interview protocols. When asked during our last interview, all participants adamantly agreed that they preferred texting to filling out a daily log. In fact, many confessed that if they were given that task that they would have filled them out at the last minute before meeting with me because it was likely they wouldn't remember to do this on a daily basis.

I provided an option for students to send pictures from their phone of things they felt positively or negatively affected their school experiences, but not many did. This is likely because I did not emphasize taking photos when I explained the two way texting conversation, but this could be very informative for those conducting future studies of this nature with English Language Learners who have a lower proficiency in English. A few of the students did send pictures from their phones of different parts of the school building when answering a few of the text questions, but I asked them not to take pictures of individuals who had not given them their verbal consent.

3.5 Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdale (2016) state that researchers conducting a qualitative study are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

In this phenomenological study, the overall purpose and focus was on understanding the perspectives of refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional high school students related to the experiences they were having at public schools located in Pittsburgh, and how they were interpreting these experiences.

Data collection and analysis were iterative processes throughout the investigation. I repeatedly returned to examine previous interview transcripts and the text message conversations, so these informed and guided later interviews questions. As a result, I was able to omit or add questions to the second and third interview protocols based on the data from the first interview and the two-way text message conversations.

For example, during one text message conversation I asked a student about what they would change about their school. Her response was simply, “better school community.” Knowing that I would want to dig deeper into what she meant by this, I made a note to ask a question related to this comment during our next interview when she could provide more details on this topic. This iterative process led to locating significant emerging themes and collecting relevant data in order to create accurate and detailed portraits of each high school student.

3.5.1 Constructing the Portraits

The first step in constructing the students’ portraits was to review all of the information from the three in-depth phenomenological interviews and two-way text conversations which occurred during the six-week period of the study. I took notes and highlighted portions of these transcripts which students emphasized as being significant to their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh.

Next, I selected key quotes from the interviews and text conversations to include in the student portraits which illuminated the emerging themes of the students’ schooling experiences. As seen through key quotes in the data, some students focused more on their academic pressures and successes, and others were primarily preoccupied with the different aspects of belonging to or being excluded from their school communities. Frequently the students provided answers during

both the interviews and the text conversations which addressed similar themes. For example, even when asked general questions, one student continually gravitated toward discussing the academic segregation he noticed occurring at his school. Other key quotes were included in the portraits when students felt it was significant to elaborate on critical incidents which occurred, and how these had impacted them.

The third step in constructing the student portraits was to identify three to five main themes that most effectively depicted their schooling experiences. These were themes which appeared throughout the data and were reflected in the students' answers and descriptions. Some of the key quotes were lengthy and detailed, while others were very brief and concise. For example, one student discussed the daily racism she encountered from strangers for several minutes during an interview, and undeniably portrayed her ongoing struggle. Another student briefly explained how she felt like she was encapsulated in a bubble traveling from class to class, unable to relate to the U.S born students. Although a much shorter quote, this powerful image clearly depicted her feelings of loneliness and isolation.

The findings of this study were portrayed primarily through the voices of the students, and that is why most of the subheadings in the findings section are selected quotations from what the students said. These quotes highlighted the themes in each of the student's portraits. Because my investigation focused on student perceptions of their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh, it was important to include numerous quotes which adequately represented these experiences. The purpose in constructing the portraits this way was to enable others to appreciate their unique experiences and recognize some of the obstacles and difficulties they face at school.

3.6 Connecting the Perspectives

After creating the portraits for students in each school, I analyzed them to find points of contact with the conceptual perspectives of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging. Specifically, I tried to connect those perspectives to students' perceptions and experiences as a way to make sense of them.

3.7 Researcher Positionality

I developed an interest in this research topic after meeting Marie, a visiting professor from France, who was involved in a collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh for a year. She and her three children (ages 15, 13, and 8 years old) moved into the apartment next door, and we became close friends. Throughout the year, I spoke with her and her children about what their school experiences were like in Pittsburgh.

The children expressed their difficulty in getting to know their English speaking classmates, when they struggled with teachers who would not modify their assignments, and how the extracurricular activities they joined helped them to make friends. Marie told me about instances she had to advocate for her children when teachers would not respond to her emails about assignments that needed to be modified, or when her son, who was a straight A student in France, was placed in a remedial class solely because of his low proficiency in English. These conversations with Marie and her children led to my interest in studying how students from refugee, immigrant and visiting professional families perceived their experiences with public schools in Pittsburgh.

I am aware that being a Canadian citizen, a former ESL certified English teacher, and a white, middle class woman who is a native English speaker, are all factors are to be considered in my positionality as a researcher. My perspective is an etic one, because as a high school student I was instructed in my native language in my home country, and I never experienced prejudice or racism as a white Canadian from a middle class family.

In the past, I have had opportunities to travel to several countries and experience other cultures as a volunteer worker for over a decade, and I taught middle school in a predominantly Latino community in Texas for nine years. In addition, as a Canadian citizen I have experienced many challenges with U.S. immigration, which included ongoing visa issues and once being denied entry into the U.S. These types of experiences have made me open to learning about peoples' perspectives from different cultures and have instilled a cultural sensitivity toward the students who would volunteer to be in my study.

I greatly admire the resiliency and ability to overcome obstacles and hardships that refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students often have, and want my research to be an act of advocacy for them. That is, I want them to know that their unique stories and experiences matter. I aim to emphasize the significance of these students' funds of knowledge, and the contributions that their diverse languages and cultures bring to their school communities.

My intention in conducting this research study was to develop a deep understanding of these individuals' schooling experiences in the U.S. and then to present their perceptions in a respectful and authentic way. I also wanted to find out if current conceptual perspectives might contribute analytic power for understanding those perceptions. It is my hope that by reporting my findings, that refugee, immigrant and visiting professional students' voices could potentially

impact the educational community, leading to positive change which might include more equitable and culturally relevant learning opportunities.

4.0 Findings

The purpose of the current investigation was two-fold. First, I wanted to determine the perceptions of high school students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families about their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh. Second, I wanted to identify points of contact between those perceptions and the current conceptual frameworks of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging.

In the following sections, I describe each of the high schools that the seven students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families attended. Using text messages, interviews, and informal interactions, I present a portrait of each student to capture the perceptions they shared about their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh. Then, I connect those perceptions to the conceptual perspectives listed above in order to determine useful points of contact.

4.1 Westbrook High School

Westbrook High School is a large public school serving 1,387 ninth to twelfth grade students, and is located in a predominantly white middle-class suburb of Pittsburgh. However, about two miles away from the school, there are apartment buildings located on two or three streets that primarily house refugee and immigrant families. The teenage children of those families attend Westbrook High School.

The student body at Westbrook High School consists of 81% white students and 19% students of various racial and ethnic origins. These include 9% Asian (mostly Nepali), 5% black,

3% biracial, and 1% Hispanic. The remaining 1% percent include American Indian/Native Alaskan and Hawaiian Native/ Pacific Islander. More than one-third of the students (36%) are eligible for free or reduced lunch, and it is probable that refugee and immigrant students make up a large part of that number. Students enrolled in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program make up 6% of the total student enrollment. ESL students are only exited from this program when they can pass the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) exit exams and their Keystone state tests.

Katie, the coordinator of the Student Success Center, a high school refugee mentoring program with a non-profit community organization located in the Westbrook neighborhood, told me about the changing demographics of the area.

“So it started with, I believe it was the Bosnians were in these apartments 20 years ago, and then it shifted to African families, and now it has shifted to Nepali and Asian families. But then outside of the neighborhood it’s all white Americans” (interview, 09/06/2018).

Walking into Westbrook High, the first thing to catch one’s attention are the athletic trophies displayed in impressive glass cases. It is obvious that athletics are greatly valued by the Westbrook students. Katie, the refugee youth coordinator, mentioned that on the soccer field there is a noticeable division between the white students and the minority students.

“Yeah. Feeling like you aren’t part of the school culture or...we went to a soccer game on Tuesday, and when an American kid scored a goal, I saw all the white kids high fiving each other, and there would be no immigrant kids in that celebration, and then one of our boys, one of our Nepali boys, scored a goal, and I saw all the foreigners high fiving each other, and I’m like, You’re part of a team! You should all be cheering because someone from your team scored, but it definitely- there is a divide, even on the field with

teammates... I don't know if anyone else noticed it, but I was like, why are all the white kids high fiving. And they practice with each other every day. They spend so much time together" (key informant interview, 09/06/2018).

Other refugee students, who would enjoy the opportunity to join teams, clubs, or even to receive academic tutoring or help from teachers after school, are often limited from doing so because Westbrook does not offer any activity or athletic buses that take students home later in the afternoon. The district seems to assume that teenagers either have their own vehicles (which many of the white American students do), or that they have parents who are available to drive them. That is not the case for the majority of refugee and immigrant students who attend Westbrook. The lack of accessibility to after-school activities not only affects these students' prospects to make social connections which would enable them to feel that they belong to their school community, but also creates the problematic obstacle of preventing them from receiving academic help.

Three of the student participants attend Westbrook High School—Brisha, Yashmeet and Femi. In the sections that follow, I present portraits of these students.

4.2 A Portrait of Brisha

4.2.1 Daughter of a Nepali Refugee Family

Brisha is a 16-year-old junior attending Westbrook High School. She is the daughter of a refugee family who arrived in the U.S. eight years ago after leaving a refugee camp in Nepal. The family first settled into a culturally and linguistically diverse community in Tucson, Arizona, where the elementary school Brisha attended did not have an ESL program. She adored her

community there, which was mainly comprised of immigrant and refugee families, and felt accepted and loved at school and in her neighborhood.

Brisha's family then moved to Pittsburgh to reunite with extended family and for access to more advanced medical care for Brisha's older sister, who is physically and mentally challenged. Although these were important reasons for Brisha's family to move to Pittsburgh, she was suddenly confronted with students who prejudged her.

“Like just because I'm in the corner, sitting, working by myself, does not mean that I don't get it, that I don't know English. I know English. I think I can be better at English than you, so I think don't judge someone by the way they look or where they come from.”
(interview, 5/26/2018).

Another development related to the move to Pittsburgh was that Brisha discovered that, compared to her American classmates, she and her family were poor. She explained this to me during one of our interview conversations.

“Okay, let's say your parent is a lawyer. Good for you, you're rich, but you should understand that even it's hard to make \$5 in the U.S., going through racism every day on the job. It's really hard for families to support their children and have food on the table”
(interview, 4/28/2018).

There is a longing in Brisha's voice as she describes being tired of feeling not only different, but also inferior to the U.S. born students. She compares herself to them and, in her own estimation, comes up short. Brisha feels insecure about participating in classes because she might mispronounce words and does not know the academic vocabulary. She is also self-conscious about wearing generic clothes to school because her family can't afford the name brand clothes she thinks

would help her fit in. Brisha has feelings of guilt that she is not more grateful for all that she has in the United States compared to what she experienced in the refugee camp.

Once in Pittsburgh, Brisha was placed in the ESL program in middle school, but was exited before she went to Westbrook High School. Sometimes she feels like she is stuck between the Nepali and American cultures, without fully belonging to either one. Because of this, Brisha generally hangs out with other Nepali teens, who have also lived in the U.S. for many years and speak English fluently. The American students don't talk to Brisha or make an effort to get to know her, which makes her feel very isolated. She notices how they only talk to their American friends because that allows them to stay in their comfort zone.

“They’ve never been exposed to kids from different, they’re never friends with someone who’s different than them, so they have their own bubble that they talk to or communicate with, so they’re not open minded about things. I think they’re still stuck in their own bubble that they don’t want to get out of. They don’t want to be exposed to me, or to someone from my country because they’re just, I’m not blaming their parents for teaching things...but...” (interview, 5/26/2018).

The ESL students, many who are Nepali, also don't often relate or talk to Brisha because they think she acts American, and speaks English so well.

“But they think that because if they’re in ESL and I’m in English regular class, they think I’m the American kid that I blend with the American kids but they don’t know me. This is a huge issue between Nepali people and me myself. Like, they’re in ESL, I get that. I don’t mean to make fun of that. I do not, but we just don’t talk to each other, because I speak English in school, so they think, oh she speaks English with American kids, you know what I mean?” (interview, 5/26/2018).

Brisha has told me that she is sometimes envious of the U.S. students' carefree and almost self-centered lifestyles. Each afternoon when she returns home from school, she knows what will be waiting for her. She will likely be cooking dinner with her mother and sister-in-law, cleaning the house, babysitting her niece and nephew (who live with her), and providing the personal care for her older sister who has physical and mental challenges. She feels stressed about her classes and homework because these responsibilities compete with her studies. Sometime during the evening, she squeezes in time to get her homework done and study for any tests she might have that week. She knows that American students are not burdened with so many duties, however, she values being a good daughter and does find satisfaction in helping her family.

4.3 Brisha's Perceptions

4.3.1 "Just me in the corner..."

Every day Brisha walks through the hallways of Westbrook High School where the mostly white, American students pass by her, laughing loudly with their friends and gossiping about their latest crush, or the upcoming party that weekend after the football game. She has her headphones on and drowns out their voices by listening to pop songs in English and Hindi.

When she arrives in the classroom and takes a seat, more often than not, she blends into the background. In most of her classes, she is overlooked during group work, and ends up working on her own because she doesn't feel comfortable with or accepted by her classmates.

“Just when teachers assign you to work with partners, when I don’t have any partners to work with, and I don’t have anyone to talk to in that class. Because everyone is just talking to their friends, and it is just me in the corner sitting by myself” (interview, 04/28/2018).

Brisha doesn’t know what to do in that moment when no one chooses her to be a part of their group. She doesn’t want to work alone, but she also doesn’t want to impose- even if she is assigned to a group.

“I also wish we didn’t have to work in groups that were assigned because I have no friends and don’t talk to anyone, so it is hard for me to socialize in groups and my anxiety builds up” (text message, 04/25/2018).

I was somewhat surprised to hear Brisha describe her reaction to group work, because I am a mentor for a high school refugee group that Brisha attends once a week, and I’ve only seen her relate easily and naturally to others. Of course the other girls in our group are refugee students from different countries, so the social dynamic there is very different from the high school. It is important to note that Brisha’s English proficiency is at an advanced level, so that is not what hinders her in how she relates to her American classmates. Not only is she hilarious, but she also really listens to others and shows a genuine interest in them. Yet in school she seems to almost freeze when the possibility of conversing with American students arises. In fact, when I asked her about the times when American students made an effort to speak to her at school, she actually laughed at me as though it were ridiculous to assume that this would ever happen.

However, Brisha also sees that making friends with American students is possible because her best friend Rashmi takes advanced classes, and since there are very few Nepali kids in those classes, she has made friends with them.

“I mean I guess because of Rashmi... She talks to American kids because she takes higher classes. They’re like nice kids. She has friends, she talks to them throughout the day, and she has someone in each period to talk to. So she’s really exposed to the American lifestyle. But for me, it’s like me in my bubble that I have, so I don’t really have any friends in classes. I just do my own thing” (interview, 04/28/2018).

As a response to this comment, I asked Brisha if she thought the American students in the higher classes were more open minded and receptive to students of other ethnicities and cultures. She rejected that idea saying that her classmates know the right way to treat people but they don’t. She feels they just don’t want to do the right thing.

Although Brisha has accepted her situation of having no American friends, she also seemed to want to interact with them on some level. She asked her friend Rashmi for pointers and tips on how converse with them.

“But it’s like personally I just can’t go up to people and make a conversation. Like sometimes I ask Rashmi, ‘How do you talk to American people? What do you say to them?’ And she says, ‘I just, we talk about a topic and we just go on.’ I’m just like, ‘What topic? Give me some ideas!’ (Laughs)” (interview, 4/28/2018).

When the rare opportunity arises in which Brisha finds herself talking with an American student, she becomes a bundle of nerves. She is worried about saying the wrong thing because that could lead to being laughed at or being dismissed or rejected.

“And talking to new American kids, when we talk, you know when we accidentally talk about assignments and stuff, I get excited because I’m like, and should I say this? Should I not? Is this the right thing to say? You know what I mean? It’s hard to just... Yeah. I

can't. It's either like my voice is shaking, or I'm stuttering, or I don't know..." (interview, 4/28/2018).

I think Brisha's fear originates from being judged, bullied, and rejected in middle school by American students. She admits that the past still affects how she views American students today. Although they may not act openly hostile toward her now, she still feels insecure, insignificant, and isolated around them. However, Brisha did mention a few times that her confidence is slowly growing, and every once in a while, I got a glimpse of that through a text message or during one of our interview conversations. But even in those moments, it appears that her confidence is still reliant on appearance and the approval of American students.

"I feel confident when I look good when my hair's not greasy. I felt confidence the most when I walked down the halls. I didn't have to worry about how people viewed me or looked at me differently. I also feel confident when other American people talk to me at school. It makes me feel like they want to be friends with me and want to know about me" (text message, 4/17/2018).

When I asked Brisha if she would like to get to know American students, and have deeper conversations with them, she expressed that she would, *"If we share the same views, if I like them and genuinely think they're a good person. Then yes, I'd love to"* (text message, 4/17/2018).

Brisha describes U.S. students who act nice and respectful toward her, but then she'll see those same students make fun of ESL students. That makes her angry because she remembers how she felt when she was one of those ESL students. Even now, Brisha feels prejudged by American students because of her ethnicity, and that feeling has been intimidating enough for her to decide not to enroll and take advanced classes. *"Probably I felt dumb because it's like, Oh, I don't take*

higher classes, and then you'll look at me like I don't speak English, like I don't know things" (interview, 4/28/2018).

Brisha didn't talk much about the ESL students at Westbrook, and it seems as if she distances herself from them for a few reasons. First, she has mentioned that the ESL students misbehave and act obnoxious sometimes, and she worries that American students will judge her by their actions. Also, Brisha already feels like an outsider at Westbrook most of the time, so I think she doesn't necessarily want to associate as much with other obvious outsiders, which the ESL students are. Instead, she mostly hangs out with a group of Nepali students who arrived in the U.S. around 8-10 years ago like she did.

4.3.2 Nepali Connections

The times Brisha feels the most at home at school is when she hangs out with her Nepali friends. Throughout the day, there are these treasured pockets of time when she can sit and connect with her friends that speak her language and share her culture. Brisha comes from a very traditional Nepali family where they still celebrate all Nepali traditions and holidays, enact traditional Nepali gender roles, and only speak Nepali at home. Having been in the U.S. for eight years, she has adapted in many ways to American culture, but has shared with me that it can be exhausting having to switch from Nepali to American culture at school, just so that she doesn't feel so different from the American students.

Having Nepali friends at school who can understand her particular circumstances is very comforting for Brisha. She described in detail an important conversation she had with one of her Nepali friends about some of the pressures and conflicting feelings she had about leaving home to

attend college. She was able to share her thoughts with someone who came from the same culture and understood how difficult it is to navigate the complicated U.S. college system.

“After a while we talk about SATS and colleges. Well, we were just talking about her family problem and how her mom wants her to stay home and go to college near Pittsburgh, and I advised her that sometimes you have to let yourself be exposed to new things in life. In order for her to get a nicer job, nicer life, she needs to do something great even though it might hurt to leave your family members. As we were talking, she told me that her parents understand that getting scholarships is hard. They told her that she could do and choose whatever fields she wants to go into.

As for me, I kind of felt bad because college talks never happen in my family. Once I told my brother I wanted to work with people and their minds, but he told me that I won't make any money and that I should get into the medical field. Our talk went on and on... Overall it was nice having someone that goes through the similar things as me. I was comfortable with colleges and majoring in what I want to do. I understood life better... Honestly, I didn't know I had to keep good grades to go to college, so that was really shocking. I just thought like in Nepal, you just go to one high school, then to one college. You don't have to be accepted. You don't have to do tests. Yeah I didn't know the system at all...I've wasted 2 years of my high school like that. It's scary because I wish I could go back and restart school because now I understand what a 'C' in a test could do to your GPA. I wish people could help me with the college applications, getting scholarships, everything that gets me to a good college” (text message, 4/12/2018).

Although Brisha has a keen interest in psychology, and has asked me about different potential careers in this field, she feels the weight of her family's expectations. The Nepali culture

is not an individualistic one, like in the U.S, but a collectivist one. She strongly believes in loyalty, and that you do everything, not only for yourself, but for your family. It saddened me to hear the regret in her voice because she felt at fault for not understanding how to navigate the U.S. college system as a freshman and sophomore. I tried to explain to her that many American teenagers have parents who take on a lot of this burden for them, and that she wasn't to blame. The reality is that her family--mother, father, and older siblings--are all counting on her to pursue a lucrative career that can eventually help them all become more established and comfortable in the United States. That is a lot of pressure for a 16-year-old.

4.3.3 “I wish [my teachers] could like talk to me in person”

In all of her classes, Brisha is very well-liked by her teachers. She works quietly, doesn't misbehave, and tries her hardest to do well. Her parents taught her to always respect her elders, and she is careful to do just that. When she sees students misbehaving or talking back to a teacher, it infuriates her and reminds her that her values are different from American students.

“They don't do their work, the teacher is so nice and always easy but they don't follow directions, always talking, always using their phones while he is explaining something. It pisses me off when they don't respect elders” (text message, 4/19/2018).

I asked Brisha what she felt students at Westbrook needed to learn more about in school, and this resulted in a discussion about how students needed to respect their elders more.

“That you should listen to others, don't interrupt elders, respect them, know what is right to say and what is wrong for someone older than you, manners, give people the same respect they give you, things in general” (text message, 4/19/2018).

In addition to feeling that this is not appropriate behavior, she also feels that when American students are disrespectful and disruptive during class it directly affects the teacher's ability to teach which results in her not learning as much. In fact, she told me about how much she enjoyed history class the previous year, but that this year her history teacher was not able to manage the students in the class and she didn't feel she was able to learn:

"I love history, but this year I don't feel like I'm learning anything about the U.S. and the war because the teacher never really does anything. He never really teaches at all, and the class is a joke. I'm telling you the class is a joke" (interview, 4/28/2018).

While her teachers appreciate her hard work and dedication to her studies, Brisha feels that they should try to connect more with their students and also make more of an effort to teach effectively. She told me how she doesn't talk much with her teachers, but would like to. Because she doesn't have many friends in school, she shared that it is especially important for her to feel that her teachers like and support her. If this occurs, she would feel seen and special.

"I wish they could like talk to me in person, or when they're like talking to a group of friends, I hope they notice me. At least like say something to me so I can you know, respond back... Yeah. Like a bond or something. Yeah. Which I don't have a lot, so I don't know, a lot of my teachers are like bummed out, and... I just wish they would talk more, interact" (interview, 04/28/2018).

Brisha also notices that her teachers show favoritism to the American students.

"You know how the teacher sometimes talks to the same old group every single day? That kind of bothers me, like why don't you make others feel the same way than the ones that you do talk to feel? They should all feel equal and all feel like they belong" (interview, 4/28/2018).

I asked Brisha what she considered to be the most important characteristics of effective teachers. She again stressed the fact that certain students receive more of the teachers' attention.

“Understanding students. Like they should put themselves in someone else’s shoes...Make students comfortable, make them feel like home and make them feel like they’re not any less than other students like you know how teachers only talk to popular kids...well I should state it better-- only talk to a group a kids. Well that shouldn’t happen. Have a connection with them in a way that makes them feel like they’re loved and belonged and that they fit into the group in a way” (text message, 4/26/ 2018).

4.3.4 “Fire some teachers.”

With her future goals in mind, Brisha takes her education very seriously. I was surprised that as respectful as she is toward her teachers, that inwardly she is actually very critical of their instruction, classroom management, and general use of class time. Although she really likes her health teacher as a person, the fact that he wastes so much time in class frustrates her. He goes off topic frequently by telling personal stories about his friends and family. Another teacher that Brisha doesn't feel is effective is her math teacher. She says that he just assigns questions and has a quiz, so she has to learn the concepts on her own. She mentioned that another student said that *“he should be sued.”*

Brisha becomes stressed because she finds math difficult and the lack of instruction brings down her GPA which she knows could affect her college prospects. Although Brisha is always respectful to her teachers, she told me that if she could change anything at her school, she would *“fire some teachers”* (interview, 4/28/2018).

4.3.5 “Just recognize us...”

Every day Brisha passes by a display just outside the cafeteria that was designed by the ESL teachers to highlight the refugee students at Westbrook. Brisha sent me a photo of it in one of her text messages. The display presents some general facts and statistics about refugees, but it also features large photographs of selected Westbrook refugee students, with information about who they are and what country they come from (one student from each country was chosen). There is also an accompanying world map with all of those countries identified.

While Brisha thinks this effort is “okay,” she desires to see Westbrook celebrate the diversity of its refugee and immigrant students in what she perceives to be in more meaningful ways. Brisha offered some suggestions.

“I would want more cultural fairs...More clubs with, they always spend money on football, but they don’t spend money on soccer because no one really comes there. It should be equal. You know what I mean?” (interview, 4/ 28/2018).

Brisha would also like to see the cafeteria offer ethnic dishes occasionally as one of the lunch options, and while that could be challenging for the cafeteria staff- she feels they could try it a few times a year to see if it is possible. She also told me that she wishes during assemblies, that sometimes they would “*just recognize us*” because she feels that Westbrook is “*very White and American*”. Brisha also mentioned hiring Nepali translators or office staff who could communicate with parents who cannot speak English.

The one club that Brisha has invested a lot of her time and energy in at Westbrook is the Global Minds Club. That mission of that organization is to combat cultural intolerance and discrimination and to unite international and U.S.-born students. Although there is still an obvious divide between these two groups, Brisha has hopes that connections and relationships can change

and grow over time. The club meets bi-weekly, and Brisha attends regularly, and intends to be on the leadership committee in the coming year.

4.3.6 “I wish they knew...”

I will end this portrait of Brisha with what she expressed as her wish for the American students and teachers of Westbrook.

“I wish they knew that I like singing and makeup. The struggles I went through in Nepal, the situations, houses in Nepal. It would be so cool for them to know how my country was. I just want to see what they’ll think of it, their reaction. I wish they knew I had a disabled sister who I take care of along with my nephew and nieces. I just want them to know that I’m someone different aside from school... We never had the things we wanted-- clothes, good food, there was no work for my dad. He used to be out of town every month searching for jobs. And my mom used to take care of 5 children while doing housework’s and her small business that she ran along with her studying Nepali. Also there was no good treatment for my sister” (text message, 05/17/2018).

4.4 A Portrait of Yashmeet

4.4.1 Son of a Nepali Refugee Family

At the time of the study, Yashmeet was a 16-year-old junior at Westbrook High School, where approximately 80% of the students are white and 20% are of other ethnicities, but mostly

Nepali. His family lived in a refugee camp in Nepal, and arrived in the U.S. 9 years ago. First, they were assigned to settle in New York, but the cost of living was too expensive, so they relocated to Pittsburgh. Now, his father works at a food packing plant earning minimum wage, while his mother does not work outside the home. Neither of his parents are able to speak or understand English. Once they arrived in Pittsburgh, Yashmeet's family moved into one of the apartment buildings that houses mostly refugee and immigrant families, so he made Nepali friends and he describes his neighborhood as a cultural bubble.

“Like in our neighborhood, it is mostly filled with Nepali people, so it feels like a camp pretty much. So it's not that hard for my parents to adapt to... And the cultures we have, it is different than what we have here. Because we are in like a bubble here... I thought I was back in Nepal again” (interview, 4/11/2018).

Yashmeet's English proficiency is high, although he expressed struggling with writing in English. He was exited from the ESL program after 6th grade, and he takes the honors and AP classes in subjects like computer science and physics because his goal is to become a computer software engineer. After school and on weekends he spends a significant amount of time volunteering in his community. He recognizes that this will enhance his college application, but also enjoys helping people.

“I volunteer at the library helping old people with technology and help around the family center. It's really fun because u can actually start having pretty fun conversation as you're helping. Last week this lady was telling me how the technology was when she was growing up and how it is now. And how she used to work for a government job. I have really fun helping” (text message, 4/18/2018).

Yashmeet recognizes the racism that exists at Westbrook High School, and feels that the U.S. students need to be exposed to cultural diversity in order for things to improve. He has ideas on how the Global Minds club, that he is a part of, could be involved in positive change.

“For this we’re trying to do something in Global Minds, like we’re going to have this thing in the gymnasium with...Do you know Refugee Day in Pittsburgh? In the PNC plaza? I think. And they do this thing every year, and in our school we’re trying to do it in the gymnasium with like our school students...So they can know about the refugees that came from other places and actually acknowledge it and stuff” (interview, 4/28/2018).

He recognizes that it will be an uphill battle to spark the American students’ curiosity and interest about other cultures, but his hope is *“That the kids were more knowing of people’s cultures, and actually appreciated it. Not like avoided it in a sense... To get it out there because that’s the first thing right? Is to have them even exposed to it”* (interview, 4/28/2018). Yashmeet genuinely appreciates this cultural diversity and mentions that it is one of the best things about Westbrook High School- *“The BEST thing is that there are kids from all over the world because you know that you’re not the only refugee”* (text message, 5/04/2018).

Yashmeet realizes the sacrifice his parents have made for him and his sisters to have a life in the U.S. where there are more opportunities than back in Nepal. *“In the U.S. you learn a lot more because the education system is way better. I think we have more freedom in the U.S. and more creativity flows through”* (interview, 4/11/2018). This realization has led Yashmeet to be very goal driven in order to achieve his goal of being a computer programmer or software engineer.

4.5 Yashmeet's Perceptions

4.5.1 "All of my computer teachers I have great relationships with..."

Yashmeet is a tall, lanky 16-year-old teenage boy who sometimes wears Buddy Holly style wayfarer glasses that show he is one of those students taking mostly advanced computer, math, and physics classes. Before school, at lunch, or after school, if Yashmeet's friends are looking for him, they know where to go. He will either be hanging out in the library or in a computer science classroom. If it's the library, he will be finishing English or history homework. If it's the computer classroom, he will be playing online video games with friends.

His computer teachers don't mind Yashmeet coming by to visit, since they share the same interests in programming and computer software. This allows them to have what Yashmeet refers to as "fun and interesting conversations." He admits to having closer relationships with these teachers than with his English and history teachers because he admittedly doesn't care about those subjects, *"Okay. All my computer teachers I have great relationships with, and the other teachers I don't really talk to them. Yeah, I don't really talk to them"* (interview, 04/28/2018).

One of the reasons Yashmeet appreciates his computer teachers so much is how they have made an effort to challenge him, so he can further develop his computer skills. This is crucial for Yashmeet because he plans to pursue a career in computer engineering. Another reason why he appreciates these particular teachers is that he feels that they have taken a personal interest in him and have mentored him in other areas of life as well.

"My computer teachers, because I have learned too much from them, not just computer stuff like mentoring- about life in general...Yeah we share the same interests and like we have the same hobby too" (interview, 04/28/2018).

In our last interview, I asked Yashmeet to pretend I was his computer teacher and to tell me how he feels about being in my class.

“It’s awesome because that’s what I want to do in the future, and the teacher is actually supporting me and helping me throughout the school year and getting me to reach my dream. It’s pretty cool” (interview, 05/26/2018).

Yashmeet says that he also gets along with his craft teacher because he finds the craft class to be a welcome break during an otherwise intense schedule which includes mostly honors and advanced placement classes. *“My craft teacher, I’m really good friends with her. And my arts stuff...yeah I enjoy it”* (interview, 05/28/2018). He would also enjoy taking piano or guitar lessons at school, but knows that his “Asian parent’s high expectations” would not allow for this unnecessary luxury.

Unlike several of the other students I have spoken with, Yashmeet does not express a need to feel close to all of his teachers. He views school as helping him advance to the next stage of his life, which is to attend a college where he can then pursue his passion to study computer science. While Yashmeet expresses that he doesn’t feel close to his academic teachers, he does not disrespect them in any way. Their only complaint about him would likely be the lack of effort he demonstrates for completing assignments in a content area that he doesn’t value or view to be relevant to his end goals.

When I asked Yashmeet if he felt that teachers at his school treated all students the same regardless of their ethnicity or race, he said that they didn’t and immediately mentioned racism.

“No, I don’t feel that all the teachers in our school teach the kids in school the same, but there is always racism all over the place and for a fact, I know it won’t go away anytime soon” (interview, 05/26/2018).

When I asked Yashmeet some follow-up questions about this, he quickly clarified that the teachers likely didn't mean to be racist but that they bond more easily and more often with U.S. students.

“Yeah. It won't go away. Like you know how back it was discriminating against, still discriminating against after like hundreds of years? They're still there...They're not intending to be racist...Yes. It's not intentional but this just happens naturally, because I don't know...Generally, like they favor those students better, meaning...I'm trying to think...And they connect with them better than they connect with the foreign students because they know their culture better” (interview, 05/26/2018).

He provided a few examples of how he sees the teachers favoring white students, and how it happens in a subtle way. *“Like some teachers calling another person more than the other and giving them more time”* (text message, 4/20/2018).

When Yashmeet explained this to me, he wasn't irate or upset, but accepted this as the reality he lives with. Because he is such a high achieving student and has a clear vision of his future, he is more pragmatic rather than emotional about the fact that teachers appear to favor white students.

4.5.2 “If I just get respected, I don't care if I get accepted or not.”

When he attends his honors pre-calculus class, honors physics class, or any of his advanced computer science classes, Yashmeet describes his interactions, which often includes group work, with many of his U.S. born classmates as being mainly positive experiences. However, in all of his regular classes, Yashmeet prefers to work on his own. This is because he says those students are sometimes lazy and just want to take credit for his work.

“Yeah we all contribute to one problem together and try to solve it. And like if one person gets stuck, we all help each other out and stuff. But in other classes, I’d rather work alone. I do better if I work alone” (interview, 4/28/2018).

Yashmeet tends to hold the U.S. born students out at arm’s length and keep some emotional distance from them, so that they are not capable of getting close enough to hurt his feelings. His conversations with them are perfunctory and focus on school-related topics. However, in his computer class, he does have some friends.

“I am done with most of the stuff we need to do in that class (computer science), so me and other classmates just downloaded Fortnite (popular video game) in the computer and play squad games together, which is really fun because it’s like one of the best times where I communicate with classmates and have fun doing it” (text message, 04/12/2018).

During our text conversations and interviews, it became clear that the U.S. students who Yashmeet does occasionally choose to relate to happen to be a lot like him. So this remains a safety zone for him, because he has already concluded that they have similar hobbies and interests, and he only talks to them during class. He first mentions this during one of our text conversations.

“My favorite group of students to be with is nerdy ones because I can get along with them better and actually know what I am talking with them and also I can actually connect the story with them. Overall I have better conversation with them” (text message, 4/25/2018).

Later he brings this up again when I asked him a question about when he speaks with American students:

“I don’t really talk to U.S.-born students that much, but once I do, they’re like really nice, because the kids I talk to that are U.S.-born are kind of like me. Kind of nerdy and stuff” (interview, 4/28/ 2018).

Even in the Robotics and Global Minds clubs that he regularly attends after school, Yashmeet surrounds himself with other refugee/immigrant students rather than white American students.

“I stay after school for my robotics club. It’s mostly Asians and, yeah. Mostly Asians in my class who are in robotics club. Yeah, I interact with them the most after school” (interview, 4/28/ 2018).

Yashmeet’s relationship dynamic with American students differs greatly from Brisha’s. She desperately wants to be recognized and valued by the U.S. students, yet feels no control over being accepted by them. Yashmeet, on the other hand, feels as if he is the one who decides whether he relates to the U.S. students or not: *“And so you find that when you do decide to open up to some of these kids, they’re actually really nice”* (interview, 4/28/ 2018).

It is unlikely that Yashmeet will ever be sighted at the mall or at the movies with a group of American students after school or on the weekend. When I asked Yashmeet if he socialized with American students outside of school, he said that was something that he would potentially do, but that it is just not a priority for him. When I probed a bit more he admitted, *“Because I am not open to them. I don’t think I’m open to them”* (interview, 4/28/ 2018). Yashmeet told me that he realized during our conversation that he is actually happy with the types of relationships he has with the American students and doesn’t like change. He has seen and personally experienced racism from some U.S. students at Westbrook, and for that reason he is cautious about when and in what ways he relates to them.

“It’s pretty decent, but it’s not great because there’s people there that are racist. Not all people, but like some of them are because of their parents’ influence and the people

around that they hang out with, make them feel like that. So they want to fit in with those people. They think it's so cool, but it's actually not" (interview, 05/26/2018).

One day during our two-way text conversation, I asked Yashmeet if he had spoken to U.S. students that day and if his interactions with them were positive or negative. He brought up an incident that happened that afternoon at National Junior Honor Society with one racist boy who he has dealt with since middle school.

"So I had a banquet rehearsal at school and I have known this kid since 6th grade, and for my knowledge none of my friends like him because he is just racist and super rude. And I sit in front of him at the banquet and I was asking him something and he was super rude about it" (text message, 04/ 12/2018).

By text, I asked Yashmeet how he handled being treated this way, and he replied, *"It annoyed me a lot, but I just didn't want to make a scene so I just didn't care."* When I asked him if this boy hung out with other racist students, he answered, *"Yeah, but some of the kids he hangs out with are nice. And that kid is popular. He is one of the most popular kids."*

However, these "nice kids" don't stand up to this student when this popular boy makes racist remarks to international students. Even though Yashmeet understands that this is because they don't want to be ostracized by the popular kids, their actions as bystanders may contribute to him closing himself off from getting to know U.S. students on a more personal level.

In our last interview, I asked Yashmeet why he thought this particular boy was racist toward him and other students who are not white.

"Um...Probably he just wants to be cool. Other people in his group probably think it's cool, so he's trying to elevate himself. Make himself elite or something like that" (interview, 05/26/2018).

Yashmeet also commented that he thought that this student's racist attitude likely had to do with the way his parents think, and attributes some of this to the political climate with Donald Trump being president. He sees the need for there to be more diversity in the government in order for all Americans to be truly represented. *"I think there should be a Nepali person in the head of government. Or senator or House of Representatives"* (interview, 05/26/2018).

Yashmeet also pointed out that people who share this student's views need to understand how refugees can be an asset and contribute to America, and how that might change their viewpoints.

When I asked Yashmeet to advise ESL students about how to learn English, he encouraged them to stay strong when racist people were mean or cruel to them about saying something wrong or mispronouncing words, *"Ignore the people that make fun of you for making a bad statement or something because you don't know English"* (interview, 05/26/2018).

Yashmeet's attitude toward U.S. students seems to be best summed up in his own words, when he expressed that feeling accepted by them was one of his three least important social components about school- *"If I just get respected, I don't care if I get accepted or not"* (interview, 05/26/2018).

Yashmeet has many Nepali friends who live in his neighborhood and also go to Westbrook, so he chooses to be close and share personal information with them. He recognizes that the lack of connection he has with American students can also be attributed to his apparent apathy toward them. Yet, during a text message conversation, I asked Yashmeet whose mind he would most want to "read" at school, and he chose a popular athletic white student. His explanation revealed what I see as feelings of insecurity and inferiority.

“Another peer, and it would be those athletic kids from my grade because I have never been athletic and I just want to know what it feels to be one. And another thing would be those popular kids in my grades because I want to experience being popular because most Asians don’t get to experience that” (text message, 04/16/2018).

4.5.3 “They don’t prepare us for the future. We just have to learn for ourselves.”

Yashmeet is one of the only refugee students I spoke with who has daily access to a car and can drive himself to and from school because his father goes to work in a company van each day. This allows Yashmeet to stay after school and attend Global Minds club and Robotics club, or receive extra tutoring help for some of his more challenging classes. In addition, he also joined the National Junior Honor Society, mostly for the opportunity to include this on his university application.

His only responsibility is to study and do well in school. As a male in Nepali culture, he is not responsible for any of the traditional women’s duties such as cooking, laundry, cleaning, or even babysitting his nieces and nephews like she is. He reluctantly admitted that his mother does everything for him, and she only enlists the help of his sisters.

When I asked Yashmeet about his perceptions of his schooling in the United States, he felt grateful for how advanced education is here. He mentioned how in Nepal there was a shortage of technology and resources.

“Resources and Internet. And we have electricity here, so we don’t have to stay up in the dark and do stuff... We had no Internet, like if you were poor you had no internet or electricity. So you had to be rich... We didn’t even have computers or phones... I didn’t know what a computer was when I came here so...” (interview, 04/11/2018).

Even though he appreciates the educational opportunities he is provided with, he still recognizes and critiques the lack of resources and other shortcomings that he specifically sees at Westbrook High School.

“No. We have a computer that is like 10 years old and slow. (Laughs) It just bothers me every time I use the computer there...Yeah. They have iPads and stuff. We have a Chromebook that is like so bad. I don’t even use it, I use a Mac, so...” (interview, 04/11/2018).

It is not surprising that because of his goal of becoming a computer engineer, that Yashmeet’s priority is for Westbrook to adopt more cutting edge technology.

“Because like, the world is all about technology, and we don’t want to be like all those old people when we get out in the world, like not knowing technology so if we start learning from the start, we’d be better off... I feel like everyone should learn to code... because it helps you with your brain, like with logic and stuff” (interview, 05/26/2018).

He mentions how the 3D printer needs to be fixed, and how the Robotics class needs more money if they ever plan to compete with other schools. Yashmeet is aware that schools in wealthier districts have the funds for more advanced technology. These types of discussions with him lead me to wonder if Yashmeet were able to attend a really affluent school, like some of the visiting professional students do, what types of programs and resources would he have access to that would help develop his potential when it came to his skill set in working with computers and technology?

Besides the courses that will enable him to fulfill his career goals, Yashmeet does not find school to be particularly useful in helping him prepare for the future.

“I feel like high school is super easy. I don’t think it’s actually going to prepare me for the future. To be honest. Because they don’t really teach us anything, just like the same

thing as every school year ever. Like every school year, it's the same... There's no difference. They don't teach us how to like apply for a job or anything like that. They don't prepare us for the future. We just have to learn for ourselves" (interview, 05/26/2018).

In order for Yashmeet to feel like school is a valuable use of his time, he needs to see the relevance of what he is learning, and how he can use that information in everyday life. He mentioned how he would appreciate being taught some real world life skills but the school doesn't make that a priority.

"Like life in general. They don't teach us how to write checks, do our taxes and get a loan out, and buying ur car. Just life in general that they should teach" (text message, 04/19/2018).

At the Student Success Center, Katie, the youth coordinator, has taken on the responsibility to teach the practical life skills that will prepare Yashmeet for his future. Because his parents do not understand and speak English, she fills in the gaps, such as helping him obtain his required community hours, providing him with homework help as needed, taking him on field trips and college visits, and explaining how to approach and prepare for his upcoming college applications. Yashmeet speaks highly of the impact and support this organization has made on him over the years.

"Yes it has been a really HUGE part of my life. Helped me? Like pretty much ever since I came here into Pittsburgh, (It) has helped me like through homework, make new friends, and communicating with others and making networks with people" (interview, 04/28/2018).

Yashmeet has a laser sharp focus as to where he wants to go in life, and how he is going to get there. He is not going to allow the lack of acceptance or approval from his American classmates hinder his progress in reaching his goal. Surrounding himself with an established group of Nepali friends, he has also found support within the Global Minds club at school, as well as with the Student Success Center that supports refugee youth.

4.6 A Portrait of Femi

4.6.1 Daughter of a Rwandan Refugee Family

Femi is a 15-year-old sophomore attending Westbrook High School in Pittsburgh, PA. She is the daughter of a refugee family from Rwanda, who arrived in the U.S. two years ago and settled in Pittsburgh. Her oldest sister came to Pittsburgh first, and then Femi and her family followed three months later. Navigating the U.S. school system was very challenging for Femi at first. A telling example was when she first came to the school and received a map for her to consult as she made her way in the building.

“And one time there was a test, and I have to go to a different class, and I was walking away. Go downstairs and I don’t know where I’m going. Still looking at the numbers and looking at the doors and I found it. But it was too late” (interview 10/26/2018).

Femi mentioned that during her regular mainstream classes she feels *“kind of alone”* because she doesn’t understand much English. She also admitted to feeling frustrated, *“Yeah, I’m just sitting there and looking at everyone”* (interview, 11/20/2018).

Femi is in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program at the high school. While she can carry on casual conversations in English, she struggles with understanding academic content in her mainstream classes. It is especially difficult for her to read and write in English, and for that reason she was the only participant that I did not have a two-way text conversation with (Google translate did not have Kinyarwanda or other African language with which she was familiar).

Femi shows a lot of interest in Indian and Nepali culture because she is very involved in the group mentoring program at the Student Success Center, where many of the refugee girls are from Nepal. Although she expresses loving Pittsburgh, she also admits that at school she often feels isolated or is bullied. It has been challenging for Femi make friends at school because she is still trying to learn English.

Many of the white American students are not openly hostile toward her; however, they seem apathetic and indifferent which makes Femi feel isolated. Surprisingly, most of the bullying Femi has experienced was by other African refugee students who had arrived in the U.S. before she had. Femi described how they would make fun of her on different occasions, *“Some of them talked to me, some of them be mean to me. And one girl was, bring my drink. And she come and she take my juice and she run away”* (interview 10/26/2018).

“There was one guy that was kind of mean to me. And I was like, Ok. He didn’t come from U.S., he came from Africa. And he was kind of mean. Kind of make me funny in how I was speaking” (interview 10/26/2018).

Femi also mentioned how a Nepali girl started some really hurtful rumors about her that suggested Femi watched pornographic videos on her phone.

“Yeah. It was like a Nepali girl. Yeah. She would make fun of me. Also I was watching a video and she told everyone I was watching a bad thing, and I was like, how? I was

watching my country's song. And she say, Oh she is watching bad things in front of all the people. One guy he liked to come over here and he liked to say it on the bus, and yeah" (interview 10/26/2018).

Although she describes a few specific white American students as being friendly to her, Femi openly revealed how she and other ESL students don't feel that they are a valued part of the Westbrook High School community.

"Some kids come from different countries, if they can help them to not feel lonely or something like that. That would be nice for them, and they're going to make them be happy, and then they're not going to feel like, Oh these people don't like me, or this class I don't like it, let's move to different country because it is going to be better. They're not going to think that. I wish they could be very good people and every teacher be nice, and some American kids, they could tell them to be nice to people, because some of the people are not nice to them, to us" (interview, 12/04/2018).

Femi mentioned several times throughout the study that she wants to return to Rwanda, but that she is too young to do so.

4.7 Femi's Perceptions

I usually hear Femi's voice before I even see her. When I approach the room where the high school refugee girls meet for our mentoring group one night a week, her loud and boisterous laugh greets me at the door. Femi is highly energetic and loves to dance to hip hop music and sing at any opportunity. She also enjoys telling the group detailed stories about experiences in her home country as well as funny incidents that happen to her at school. Even though she is well aware that

she is the girl in the group who struggles the most in English that doesn't keep her from sharing. She knows we care and want to hear what she has to say. Femi loves being around other immigrants and refugees, and has explained that she feels like she can "be herself" during our mentoring group in a way that she cannot be at Westbrook High School. Often, she interrupts when other girls are talking, but it seems like she does this because she is just so eager to be heard and to feel like she is a valuable part of our group.

4.7.1 "We only have a little bit of time, but the time you have, make everyone understand."

Femi is not literate in her native language of Kinyarwanda, and this makes it hard for her to learn how to read and write in English. She finds it incredibly difficult to understand any of the content in her academic courses. Katie, the coordinator of the Student Success Center which provides mentoring for refugee teens, provided me with detailed examples of Femi's challenges. Despite her low English proficiency, Femi's teachers expect her to read the textbooks and complete all of the assignments and homework without modifications or accommodations. Homework Help is a service that Katie's organization offers, and she described how much Femi depends on the support she gets there.

"Like last year Femi was in biology and comes home with like, she needs to define all these terms. So she's like, I have to define all these things. I'm like, I don't even know where to begin explaining. Do you even know what a cell is? She wants to do her homework. She wants to understand, but her English is so limited... So I heavily helped her with her homework last year. Basically doing it for her... Yeah, and she's getting experience writing. I think her first week here she had a crossword puzzle she had to fill out. The concept of a crossword puzzle, she was not familiar with. Yeah, and it's a real

weird thing if you've never seen them before. So, basically I just did it for her. I mean she had to write, but I told her what letters to write in each box, so I told myself, this is valuable because she is learning the concept of it, she's practicing writing her letters, but she's not learning any of the content. And if I hadn't been there...Then I don't know... Because it's a weird thing, but...I'm sure her teachers didn't know that was a foreign thing to her, and I'm sure they didn't explain it" (interview, 09/06/2018).

Femi depends on Homework Help because Westbrook High School does not provide late afternoon buses to transport students home after meetings with teachers or tutoring sessions. Femi would be very willing to stay after school to ask for more clarification about the assignments that she doesn't understand if that opportunity were available. She also recognizes that there are other English language learners, like herself, who struggle with their English and would benefit from additional tutoring after school.

"Yeah that would be hard and you need to do your homework after. And maybe some of them have to walk home and some of them they don't have a car, so they have to go maybe their house is like far away. Or maybe they can bring the bus after you're done to take you home. Yes! That would be very good" (interview, 12/04/2018).

Femi also mentions how there are other refugee students who want to join clubs and teams, but the lack of transportation is too much of an obstacle for them to do so:

"Some of them want to play basketball, football, soccer, everything, but they say, I don't have a ride. How am I going to get home?! Walking will get them home late at night, and they say, who is gonna drive me home? Nobody" (interview, 12/04/2018).

Not having a way to participate in activities is problematic for refugee and immigrant students, because this only further isolates them from feeling that they are an important part of

their school community. Femi already feels “different,” and sometimes inferior to her white American classmates, and doesn’t find it easy to connect with many of them.

Since she is not able to stay and receive tutoring after school, I asked Femi what she would suggest the teachers change, as far as their instruction in the classes she struggles with the most (which were history and chemistry). She wasn’t judgmental toward these teachers, but did express that they should make sure all students can learn the material.

“Yeah. I would tell her that to take more time for you. We have only a little bit of time, but the time you have, make everyone understand. The people who no speak English...Because American kids, they can understand what you say, but I can’t understand what she say. But sometimes when she says something, I can’t even know what that means, so I feel shy because I can’t ask American kids. And maybe they are going to say, oh she doesn’t know anything. And then I leave it. Sometimes I get a zero for her class because I didn’t know what we were doing” (interview, 12/04/2018).

I was curious and asked if the teacher ever asked her why she got a zero for a grade, but Femi told me that the teacher doesn’t inquire as to why she isn’t doing better and Femi is too intimidated to talk to her. I empathize with Femi’s teachers and find it hard to imagine how I would support a student who speaks a language that I don’t know, and who wasn’t able to speak, understand, read or write English. I would be curious to know if Westbrook provides adequate ESL training for their high school teachers, especially since they have had refugee and immigrant students attending their schools for the last 20 years.

Femi recognizes that there are some practical ways that teachers could assist her in understanding more of what is happening in class. She emphasized how helpful it would be if teachers slowed down and created step by step instructions to make it easier for her to understand

the processes involved in completing different assignments and group projects. Having the instructions in print for her to refer back to would also be a good strategy for teachers to use for her, as well as other ESL students.

“Or maybe like they can, if they do projects you can- Oh we are doing this stuff, and you can go to Google classroom and see this. If you can see, then she can help you to find it and make you understand what you are going to do in the class...” (interview, 12/04/2018).

I asked Femi if any of her teachers ever read the test questions for her, so she could answer orally. Although still limited, she has a higher English proficiency in speaking and listening than in reading and writing, so this type of assessment would better measure what she has learned. She replied that only one middle school teacher read tests aloud for her, but that nobody had offered her that option at the high school.

“Oh, when I was in middle school, it was only one teacher that do that for me. In high school no. Nobody...When I do tests, nobody can help me, so I try to do my best” (interview, 10/26/2018).

Every day, Femi travels from class to class, rarely feeling successful in her academic mainstream classes. Although it is her second year in the U.S., she often feels like she is falling further and further behind. She is given assignments and readings that she is unable to complete because she does not have the proficiency in English to do so.

“Yeah. Actually it is because she (teacher) can think maybe you know how to read or you don't know how to read. And she can just say, just do this for me and bring it tomorrow, and you can't even know what you are going to do, how you are going to do it” (interview, 11/20/2018).

There is also the complication that in her mainstream classes she finds it difficult to work with American students because she can't understand what they are saying or join in the discussion. Often she will try to send an assignment or PowerPoint to the teacher in order to ask for help. Again, I wonder if there wouldn't be a way the teachers could foresee this happening and maybe try to pre-teach her and other ESL students the vocabulary that they would use in class that day.

“Sometimes I can't understand what they say, and when we do a project, and sometimes I can't do it with a group of people, and I can send it to her and she can read it, and she can help” (interview, 11/20/2018).

Fortunately, Femi has an outgoing personality which has, at times, enabled her to be proactive and ask for the help she needs. If she were a shy person, I suspect that she would go unnoticed even more often than she already does.

4.7.2 “But they just tell you the answer and walk away...”

Femi had lots of friends and was very popular in Rwanda, so it was a major adjustment to arrive in the United States and leave her friends and extended family.

“But when I have the day of leaving, I cried all the day because my friends were all, Oh we're going to miss you! Yeah. I miss my friends and I wanna go back, but I'm too young to go back...Yeah because when I was in my country, every time I see my all my friends in the school every day, every time, every second, every minute...” (interview, 10/26/2018).

Femi ranked having students from her culture and country as one of the most important social elements of school. At Westbrook High School, there is no one who speaks Kinyarwanda

or comes from Rwanda. Femi feels that if there were more people from her country at the school, then they would have more power and people would notice and respect them more.

“Yeah. You’re not gonna feel different, so maybe some of them will know who are you, and they are going to know that you have some people from YOUR country and we speak THIS language. And they’re going to care about our language and they’re going to care about us” (interview, 12/04/2018).

In the U.S., Femi has found it difficult to get to know people, especially white American students, and she doesn’t understand why. Even when I present her with questions like, “Do you think it is a language thing, or because you are from another country?” She is a very sociable person and cannot figure out why anyone would let these differences be barriers to making new friends. Femi would really like to become better friends with American students to also help her pick up English quickly.

“Because they’re not nice and they’re kind of...some of them are nice, some of them no nice, and I feel like if they were nice, everyone they would come close to each other. Maybe some of them would help you to get a lot of English” (interview, 12/04/2018).

She is disappointed when the teacher assigns group work because what often happens is she is assigned to work with students do not know her. Then, they don’t include her while working on the task because they don’t want to make the extra effort to help her understand.

“Maybe because you can pick your friend, and then maybe your friend can help you more to understand how to do it. But if the teacher is gonna pick them, some of the people you ask them, and they never care” (interview, 11/20/2018).

Femi describes her interactions with U.S. students by emphasizing that they don’t want to be bothered to help her. When she asks them a question directly, they often provide her with very

simple and incomplete answers. Femi is not satisfied with that. In fact, it is Femi's pet peeve when students "help her" by just telling her the answer, because she wants to understand why the answer is what it is. She has a genuine desire to learn and knows that just "getting the answer" is not good enough, and not a beneficial long-term solution.

"Yeah. They tell you the answer, but you can never... When I try to ask them, I want to try and figure out how to do it, and what do you use to get the answer. But they just tell you the answer and walk away" (interview, 11/20/2018).

4.7.3 "...But now that you see me, now you are going to have a good day."

Femi may face difficulties in relating to students in her regular classes, but there are times throughout the day where she sees "the sun come out from behind the clouds." These special times include interactions with a few specific adults and her ESL class. The most positive place and refuge for Femi at Westbrook High School is when she is with her ESL teacher and the other English language learners in that class.

"I feel happy. I feel like I'm home... I feel so happy! Sometimes when I have problems, I feel like it's okay. I'm happy because everyone, we all know each other, and nobody is scary. Yeah. I wish that everyone could be like that! In every class" (interview, 11/20/2018).

Femi feels that the ESL class is rigorous and that she is able to learn much through the writing, reading, and speaking activities, engaging games like word bingo, and working on group projects. *"Yeah I am learning, but I don't feel stressed. It is hard and it is easy"* (interview, 11/20/2018).

Femi feels that if she has a serious problem at school that she can get help from her ESL teacher, Ms. A. For example, we discussed the bullying that was occurred daily in her chemistry class, and decided to ask Ms. A to talk to the chemistry teacher so that she would understand that certain students were picking on Femi and not joking around.

Ms. A sometimes is also able to provide support in Femi's mainstream classes.

"She is so good. She helps everyone with homework. If you have math homework or social studies, she'll help you... Yeah! She sometimes comes to the Social Studies class, when the teacher isn't there, and then she'll say maybe we have a project that we're doing, and she come and she say, and she asks me if I understand that, and I say, No. And then she sit with me and we do it together" (interview, 11/20/2018).

Another adult at Westbrook who seems to look out for Femi is the principal who once bought a mug from her as part of a fundraiser for dance. Femi feels that the principal likes and values her.

"I have the principal... Yeah, she's nice. She buy the cup from me (this was a fundraiser)... Yeah. She just bought it. Yeah and she took my picture and she put it in her room. Yeah. Me and her... It was just a letter that I write for her. And I put a chocolate in there, and I put the picture there" (interview, 11/20/2018).

Another adult that Femi is fond of is Mr. M, who wasn't even her classroom teacher her first year at the school.

"Yeah, he's nice. Last year I would see him when I was walking. He would say hi and I would say hi, and he would say, do you remember me? And I would say, yes. But I didn't know his name really. My math teacher was like his friend, and he would come and he would ask me, Do you remember me? And I would say, yes. Then he would say, maybe

next year you are going to have me! And I'd say, Okay, maybe! And then after, I saw him at the first day of the year and he said, oh you have me for homeroom! And I say, Okay, I will! (Laughs") (interview, 11/20/2018).

Femi explained what an impact Mr. M has had on her, and how he has made her feel better just by being kind to her during some difficult moments at Westbrook.

"Today I was having a bad day, and I told him, I had a bad day today, and he said, Oooh, you have a bad day? But now that you see me, now you are going to have a gooooooood day! You are going to have a good day. And I was like, Okay... I feel so good! Before I didn't feel like talking, but then I feel nice. I wish that all my teachers would be like him. He is so nice person. Every time, I give to him a high 5" (interview, 11/20/2018; interview, 12/04/2018).

4.7.4 "If they are born here that they have to help the people not born here...."

In Femi's view, the school district, principal, teachers, and students can and should do more to fix the issues and obstacles she is facing during her experiences at Westbrook. The overly simplified solutions she suggests are ones that will likely never occur, yet she remains hopeful that real change will happen. Femi seems to feel strongly that Americans have to help the people who are from other countries to learn English.

"Yeah. I feel like when they have to, if they born in here that they have to help the people that are not born in here. They have to help them to try to learn English, to try to help them. Yeah. That's how I feel...Yeah. Maybe they know something I do not know. So they can help us" (interview, 11/20/2018).

Although Femi believes that the American students should be supportive of their refugee and immigrant classmates, this is not her reality.

“Like, some of them they make fun of you, how you talk, or how you say something. Maybe they can’t hear you, maybe they can’t understand what you say and they start laughing. And for me, it’s not like for me, it’s for everyone that comes from different countries and they come to America. They feel like so bad, and they can’t wait to go home and to cry at home. It’s like that” (interview, 12/04/2018).

In order to combat the mistreatment that she and other refugee and immigrant students have faced at Westbrook, Femi feels that the principal should speak directly to the American students.

“Like I wish that my principal can take American kids and then just go somewhere and just talk to them. Maybe that would be nice if she could talk to them, and they could maybe know why, some of them they just, I don’t want to feel bad to them because they don’t know why we come to America and why we have to do there. We just come to study and to have a better future. Yeah, some of them I don’t feel bad, because they don’t know why, why, what we’re doing here” (interview, 12/04/2018).

Femi wants her school community to be united and thinks this problem within the Westbrook could be solved with the principal calling and speaking to all of her classmates’ parents:

“I feel like the principal could take one time, maybe Friday after school, and they can call parents, every parent for like American kids and talk to them and maybe say something so they can teach their kids. Like be nice to each other. To stop this stuff. That would be better for them. Or maybe, they could take parents of kids who come together and they can say, this is like making this kid feel lonely, this makes a kid be sad, and they can change it” (interview, 12/04/2018).

Being hopeful is vital for Femi, so I am sure that she will be discouraged when she finally realizes that the principal isn't going to call a meeting with the American students or their parents. It is hard to pinpoint what could help Femi integrate more into Westbrook's school community, but providing her with transportation so she could stay after school and join clubs and teams could be a good start. A more reasonable goal for Femi than her principal changing American students' and their parents' worldviews, would be that newcomer ESL students like herself would one day have access to more intensive English language instruction. Femi knows that mastering the English language would provide her with many more opportunities, and she only has two years left to achieve this.

4.8 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives for Students' Perceptions and Experiences at Westbrook High School

4.8.1 Funds of Knowledge

For the three refugee students at Westbrook High School, there were limited opportunities for showcasing their funds of knowledge or for creating a third space in which they felt like significant and valuable members of a learning community.

A funds of knowledge perspective emphasizes the reality that family literacy and cultural practices within the households of refugee and immigrant students are important and can be used to benefit the classroom, school, and district in significant ways. The majority of the student population at Westbrook was white and middle class. The refugee students did not report any attempts by the school to access their funds of knowledge by making connections to their families

and communities, who are critically important parts of their identities, in order to discover and use these assets in any significant way.

Brisha, Yashmeet, and Femi all suggested that there were two ways that the school could make their parents feel more welcomed by and connected to their school. The first would be having more translators available to help them communicate with their teachers at parent-teacher conferences and by translating teacher emails and interpreting during phone calls home. A second way for students' parents to feel more connected to Westbrook as suggested by the students themselves was for the school to offer tours of the school in order to familiarize them with the building and to show them what a U.S. school is like.

Another consideration related to funds of knowledge is that some of the refugee students at Westbrook were positioned in terms of a deficit perspective. For example, Brisha explained how some of her friends were not allowed to exit their ESL classes even though their proficiency in English is high, because they could not pass one of their Keystone tests. She felt that this was unfair as American students who could not pass a Keystone test could still enroll in advanced placement classes in a different subject area. As a result of remaining in the ESL program, some refugee students were denied the chance to take classes which interested them or would be more attractive to include on their college transcripts. Yashmeet was an exception who did take advantage of such classes.

4.8.2 Third Space

The Global Minds Initiative Club was the closest thing to a third space at Westbrook High School. For many of the participants, this club provided a refuge within their school environment where they felt welcome and accepted. This after-school club combats racism by (a) focusing on

connecting American students with ELL students, (b) empowering youth leadership, (c) encouraging community engagement, (d) fostering global friendships, and (e) celebrating cultural identity and inclusivity. Global Minds recognizes and celebrates racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity. The refugee students at Westbrook mentioned that their hope was that Global Minds would help open up their U.S. classmates' minds to different cultures and help them want to connect more with them and other international students. A logistical issue was that Westbrook did not provide any after-school activities buses, so refugee students who did not always have access to a car or a ride home from parents could not participate in club activities. Thus, they were excluded from the opportunity of interacting with club members and possibly making friends with American-born students.

4.9 Chandler High School

Chandler High is a large public school that serves 1,479 ninth to twelfth grade students, and is located in an urban area of Pittsburgh. It is a neighborhood school with a partial Teaching Academy Magnet program for students who have indicated an interest in the teaching profession. Additionally, Chandler is an ESL (English Second Language) regional site.

The first time I visited Chandler High School was to help with an after-school tutoring program, and I immediately noticed the massive brown building with very few windows. I still remember how its 70's design and general appearance seemed cold and not particularly inviting. Unlike Westbrook High School, which only has security cameras and a few security guards, Chandler High School also has metal detectors that students and visitors are required to pass through before they can enter.

Once inside the school, I walked down the dark hallways with only the fluorescent lights weakly illuminating the way to the cafeteria, where I was supposed to meet the students for a tutoring session. The tables were shabby with peeling and chipped paint, and there was discarded food on the uncomfortable benches.

My role was to help selected ESL students practice their English. The students at Chandler are 39% white, 38% black, 12% Asian, 6% biracial, and 5% Hispanic. Of these, 21% are English language learners enrolled in Chandler's ESL program. These students have the option of taking any of the courses that the school offers, including sheltered content classes that provide more language support based on students' language proficiency. The majority of the students, 73%, who attend Chandler are considered economically disadvantaged, and are eligible for free or reduced breakfast and lunch.

Chandler is not an academically high performing school with only 32.7% of students rating advanced or proficient on the state mathematics assessment, and only 46.5% rating advanced or proficient in English Language Arts/Literature.

Despite Chandler's challenges, the school offers many progressive activities and programs. For example, after the scheduled tutoring session, students are able to choose between a few "fun activities" before the buses take them home, and this is what draws them to stay late. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the school offered a Capoeira (Brazilian martial arts mixed with dance) class, an African drumming class, and other culturally diverse options. Chandler High School holds many cultural events and celebrations, and also supports the Asian club, the Hispanic Club, along with many other extracurricular activities that are culturally responsive to various students' needs. Additionally, Chandler offers a mentorship program where students are matched

with a mentor in the community who can assist them in making a transition to college or the work force.

After speaking to my student participants, I discovered a very strange dynamic at Chandler High School. On one hand, I heard that there are a lot of inclusive events and clubs which are offered that focus on cultural and ethnic diversity as well as supporting the LGBTQ community, yet it appears that there are also frequent reports about fighting and acts of racism. The following portraits of Mariana and Esperanza reveal their experiences at Chandler.

4.10 A Portrait of Mariana

4.10.1 Daughter of a Guatemalan Immigrant Family

Mariana is a petite teenage girl who is slightly less than 5 feet tall, but insists that what she lacks for in physical height, she makes up for in determination and strength. She was the only student who invited me into her home for our interviews about her schooling experiences, and all of our conversations ran well over 90 minutes each. Mariana had a lot to say.

Her father initially came to the U.S. from Guatemala on a work visa and, with the help of a lawyer, was able to secure residency status for his wife and children. Mariana explained her father's situation.

“My dad came here first. He came with a visa and he was supposed to work for a company, but the company treated him really bad, so that's why he had to move and he had to come here. Then his lawyer said, ‘Do you want your family to come here?’ So he said, ‘Of course! I would love to.’ And then he applied for our papers, for the families

papers, and that's why we're here. It was there [Atlanta, Georgia], and they treated my father and uncle really bad, and they didn't want to pay him..., so they had to leave" (interview, 10/05/2018).

Mariana's family chose to live in Pittsburgh to be closer to a family member who had been in the U.S. for several years, and was more familiar with American culture and how to navigate it. Her parents' purpose for coming to America was so that Mariana and her brother Ernesto could take advantage of educational opportunities that were not available in Guatemala. When Ernesto started high school, he received a scholarship to attend a predominantly white, all-boys private Catholic school. Mariana's family could not afford to send her to a private school so she attends Chandler High School. Mariana has expressed being very unhappy with the violence that she encounters there daily.

"Yes, and they especially like to fight a LOT. A Lot. And I don't like, I'm really scared of people I see fighting. I'm really scared of that, so whenever I see the people fighting, I have to run and go to the classroom, because I feel like they are going to grab me as well! And I don't know how to fight!" (interview, 10/14/2018)

Mariana has frequently experienced racism at school. She mentioned that on any given day, walking down the hallways at Chandler, there is a 50-50 chance that any student will make a derogatory or belittling comment to her based on her ethnicity. Most students assume that she is from Mexico.

"Especially being from Guatemala, I feel like, because they all call us Mexican? And I don't like when they call me Mexican. I really get mad when they call me Mexican. And that's why I don't feel like talking about it. I just be myself, and I feel like America is my culture and English is my language" (interview, 11/10/2018).

There has been one aspect of attending Chandler that was very positive for Mariana, and that was when she was chosen, in ninth grade, to participate in a rigorous two-year STEAM program that integrated science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics. Mariana really appreciated being challenged academically and working with students who cared about their education.

“And I was in STEAM. It’s like a program at Chandler. We were the first group to be in that program, and they didn’t let me have an ESL class, because I had it for two years... And that program is really cool. It’s a program that is an advanced class, and it is really cool because you have to take those classes for two periods all the time, and you are having those classes every other day. The same kind of thing, like English, Civics, Algebra, and I had STEAM, it is like a computer program to make robots and how to make games and all that. It was really cool because they gave us a computer, and all the essays and homework I had to do on the computer. So it was really cool and I liked it so much. And that program was for only two years. Nine and tenth grade, and now I am in Eleventh grade. When I was in 9th grade, they really took us on a lot of field trips, and saying that’s how you’re going to be doing this...and we made a lot of projects, and they gave us a computer. And I was like, yeah! I have a computer!” (interview, 10/14/18)

Mariana received ESL services throughout middle school, up until she entered the STEAM program in ninth grade, and although she no longer has ESL classes, she was never officially exited from the program. Her English language proficiency is quite high for being in the U.S. for five years, but she still feels insecure about her accent and knows that there is room for improvement. I asked her to describe how fluent she feels in English, and what opportunities she has at home and at school to practice and learn the language.

“To be honest, I would give myself like 70 percent. Because like I know some words, I know what they mean, but I just can’t pronounce it. And I don’t want to say it, because I don’t want to say it the wrong way, and be embarrassed, so that’s why I don’t use those words. So that’s why I would give myself a 70. I’m practicing more and listening more to things in English so I can get it. And also at home I am always speaking Spanish, so sometimes I feel like I’m not learning any English because I’m speaking in Spanish with my uncle, my parents, and...if I try to speak in English they don’t understand me, so I have to speak in English only in school” And the other thing, is that in school many people start talking in Spanish, so they start teaching in Spanish, and I’m like, No! I don’t want you to start teaching in Spanish! I want you to teach me in English so I can understand more, and I will need this in college” (interview, 10/05/2018).

Mariana’s parents have high expectations for her academic achievement, and she often joked that she couldn’t risk skipping class or getting low grades or they would take her out of school.

“Especially for my parents. If you are going to get a C or a D, I’m going to take you out of school. That is why I focus so much and I try. One time I got a C- or two times I got a C, and my mom said, ‘Why do you go to school? Why are you having a C? What are you doing at school? Are you skipping? What?’ And I’m like, ‘No. It’s just hard for me. You have to understand me.’ Then they said, ‘Okay, but you better get a B or an A, because if you are going to get a D, C- I’m going to take you out of school.’ That’s why it makes me more like, I need to do this!” (interview, 10/14/18).

Her desire to make her parents proud is one motivation that helps Mariana walk through the doors of Chandler High School every day, despite some of the considerable obstacles she faces there.

4.11 Mariana's Perceptions

4.11.1 "I don't feel safe in school."

There are certain precautions that Mariana takes throughout the day that provide her with some sense of control over her own security and safety. Besides arriving to all classes as quickly as possible, her main safety measure is to make sure she doesn't drink too much water so she doesn't have to use the bathroom.

"I don't feel safe in school. Because at any moment they can start fighting, and at any moment, they can try to fight me, so that's why I never go to the bathrooms... I do drink water, but have to control myself. I have to use the bathroom at my house... Because I am so scared. Sometimes there are crazy people that just want to start fighting, and what if I am going to be in the hallway or the bathroom? Umm umm. I'm going to die. (Laughs)... I don't know why, but it's more the Americans that they have sex in the bathroom. That's why I hate going to the bathroom... Sometimes they skip school, they skip classes because they want to do that. Especially in the boy's bathroom. But they do it in the school... And that's why my mom doesn't trust the school too, because she hears a lot about that."

(interview, 10/14/2018)

4.11.2 “This is a really good girl. She’s from Guatemala.”

Mariana doesn’t allow her fear of violence or the disrespectful behavior of U.S. students to affect her academic performance. Very motivated by her parents’ sacrifices to come to America to provide her with the opportunity to get an education, Mariana strives to make them proud by doing well in all of her classes. Her ultimate goals and future plans to become a doctor or a lawyer are driven by how she sees herself being able to best help her family, and eventually take care of her parents.

“Because they [her parents] didn’t go to school in Guatemala, so they have zero education, and now that I’m here, I’m trying so hard to go to school and to learn the language and the culture, because I want to be better than them, and to have a better future when I’m going to be older, and have a really good job so I can help them because they helped me when I was young. Then I can take care of them later on. Yeah, so that’s why I’m studying so hard. I want to be a good doctor. I don’t know what kind of doctor yet, but I know I want to be a doctor. (Laughs)” (interview, 10/05/2018).

In each class, Mariana chooses a desk in the front row because she is determined to learn as much as she can. Meanwhile, many of her classmates are playing games or checking social media on their phones. This frustrates her because their lack of engagement results in the teachers having to review and reteach the content, so she knows she is not learning as much as she could be.

Mariana wants to take challenging courses at Chandler because she feels that will better equip her to perform successfully in her future college classes. She really misses the STEAM program because she enjoyed the way the teachers taught, the use of technology, and the interesting and informative fieldtrips, *“Yeah. I wish that they had that STEAM for the whole 4 years, but they*

didn't. Just for 2 years” (interview, 10/14/2018). Previously in STEAM, Mariana completed homework in her courses every night, but now that she takes regular classes, she rarely has homework assigned. She is looking forward to next year because she will take several advanced classes. “I'm looking forward to taking advanced classes for English, math, and science because it's good for college and it's going to help me a lot with my English” (text message, 10/22/2018).

Being considered a model student by all of her teachers is a priority for Mariana, and she especially values their comments about her efforts to be responsible and diligent.

“Yes. I just like when people say good things about me, especially Miss F, my personal finance teacher. She would always keep telling everybody, ‘This is a really good girl. She’s from Guatemala’, and all these things. Sometimes she would make me embarrassed, but she’s doing it in a good way. Yeah, she would always say good things about me. And she would already get used to it, that I won’t get in trouble. Or do nothing that will make her mad” (interview, 10/14/2018).

Mariana described what happened when one of her teachers decided to call her parents, who do not speak or understand any English, in order to praise her for being such a great student.

“One day they call my mom and she was really mad at me. Because the teacher called her, but she didn't have a translator, and she was saying, ‘Your daughter is amazing’, and really nice things about me. And my mom thought she was saying negative things about me! (Laughs)... Yeah, so I opened the door, and my mom was already sitting on the sofa, and she has the belt with her! She says, ‘Okay Mariana, tell me what you did at school.’ I was shocked, and was like, ‘Nothing. I did really cool things at school!’ (Laughs) She said, ‘Your teacher actually called’, and I was like, ‘What did she say?’

Because I knew she didn't understand, and then I started laughing.” (interview, 10/14/2018).

Mariana was able to explain what happened to her mother, but this incident demonstrates how even the good intentions of teachers can backfire.

There are a couple of teachers Mariana has known for a few years, and they make her feel special and cared for. She enjoys when they joke around with her, and when she feels that they are ready to help her with her English when she needs it.

“Yeah. So I am very social with her. Like she is so funny, and she is always saying things like, ‘I’m going to your house to eat tamales for Christmas!’ And I’m like, ‘You are welcome to my house!’ (Laughs). I am too social with her, and I like her. She’s really nice, she’s patient and all that. Some words you don’t understand and I say, Can you tell me what that means? And she’s like, Sure! I’m so glad to help you. That’s what I like about her. But with the other teachers I’m not too social. I don’t know them really well so...” (interview, 10/14/2018).

When I asked Mariana if any of the teachers at Chandler High School ever treated students differently because of their race or ethnicity, she was adamant that this was not the case, *“No they treat us the same. All the teachers I know treat everyone the same” (text message, 11/01/2018).*

The only time Mariana mentioned that her teachers were sometimes frustrated with her was when a teacher or other adult would come and ask to “borrow her for a minute” in order to translate for Spanish speakers who couldn’t understand or speak English.

“Especially now, there are a lot of Guatemalan people who don’t speak English, and then they had to take you from the class- ‘Can I borrow you for a minute really quick?’ I’m like, ‘Yeah, sure’... Sometimes they go to my English class, and they ask, ‘Can you please

translate this because the translator is doing something else or translating for other people, or helping other kids.’’ (interview, 10/14/2018).

Out of respect for her elders, Mariana agrees to translate. However, she sees that it annoys her classroom teachers because they are trying to provide instructions or explain concepts that Mariana will be responsible to know, and she understands their frustration and tries to make up whatever work she misses without bothering them.

“Because I am trying to teach you, and what if you’re going to come back and ask me what to do and I was explaining it to the class. And I was like, but whenever they take me out, I just don’t ask the teacher because I know how they are going to feel, so I just ask a friend, and sometimes they help me. And then I’m like, Okay I know how to do this’’ (interview, 10/14/2018).

Overall Mariana thinks that Chandler High school is trying to meet her needs, and she especially praises the teachers for being kind and helpful. Her main complaint about the school centers around the students’ violent and racist behavior.

“No, this school is really good. Everything depends on the person and how he acts, and how they take their action. But everything is perfect. I like the teachers, they’re nice. Like they help you a lot, so I feel very good in school. It’s just the kids...” (interview, 11/10/2018)

4.11.3 “You’re ugly, you’re black, and you’re Hispanic.”

When Mariana is passing through the hallways to get to class, she feels surrounded by negativity, *“They say bad words, they insult, they gossip, and they talk nonsense”* (text message, 11/17/2018). She tries to spend the least amount of time possible in the halls, because there are

U.S.-born students she doesn't even know who will walk up and tell her that she smells bad. This really offends her, but she sticks up for herself.

"Yeah, and also, like, I don't know. They say that all Hispanics smell bad. And I take a shower every day. I literally take a shower and wear perfume. And then I'm like, 'No we don't. We Hispanics smell good!' Yeah, and that's what they tell us sometimes. 'You stink', and I was like, I start smelling myself, and I don't. I smell like perfume! (Laughs) I say, 'Nope. We Hispanics don't stink because we literally take a shower and put on perfume. That is our habit. We got used to it'" (interview, 10/14/2019).

Mariana's way of coping is to hide how she feels by acting like everything is okay, especially in front of any friends who try to stand up and defend her.

"Yeah, because to be honest, people see me smile all the time. Laughing. But they don't know how I feel inside. My friend is with me all the time, my best friend, and sometimes people talk to me saying, 'You're ugly, you're black, and you're Hispanic. Like you have this BIG accent.' I know I have! I know how I am. You don't have to repeat me that because literally I know where I'm coming from. I know everything. And they come to me saying, 'Oh you're this. You don't belong here.' You don't have to tell me that because I know. I'm just here for a better future. I just need a really good education that I can't have in my country. And my friend says, 'No she's not. She's very intelligent, and she can do better things than you.' And I tell her to just let him say whatever he wants, but she's like, 'But I don't want you to feel bad.' And I'm like, 'I'm not feeling bad. I'm happy.' I show that smile, but yes! I want to cry. I want to go and grab him and smack him and beat him up. And it makes me feel bad, and it wants me to quit school, but I don't want to

tell my parents, because my parents are going to get mad at me and say, 'You've got to be strong and fight.' (interview, 11/10/2018).

As a result of the barrage of insults Mariana endures, she now feels self-conscious about her skin color and this has affected her sense of identity.

Because my color. I don't know what color I am. I feel like I'm black. Brown? I don't know what color I am. And I feel like that affects me because white kids are like, 'You're black, you're Mexican.' All Mexicans are not black! What are you talking about? And in Guatemala, I don't know white or black as well. We have mixed colors, we have...I call myself coffee because chocolate and coffee mixed. Like light brown... And I'm trying to put cream on my skin to make it more light. (Laughs)... My mom saw me and said, 'Are you ashamed of your skin?' Not really. And then, I opened up to her saying, 'To be honest yes. Embarrassed. Ashamed.' And then she said, 'Why?' 'Because I wasn't born here. We're Hispanics. We have different culture, language. We don't have that much in common with the Americans.' Then she said, 'That's the point! That's why we're different than them. They're White, we're Hispanic. We're brown. We're not black. We're brown'" (interview, 11/10/2018).

Although Mariana insisted that she is proud to be Guatemalan, and wants to preserve her culture, she makes a profound statement that shows her weariness in having to deal with these types of comments day in and day out.

"Yeah, but when some random guy comes up to you and says, 'You're black. You want to be white at that moment... And even in the Declaration of Independence it says we are created equal and we are supposed to treat everybody equal, that's not true. That's not true at all... We are all unequal still. And I don't like that'" (interview, 11/10/2018).

4.11.4 “I don’t like being friends with Hispanics.”

There are several Hispanic students who go to Chandler High School, and I expected to hear that Mariana had made friends with them. However, that was not the case.

“Okay. I just like the kids who are really nice because when you see them, you really know how they act...Because some people, like the Hispanic people, they just act like fools! Really! And I don’t like that! Because if they’re going to act like that, then probably the teachers might think, Oh this girl might be like them! That’s why I don’t want to, it’ll ruin my reputation. Because I like how I am, and I like how the teacher thinks of me. They have a really good thing. That’s why I don’t like being with them, and I don’t really like being friends with Hispanics. I’m friends with them when they ask me for translation, but nothing else. So that’s what I’m happy of... But, I’d rather have friends from other countries because I know they won’t act like fools because they will do what they’re supposed to do, because they really want a good reputation too!” (interview, 10/14/2018)

Mariana connects the most with non-Hispanic students who are from other countries, and recognizes that they are not the ones getting in trouble or fighting at Chandler High School. Although they are not Hispanic, she feels that they still share her values about respect.

“I feel like the immigrant people, the illegal people, I don’t know what to call them... People that are from other countries. They don’t make fights a lot. I feel like it is because they know how, and especially the Nepali kids, I have a lot of friends and we talk about their country, my country, and so we have a lot in common” (interview, 11/10/2018).

Mariana learned the hard way that American students wouldn’t respect her culture or values. As an initiative to try to unite U.S. born students with international students, the principal asked students like Mariana to speak to different classes about their cultures. The assumption was

that if students got to know each other on a deeper level, there might be less racism and violence. The very first class Mariana went and spoke to ended up being a very traumatic experience. A student stood up and disrespected her in front of the class, calling her names and cussing at her. She was shocked that the teacher did not intervene. When her English teacher asked her to try speaking to another class, she refused.

“No thank you. Yeah. I don’t want to go. Well then people won’t know your... I don’t care if they know my culture or not. As long as I know my culture, that’s important. I don’t care if the Americans pay attention to it or not...because I literally got mad. But I’m not going to go there and other people are going to be bullying me, or doing mean things to me. No thank you. I’d rather just stay here” (interview, 11/10/2018).

Because I know Chandler High School has an international night and other cultural events, I asked her if she ever attended those.

“They do have that. They have it every year. Like the African, the Hispanics, all the international students that are at Chandler. They do a party, bring foods from different countries. But I don’t go there, because they want us to talk. I mean, I’m willing to talk, but I feel like they won’t understand it. And I don’t feel like talking about it...That’s why I don’t go and it’s not important to me” (interview, 11/10/2018).

Mariana is a survivor, and I admire how she goes to school every day knowing that she will likely be disrespected and have to deal with bullying and racism. When I tried to explain to her that college could be a very different experience for her than high school had been, she told me that she believed that she would never be accepted by Americans, but that no matter how U.S. students feel about her, she will accomplish her goals.

4.12 A Portrait of Esperanza

4.12.1 Daughter of an immigrant family

At the time of this study, Esperanza was a 17-year-old senior who also attended Chandler High School. She is the daughter of an immigrant family from El Salvador, and three years ago entered the U.S. illegally with her younger brother who was just 10 years old. They were both detained at a youth shelter in Miami for a month before being reunited with their mother, who was already living in Pittsburgh with her boyfriend. Esperanza explained to me that her father still lives in El Salvador and is disabled and ill. Her aunt also lives in Pittsburgh and has a house cleaning business where Esperanza and her mother work.

Esperanza works part-time every day except for Mondays and Fridays in order to help support her family. She does not complain, even though she no longer has the opportunity to enjoy participating in after-school activities like Spanish club and a club run by Casa San Jose, a local organization that supports the Hispanic community in Pittsburgh.

Already a senior in high school, Esperanza still struggles to learn English, and she currently receives English Second Language (ESL) services. She was the only participant with whom I used an interpreter during our interviews. The lack of adequate translation services and explicit instruction in English during her classes created a situation where Esperanza wasn't getting the language support she needed to advance in her English proficiency.

“The teachers were good and they understood that I didn't speak English, but they gave the class in English and I didn't understand, but afterwards they didn't really help. There was a translator for a while but they weren't very efficient or effective” (interview, 10/15/2018).

Esperanza feels responsible to help support her family financially, which competes with her desire to pursue a career in nursing or counseling. In some ways, Esperanza is a typical teenage girl likes to listen and dance to pop music in English and Spanish. She also enjoys going to the movies to watch science fiction or horror movies with her friends. However, her life is not carefree because she feels the burden of being in the U.S. illegally, and recognizes that her opportunities are limited.

4.13 Esperanza's Perceptions

Esperanza is a short teenage girl with long black hair and very expressive dark brown eyes. Upon meeting Esperanza, I immediately sensed that her demeanor is one of humility with an undercurrent of quiet strength. Whenever Esperanza smiles or laughs, her entire face lights up. However, her facial expression is more frequently serious, and on some topics it is obvious that she wants to preserve her privacy. For example, when I asked her about why she and her family had moved from El Salvador to the U.S., the response was very simple and she purposefully did not discuss the details, "*Because the conditions in the country were not very good*" (interview, 10/15/2018).

Esperanza has overcome much adversity since arriving in the U.S.; however, she does not represent herself as a victim. Rather, she is grateful to be able to live in a safe country where many resources are available. She is especially grateful for the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity at her school. It makes her feel more comfortable because she doesn't feel like a noticeable outsider. She also enjoys many of Chandler's activities and festivals that celebrate different cultural holidays.

“I think the school is good because there is a lot of diversity, there’s so many different people, so no one is looking at you like you’re different because everyone is different. So that made me feel welcome. Also like the activities and festivities too, where they celebrate Latin American Heritage Day, Nepalese holidays or Nationalities Days, so you feel even more welcome that all these things are celebrated” (interview, 10/15/18).

4.13.1 “The problem was that I didn’t know English either!”

At Chandler, there is an ELD (English Language Development) program instead of an ESL (English Second Language) one. Because she has been placed in the ELD program, Esperanza is mostly isolated from American students. Esperanza tried to explain the way the ELD program works at Chandler.

“So what happened is like you get there, is the class is at a lower level, but it is still all in English, so you still don’t understand although it is at a lower level, you keep not understanding. The majority of the students don’t speak English...Yes, so it is classes like math, history, but it is for ESL students that come from different countries, and I’m not sure, but it seems like it was the same group of students in all of my classes” (interview, 10/15/2018).

One of the Esperanza’s greatest challenges has been gaining a mastery of English, and this has made high school very difficult for her. *“I feel that if I had studied here since I was born, high school would be much easier”* (text message, 11/16/2018).

When Esperanza first arrived in Pittsburgh with her little brother, her mother told her she

would be the one solely responsible to help him with his homework in English. This task seemed almost impossible at first because she had to Google almost every word, but she knew her mother didn't know any English.

“Yes. (Laughs) I had to help my brother finish his homework every night because he didn't know English. The problem was that I didn't know English either! (Laughs) It was very hard, but my mom couldn't help him” (interview, 10/15/2018).

During Esperanza's first year at Chandler, she couldn't even try to focus on being social with other students because of the monumental task of trying to understand and learn English. When I asked her about trying to make friends with her classmates when she first arrived, she laughed because there was no time for that. *“Maybe a year later because it was hard to manage with the language. I had to pay attention in class and try to understand”* (interview, 10/15/2018).

Many times during class, Esperanza couldn't understand anything the teachers were saying. Since there was a “no cell phone” rule, Esperanza would often excuse herself and go to the bathroom to look up English words from her assignment sheets that she didn't understand. *“Sometimes I'd take pictures and translate in the bathroom or at home”* (interview, 10/15/2018).

Esperanza is not one to criticize her teachers. However, when I asked her what she would like to say to the teacher whose class she struggled in the most, she had some respectful suggestions.

“I think that you teach a lot and very well, but I wish that you had the ability to know when a student understands completely, and when they don't. You could ask, but also if you notice that a student has a lot of errors, you could review it for the whole class so that they can understand. And even the students who do understand, would understand better” (interview, 12/03/2018).

Esperanza wants her teachers to take the time to reteach some of the content, and she wants them to check for understanding and to slow down. Another request she had for one particular teacher was that she make herself more available outside of class to help students, *“Yeah, because if you had the time, I could go there and you could explain more relaxed”* (interview, 12/03/2018).

Writing essays in English is one of Esperanza’s greatest struggles, and she wants teachers to provide her with more detailed feedback on her assignments. Even if their critiques might be discouraging, it is more important to her that her English improves.

“Yes, I would like that [feedback] because if they give it to you as a C, but without explanation, I don’t know what to make better. Yes. Even if there are a lot of corrections, I would feel a little bad and sad, but it would be better because I could then fix it on the next essay” (interview, 12/03/2018).

4.13.2 “Yeah she is from the same continent, from Costa Rica, and I’m from El Salvador.”

Overall, Esperanza feels comfortable with her teachers at Chandler High School. When I asked her if the teachers treated all the students the same, regardless of race or ethnicity, she agreed with Mariana that they did, and wondered why there was so much fighting and racial division among the students in a school that tries to celebrate diversity.

“Yes, the teachers treat us all the same, and it’s weird because the school is used to diversity, so I don’t understand the fighting. I think that the school is nice. There’s a lot of diversity and that makes me feel welcome. But with the diversity, there’s also a lot of division among the races. I’d like for everyone to be a little more united” (interview, 10/29/2018).

Esperanza mentioned feeling especially comfortable with her Spanish teacher because they share so many similarities and are from countries that are close together and speak Spanish. She feels that this teacher understands her.

“Yeah she is from the same continent, from Costa Rica and I’m from El Salvador which are both in Central America. We speak the same language, and there’s some other similarities between us, so we understand each other very well” (interview, 10/29/2018).

There is also Esperanza’s health teacher who has taken a special interest in her, and wants to provide guidance and help with steps she can take after high school toward her future.

“Yes it is my Health teacher. His grandmother is from El Salvador, so he is always asking me how I am doing, if I’m okay, if I need help with anything. If I need help with immigration, legal stuff, if I need help applying to college” (interview, 10/29/2018).

This teacher is very caring and wants to know how he can help Esperanza in practical ways. She is hesitant to accept his help because she is not sure what to do about college, although she later mentions to me that it is unlikely she will go.

“Yes. He has offered me help, but I have said no, because I am not sure about what I want to do about applying for college, so I don’t want to waste his time or her time since I don’t know” (interview, 10/29/2018).

4.13.3 “Say hi to me, greet me, and try to talk to me more...”

While it is common for many American students to prioritize socializing with their friends at school, this is definitely not the case for Esperanza. Although she is respectful and nice to everyone, her classmates would definitely view her as being the shy and quiet girl whose absence would probably go unnoticed.

When Esperanza first arrived at Chandler High School, I asked how her classmates treated her, “*Good, I almost spoke to no one, so no one really bothered me*” (interview, 10/15/2018). I immediately wondered how it could be good that she spoke to no one, and realized that she had intentionally isolated herself because she didn’t want students to bully her or make fun of her English. Unfortunately, I think this started a pattern of going to school and spending the day avoiding talking to most people. Esperanza talked more about teachers than other students, and never mentioned anyone she felt was a close friend at Chandler.

The overall impression I have of Esperanza’s social experience at school is that she feels lonely. Part of this self-isolation had to do with Esperanza not being able to speak English, and her resulting unwillingness to be vulnerable with others in case they commented or made fun of her. While that served as a type of self-protection, it also prevented her from getting to know the American students at school.

Because she is in the ELD program, she does attend her core subject classes with many of the same students who are also learning English; however, for several electives such as gym, art, and Spanish, she takes classes with mostly American students. These students don’t make an effort to speak to her, and Esperanza wishes that they would reach out to her sometimes. “Say hi to me, greet me, and try to talk to me more. I don’t speak very well, but they could be friendlier” (interview, 12/03/2018).

When group work is assigned, American students don’t acknowledge her and just pick their friends. This is an especially awkward situation when the teacher lets them pick their own groups because it just highlights that she is isolated and doesn’t have any friends.

“Depending on the class I feel awkward because U.S. students will just go with their friends if they get to choose. Since I don’t talk a lot, sometimes people don’t choose me, so I prefer when the teacher chooses the groups” (interview, 10/29/2018).

Besides the occasional opportunity in classes, Esperanza doesn’t talk to U.S. born students on the bus, during breaks at school or before or after school because she is worried they will make fun of her English, *“No. (Laughs) They just talk to their friends”* (interview, 10/29/2018).

Esperanza wishes her American classmates understood that it has been difficult for her to adapt to new people, a new place, and a new language.

“I wish that they understood that since I wasn’t born here, my English is not like their English. And that the way that we’re taught here is different than how we were taught in my country. It is a little difficult to adapt to new people and a new place, so it would be good for them to be more understanding and friendlier” (interview, 12/03/2018).

When she discusses the American students’ disinterest and apathy toward her, she does not seem to judge them for this because they are not hostile or mean to her. While part of their lack of interest in getting to know Esperanza is that she’s shy, it could also be that sometimes teenagers are just self-absorbed, have their established friends, and are not willing to put in the extra time or energy to get to know her.

I asked if Esperanza if she would like to talk to her American classmates more, and she wishes that she could get to know them. There is one girl in her Spanish class she describes as being really friendly toward her, but it is a casual friendship. *“There is a girl in my Spanish class who is from here and speaks a tiny bit of Spanish, and she’s really friendly”* (interview, 10/29/2018).

Esperanza did tell me that in one of her classes she reached out to a new American girl who didn't have anyone to talk to. I found out that she was secretly hoping that her thoughtfulness will be rewarded with some potential new social connections.

“Today I was talking with her [a new American student]. I think that if she tried to talk to other girls, they might also be kind to me” (text message, 11/07/2018).

4.13.4 “There was one that when he heard me speaking in English would make fun of me.”

When I asked Esperanza if there had ever been classmates at Chandler who were unkind to her, the only instance she recalled involved some Hispanic students. One Hispanic boy in particular made fun of her when she attempted to speak English. It was telling that Esperanza described his actions as being nasty, because she rarely used such strong adjectives. It sounded as if this boy was one of the popular Hispanic students and leader of the group. His friends seemed to just go along with his taunting even though they did not make fun of her themselves.

“There were some [Hispanic students], or really there was one that when he heard me speaking in English would make fun of me, so that was pretty nasty...They knew I had just gotten here, but there were only 2 or 3 that really talked to me. Otherwise it was people from other countries, and so now I really try to be friendly to the people who have arrived more recently” (interview, 10/15/2018).

Like Mariana, Esperanza experienced Hispanic students making fun of her rather than making an effort to get to know or welcome her. It didn't seem to matter that they shared a similar culture or language. Instead, from the beginning of her time at Chandler, Esperanza felt more accepted by other ESL students who were not Hispanic.

“Yeah they were nice. They accepted me and sometimes they would try to help even though I didn’t understand...There was an Asian boy that helped me a lot. A lot of the African kids would greet me always” (interview, 10/15/2018).

4.13.5 “There came a moment when I didn’t want that anymore.”

When I first met Esperanza, she told me that she wanted to learn enough English so that she could study nursing or counseling, but by our last interview she felt that she needed to give up that dream.

“Just a while ago I was remembering, or maybe just now I was remembering how I used to fight with my mom a lot about how I wanted to go to college, and my mom said, No! And I told her how I really wanted to go, and my mom was telling me, ‘You have to work! You have to work! We have to build a house in El Salvador, and my dad is disabled. He is in El Salvador.’ So yeah, I did change my mind, and it made me really sad because there came a moment where I didn’t want that anymore” (interview, 12/03/2018).

Esperanza mentioned wishing that there were more translators so that her mother would feel more comfortable being at school, and that possibly might have influenced her ideas about college. *“Because I think it would change my mom’s way of thinking. If she felt more welcome, she might change her way of thinking about studying after high school”* (interview, 12/03/2018).

When I asked Esperanza about why she didn’t want to go to college anymore, she described to me in detail about feeling torn between helping her family and enrolling in school. Part of the problem is she would not be able to apply for student loans since she is not documented and therefore ineligible. If she could secure loans, that would be helpful, because then she could still work part time and help her family who depend on her.

“Yes, because I was talking to a friend saying I didn’t want to go to college anymore because I wanted to help my family, and he was saying I should go to college, and then after I will be able to help my family even more, because then I’ll have a career and be better able to help them. And I said, Well, helping my family doesn’t mean helping them 7 or 8 years from now, it means helping them now. Because in 7 years it is possible that my dad won’t be here, and my mom won’t be here, and it’s not about the future. It’s helping them in the present” (interview, 12/03/2018).

American culture generally is more individualist than many other cultures, and a lot of times in Hispanic culture, the families’ well-being prevails over an individual’s own individual plans or dreams. When I asked how she felt her school could help her be better prepared for the future, she had some ideas.

“Help the students to think more about their future. Because teachers are always saying, Study, study. But there’s more to it. There’s family, there’s money, how to choose work. I just heard this woman speaking at the Latino Community Center, who said her whole family depended on her, and how she found school difficult, but she found these scholarships, but she didn’t talk about how she provided for her family. Like how she was surviving, and providing for her family. How she handled everything. In conclusion it would be nice for them to talk more about what happens after school, especially for those whose families depend on us, how to handle all of that. More realistic” (interview, 12/03/2018).

Esperanza is not the only student at Chandler High School in this situation. She mentioned that many Hispanic students dropped out of school in order to work because they didn’t see the point of getting an education.

“They come and just come to work, and some Latinos leave high school, and they just want to work and work...Because of their document status, they don’t want to be sent home and not have anything. A lot of adults and adolescents think that they’re wasting time in school, so they think they just better go work” (interview, 12/03/2018).

High schools in the U.S. sometimes seem to overlook that there are refugee and immigrant students from families that are still establishing themselves here in the United States, and that they will require more relevant help and information about colleges than American students will.

4.13.6 “The States is like a mosaic of different people...”

Despite the fact that Esperanza never seemed to become a visible and valued member of Chandler’s school community, her hope is that one day everyone in the U.S. will be united and appreciate and respect each other’s cultures and backgrounds.

“So, we’re in the United States, and obviously the States is like a mosaic of different people, and it’s a big part of this country, mixing people from different cultures, and so it’s important that we mix, and also it’s going to be a part of our lives meeting people from other cultures in the future...” (interview, 12/03/2018).

4.14 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives for Students' Perceptions and Experiences at Chandler High School

4.14.1 Translanguaging

Mariana and Esperanza had very different experiences when it came to translanguaging experiences in the classroom. Esperanza was still considered an ESL student and took her content area classes with other English language learners, while Mariana was in mainstream classes with almost all U.S.-born students.

Esperanza discussed how she had to excuse herself from class to go to the bathroom where she could use her cell phone to translate the information on assignment sheets since she was not allowed to use her phone in class. She mentioned how some teachers encouraged ELL students not to use their first languages because they believed that they would learn English more quickly if they just tried to use it. Esperanza characterized the translators that came to assist at times as ineffective and inefficient, and felt Chandler needed to hire higher quality and more skilled translators. Occasionally a teacher would allow her to write an English essay or paper in Spanish first and then translate it into English, but this didn't happen often.

In Mariana's case, it was obvious that a distortion of translanguaging was taking place. She could use her native language but only to translate for Spanish-speaking newcomers. Not only did this remove her from her own opportunities to learn, but also created a strain in her otherwise good relationships with teachers who did not want to have to repeat instructions or reteach content because she was absent. Mariana expressed how she was brought up to obey authority figures and so she did not feel she could deny teachers' requests for help with translation. Her suggestion was

that Chandler hire a sufficient number of translators so she would not be put in this uncomfortable position.

4.14.2 Funds of Knowledge

Chandler High School is known throughout Pittsburgh as the school that embraces diversity. As mentioned earlier, the school does celebrate international holidays and some traditions such as drumming and dance. While it is commendable that the school is making an attempt to recognize different cultures, the students reported that teachers from mainstream classes never elicited information about their backgrounds or cultures or related that information into classroom instruction.

4.14.3 Third Space

Overall, Mariana described Chandler as a very hostile and unsafe environment because of how the students behaved. Her portrait revealed how she had to take daily safety precautions in order to avoid being involved in fights and other uncomfortable situations. However, she emphasized the importance of the rigorous STEAM program at Chandler High School, which seemed to serve as a type of third space for her. She enjoyed the way the teachers taught, the use of technology, and the interesting and informative fieldtrips. Also, being able to work collaboratively with like-minded classmates in this program, who also cared about their education, was something that she enjoyed deeply.

Esperanza did not express experiencing any type of third space at Chandler High School. Overall she felt a sense of isolation and did not feel like a significant part of any classroom learning

community. Her suggestion was that the school administration needed to change the environment at their campus by educating students to be more tolerant of one other because she perceived a racial divide at the school. She felt no sense of community or connection between her school and life experiences.

4.15 Fairfield High School

Fairfield High School is a large public school that serves 1,483 ninth to twelfth grade students and is located in an urban area of Pittsburgh. It is an impressive school building situated in a picturesque, upscale neighborhood. Students from less affluent surrounding neighborhoods are bused in because Fairfield offers a partial Engineering Magnate program, and is also considered an English Second Language (ESL) regional site. Surprisingly, although it is an ESL regional site, only 4.5% of the students at Fairfield are enrolled in the ESL program, compared to the 21% who attend the ESL program at Chandler High School in the same school district.

Unlike Chandler High School, which is an isolated campus and not within walking distance of anything notable, Fairfield High is located very close to busier city streets. After school, it is common to see groups of students spending time with their friends while visiting the nearby coffee shops, restaurants, and stores.

The student body at Fairfield High school consists of 48% white, 42% black , 4%, Asian, 4% biracial, and 3% Hispanic. A little over half of the students, 52%, who attend Fairfield are considered economically disadvantaged, and are eligible for free or reduced breakfast and lunch.

Fairfield is a fairly high achieving school with 62% of the students scoring proficient or advanced on the state math test, and 77% of students scoring proficient or advanced on the state

reading test. The advanced placement participation rate at Fairfield High School is 48%, and the school has a reputation for rigorous college preparatory classes. Fairfield High School receives a lot of support from their parent council as well as partnerships they have in the community. As a result, this high school offers a full range of interscholastic, intramural, and co-curricular clubs that reflect the diversity of its students' backgrounds and interests, and has a reputable status in Pittsburgh.

4.16 A Portrait of Mansur

4.16.1 Son of visiting professionals

At the time of the study, Mansur was a 14-year-old freshman attending Fairfield High School. His parents are both visiting professors employed by a large university in the city.

Mansur is biracial (his mother is French and his father is from West Africa), and his family visits his grandparents in Europe and West Africa every summer. He mentioned that he is often mistaken for a U.S. born African American student, and that most students and teachers find out later that he is from Europe.

“So I lost my British English back in North Carolina, because that’s when I started speaking American English. So here people don’t know that I’m European” (interview, 04/02/2018).

Mansur’s family has often relocated because his parents have secured positions at various universities in New York, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Pittsburgh is the fourth city he has lived in during the last six years. While Mansur sometimes struggles with idioms and other minor

nuances of English, he has attained an overall mastery of English. He was exited from the ESL program when he was 12 years old and is an academically high achieving student.

Mansur shares some similarities to typical teenagers in the U.S. He loves sports, especially soccer and swimming, and he originally made his first friends in Pittsburgh by joining a city-wide soccer club. He also likes to listen to music, go to movies, and watch American T.V. shows like *Big Bang Theory* and *Friends* on Netflix to relax. Mansur is responsible for some basic chores, one of these being to look after his 8-year-old brother, but his main obligation is to perform well in school.

One way in which Mansur stands out from other participants I interviewed is that he is a voracious reader and reads books from a variety of genres. Also, every summer he intentionally reads books in German and French, which his grandparents buy for him, because he values preserving his fluency with these languages and considers being multilingual to be important. *“Just because I’m in America doesn’t mean I have to throw everything away, and that’s the language I have known all of my life”* (interview, 04/02/2018).

Mansur’s perception is that he is unlike most American teenagers because he has been exposed to different cultures and groups of people, while they have not. As a result, he finds many of his classmates to be close minded and not open to knowing others who are different from them. He finds this incredibly frustrating. For example, he and his family are all practicing Muslims, and he has been very offended by off-putting remarks made by his classmates about Islam. He believes that this occurs because there is a lack of education about religions.

“I realized that here you don’t learn much about religion. And here a lot of people are, especially like with Islam and other religions, people will like say things, like a lot of insensitive things often” (interview, 04/02/2018).

Ultimately, Mansur's future academic goals are to receive scholarships and attend an elite university.

“When I say elite university, of course I include the Ivy Leagues. Oxford and all that stuff, but also good...I want to go somewhere that kind of sets me for the future, sets me to have a successful future”(interview, 06/10/2018).

Mansur has already noticed issues of inequality in the U.S. educational system, including at Fairfield High School. He told me that he could generate lasting change as a wealthy business man influencing politicians or policy makers rather than as someone working directly in the education field.

4.17 Mansur's Perceptions

4.17.1 “That's a big way they do segregation these days.”

Mansur is not a morning person, and he arrives late to school most mornings even though he lives close by. In order to avoid being given tardy slips, he has “figured out the system.” When he goes through the metal detector, he makes sure his hoodie partially hides his face so that the attendance ladies looking to mark down the names of the late students don't automatically recognize him. Wherever they happen to be, he slips by them and slides into his homeroom class. He knows that his homeroom teacher doesn't take attendance until just before the bell rings for first period, so on most days he successfully evades consequences for arriving more than 15 minutes late. Mansur is very adept at noticing how different aspects of the school system work,

and he also knows how to navigate them. Perhaps that is why he is so quick to notice some of the educational inequalities that exist at Fairfield High School.

In spite of his early morning antics, Mansur is a high achieving student. His classes are fairly rigorous since he is on track to being in AP (Advanced Placement) and honors classes once he completes his freshman year. The CAS (Center of Advanced Learning) classes are usually the prerequisite classes for students to take if students want to take the AP or honors courses at Fairfield. These are the classes that Mansur applied and got into.

Mansur discussed how ESL (English second language) students are automatically enrolled into basic PSP (Pittsburgh Scholars Program) classes, and are not encouraged to apply for the CAS or AP classes.

I asked Mansur if the higher level classes would be too difficult for students whose language proficiency wasn't high enough to understand some of the content, and he made a great point that there are some subjects where this would not be problematic, *“And also other classes like math, you don't need to know language that much. Numbers are everywhere. They can do the same math that we do”* (interview, 04/23/2018).

Mansur makes a valid point that automatically tracking ESL students in this way denies them opportunities if they decide to pursue higher education, since they won't have taken the classes that attract colleges they might apply to.

“But I also feel bad for them because it's not that good of a school for ESL students because they automatically put them in PSP classes, even if it's like, they don't let them do the CAS application or AP classes, so even if they speak a different language, for example, all the classes are easy for them all of the time, not always but a lot of the time. Which is really bad for their future, because then if they're doing math classes and then

when they're applying to colleges, it's not going to look good for them. And that's like not their fault" (interview, 04/23/2018).

What Mansur sees as being particularly unfair about this way of assigning courses is that students have to apply for CAS classes, and much of the time the application process is not adequately promoted or explained. This is problematic, especially if ESL parents don't speak English. They would not be aware that their teenager is automatically going to be enrolled in the least rigorous courses offered at Fairfield. While ESL students may know some English, they may not have enough mastery of English to ask the clarifying questions about these classes that they should.

"And if they're new to the school, you're not going to ask that many questions. Especially if you don't speak English. You're not going to ask that many questions, so they're already put in the school at a huge disadvantage because they don't know how everything is going on and stuff, and the classes levels, and stuff like that" (interview, 06/10/2018).

Ultimately, PSP classes end up being filled with mainly ESL students, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and black students. Mansur calls it how he sees it, *"That's a big way they do segregation these days"* (interview, 04/23/2018). He has also noticed that there are a disproportionate number of black students in these PSP classes, *"There's more poor black kids though. So the majority of PSP classes are often black. But the poor white kids are also in there too"* (interview, 06/10/2018).

Mansur worries about the stigma that has become associated with being a "PSP student." He is concerned that PSP students are being stereotyped and labelled.

"Definitely with PSP and CAS, I'm pretty sure that all the schools in that district, has PSP and CAS and AP classes, but they're less like separated and stuff, and more united."

Because PSP and CAS, the other day this really surprised me because my friend said, 'I hate PSP kids.' I don't know if he was joking, but it's because they're all lower class people and a lot of the time they act off and stuff in the cafeteria. And I just didn't like that because we don't have that much communication with them, we don't really associate with them, so then he only sees the kids who act bad right? And then in his head it's like, all PSP classes are like that" (interview, 06/10/2018).

Mansur emphasizes how students who misbehave are the ones that are assigned to PSP classes so they won't disrupt learning in the advanced classes, not because they are unable to be academically successful. He does not feel that it is fair to exclude students from CAS and AP classes because of the classroom management issues that could arise.

"And I think also made for that, that some kids from the lower class neighborhoods go to these lower classes because a lot of them they act up... Yeah, a lot of the time. They might be geniuses, but they're still there because they act up, and then the system doesn't want those kids to be in the CAS classes because of behavior" (interview, 06/10/2018).

He also brought up the point that AP courses could be difficult for students from lower economic backgrounds to take because the AP tests needed to receive college credits are costly.

"Actually now thinking about that, the AP's, even they're set against lower class communities because the finals that you have to take, the AP tests, they each cost \$50-\$100" (interview, 06/10/2018).

4.17.2 "I wouldn't be able to survive living in one city for my entire life."

As a result of living abroad and his extensive life experiences, Mansur has a sophisticated world view. His overall perception of U.S. students is that many of them are close minded and not

very open to people from other countries and cultures. It is noticeable how these American students avoid working collaboratively with the students from other countries in class. He remembers how awkward and isolating it felt for him when he first arrived.

“When you’re a new student, it’s definitely hard because you don’t really know anyone, but people obviously want to be able to pick their own people, because they want to have groups with their friends. And I guess it really depends, because it can be awkward sometimes” (interview, 04/23/2018).

When speaking to his classmates, Mansur realizes that many of them are not interested in exploring other places outside of Pittsburgh, and he cannot understand why they would not want to learn about other parts of the world.

“I don’t understand how they can just live their whole lives in this...I wouldn’t be able to survive living in one city for my entire life. I don’t know if that’s because I’ve moved so much and seen so many things, but I like couldn’t survive. There’s so many things in this world that are so cool and stuff. Travel a little bit and see what the world is like” (interview, 06/10/2018).

Although Mansur takes many classes with U.S. students and considers some of them casual friends, he recognizes some distinctive differences between their values and perspectives and his. He has chosen not to assimilate by adopting their philosophies and beliefs because he doesn’t agree with them. He would rather preserve the beliefs he has been raised with.

“A difference in values and perspectives on the world. I don’t really know how to describe it that well. By values I just mean like the life philosophy and how to live kind of. How to interact and just live I guess...They [American students] just talk about things that I wasn’t used to talking about like money and vulgar things. [Materialistic] Yeah, stuff like

that and comparing people's income and stuff. I feel like it's also starting to rub off on me and I don't like it" (text message, 04/26/2018).

Mansur especially feels like an outsider in America because he is a practicing Muslim and dislikes how Islam is portrayed as being a religion adopted by terrorists. He resents when U.S. students joke about religions that differ from theirs, but attributes it to their ignorance.

"Well a lot of times they say it as jokes, but it's not very funny. Like they'll be saying Allahu Akba, which is like how Christians say Amen, and be acting like a terrorist and stuff. Acting like they're bombing stuff and stuff like that" (interview, 06/10/2018).

Although he may not always appreciate the way some American students act toward him, he recognizes that ESL students are often treated in a worse manner. For example, he notices that American students often make no effort to try to include ESL students or relate to them. He feels there is no excuse for this, and that there are ways they could try to communicate with them if they wanted to.

"Well most of them [ESL students], I meet through Global Minds club, and well I mean even if you don't speak their language, you can still communicate with them, right?... And they speak a few words, a little bit that they can understand, and movements they understand, and other times there's other kids who speak the same language, but speak better English" (interview, 04/23/2018).

In particular, Mansur spoke about how he was upset about the way American students treated his friend Abul from Bangladesh. Besides a few students who were in the Global Minds club, Mansur noticed that Abul was almost completely isolated during health class. He got angry when the U.S. students disrespected his friend by comparing him to a cartoon character.

“Regular kids [American students]. There’s kids in Global Minds that talk with foreign kids better, but in health the other day, I realized that my friend Abul, no one really talks to him that much because he’s from Bangladesh. And, have you seen Phenias and Ferb? They were making fun of him one time because of one of the characters, behind his back. And I thought, that’s not really cool. And he’s a nice guy. Me and him are friends. I don’t like it when other people don’t even make an effort to try. And it’s not really that they’re mean to him, they just don’t really associate. Like sometimes they get his folder, and they’re kind of in a group, and they know I’m friends with him, and they don’t really associate with him” (interview, 04/23/2018).

When I asked Mansur why he thinks the American students treat Abul this way, he said that he thinks it is because they just want to remain in their friend groups where they feel most comfortable. As a result of being left out, he says the ESL students at Fairfield High School often will not even try to connect with American students, and instead choose to develop friendships with other immigrant students, *“And most ESL kids are not really friends with other kids, just with other ESL kids” (interview, 04/23/2018).*

Mansur also explained how which countries the international students came from sometimes effected the way they were treated, as some countries seem to be more popular in the eyes of the American students.

“I would definitely say that countries like well-known countries like Italy and France and stuff, everybody loves those countries. If you’re from there you’re going to be the center of attention. For at least like 2 months (Laughs)... Yeah, so if you coming from, no wait, if you look like you come from a country with poor conditions or so called really different, that it would be looked on as inferior here, then you will have more trouble because

people will not like look at you. For example, that thing that you said about the kids who smelled like curry, because they eat a lot of curry. I've seen that before. Kids thinking that. I'd say that kids coming from Europe, they're like, Oh my god, do you eat the bagette, and stuff. That's like the American kids. And I'd say because they have more in common. Like I'd say they're not as culturally different” (interview, 06/10/2018).

Mansur sees how American students have an easier time connecting with European immigrants because they can make connections to foods they like, and countries in Europe are seen as being prestigious places as well. On the other hand, Mansur recognizes that there is a stigma and racism that students from other less familiar countries have to face, and they are often looked at as being inferior. For example, he has seen Indian students made fun of for smelling like curry, and he points out that American students make a lot of assumptions about immigrant students who look different and appear to be from “poor countries.”

It isn't just the American students who are not welcoming the ESL students into Fairfield's school community. Mansur has also noticed how some teachers do not make an effort to reach out to the ESL students, even if they commonly socialize with their American students.

“I think like for me, most of my teachers don't know that I'm international. I think for other students, for what I've seen at least, they do treat you different. Like for my friend Abul from Bangladesh, the teachers are, the sociable ones even, don't talk with immigrants that much... They know that that student likely doesn't speak English as well, so they don't even bother” (interview, 04/23/2018).

In contrast to this, when teachers discovered Mansur came from France, their reaction to him was very different, and they showed a lot more interest in him than when they thought he was a U.S.-born black student.

“Yes. So, when they learn that, they’re like, ‘Oh my gosh! Really? I didn’t know that!’ Because people think I’m African American, so they suddenly get an interest in me (Laughs)... And when they see someone is interesting, they’re like, ‘Oh my gosh, really? You’ve been to so many places! You’re so interesting’ (interview, 04/23/2018).

Teachers at Fairfield High School do not always make the necessary accommodations or modifications to allow ESL students to be successful in their classes. Mansur realized this by the unfair treatment he saw his friend Matis experience in their social studies class. This was a mainstream class, and Matis’ English proficiency was very low at the time. The most frustrating part about this scenario was that this particular teacher used to teach ESL students and should have known how his lack of accommodations and modifications prevented Matis from learning the content.

“Yeah. Mr. S. our social studies teacher, he was fully aware that Matis was learning English. And the stuff that we do in that class is pretty advanced. Like we write a lot of essays, we read a lot of long texts and stuff...And presentations, yeah. And then he graded Matis (French student who didn’t speak English) like he would any other student. And, you can’t expect him to write a 3 page paper when you don’t know that much English. And the systems in France where he lives, and then here, they’re completely different so you can’t expect a guy to just write a three page essay” (interview, 04/02/2019).

Mansur explained that even though Matis’ mother sent multiple emails to this teacher as a way to advocate for her son, the situation in the class never improved and nothing changed. Instead Mansur was assigned to translate for his friend.

“Like he put me next to him. That was his only resolution (laughs) because I spoke French, so... Matis’ mom tried to advocate for him, but the only thing the teacher would

do is sit Matis next to me...Well I speak French, so just because I speak French, I can translate everything for him, and then he's going to be liable to do everything. Like everyone else, because I'm there" (interview, 04/02/2019).

4.17.3 "I mean immigrants, we kind of got this bond going on."

Mansur chooses to relate more to students who were not born in the U.S. because he feels that their shared experiences create a bond between them.

"Yeah, I'm not going to tell them [American students] that [his problems]. Like they're not really good friends. But I'll admit the best friends that I have are more international because we can relate more, they kind of understand...I mean immigrants, we kind of got this bond going on (laughs) because we speak different languages, we've traveled the world, we've been to different places, we know how the world kind of ticks. Yeah we've been the new person everywhere" (interview, 04/23/2018).

There are some U.S.-born classmates who Mansur feels do have larger world views, and he enjoys talking to them because they are open minded and receptive to different cultures and perspectives.

"I try to surround myself with people I like and can have good conversations with. I like to talk to U.S.-born people who know more about the world because we can relate more" (interview, 04/23/2018).

4.17.4 “I wouldn’t call that diversity.”

Mansur explained that compared to Europe, he does not view the U.S. as being a very diverse place, and that people of different races are still separated. He wishes they would mix and connect more.

“And also, when I talk about diversity here, the only diversity you see in the U.S. is African American and like White, and that’s not really, I wouldn’t call that diversity because first of all they’re not like mixing, like a lot of schools what they do is take pictures when they make school pictures, and they make sure to like have black kids and white kids, and then the only 2 Asian kids that they have in their schools to make their school look like they’re diverse... I mean, when I first came to America, it was a change because schools in Europe are more diverse. And here, like you learn about how America is either a melting pot or a mosaic. And I see here, that it is more like a mosaic. They say it’s like that everybody is mixed together, but when you look out in the cafeteria, there’s groups of like, and it’s all by like race. There’s like spots of white people, and there’s black groups, and then there’s like a very few mixed groups” (interview, 06/10/2018).

Mansur is very involved in Global Minds, an after-school club that is dedicated to diversity. The club meets once a week and between 20-40 students attend. His priority is that ESL students would see this as a safe and welcoming space.

“It’s a club that meets once a week and many diverse kids from Fairfield High School are encouraged to join and we learn about lots of different cultures and it is meant to kind of break the barrier between ESL kids and other people” (text message, 04/03/2018).

The club provides activities and events that Mansur enjoys because he likes having the opportunity to get to know new students from other cultures. It energizes him.

“We learn about other cultures just by socializing with kids from other places and doing activities with them. Well I missed the last one but we went to a Latino community center and some volunteering place. We are also going somewhere to paint a mural in Braddock” (text message, 04/04/2018).

During one of our text conversations, Mansur mentioned that if he could plan a field trip for students at Fairfield High School, he'd like to take all the American students to a local mosque. He feels that would help to dispel some of their inaccurate perceptions about Islam, so they could understand that it is a peaceful religion, and that not all Muslims are radicals.

“I would go to the local mosque because here they think that like Muslims are violent, and the local imam is really chill and I want to show them that” (text message, 05/09/2018).

Even in Global Minds, Mansur sees that there need to be changes because the American students still gravitate toward sitting with other American students, and the ESL students sit together as well.

“So now I'm the ESL coordinator for Global Minds, and we actually decided to, because at the beginning at the year we made it so we chose the seats. That the people in charge chose the seats. But then at the end, later it was like later, nobody chose where they sit, so everyone could just choose, and then the refugees all sat together by nationality (laughs). And then the white people sat together with their friends, and then it was just like a regular classroom again...Next year we're going to make it so it's going to be together” (interview, 06/10/2018).

4.17.5 “How am I actually going to fix things?”

Besides being offended by what he perceived as the close mindedness of U.S. born students, Mansur did not excessively complain about their treatment of him. Their opinions of him did not seem to matter much. He did mention being friendly with some of his teachers, but most of the relationships appeared primarily business-like. He did not crave emotional support from them, and, in fact, he mentioned that his view of most teachers changed depending on his grades.

“My relationship with every teacher, most teachers depend on my grade in that class. (Laughs) Because if I get a bad grade, then my main focus in that class is why do I have that bad grade? So, when I think of that bad grade, I think of them” (interview, 04/23/2018).

He also felt that he had enough friends, especially including those who are from other countries, through the Global Minds club. While he wishes that Fairfield High School had more of an appreciation for cultural diversity, he is actively doing what he can to make that happen. He plans to be the president of Global Minds by his senior year. Mansur is able to discern systemic problems with the way students are tracked in Fairfield’s three-tier courses and hopes to one day be in a position that would enable him to make significant changes to benefit students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families in the future.

“And the thing that motivated me from that is ever since I was little, my parents talked about different problems around the world, especially Benin (in Africa) and stuff. When I was younger, I was like, Oh yeah, I’ll fix everything. That kept me motivated. And then when I got older, I was like, Wait. How am I actually going to try to fix these things? Then when you think about it, all these people who are like protesting, yeah I mean that kind of helps it, but the people who actually have control are the big capitalists, with all the

money and stuff. They're like the big power houses of the world. A millionaire and stuff because he has the means of changing the world" (interview, 06/10/2018).

4.18 Kingsfield High School

Kingsfield High School is a large public school located in one of the most affluent suburban neighborhoods of Pittsburgh and serves 1,391 ninth to twelfth grade students. After recent renovations, the school building is modern and attractive with many interesting architectural details. Similar to Westbrook High School, Kingsfield also recently had millions of dollars' worth of funds dedicated to upgrade its football stadium and build a new aquatics center.

The student body at Kingsfield High school consists of 85% white, 11%, Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 2% black students. It is not surprising that in such a wealthy area of Pittsburgh that only 7% of the students who attend Kingfield are eligible for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. There are not many ESL students attending Kingsfield, although the exact number was not available.

Kingsfield is a nationally ranked, very high achieving school with 92% of the students scoring proficient or advanced on the state math test, and 95% of students scoring proficient or advanced on the state reading test. Kingsfield has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a National Blue Ribbon School multiple times. This recognition is awarded to public and private schools based on their overall academic excellence or on their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Kingsfield's recognition is based on academic excellence only, since the students are predominantly white and Asian students with only small numbers of students in subgroups.

Preparation for college is the primary focus at Kingsfield, and that is why Riku's family wanted him enrolled there. Kingsfield offers the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, which is a rigorous two-year pre-university course of studies. One-third of the students are enrolled in AP (advanced placement) classes, and the AP exam pass rate is exceptionally high at 87%. Additionally, Kingsfield's graduation rate is 99%, which is by far the highest of all the other schools in this study (Westbrook's graduation rate was 93%, Chandler's was 83%, and Fairfield's was 82%).

There is a peer mentorship program at Kingsfield in which a junior acts as a peer mentor to a freshman. Each peer mentor serves as a support and resource person who provides information, encouragement, and support during a student's first year at Kingsfield. The goal is to help ease the freshmen students' transition to being in high school. This is a way to integrate the new students into the school community and to promote caring and supportive relationships between upper classmen and freshmen students

4.19 A Portrait of Riku

4.19.1 Son of a visiting professional family

At the time of this study, Riku was a 15-year-old freshman who attended Kingsfield High School. His family moved to Pittsburgh from Japan three years ago, and he is the oldest of four children. Riku's family selected the location of their home for its proximity to Kingsfield High School. His father has a daily hour and a half commute to work in West Virginia, but he is willing to make that sacrifice so Riku and his siblings can receive an excellent education. Before arriving

in Pittsburgh, Riku was diagnosed with leukemia, but he is now in remission after receiving treatment at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh.

Riku's parents also plan for him to join the International Baccalaureate program at Kingsfield once he is a junior, as this program is attractive to universities where he will eventually apply. Volunteer work is not valued as highly as academic achievement. Often American students complete community service hours to enhance their college applications, but Riku insisted that in Japan academics are the only priority, *"No! We didn't have time at all for that. I have like a free 2 hours in the day [in America] so I think I can volunteer sometimes"* (interview, 10/13/2018).

Riku especially enjoys being in the U.S. because he notices his father enjoying a better life-work balance than enduring the very long work hours in Japan. His father currently has a visa which allows him to work as an engineer in the U.S. for at least two more years before the company decides if he will stay in Pittsburgh or be transferred back to Japan. While most of the family wishes to remain in the U.S., his mother would prefer returning to Japan because she misses her family and is not able to communicate in English with Americans. Riku is still struggling to learn English himself, and receives ESL (English Second Language) services at Kingsfield, which consist of two 45-minute class periods a day. He knows that learning English in the U.S. will be advantageous when he returns to Japan.

"I think it will be a good thing for when I go back to Japan. They never learn English. Well they learn it, but they never speak it, so..." (interview, 10/13/2018).

Riku expresses curiosity about his American classmates and views them in a very positive light. In fact, he was the only participant who did not criticize them in any way, and said that he wanted more opportunities to interact with and be noticed by U.S. born students. Unlike many of his peers, Riku doesn't watch TV, rarely goes to movies, and isn't interested in listening to music.

Instead he enjoys going online to learn about what is going on in the world and wants to excel in his studies. Common ground he does share with his classmates is that he does enjoy watching YouTube videos, using Snap Chat, and playing video games when he has free time. His favorite sports are tennis and baseball, which he admitted he would not have time to participate in if he lived in Japan. Participation in extracurricular sports is not as common in Japan, because Japanese cultural expectations about education are that students often go to a tutor after school, and then complete their homework or study until it is almost time to go to bed.

Riku finds it amusing when his American classmates complain about the difficulty of school in the U.S., *“Yeah. So, my U.S. friend just told me that high school is like a prison, but it actually isn’t compared to Japan. They have so many freedoms here”* (interview, 10/13/2018). In addition to his English schoolwork, he attends Japanese school every Sunday from 10:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., where he takes language arts and math classes in his native language. His parents know that one day it is likely that their family will return to Japan, and it is critical that Riku not lose ground in these core subjects in Japanese.

Riku avoided talking about any ways that he may be different from his American classmates, and it was obvious that he desired to fit in and be accepted by them. During our text messages, he mentioned how if he could read peoples’ minds he would choose, *“a friend who’s born in U.S.- reason for that is I want to know what native people think”* (text message, 10/16/2018). He admitted that when he first arrived in Pittsburgh, many of the U.S. students ignored him and he felt isolated. However, things have improved socially for Riku once he was able to engage in more conversations with them, *“Some of them didn’t even talk to me. I think they ignored me though. (Laughs) ...They’re so nice here. Especially now I’m getting used to English”* (interview, 10/13/2018).

Riku's future aspirations are to become either a computer programmer or an engineer like his father, and he is not worried about finances for his college tuition because he knows his parents will pay for it. This year his only responsibilities are to learn English and to get good grades in all his classes.

4.20 Riku's Perceptions

4.20.1 "First I was scared. I was scared to death."

Riku has a slight build and looks younger than his 15 years. He is also shy and soft spoken. While he doesn't seek to be the center of attention, he does want to be noticed and feels it is important to have friends at school. I imagine Riku maneuvering through his school day trying to blend in rather than stand out.

The majority of students at Kingsfield are white, and Riku recalled how Americans looked strange when he first arrived. He had only ever been around Japanese people, and he found that suddenly being part of a minority was intimidating, "*First I was scared. I was scared to death*" (interview, 10/13/2018).

Although he has not yet mastered English, Riku does find it easier to communicate with his classmates and teachers. This has helped him feel less isolated and more a part of the school community. In most of Riku's classes, he has at least a friend or two that he can talk to. His favorite class is geometry, but not because of the content or the teacher's instruction. That is the class where he has the most friends to "hang out with," and where he can ask them questions when he needs to. Moving from class period to class period, Riku hopes, like most teenage boys, that he will have

an unexpected free period or that the teacher won't assign too much reading. He really dislikes books and would rather read information online.

4.20.2 “I think my most responsibility is for to study.”

Riku has no other responsibilities other than performing well academically. He is not responsible for any chores at home and will not be allowed to work at a part-time job while he is still in high school. Consequently, his parents expect him to excel in school and also complete his assignments for Japanese school. He understands this expectation and takes it seriously, *“I think my most responsibility is for to study”* (interview, 10/13/2018).

Even with these high expectations, Riku explained how the emphasis on academics is a cultural value for Japanese people. *“Yeah. It's... Yeah they study more than here. They study like 8 hours per day”* (interview, 10/13/2018). He is thankful that he does not have to deal with the intense stress and pressure that most students in Japan face, because their academic future is directly determined by test scores at a young age.

“If you get to the high school, they have to get good grades to get to college... Yes, a lot. So if you don't get good grades, you can't go to a good high school. So in Japan high school is not required. Yeah, it's not required, but they usually go to high school” (interview, 10/13/2018).

Riku considers his school day to be a good one if he gets high grades on tests and assignments, and when his teachers praise him, *“My bio and geometry teachers told me I am ready for the test. That's why I feel happy and had a good day”* (text message, 11/01/2018).

One challenge Riku encountered in Pittsburgh was to learn to be more responsible for completing his school work independently, because in Japan teachers oversee and monitor their

students' progress closely. In the U.S., he discovered that teachers expect students to study and complete their work independently, and they do not check up on them to see that they are.

Unlike the refugee and immigrant students, Riku is not concerned with learning any real life skills, such as doing taxes, managing a bank account, or obtaining a school loan. He is confident that his parents can help him learn all of these things, or that he can always go online and research anything he might need to find out. He knows that his time is better spent improving his English and excelling in his classes.

4.20.3 “My brain just kind of almost blows up”

Riku spends the majority of his day in mainstream classes with native English speakers, and he described feeling excited and kind of nervous about being there, “*My brain just kind of almost blows up*”(interview, 10/22/2018). It is tiring, but he is determined to persevere and try his hardest to succeed, “*I am hard worker, because I’m in the school even I can’t understand English completely*” (text message, 10/16/2018).

One of the main sources of anxiety for Riku is having to answer questions or give presentations in class. He finds it very intimidating to speak in front of the U.S.-born students in his mainstream classes, because he is certain that he will make errors when speaking in English and feel embarrassed. When Riku answers questions in class, he describes himself as “*dead nervous*” (text message, 10/15/2019). He told me he wasn’t worried about getting the answers wrong, but rather just having to say them aloud in front of his peers. Riku feels much more comfortable in his ESL classes with other students who are learning English, “*It’ll be so hard if I speak in front of normal classes, but I think I will feel better in ESL, because everyone in ESL are on almost the same English level as I do*” (text message, 10/15/2018). Right before he has to

present in front of the class, he copes by using positive self-talk, *“I just tell myself I can do it. Just to calm down”* (interview, 10/22/2018).

Riku wishes there was a Japanese translator that could help him in his classes, because he occasionally finds it challenging to communicate with other students and the teachers. While he sometimes uses Google Translate to help him decipher English words and phrases, it is not always accurate and can result in confusion about meaning of the text. His way of coping with this is to either search online for more information, or to make a note of what he doesn't understand and ask his teacher during his ESL strategy class. Having access to a Japanese translator would help Riku with tasks such as understanding academic terms in courses like biology and writing essays. He attempted to take a civics class, but had to drop it because the academic vocabulary was too difficult and there were too many required presentations.

“Civics? Yes, I had it. Yeah I dropped this because it was too hard. You have to take civics at third year... Yeah, it was too hard! There's a lot of presentations too. Like once a week” (interview, 10/22/2018).

Although he would rather sleep in on Sunday mornings, Riku has discovered that attending Japanese school has been helpful, and learning math in his native language resulted in being able to understand math in English.

“Yes. When I was in the math class, I was like, oh I remember doing this in Japanese school...Actually I just like it. I actually want to be a programmer or an engineer like my dad. So I have to learn more math” (interview, 10/13/2018).

Riku has mixed feelings about his two daily ESL classes. He describes feeling relaxed and comfortable with the five other ESL students, because they are all still learning English and they understand the experiences he is going through, *“It's the same level English students and friends.*

We can share that feeling” (interview, 10/22/2018). Also, his best friend, who is from China, is in his ESL strategies class, and that is the only class they have together. Riku also appreciates having the opportunity in ESL class to practice his conversational English, because he hopes that skill will help him make more American friends.

While considering his ESL classes as being “a bit of a “break for him,” which he likes, his complaint is that the instruction is not always rigorous, “*Because the book is easy. 80% of vocab, I already know it. But we are doing vocab that normal students do right now. That makes it a little harder*” (interview, 10/22/2018). Although Riku doesn’t think the ESL class is challenging, he still wants to be a part of it. “*I couldn’t go to the normal English, but I can’t be alone in a class, so I’m going to that easy class. It’s better than nothing*” (interview, 10/22/2018). However, he does recognize that in ESL he sometimes receives help with academic vocabulary for classes like biology and civics, “*So, when I saw the vocabulary from ESL, when I was reading a biology article or a civics article...*” (interview, 10/22/2018).

4.20.4 “I wish my teachers knew I can’t speak English very well.”

When Riku doesn’t understand English in his mainstream classes, he never blames his teachers. “*Well, I have to try. Yeah, I’m just going to keep trying to try*” (interview, 10/13/2018). Throughout our conversations, it became apparent that Riku’s mainstream teachers are not aware of his limited English language proficiency and that they need to make modifications to their instruction for him to understand the content.

Riku wishes that his teachers understood what his capabilities and limits are, and he thinks this has to do with the fact they don’t know him well enough as an individual, “*Because maybe the teacher who doesn’t know you will ask you difficult questions for you, or presentations or*

something like that, so maybe... (Pauses) I'd dislike it... I wish my teachers knew I can't speak English very well. Geometry teacher doesn't know that, I am thinking about telling him about it." (text message, 11/07/2018). While I listen to Riku express these concerns, I think about how he fits the 'model minority' stereotype of well-behaved and high achieving Asian students.

When I asked him to imagine that I was the teacher whose class he struggled with the most, Riku expressed some ideas about how his biology teacher could teach in a way that would enable him to better understand the content. Although he enjoys biology, he wants the teacher to use more visuals, pictures, and videos. *"Use a video or something. YouTube. So it will be easier to understand. A picture"* (interview, 11/15/2018).

4.20.5 "Just don't be shy. American people were so much friendlier than I thought."

Riku's positive perception of U.S. students contrasted dramatically with the perceptions of the refugee and immigrant students. He also minimizes his differences with U.S.-born students because he doesn't want to be seen as different, or as an outsider. No one hassles or bullies Riku at Kingsfield High School. However, when I asked Riku what he wished his American classmates understood about him, he admitted that when he first arrived that they made assumptions about him based on his race.

"The first or second week of high school, I had new classmates in all of the things [classes], so my classmates doesn't talk to me very much, but I just start talk to them. Then they told me, they thought I couldn't speak English at all. I never saw them at the middle school, so..." (interview, 11/15/2018).

He made it clear that this didn't bother him because they did talk to him once he started conversations with them, "Yeah. They were actually so nice! I felt so happy at that time!" (interview, 10/13/2018).

Surprisingly, Riku describes the American students at Kingfield as being more respectful to the teachers than his classmates were in Japan. He does not witness fights or other acts of violence, which was practically a commonplace occurrence at Chandler High School and happened occasionally at Westbrook and Fairfield. Riku told me that many students even have free periods during the day where they can go and work independently "wherever they want." This type of trust in students' behavior didn't exist at any of the other schools featured in this study.

Having teachers select students for group work is something Riku prefers because he feels that being part of different groups provides him with an opportunity to make new friends.

Riku described one particular episode in which a student was mean to him. At first I thought they shared friends, but he later explained that they just have the same lunch.

"When I was in the café there was my friends and teacher sitting next us, and one of the stupid friend was just swearing so much, it was like more than it needs to be and the teacher who was sitting next to me was yelling at him in front of everybody. I couldn't do anything but lounging [laughing]. I think I'm mean, but that friend is soooooo mean to everyone, so I just thought it was kind of a payback... He is the meanest person I know. Sometimes he's nice but when he got into mean zone, he'll go crazy" (text message, 10/25/2018).

When I asked Riku about why he is friends with this student, he clarified, "I think it's just me, he just doesn't like me" (text message, 10/26/2018). He couldn't explain why this student would single him out sometimes and be unkind to him. However, the situation never escalated to the point where a teacher needed to get involved.

The only other related episode that Riku mentioned was that American students sometimes make fun of his English. However, he insists that he doesn't care (as he laughed and smiled about it), because he felt like they were joking. Riku did not seem bothered at all and described these students as being his good friends. When I asked why he didn't feel insulted when they made fun of the way he spoke, he emphasized that they were not being mean-spirited, *"It sounds like a joking. They don't make me anxious or something like that... No...They're good friends"* (interview, 10/22/2018).

Riku often avoided answering questions about the cultural differences he might have with American students and seemed to be sensitive and have a negative reaction to being asked about this topic, *"Yes, next question?"* (text message, 10/16/2018). He also emphasized that culture isn't really important to him and his friends, *"It depends on the person, my friends doesn't care about it sometimes... Oh ok. Ummmm, I didn't even pay attention for that"* (text message, 10/16/2018).

It makes sense that he wants to be seen as a regular high school student, and he identified being accepted and included by U.S. peers as the most important part of his social experience at school. *"So this one is most important... [He starts arranging the options for the ranking task] For me, friends are more important than teachers"* (interview, 11/15/2018).

When I asked him to imagine that I was the principal and asked him to tell me about his experiences at Kingsfield, he described it as being hard to make friends initially, *"We have a different thought or thinking. Because I grow up in a different culture, so that was a hard thing for the first time"* (interview, 11/15/2018). This was one of the only times he acknowledged that he was different from U.S. students. However, Riku was determined to not let this obstacle prevent him from getting to know some of his American classmates who do make an effort to talk to him every day. *"(Laughs) So, every day we speak about the football and the video games, and what"*

happened in class” (interview, 10/22/2018). Because Kingsfield is a smaller district, Riku does feel connected to the U.S. students he recognized from middle school. He may not have known them very well since he spent quite a lot of his 7th grade year in the hospital, but they were still familiar from 8th grade.

One of the main reasons Riku enjoys going to school is to see his friends, *“Yeah. So it is like a motivator for going to school”* (interview, 11/15/2018). He also feels that it is very important to have friends to spend time with both in and outside of school, *“Fun? So after I made friends, we can hang out outside of school or even in the school during the free time or in the gym, or something like that”* (interview, 11/15/2018).

Riku wishes his American classmates understood that he is not able to help them academically, as it seems like many have made the assumption that he can, *“That I can’t help with everything. They are asking me for help every time... I just tell them I don’t know and go ask someone”* (text message, 11/07/2018). As a result of these text messages, I brought up the fact that his American classmates may be doing this because they are stereotyping him by assuming that he would know all the answers in class because he is Asian. He admitted that this happened at times.

“Some of my friends did, but I’m not that smart as they are, so they are Indian and they had like 92% of average score in almost every classes (laughs) and they thought I’m smarter than them. They were just asking me questions, like what is that? What is that?” (interview, 11/15/2018).

Riku does not seem bothered or offended that students make these assumptions and just directs them to ask for help elsewhere. His positive view of Americans is evident in his advice for future ESL students who may one day be students at Kingsfield High School, *“Just don’t be shy.*

American people were so much friendlier than I thought when I came here” (text message, 11/07/2018).

4.20.6 “Oh my God, I have so many more Indian friends than U.S.-born friends.”

Even though Riku thinks so highly of American students, he is still mainly friends with students who are not white and are either in ESL or are first generation U.S. born students from immigrant families. He seemed to realize this during one of our interviews.

“I never thought about it, but I have so many Indian friends. I don’t know why. I was thinking about my friends’ faces, and I was like, Oh my God, I have so many more Indian friends than U.S.-born friends. Well they’re U.S.-born, but their parents are from India, so...Mostly I hang out with one boy from China” (interview, 11/15/2018).

Riku’s best friend at school is from China and arrived in Pittsburgh six months before Riku did. They met in an ESL class.

“So one of them is my best friend now. Yeah he just talked to me and he was in the ESL class with me. He’s from China. He got here faster than me, like a half year” (interview, 10/13/2018).

Riku explained that he doesn’t really care if his friends are international or U.S. born. He just wants to be friends with good people that he can count on.

“Yeah. I’m just okay with the fact that we’re friends. Like that. So, I really don’t care about it” (interview, 11/15/2018).

Riku is determined to not only succeed academically but also socially at Kingsfield. He wants to embrace the experience of living and attending high school in the United States for all it has to offer before possibly returning to Japan in a few years.

4.21 Connections to Conceptual Perspectives for Visiting Professional Students’ Perceptions and Experiences

4.21.1 Translanguaging

An obvious difference between Mansur and Riku is their different proficiency levels in English. Mansur speaks English fluently and is often mistaken for an American student, while Riku has only been living in the U.S. for three years and still struggles to communicate in English. The only type of translanguaging activity in class that Mansur engaged in was when his social studies teacher requested that he translate the lectures and assignments for a French classmate who did not speak English. In this case Mansur used his native language in order to help another visiting professional student, and not as a means to learn more English himself. While this could be considered beneficial because he was retaining his native language, the amount of translation he was asked to do was excessive because the teacher did not want to make modifications or accommodations for this boy who only spoke French.

Riku expressed that there was not a time when his teachers encouraged him to use his Japanese to help him with his English during class. In fact, Riku expressed wishing he had a translator who could help him with writing essays because he found that especially difficult.

4.21.2 Lack of Funds of Knowledge and Third Spaces

Although Mansur and Riku’s teachers and classmates appeared to have positive views about their countries of origin -unlike the refugee and immigrant students- they did not report any

significant incidents when their funds of knowledge were recognized or referred to as part of instruction.

Although both visiting professional students gravitated toward befriending other immigrant students, there were times where they specifically mentioned classes resembling third space learning communities. Mansur was very involved in the Global Minds Club at Chandler, and that was the only place that had third space-like qualities where students' ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity were celebrated and drawn upon for activities and events. Riku's prestigious suburban school did not have Global Minds, but he did not seem to mind the lack of third spaces at his school since he was focused on getting good grades and improving his English.

5.0 Discussion

My goal for conducting this study was to secure the perceptions of students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families. I wanted to share those perceptions with educational professionals in the hope that they would use the information to potentially influence their policies and practices. I also wanted to investigate the relevance of current conceptual perspectives in framing the experiences of these students. In the sections that follow, I focus on two important themes revealed in the perceptions that students shared. Then, I suggest how the conceptual frameworks of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging might be useful for educators to learn about and use.

5.1 Themes and Recommendations

5.1.1 Racism and Intolerance

Like other researchers (e.g., Allen et al., 2016; Bigelow, 2008; Davies, 2008), I found that the students in this study experienced discrimination and racism. For the refugee students at Westbrook, racism often took the form of isolation by their white classmates and being treated as though they were invisible and too insignificant to be noticed. While Yashmeet chose not to allow U.S. students emotionally close enough for their rejection to hurt his feelings, Brisha and Femi were traumatized by the racism they experienced because they longed to be accepted by their

American classmates. The ongoing isolation and loneliness they both experienced at school severely damaged their self-esteem and sense of self-worth.

The three refugee students at Westbrook described overt incidents of racism. For example, all three students mentioned how white students confronted them on the bus to ask why they were in the U.S. and told them they should go back to their country. This obviously caused them to feel unwelcome, humiliated, and less willing to risk initiating social connections with American students.

Also, the obvious division of race on the Westbrook soccer team was especially noticeable and was demonstrated during the games when teammates only congratulated and encouraged those of the same race after each goal scored.

For the two immigrant students at Chandler High School, the frequency and impact of racist incidents which the girls experienced differed. Esperanza was still considered an ESL student and took most of her classes with other English language learners, while Mariana was in mainstream classes with almost all U.S. students. Esperanza did express feeling lonely in her elective classes, because she wished that her American classmates would try to relate to her and be kinder. Leaving her to work alone during group work and not making any effort to speak to her during class demonstrated the American students' preference to associate only with other their American peers.

Mariana suffered horrific incidents of racism at Chandler High School on a nearly daily basis, to the point where she felt ashamed of who she was and often felt like quitting. For her, school felt like a battlefield, where she constantly had to be on the defensive psychologically. She described in detail the stereotyping, the discrimination, and how complete strangers would unleash their hate toward her as they passed by in the hall. U.S. classmates would tell Mariana that she was

ugly and black, to the point where she was using skin cream to try and lighten the color of her skin. She was not only made to feel like an outsider, but also as an intruder who did not belong in America. To combat her American classmates' perceptions, she did her best to try to "fit in" and master English and learn about American pop culture. However, none of her efforts changed the color of her skin or the fact that she was Hispanic, so the racist attacks continued. She could not imagine that college would be any different and so was already preparing herself for mistreatment there.

Mariana used a few coping strategies to deal with this onslaught of disrespect and hate. The first strategy was positive self-talk in which she would repeatedly tell herself that she was 'better than they were' because she had two cultures and spoke two languages. Her second coping strategy was to take whatever words the racists used and try to turn them around so they couldn't hurt her. For example, numerous times students would approach her in the hall to tell her that she smelled. Instead of yelling at the person or getting embarrassed, Mariana would respond with phrases like, "I know! I smell so good right? I smell like mango-vanilla today." She told me that she had to convince herself that they meant to compliment her or she would either cry or want to fight with them.

The visiting professional students occasionally described experiences with prejudice and stereotyping at their schools, but these were subtle and not as obvious as what the refugee and immigrant students faced. Riku mentioned how his classmates assumed he did not speak English because of his race, and how that was why they chose not to speak or interact with him when he first started high school. However, his desire to assimilate and be accepted by American students allowed him to excuse how they stereotyped him, and he insisted that they talk to him now and are nice to him.

Mansur did not indicate any specific incidents in which he felt discriminated against because of his race, but he did experience intolerance and bigotry from American students about his Muslim faith. Students would make comments linking Islam to terrorism, and their insensitivity toward his faith really bothered him. Because Mansur could pass for a U.S.-born black student, he did not feel targeted by racist peers at Fairfield High School, however he did report racism that he noticed occurring to other students there.

As discussed in his portrait, Mansur insisted that ELL and black U.S.-born students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were being purposefully tracked into the lowest tier of academic classes at Fairfield High School. He reported that this happened because these students were unaware that they could request to be enrolled in the advanced classes. Their parents may have been unaware of how the system works, or may not have had the proficiency in English to advocate for them. He viewed this segregation as being a form of systemic racism and felt this prevented ESL and black students from receiving an equitable education. He raised valid concerns about who was given the opportunity to take honors and other advanced classes, and why they might have access to these educational opportunities while others do not.

Coming from a low socio-economic background was another way that refugee and immigrant students were often made to feel insignificant by their American classmates at Westbrook and Chandler High Schools. Because refugee and immigrant families had limited resources and could not afford the name brand clothes and material things that U.S. born students had, they were often looked down on or made fun of. As the visiting professional students' families could afford these types of luxuries, this was not the case for them, and wearing name brand clothes and having nice things helped them fit in.

As a result of facing the racism and intolerance of their U.S.-born peers on a regular basis, the majority of the refugee and immigrant students felt resigned to feeling that they were outsiders, and could not visualize being accepted and embraced by their American classmates in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, these incidents of racism and isolation solidified many of the refugee and immigrant students' perceptions that they were not accepted into their school communities, which negatively impacted their high school experiences in Pittsburgh. This lack of a close social connection with U.S. students led to the student participants associating mostly with other refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students. It was common that when they each reflected on who their close friends were, every one admitted to feeling more comfortable with students who were not white U.S. born students.

Even the visiting professional students who spent more time around their American classmates, admitted that they enjoyed being with other international students more, and agreed that this was due to an "immigrant bond." This immigrant bond involved sharing some of the same life experiences, such as arriving in the U.S. from another country, not being white, learning English, becoming familiar with American culture, and having faced similar struggles and obstacles in school because they were "different" from their U.S. classmates. For these reasons it made sense that the student participants gravitated to those students who shared a broader world view, were mindful of global issues, and could empathize with aspects of their journey.

5.1.2 Academic Support

As suggested by other researchers (e.g., Cummins, 2005; Pryor, 2001; Sugarman, 2010), the students in this study required varying degrees of support in order to achieve academically.

Yashmeet felt close to the teachers who were able to mentor him in strengthening his computer skills and who shared his interests, while he felt no need to be close to the teachers who taught other content areas that he wasn't interested in. Mansur often linked positive relationship with teachers as being connected to grades in his classes. Although he enjoyed teachers who were personable with their students, he did not find it necessary to develop strong bonds with them. Riku really did not focus on relationships with his teachers, but was consumed with being accepted by American students and what he perceived as having "a lot of friends" at school.

While the young men appeared to have more of a "business-like" relationship with their teachers, all of the young women expressed that it was very important that their teachers knew and cared about them. Perhaps what contributed to this is that two of the three boys were visiting professional students who did not always feel as much like outsiders as the young women, who were all refugee and immigrant students, did.

Brisha and Femi both wished that their some of their teachers at Westbrook would show more care and interest in them as individuals. Femi was very disappointed and hurt when her chemistry teacher witnessed her being bullied, yet chose to look the other way and do nothing. Brisha spoke about feeling lonely and isolated, and she wished that teachers would care for their students "as though they were their own children." She did not feel accepted into her school community by her U.S. classmates and her teachers did not address that.

Both Esperanza and Mariana only had positive things to say about their teachers at Chandler High School. Esperanza spoke about teachers taking a special interest in her and feeling that they did care about her and her well-being. Mariana also appreciated most of her teachers as well, although there were a few exceptions. She discussed how they often complimented and

praised her for working hard, and she appreciated those words and acts of kindness since she experienced such severe racism from her U.S. classmates on a daily basis.

Some of the participants did notice how American teachers would treat U.S. students differently than refugee, immigrant and visiting professional students. While only Yashmeet called this treatment racist, even he acknowledged that he did not feel that the teachers were intentionally favoring U.S. students. Other refugee and immigrant students mentioned that this slightly different treatment involved calling on American students more in class, giving them more of their time when they asked questions, and providing them with extensions on when they could hand in their work. Additionally, some of the refugee and immigrant students surmised that the teachers spoke to and joked around with American students more than with them, because they likely felt closer to American students since they shared the same culture.

Mansur also noticed how some of his ELL friends who were in electives with him at Fairfield High School were treated differently by some of the teachers, especially if it was obvious by their appearance that they were not from the United States. He saw how these teachers did not make attempts to engage ELL students in social conversations and class discussions in the same way they did with American students, and he felt that these students were thus excluded from participating.

5.2 Conceptual Frameworks

There was little evidence that the conceptual frameworks of family literacy, funds of knowledge, third space, and translanguaging could be seen in the four schools in this study. However, each framework offers important ways of thinking about the experiences of refugee,

immigrant, and visiting professional students. I suggest that learning about these frameworks could support educational professionals in developing an understanding of these students' experiences and perhaps contribute toward policy and practices that could benefit them as well as the entire learning community.

5.2.1 Family Literacy

Family literacy emphasizes the importance of how adults and children learn and build literacy skills together, and that these experiences are not limited to school-like activities. Morrow and her colleagues (1993) recognized the value of schools taking into account the needs of culturally diverse families, whose literacies may not look the same as school-like activities.

5.2.2 Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge is a conceptual framework that provides a counter to the deficit view of ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse students that still exists in American classrooms. A funds of knowledge perspective emphasizes the reality that family literacy practices within the households of refugee and immigrant students are valuable and important for schools to build upon (Moje et al., 2004; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005). Gonzalez et al. (1995) recognized that a deficit perspective of immigrant students served as a way for teachers and schools to justify lower expectations for their academic success; therefore, learning more about the funds of knowledge that these students can bring to their classes can challenge that perspective.

5.2.3 Third Space

Third Space is a conceptual framework that emphasizes how educators can create engaging and transformative learning environments for refugee and immigrant children who often face challenges adjusting to their new home and culture (Cummins, 2005; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejada, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2008). ELL students often feel isolated, confused, and frustrated in a traditional classroom environment, and a third space perspective stresses the importance of these students belonging to a learning community where they feel safe, accepted, and comfortable enough to contribute in class by using their funds of knowledge (Allen et al., 2016; Davies, 2008; Mendenhall et al., 2017).

Building third spaces “rests on the teachers’ facilities for hearing, seeing and incorporating children and youths’ literacy and language practices into academic literacy and language instruction in an attempt to build connections from home to school discourses” (Hull and Moje, 2012, p. 5).

5.2.4 Translanguaging

Many third space learning environments use translanguaging theory to incorporate the use of culturally and linguistically diverse students’ native languages as a part of the learning process in the classroom.

Translanguaging highlights how multilingual students should be permitted to use all the tools in their “linguistic toolkits, and that their abilities to do so be seen in a positive light by their teachers and classmates (Orellana & Garcia, 2014, p. 386). When students engage in classroom activities where they can build their learning in one language and transfer it to another, they

experience benefits in terms of their own their own language development, their English development, their content learning, and their social development (Orellana & Garcia, 2014).

5.3 Teacher Professional Developments and Education Preparation Programs

All educators could benefit from learning more about the conceptual frameworks described above because the frameworks provide important perspectives for understanding the lived realities of an increasingly diverse student population.

When educators become familiar with the family literacy and funds of knowledge frameworks, they can better promote tolerance and acceptance in their classrooms by modelling for American students how to treat ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse students. Educator preparation programs and school districts could provide classes and professional development trainings and classes that teach culturally sensitive and responsive approaches, which could help teachers anticipate ways that diverse students might be bullied or teased by their American classmates so they can effectively intervene in those situations.

Creating classrooms that could act as third spaces for refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students is dependent on teachers. In order for teachers to be able to effectively build these supportive and accepting learning communities, they need access to information and approaches that will support their specialized knowledge in this area. Students in this study reported being treated differently from their American peers, so opportunities that challenge teachers to consider their implicit biases could help them become more aware of any unintentional differential treatment.

Part of creating a third space environment is to provide linguistically diverse students with opportunities to use their native languages in order to facilitate their learning of English, and this can be done using translanguaging activities. It is detrimental to enforce an English-only policy in the classroom, because it limits multilingual students from being able to use translation resources and also indicates that students' native languages are somehow less important than English.

It is important for professional development and teacher education programs to present these conceptual frameworks and how they can inform practices in the classroom and school. Students from refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional families deserve equitable educational opportunities in U.S. schools. They should have schooling experiences where they feel they are a valuable part of their school communities and that they are able to achieve academically.

5.4 Limitations and Importance of This Work

I provided portraits of seven students in four different high schools in Pittsburgh. Clearly this is a small sample with obvious limitations. I also chose to make use of phenomenology as a research method and portraiture as the way to present the information that I secured from interviews and text conversations with these students. Phenomenological research attempts to discover the perceptions of individuals and those perceptions are personal and subjective. Portraiture involves the researcher in making use of those perceptions to create representations of by selecting and arranging them. Although these approaches are limited, they provided insights that are not currently available in the literature. Previous research done with refugee and immigrant participants concentrated on elementary students' experiences and was often conducted with children from Spanish-speaking immigrant families. Also, it was difficult to locate studies which

focused on the experiences of high school students from visiting professional families. My study adds to scholarship in this area by concentrating on the perspectives of all three of these diverse groups of high school students in order to examine their perceptions about their school experiences in Pittsburgh. It also builds on the work of Duff (2001) who focused on the perceptions of students in her investigation of ELL students in Canadian high schools. Duff provided excerpts from her interviews with these students that revealed the lack of culturally and linguistic relevant academic experiences in their social studies classes.

This investigation not only advances the range of students who were able to describe their perceptions, it also provides specific ways to capture and report on those perceptions. In the sections that I follow, I comment on the methods employed in this study, which I believe can be of use to other researchers.

5.5 Data Sources and Analysis

Text-messaging was a very useful and productive method for collecting data. All of the students who participated in the study mentioned how it was much faster and more convenient for them to text their answers to daily questions rather than to write in logs or e-mail messages. All of the students had their phones with them and said that they could answer my questions anywhere they happened to be. By the end of the six weeks, they ended up answering between 60-80 text questions each, not including probe questions. I added questions to the text message protocol when students brought up new topics from interviews or earlier text conversations.

When I asked students from the first data collection period what improvements I could make to the methods I used, especially the texting, they provided a suggestion that I incorporated

into texting students during the second data collection period. What they mentioned was how I would ask them a question about an emotion they felt on a particular day, and they sometimes found that question the most difficult to answer. For example, I might text them, “What made you feel frustrated today at school?” If that student had a particularly great day, this question became hard to answer. After receiving this feedback from a few students, I decided to revise this by creating a page that included questions about 20 different emotions for text message conversations, and the students could answer which ever one they felt was the most appropriate for the type of day they had. This significantly improved the quality of the answers that were related to daily emotions the students experienced, and they appreciated having options to choose from. Overall, they were very agreeable and made valid efforts to thoughtfully answer questions about various emotions by text.

Text message conversations were extremely useful in understanding many of the students’ day to day lived experiences and complemented the in-depth phenomenological interviews which were designed to provide in-depth information about their overall schooling experiences.

All of the students expressed feeling comfortable during the interviews, and they acknowledged that they benefitted from being able to share their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh. Several students felt that the interview questions helped them to think about some of their experiences for the first time, and it was fascinating to watch them reflect on these and come to new realizations. For example, the refugee and immigrant students recognized that sometimes they were the ones to pull away from connecting with U.S. classmates who reached out to them because they were afraid of possible rejection. Some students had never even thought about why they didn’t relate to the American students, so this was eye-opening for them.

A few of the students told me how much they looked forward to the interviews, and that they enjoyed having someone to talk to about how their school experiences. Mariana would talk to me for no less than 90 minutes during each interview and often before and after we would chat about general things. She shared with me that it was such a relief to vent about the racism she faced, because she did not feel like she could burden her parents with these stories. They had made such great sacrifices to bring her to the United States for more opportunities, that she did not want them to find her ungrateful or to think she was complaining about her school. She also said that speaking out about the traumatic experiences she had been through made her feel stronger.

5.6 Portraiture

Portraiture allowed me to capture the perceptions that students expressed in their interviews and text messages. I transcribed and reviewed the text message conversations for each participant every few days, highlighting phrases or words that triggered a question to ask in a later interview. After each interview, I listened to the audio recording and jotted down impressions and thoughts. Then I transcribed all of the interviews and circled and wrote notes about the answers students provided, noting how I would either omit or add questions to the following interviews. This closely followed the advice of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) about how to work with the data, “With each stage of data collection, at the close of each day, the portraitist gathers, scrutinizes, and organizes the data and tries to make sense of what she has witnessed” (p. 187).

In creating the portraits of the students, I followed the process described by Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005).

“The process of creating narrative portraits requires a difficult (sometimes paradoxical) vigilance to empirical description and aesthetic expression and a careful scrutiny and modulation of voice. It is a discerning, deliberative process and a highly creative one. The data must be scrutinized carefully, searching for the story line that emerges from the material. However, there is never a single story; many could be told. So the portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative.” (p. 10).

When creating the portraits, it is also crucial that portraitists are constantly aware to check for their own biases. Van Manen (2016) emphasizes that the researcher must ensure that *epoche* is used. *Epoche* is an ancient Greek term which is typically translated as “suspension of judgment.” Within phenomenological research, *epoche* refers to this process as “*suspending one’s presuppositions, biases, and taken for granted assumptions regarding the phenomenon one is studying*” (p. 347). Portraiture differs from more traditional research methods because it explicitly showcases the researcher’s biases and experiences which are “*in essence becoming a lens through which the researcher processes and analyzes data collected throughout the study*” (Hackman, 2002, p. 52).

Another point that has been debated is how formal or close the relationships between the researcher and the study participants should be. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) insist that authentic findings emerge from authentic relations. “We see relationships as more than vehicles for data gathering, more than points of access...” (p.138). They recognize that the quality and complexity of the relationship will be shaped by factors such as the frequencies of encounters, the amount of time spent together, as well as their personalities and the harmony (or lack thereof)

present in their interactions.

As mentioned previously, I was able to develop very good rapport and authentic relationships with all of the students who participated in the study. Mentoring the high school girls weekly for months before we started the interviews and text messages, helped them to feel very comfortable during the interviews, and to speak openly and honestly. However, I was surprised at how comfortable the students felt with me, who I only got knew through the interviews and text messages. I attribute this to Spradley's (1979) conversational style interview approach which I used, knowing that teenagers typically need a chance to warm up to strangers. Also, I made it evident to the students that not only was I interested in what they had to say, but that I felt their stories and answers contained valuable information that could raise awareness to issues that they faced at school.

I found portraiture to be a way to capture the perceptions of the participants in an authentic way. My goal was to allow those perceptions to be voiced and heard. Although these perceptions are not generalizable, I believe with Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) that embedded in each portrait, "the reader will discover resonant universal themes" (p. 13).

Appendix A: Interview Protocols (7-12th grade – secondary students)

Interview 1: (Focus on their interests, family, and their life history)

1. How old are you right now?
2. What type of music do you enjoy listening to?
3. Do you like going to movies? What types of movies are your favorites?
4. What are some of your favorite TV shows?
5. What are your favorite things to do in your free time?
6. Do you like to read- books, magazines, blogs, etc.? If so, what types of things do you read regularly? How much time do you spend reading for fun compared to reading for school?
7. Which types of sports do you like to play? (Follow up with asking what position they play, etc.)
8. Do you play a musical instrument? If so, which one? If not, is there one you would like to learn someday?
9. How long have you lived in the United States?
10. Why did your family move to the U.S. from _____ (your home country)?
11. Did you come to Pittsburgh directly from _____? If not, where did you and your family live previously?
12. Did your family choose specifically to move to Pittsburgh? If so, why? If not, what factors led to you moving here?
13. What do you see as things that are similar between Pittsburgh and where you used to live (home country)?

14. What do you see as things that are different between Pittsburgh and where you used to live (home country)?
15. Who are the family members that you live with?
16. What do your parents do for work/school?
17. How would you describe their ability to speak English?
18. How comfortable do you feel with your ability to speak English? Describe what has been helpful or difficult about learning English.
19. Do you have a part-time job? If so, what is it and how many hours do you work?
20. What are your responsibilities at home? For example, do you help take care of younger siblings? What chores do you do?
21. Tell me about some of the differences and similarities you've seen between education in the U.S. and in _____? (use same and different if I need to simplify the question)
22. What are some of your first significant memories of being in school here in the United States? (In Pittsburgh, if they have moved from another state or city)
23. Describe how you felt your teachers treated you when you first arrived here.
24. Describe how you felt your classmates treated you when you first arrived here.
25. Did you feel that your school welcomed you? If so, in what ways did they make you feel comfortable? If not, what did they do that made you uncomfortable? Was there anything you wish they would have done to make you feel more welcome?
26. Describe any people at your school who made you feel accepted when you first arrived. Who were they and what did they do to make you feel that way? (this may be addressed in their answer for questions 21-23)

27. Tell me about any times when people did not make you feel welcome or were mean to you. What did they do to make you feel that way? (this may be addressed in their answer for questions 21-23)
28. When you first arrived, describe times that you remember being allowed or encouraged to speak, write stories or answer questions using your first language in class. If you were not allowed or encouraged to use your first language in class, how did you feel about that? (Do you think it would have helped?)
29. Describe the times when any of your teachers ever related what you are learning about in class back to you and your _____ background. How did this make you feel? If this never happened, how does that make you feel (do you wish they had?)
30. What are a few words you could use to describe your first year or two attending school in the U.S./Pittsburgh?

Interview 2: (Focus on the details of the experience- including academic and sense of belonging)

Focus on Academic

1. How often during the school week do you attend ESL classes? How long are the classes?
2. Approximately how many other students are in your ESL class? Which countries are they from and what languages do they speak? Describe the ways you are able to communicate with each other (google translate, same native language, English as the language both know a little, etc.)
3. In your opinion, what makes a classroom feel like a fun and safe place for you to learn?

4. In your opinion, what makes a classroom an intimidating or boring place for you to learn?
5. Describe how you feel when you leave your mainstream classes to go to ESL class.
6. In what ways do you feel your ESL class is helping you learn English? Tell me if you feel ESL class helps you understand the content in your mainstream classes?
7. Describe the types of activities that occur in your ESL class.
8. Can you tell me some examples of when you feel the most successful in your mainstream classes?
9. When, and during what times do you feel anxious or embarrassed in your mainstream classes? What do you do when you feel this way?
10. Describe how your ESL teacher works together with your mainstream teachers in order to teach you some academic words from your other subjects like math and science? (Interdisciplinary/cooperation with content teachers) (Follow up- Or do you feel they don't work together and what you learn is unrelated?)
11. In your opinion, do you feel like your ESL class is too hard, not hard enough, or just right? Explain why.
12. In ESL class describe how often the teacher speaks. What opportunities do you and your classmates have to speak?
13. In what ways do your teachers review previous lessons with you if they felt you had trouble understanding the material?
14. Describe how working in groups looks like in your class. (Follow up- do you get to pick the people you work with or does the teacher? If the teacher does, how do you think she chooses the groups?)

15. In what ways do your teachers ever use your first language to explain concepts to you?
(For example using a translating app if they don't know your language? If so, how?)
16. When you do not understand the idea that the teacher is talking about in class, what do you do? During what times do you feel you can ask them to help you understand?

Focus on Social/Sense of Belonging

17. Do you feel more relaxed in your ESL class than in the mainstream classes? If so, why? What words would you use to describe how you feel in ESL class? In your mainstream classes?
18. Please describe the relationships you have with your teachers.
19. Tell me about which teachers you feel the most comfortable with and why. Which ones do you feel less comfortable with? Why?
20. Tell me about the teachers or other adults in your school that you feel respect you? What do they say? How do they show that respect?
21. Tell me about your principal. Have you ever spoken with him/her? Do you feel like he/she know who you are?
22. Describe whether or not native English speakers make an effort to speak to you in class? During class breaks, lunch, or after school?
23. What chances do you have each day to speak English with native English speaking students (from the US)? When and what types of conversations do you have? If not, why not?
24. Describe any time you ever feel worried that other students will make fun of your English? Native Speakers? Other ESL speakers? If this happened, what was your response?

25. Describe any activities, clubs or teams you are involved with at your school? Tell me about your experiences with these.
26. Tell me about any activities or clubs in your community (not school related) that you participate in.
27. What are some of the things that you find difficult about going to school?
28. What are some of the things that you like about going to school?

Interview 3: (Focus on imagined possibilities reflection on the meaning)

1. Tell me about the ways teachers (and other adults in school) could make you feel good about being in school?
2. Pretend I am your principal. What would you want me to know about your school experiences? What do you think I could do to make your parents feel more comfortable visiting the school? To make you feel more comfortable attending school?
3. Pretend I am the teacher whose class you struggle the most to understand. What would you like me know about your experiences?
4. Pretend I am the teacher whose class you enjoy going to the most? What would you like to tell me about your experience in my class?
5. What do you wish your English speaking classmates knew and understood about you?
6. If you could give three pieces of advice (based on your experiences) to a new student at your school who is still learning English, what would you tell them?
7. Describe to me how you feel your experiences in high school will prepare you for the future.

8. Describe to me how you feel your experiences in school have not yet properly prepared you for the future? What could the school do better to equip you for life after high school?
9. What type of job or career would you be interested in after you finish high school?
10. What do you think could be possible challenges to reaching your goals after high school?
11. Using the list of emojis, which 5 of these most describe your experiences at school this year? Explain why.

Appendix B: Texting Prompts Protocol

Focus on Social/ Sense of Belonging and Academic

1. Describe the best part of your day at school today.
2. Tell me about the hardest part of your day at school today.
3. Did anything happen at school today that made you feel happy?
4. Did anything happen at school today that made you feel frustrated?
5. Did anything happen at school today that made you feel angry?
6. Did anything happen at school today that made you feel scared?
7. Did anything happen at school today that made you laugh?
8. Did anything happen at school today that made you feel sad?
9. Did anything happen at school today that made you feel confused?
10. Describe how you feel about speaking or answering a question in front of the class. Talk about why it is easier or more difficult to do this depending on the class.
11. Tell me about how you felt about working with a small group of other students in your classes today. Working with a partner? What do you like about working with others in class? What do you not like about working with others? (If you are allowed to choose the partner or group you work with, how do you decide? If not, how do you feel about being assigned to a group?)
12. Describe any choices you had about what you learned about today in school. (For example, choosing a topic to write about. Choosing a group to work with. Choosing what books to read) What choices did you wish you could make?

13. Throughout class, how and when do your mainstream teachers check in with you to make sure you understand most of what they are saying? Tell me how you feel about their efforts.
14. In what ways did your teachers do anything today to make their classrooms positive places to learn, and safe and supportive environments? (Follow up: If nothing, what do you wish they would do?)
15. Describe any of your classrooms that were difficult places to be and to learn in today.
16. When, and in what ways did you use your native language throughout the school day? (Follow up: Before school? Lunch? After school? In ESL class? Mainstream classes? Both? How did you use it?)
17. Describe the times you spoke with native English speaking students at school today. –In class? Before school, lunch or after school? In what ways were these experiences positive or negative for you?
18. If you felt that you needed help in class today, how did you receive that help? (Follow with a probing question- from teacher? Another student? Translating app?)
19. What were some things you learned about in school today?

Appendix C: Interview Protocol with Key Informants

1. In what capacities have you worked with refugee, immigrant or visiting professional students? How long have you been doing this?
2. Describe the various organizations here in Pittsburgh that you feel help support refugee students and their families? What types of resources and help do they provide?
3. Explain to me whether or not you feel that refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students have needs which have not been sufficiently met by these organizations?
4. Tell me about how you feel the public schools in Pittsburgh support refugee students? Immigrant students? Visiting professional students? What types of resources have you encountered that they use and provide for these students?
5. What do you know about ELLs' (English Language Learners) class schedules during the school week? Tell me about any collaborations between mainstream classroom teachers and ESL classroom teachers that you are aware of. What types of programs or resources are being used to teach students English which are age appropriate? What types of procedures are in place to provide these students with a sense of belonging to the school community?
6. In your opinion what do you feel are the largest obstacles that refugee students, immigrant students, and visiting professional students face at school? How do you think these could be strategically addressed?
7. How do you think that schools could provide even more suitable services for these students?

8. Tell me about if you feel that schools adequately prepare high school students to pursue their future goals once they graduate. Explain why or why not you think they are ready to move on toward college or a career.
9. If you could make three wishes on behalf of refugee, immigrant, and visiting professional students and their schooling experiences in Pittsburgh, what would they be?

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