

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES OF SUPPORT FOR RESETTLED REFUGEE
CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES: A STRENGTHS-BASED STUDY OF
PARTNERSHIP IN METRO VANCOUVER

by

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Abstract

Public schools fill a unique space in the settlement landscape, often serving as a first point of community-based contact for newcomers to Canada. Inspired by characteristics of appreciative inquiry as methodology, this qualitative study takes a strengths-based approach to examine the roles—both present and potential—of public schools in supporting refugee resettlement. Using a singular partnership between a service-providing organization (SPO) and a public primary school in Metro Vancouver, I explore the policies and practices where support of both refugee students and their families is encouraged and nurtured at the K–12 school level.

School districts across British Columbia and Canada continue to take various innovative approaches to support newcomers, and specifically refugees, in their schools and communities. However, limited research has been done in the Canadian context to assess and collate best practices where refugee students are supported holistically, and in relation to the broader settlement service sector. Research methods include interviews conducted with key administrators at the school and district levels as well as staff in the SPO, nested in the context of relevant municipal and provincial policy documents. I suggest essential characteristics of program design and practice that promote integration of refugee students and families in the community, as well as considerations for future research to grow our understanding of the critical role of public schools in refugee resettlement and support in Canada.

Lay Summary

This study explores a professional partnership between a public school and a settlement service organization in the Metro Vancouver area of Canada, with the aim of understanding how school/community partnerships may serve to support resettled refugees. Taking place at the intersection of school and community through an adult English class, the study assesses staff perspectives of refugee support existing within the context of relevant local, provincial, and federal policies and global displacement. Conclusions are based primarily on interview data with staff members and future areas of research are suggested that may allow broader insight into the role of public schools in countries welcoming learners of refugee backgrounds.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished and independent work of the author, Rachel Goossen. The fieldwork reported in Chapters 4–5 was covered by UBC Ethics Certificate number H17-03068. The project was titled “Understanding communities of support for resettled refugee children and their families: An appreciative inquiry in Metro Vancouver” and the principal investigator was Dr. Hongxia Shan.

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To my colleagues and friends, Andrew, Addyson, Rabia, Cherie, and my many classmates who have cared to discuss our work, share ideas and frustrations, and challenge each other, I am so grateful.

My biological family in the United States, Canada, and Germany and my chosen family in China, the United States, Brasil, and Australia, have never wavered in their love for me. This love is active: it is taking the time to call/Skype/FaceTime; deal with time zone differences, visas, and flight travel; understanding my need to ‘do good work.’ Having a wide safety net of humans who care for me has allowed me to follow my heart and dreams. I am lucky to have this. Thank you.

Without the support of the community members, research participants, and settlement practitioners with whom I have had the honour to learn from, this work would not be possible. I must particularly highlight Dr. Anea Wilbur whose work in settlement services, adult education, and community-based research has guided and shaped my experiences in Vancouver. I am thankful for her continuous willingness to support me through conversation and connection.

As is documented in the pages ahead, I often reflect on my place as a settler in Canada and an immigrant in the United States. I was lucky to have spent my childhood on the beautiful land of the Coeur d'Alene People in northern Idaho. To be able to further my formal schooling at the University of British Columbia on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) People is an opportunity I do not take lightly. Thank you.

Dedication

To those who crave a sense of belonging.

To those being forcibly displaced from their homes.

To those who experience nation-state borders as a constant stress and barrier.

To the children, families, and community members of Hall.

To the women and children of Hope.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The role of the public school in a settlement service context

Throughout my Master's studies at the University of British Columbia, I have grappled with a particularly weighty and complex question: what is the role of the public school in supporting resettled refugee students? As a former educator, as well as someone who is personally acquainted with immigration and the life-changing impact it has on human development, I have seen and experienced how schools can serve as systems of support. I have also seen the inverse, where there is not a focus on supporting immigrant students, especially those settling as refugees, with any targeted attention. When beginning to consider this dynamic—how the public school fits into the resettlement sector puzzle—I first began to consider my assumptions of how formal schooling and support are understood and defined. I also sought out understanding of the Canadian resettlement sector by reading articles, attending conferences, and keeping tabs on policy decision-making, all to bolster my knowledge of the context of refugee resettlement and integration in Canada today.

I found the work of Joyce L. Epstein (1995, 1997) particularly compelling. Her theories and practices around school, family, and community partnerships affirmed what I intuited as an educator: that by engaging the broader community of the child in schooling and redefining assumptions of who should and is involved in the schooling processes, we can ultimately achieve better outcomes for students, families, and educators. Relying on this understanding, I chose to examine the public school as a

member of the larger settlement service community, where students of all immigrant backgrounds may be supported not only academically, but also with their basic needs, their integration experiences, and social/emotional development as well.

1.2 The ways in which I've entered this work

1.2.1 Professional context

I began working as a teacher in the United States through an alternative education certification program, which allowed me to use my Bachelor of Arts degree, with a focus in Comparative Politics, in a way not originally envisioned. As an undergraduate student, I did not anticipate entering the teaching profession. Yet nearing my graduation I found that my desire to work on the ground, or “in the trenches,”¹ in historically marginalized communities specifically with children and youth, could be well-suited to a career in education. I initially entered the classroom teaching an ancillary science class to students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5, in a school that was demographically varied. Many of my students were from Latin America: children who resettled to urban Texas with only fragmented sections of their families fleeing violence and poverty in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Others were multi-generation Texans with established familial and community roots.

¹ “In the trenches” was a term used to describe my work by a former manager within a United States-based nonprofit organization when I was a young undergraduate student. I use it here as an indication, and self-reminder, that community-engaged work—in various forms—has long been part of my personal passion and professional trajectory.

This dynamic of working with students from very different family backgrounds, experiences, and access to services or support outside of school combined with my background knowledge of peace studies, human rights and social justice, planted seeds that are now sprouting. I understood my role as an educator to be one where I must cater to the whole child² by considering past experiences shaping current knowledge and behaviors, while not cutting short my expectations of students based on preconceived ideas of their capabilities.

1.2.2 Migration as personal

Beyond this professional context, I would be remiss not to trace my personal pathways in immigration and living in community. I describe my life experiences here not tritely or unintentionally—I do so because I am growing in my awareness of how personal factors play into my research, both my passions and my performed work. My aim here is to provide the reader a sense of who it is entering into this work, who Rachel Goossen is as someone relating to resettlement, community-engagement, questioning power and privilege in academia and beyond. While this section may seem overly personal or perhaps disjointed compared to curated results and literature reviews, it is honest and true.

I struggle when I consider my place as a settler in Canada. My family has lived in central Canada for the last 2–3 generations. My mother’s grandparents moved here

² My understanding of teaching to the “whole child” stems from the Whole Child Initiative with the tenets of community engagement, student and staff safety, a supportive and challenging environment. More information can be found at: <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/>

from England, and I have little knowledge of their history or experiences. My father's family, however, I have thought of deeply throughout my life and particularly during my graduate studies. My paternal grandparents were both ethnically German, living in eastern Russia and Prussia during the early 20th century. Many details of their early lives are unknown as both were adopted as young children. What we do believe to be true is this: my Oma (my father's mother) was born in Prussia, and her family was forced into Russia by the local Polish population due to 'wartime animosities' targeted toward Germans. Poor sanitation conditions killed my Oma's mother and one sibling. Following this, Oma was adopted by a Mennonite family in Russia (location unknown). For my Opa (my father's father): he was born in Russia to an ethnically German family, yet conditions leading up to the Russian revolution caused his birth family to be unable to feed him. Both Mennonites and ethnic Germans were persecuted in these years, as former policies from Catherine the Great had long favoured ethnic Germans over the local Russian populace³. As the Russian revolution started, both of my paternal grandparents were able to flee to North America in the mid-1920s, with my Oma first settling in Mexico. Both Oma and Opa eventually landed in Manitoba, settling in a Mennonite community 360 kilometres north of Winnipeg. It is there my father was raised with five siblings, speaking low German at home, high German at church, and English in school.

³ I have read a significant amount of literature in this area, and recommend the book *Anton: A Young Boy, His Friend & the Russian Revolution* by Dale Eisler for a very personal connection to this history.

As I write this, my chest is heavy, and tears come to my eyes. I say this not to elicit sympathy, but simply to document for myself and my readers how personal this story feels. Why do I feel so emotionally connected to this history?

I struggle with my place as a settler as I think about the persecution and genocide Indigenous people in Canada have faced, and the continued wrongdoings communities continue to face (lack of clean drinking water, limited access to health services, soaring rates of children in governmental care). My family could not stay where they were. They 'did not belong' in Russia as Germans, yet, how long had my family been in Russia and Prussia? If they didn't belong there, and we don't necessarily belong here in Canada because we undoubtedly benefitted from pro-settler/colonist policies in the early 20th century, then where do we belong? Where do I belong? This question runs deep and concerns me. How can I combat colonialism in my daily actions when I feel the only reason my life exists is because there was a home available to my Oma and Opa in a land that was safe for them, ethnically and religiously?

Let's continue on this journey of immigration, in my own present-day life. When I was 4 years old, my parents received permanent residency in the United States of America. We moved to northern Idaho, to the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation. I grew up with friends assuming I was Native⁴ because of my darker skin tone and hair, and because I lived there. We were also children, so surface-level decision-making sufficed. Yet, as an adult looking back, I see the very systemic issues avoided because we left

⁴ I use Native as that has been the preferred term of identity my friends used when I was young and primarily continue to use.

the Reservation. I was able to leave generations of trauma and wrongdoings and harm because: 1) I am not Coeur d'Alene, or Spokane, or Nez Perce, or Colville⁵; 2) my family's Whiteness, and education, and economic status (limited, with single parenthood, yet still impactful) allowed us to leave and enter a homogenous, primarily White city with relative ease. I could adapt. I could visually fit in, even if my internal experiences of the world around me did not agree. We had the privilege to leave, to move to a city where we would not be judged for being from the 'Rez or from another country, simply because *I looked like neither one of those things applied to me*. I emphasize that because it is so true. Throughout my life—from the Reservation, to homogenous eastern Washington, to the deep South, to Texas—my Whiteness, my superficial being, has allowed me to pass through privileged space.

My personality is one to adapt and get along. Thus, I have been malleable my entire life. A chameleon. When on the Reservation, I could have been Native. When I was in the city, I was a middle-class White girl just like the majority of my peers. When I moved south to Georgia, I was certainly different than everyone else (I used words like 'pop' for carbonated sugary drinks and didn't wear pearls or own Lilly Pulitzer), but it was here that I began to understand and recognize race and racism in my life. A poignant moment was walking in the downtown of the small city where I attended university and, upon observing a Black man walking across the street, surrounded by White people keeping their distance, that I realized: people will never fear me for how I

⁵All local Indian tribes in eastern Washington and northern Idaho where I spent my childhood.

look. I am a relatively cheerful, friendly, White woman—and in the deep South, this identity is placed in a space of requiring protection and care, not in eliciting fear. This experience was not discussed with my peers, as race was never spoken of critically in my friend group but rather as an assumed norm, attitudes such as: ‘Black people do this, White people do that other thing. We are different. And that’s not racist, it just is’ was common in conversations.

So why do I write these things? Why does it matter? Well, I suppose it matters because it’s all part of who I am. And when I consider my Whiteness is research and my positionality as a privileged person entering into this work and gaining benefit from this work (through an advanced degree, opportunities to travel and present, etc.), it is to say that questions of privilege, identity, and belonging have been part of me for as long as I can remember. On the surface, I likely am perceived in a very straightforward and predictable way. Yet, one would never guess or know my family’s migration history to Canada, or my own experiences understanding ‘belonging’ and immigration from Canada to the United States⁶. While I personally have never had to flee a country to

⁶I often hesitate to speak about my own immigration between Canada and the US, for many reasons. Primarily because it sounds so light and silly—so I moved from one English-speaking, North American country to another, how can that be impactful in any meaningful way? Perhaps this line of thinking has been my own defense mechanism against the feeling of ‘not belonging.’ When I have had conversations of migration and belonging with a friend who is British (also identifying as ethnically Vietnamese and culturally Chinese), I share with her this feeling of hesitance, recognizing that my physical appearance moving between spaces in North America has allowed me to superficially fit in, while her physical appearance, despite identifying as British through and through, has always caused her a sense of not belonging. Through these conversations, we find common ground: I too always felt that I didn’t belong. Perhaps because I closely feel the persecuted experiences of my Oma and Opa, but more so because I was never ‘from’ where I lived. I am ‘from’ many places, have grown to who I am in many homes. And despite having this sense of being ‘from’ many places, I am simultaneously unsure of where I belong.

stay alive, that experience is not far removed from me. While superficially I always may have looked like I 'belonged,' for nearly all of my 29 years, I have not felt that I have. So this work, the seemingly straightforward question of looking at schools and communities supporting resettled refugees, is about more than my professional work as a teacher and more than the mass human displacement in our world, it is also about me.

1.3 Settling into my research question

When planning my start of study at UBC, I returned to my previous academic roots in political science with an exploration of human displacement and, given my work in formal education systems, the relationship that displacement has with education policies and practices in resettlement countries. Worldwide displacement has continued to rise in recent years reaching their highest level, with an estimated 68.5 million people fleeing their homes to enter new countries, or new locations within their home nation (UNHCR, 2017). The reasons for displacement are complex and wide-ranging, including human-driven violence and consistently reduced environmental resources. About half (52%) of these displaced persons are under 18, creating a crisis of human displacement that has drastic effects on the youngest generation of the world (UNHCR, 2017, p. 3).

For refugees resettling in North America, schools are often “one of the first and most influential service systems” that young refugees engage with upon resettlement, placing them at a critical point for integration (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007, p. 30). This fact, combined with my framing of a school as a community of support, based on Epstein (1995, 1997) guides my research focus. Between November 4, 2015 to November 27, 2016, about 2,100 Government Assisted Refugees (which does not include privately

sponsored or blended visa newcomers) arrived in British Columbia, with nearly 60% of these under 19 (ISSofBS, 2016). Fifty percent of those individuals under 19 were under 12 years of age, meaning that a large proportion of those recently resettled would soon be expected to enter the public-school system (ISSofBC, 2016). According to recent data, this trend continued in 2017 with 48% of GARs resettled in British Columbia being under 18 years of age in quarter two of the calendar year (ISSofBC, 2017). It is within this context of record-high displacement of people worldwide as well as increased immigration to Canada⁷ that I designed and conducted my study.

Why this site and this choice of methodology? Having not taught in the Metro Vancouver area, and having little personal engagement in local schools, I chose to reach out to professionals working in resettlement in British Columbia to ask this: what public schools in the Lower Mainland do you understand to be particularly supportive of resettled refugee children and youth? By asking staff at third-party organizations, rather than professionals working in schools, and purposely not specifying *how* the schools were meant to be supportive (i.e., academically, linguistically, etc.), I received answers that were instinctive and based solely on their expertise in local settlement support. These conversations led to personal introductions with two potential research sites. After being introduced to the work being done at Hall Community School (hereafter, Hall) regarding community engagement and refugee resettlement, I moved forward with a research proposal that focused on a program at Hall and led in partnership with Hope

⁷ In 2017 the Government of Canada through Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada released a multi-year Immigration Levels Plan, outlining number of Permanent Residents to be resettled through various streams over the subsequent three years. Within this plan, the targets increase year over year through 2020 in all categories of permanent residency immigration.

Society⁸ (hereafter, Hope), a local organization serving newcomer women and children in the Lower Mainland. I intentionally worked to design a study that aligned with both the needs of the organizations in which I conduct research, as well as my own passions and ideas.

By scouring qualitative research focused on public schools and resettled students of various ages, I narrowed down the specific gap in the literature that I wish to address—how partnerships between schools and community organizations serve resettled refugees at a local level. This question ultimately fits into the larger landscape of how the public school fits into the Canadian settlement service and support landscape. By focusing on the public school, I consider the “whole-of-society” approach to immigration, where newcomer integration practices and services involve institutions and actors at multiple levels, from municipalities, service providers, provincial and federal government branches, and community organizations (Prince-St-Amand, 2016). Public schools in Canada certainly fall into this conceptualization of “society,” yet are not typically included in holistic understandings of the resettlement landscape.

Conversations with staff at Hall as well as at the service-providing organization, Hope, allowed me to construct a research question in partnership rather than in isolation. Co-construction was important to me as my academic passions lie in the areas of community-based and participatory action research (see Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Wallerstein & Duran, 2003). My study does not fall solidly into either of

⁸ Throughout this thesis, I use pseudonyms for each research participant, the school, and the school district to protect the privacy of those involved.

these approaches to research, as it is not by definition action-oriented or participatory; however, I intentionally created space in my research timeline to speak with contacts working at the intersection of education and resettlement, to gain greater understanding of what focus areas may be of value to the community in which I would conduct my study. Resulting from these conversations is my research question:

How do schools and communities work together to support refugee families and their students?

The goal of the written thesis is to present a collated record of the how, the what and the why of research. The “how” refers to methodology, the “what” referencing the background, context, and findings of my research, and the “why” showcasing the value of this work in relation to the academic landscape and implications to applied work. My goals of my research are certainly to demonstrate the above components cohesively, but also to produce a record of my processes and reflections to support future research.

1.4 Overview of the chapters

Throughout Chapters 1–3, I present additional background of my professional work, which has laid the foundation upon which this research sits. I also address the current global and local developments of refugee resettlement. Within these chapters I weave in literature relevant to my work, showcasing the need for our understanding of public schools in settlement support to be deepened.

Of focus in Chapter 2 are the key concepts and the local context in which this study takes place. I also introduce my methodological approach and theoretical framework shaping my study then clarify essential terms used throughout my research.

In Chapter 3, I expand upon my methodological choices including the study parameters, data collection, and analysis processes.

Chapters 4–5 serve as the bulk of this piece, where the words of the research participants are brought forth for exploration and understanding. In Chapter 4, I introduce my research findings and explore the first aspect of how schools and communities work together in supporting resettled refugees. I round out these findings in Chapter 5 and discuss the role of shared values in building partnerships.

Finally, I conclude with reflections and implications of this study in Chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Context of the Study

2.1 Introduction

The scholarly context of this study is unique, insofar as it transcends the boundaries of K–12 education research and enters into the fields of community-based resettlement and migration research as well. While this dynamic creates some difficulty in placing my work solidly into one scholarly camp, in and of itself, it alludes to the complex nature of the resettlement sector. When considering the role of the public school in supporting resettled refugee children and families, it is crucial to recognize the many forces and factors at play, including policies shaping public schooling in British Columbia, the federal policies and practices guiding settlement in Canada and the more localized nature of neighbourhood-based refugee resettlement and integration (Hyndman, 2011). In Chapters 4 and 5, I discuss some of these factors as related to my finding. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the context in which my study takes place, exploring how and where K–12 schooling intersects with community-based resettlement support.

2.2 The intersection of community and schooling

This study took place at the intersection of a community organization and public school, specifically within the context of an English as an Additional Language (EAL) course for immigrant and refugee women hosted at Hall Community School (Hall) and led by Hope Society (Hope). Hope is a non-profit organization in British Columbia serving immigrant women and children through English language and women's

development courses. The organization operates through a place-based approach, bringing services and programming to neighbourhoods where participants live, work, play and learn throughout the Lower Mainland. Hope is “a pioneer and leader in the provision of programs that develop immigrant and refugee women’s knowledge, skills and confidence” (Wilbur, 2016). The goal of the organization is “to ensure immigrant and refugee women and their young children can participate fully in Canadian life, including our education, labour and community systems” (Wilbur, 2016). For over 40 years, Hope has offered programming and services through partnerships with schools, churches, and other non-profit organizations to ensure participants are able to access services in various locations and at various times. Key to any Hope program for adults is the inclusion of childminding for children of participants. Gloria, one of my research participants, described childminding at Hope as not simply a space where children are watched while their mothers learn; rather, it is designed through the lens and delivery of early childhood education and simultaneously provides a learning environment for young children as well.

The Refugee EAL (REAL) course at Hall started in April 2016, initially through a pilot course and has continued in multiple locations throughout the Lower Mainland. At the time of my research, the same instructor had been teaching the course at Hall for 2 years, and many of the women had been in the class throughout this time period. Hall Community School presents an ideal site for this course to be held, given the high

newcomer population in the city⁹, including many individuals who came to Canada as refugees. The members of the REAL class during my data collection period were quite diverse in many ways: age range, country of origin, length of time in Canada, marital and parental statuses, and beyond. The salient commonality was that all participants in the REAL course, aligned with the directive of Hope, were women.

2.2.1 Hall and the southeast neighbourhood corridor

Hall Community School is located in Metro Vancouver in a neighbourhood bounded by regional thoroughfare streets. Within this corridor there are 10 elementary schools and two secondary schools, including Hall. The city itself has a population of over 230,000 people across nearly 100 square kilometres, while as of 2011 this neighbourhood was home to nearly 60,000 people (Statistics Canada, 2017a). Hall Community School lies nearly in the geographical centre of the corridor and has served the neighbourhood since 1894 (Starr, 2011, p. 17). This neighbourhood has a long history of serving newcomers to Canada, starting with the Scottish, Irish, and English over a century ago, then continuing the immigrants from Japan, Germany, Italy, and Poland. From its very genesis, Hall has been a school serving newcomers (Starr, 2011). This has continued in more recent years as the 1970s and 1980s brought “the Indians and the Chinese” followed by “Bosnians and Croatians, Koreans and Filipinos” (Starr, 2011, p. 16). Today, Hall is the new home for newcomers originating from South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as many from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. In 2011, 55% of

⁹ Throughout this thesis, I use “the city” to refer to the geographic bounds of the city in which this study took place, in the Metro Vancouver region.

those living in the neighbourhood surrounding Hall were immigrants, compared to 49% of city residents overall (Website, City).

The diversity of Hall students and families mirrors that of the neighbourhood. The school serves students in early childhood learning programs to grade 7, with more than 48 countries represented by students and families (Website, School). There are approximately 300 students in Kindergarten through Grade 7 each year, and over 100 community partners support the school in varying capacities from in-kind donations to programming. About half of the families at Hall engage with the community space in some way throughout the year. Breakfast is served for all students every weekday at 8 AM, with the school day running from approximately 8:50 AM to 2:40 PM Monday through Friday. At the time of my data collection, Hall was open for community-based programming and schooling six days a week and as of September 2018 this extended to seven days a week. Community-based programming ranges from knitting clubs for elderly community members to after-school and weekend futsal clubs for neighbourhood children and youth. The school district mandates that 10 PM is the latest a school may remain open for any type of programming or event.

As a community school, certain characteristics of Hall are guided by the general philosophy of community-based education, as well as commitments laid forth by the school district¹⁰ in which this study took place. Community schools first came into vogue

¹⁰ Throughout this thesis, I use pseudonyms for each research participant, the school, and the school district to protect the privacy of those involved.

in the 1970's in Canada, with Queen Mary Elementary School in North Vancouver being the first recognized community school in British Columbia (Stevens, 1974b). As described by Jack Stevens (1974a), himself an early community school administrator in British Columbia, three basic principles of community schools include: first, the opportunity for both children and adults to participate in decision-making within the school community; secondly, schools may serve to coordinate local resources of various forms; and finally, "schools should serve as a catalyst in overall community development" (p. 11). In the local school district today, the development of community schools is described as taking

one of the largest and most under-utilized public facilities, the public school, and increases its investment by keeping it open evenings, weekends and during the summer for community activities. Through multi-ministry funding and non-profit partnerships, community schools address the needs of all age groups, with programs for preschoolers, after school care, and adult education and recreation...

Community schools provide a way for community residents, with or without children, to participate in the activities of their neighbourhood school. The variety of programs and services they offer helps to meet the specific educational, recreational and social needs of the area they serve (Website, School District)

Crucial in both Stevens (1974a) and the school district's interpretation of community schools is the encouragement of broad participation in the school environment as well as accessibility of the site to meet the need of diverse individuals.

The community school environment provides a unique landscape in which to understand the potential of partnerships between school and community, while also presenting a limitation to the transferability of my research findings. Not all schools are systematically designed to engage with their neighbourhoods as intentionally as a community school; thus, the qualities of partnership building explored in this study may not seem as feasible in traditional public school environments. Despite this potential limitation, I am encouraged by the enthusiasm portrayed by Stevens (1974a, 1974b) as the attributes outlined in his experiences developing community schools 40 years ago ring true still today. While recognized community schools may be a minority in school districts, characteristics to which they adhere have the potential to be replicated across myriad school sites.

2.3 Clarifying key terms in my work

2.3.1 Community—what does it mean?

Community is an elusive term. It slips off the tongue easily, with presumed meaning; yet, when taking a closer look, it proves challenging to solidly define. Throughout this research, community is used often. The site in which much of my data was collected is a “community school.” Hope is a “community-based” organization, providing outreach services that aim to meet the needs of members of language, cultural, or religious groups. While Hall receives wide support from their geographic community, it is also closely connected to a wider community of educators *and* the

resettlement community. These connections and interrelationships are explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

When I reflect on the term in relation to my research question—how schools and communities work together—I first consider neighbourhood-based non-profit organizations such as Hope or the local thrift store down the street from Hall. But I also expand this view of community to include the church members who serve breakfast at Hall during summer school or the Muslim faith groups who helped sponsor Syrian refugees to resettle in Metro Vancouver. Community is human, and it simultaneously builds and serves as a vessel for person-to-person connection. While my study showcases community in one particular way, through the REAL class from Hope, there are a multitude of other ways community may be viewed in relationship to supporting resettled refugees.

The notion of community, specifically within research settings, is not without challenge or contestation. To shed light on my own conception and usage of community, I look to two particular ideations as related to my research. The first is that of the Government of Canada, through Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and their usage of “community” in resettlement and integration support for newcomers. The second notion of community I wish to explore is that which exists outside of the state, where I look to Iris Young’s (1986) disruption of the concept of community as a normative ideal. Young’s work challenges my own thinking and brings nuanced reflection to this work.

Within IRCC, community is presented to the public in two clear ways. First, when considering practices that promote immigration integration, IRCC (2017a) highlights

“connecting with others” as essential for settlement success and general wellbeing (para. 2) They suggest such connection may take place through volunteering, joining activities or clubs, or meeting neighbours. This conceptualization necessitates person-to-person connection as part of community, speaking to a localized level of engagement. In this understanding, the potential for community seems to be physically all around us, it is simply up to the individual actor—in this case a newcomer to Canada—to take advantage of the opportunities.

The second way that community is conceptualized within IRCC relates back to the “whole-of-society” approach to newcomer integration as shown by Prince-St-Amand (2016). IRCC shares immigrant integration governance between provinces and municipalities, while working with local service providers for support delivery. Beyond these multi-lateral partnerships, IRCC encourages community participation in resettling refugees; community, here, refers specifically to Canadian groups and organizations. This usage of community is meant to evoke differences between resettlement processes spearheaded by civilians, versus resettlement through government assistance. In this way, community is broad insofar as it may entail individuals of various backgrounds coming together to financially and socially support a refugee family resettling in Canada. In both of these considerations of community in IRCC, the notion of engagement of the public rings through.

I also look to Iris Young (1986), in her work questioning community and suggesting, instead, the development and use of a politics of difference. Young critically questions the use of community as an ideal to be evoked, arguing against the notion both theoretically and practically. As no one definition of true community exists, Young

contends that “the ideal of community presumes subjects who are present to themselves and presumes subjects can understand one another as they understand themselves” (pp. 1–2). Young highlights a critical point of concern when considering the meaning of community, namely, that is it not *one* thing to all people. Where comfort and camaraderie may exist for one person, another person may find isolation. I see these challenges in my own work and question my positionality through this research: wondering, how can I honour the many notions of community without ignoring or undervaluing difference between individuals or institutions?

While I cannot fully unpack the challenges and contestations of community here, it is essential for me to highlight that community is not consensus; it is not a “normative ideal” that we may ultimately achieve (Young, 1986, p. 2). Community, whether based on geographic location, native language, sex, gender identity, age, or faith, is complex. In this research, I define the meaning of community only so far as my participants verbalize and share my own understanding and conclusions, in the context of this study, of personal connection as part of community.

2.3.2 “Supporting resettled refugee children and families”

My use of the word “support” throughout this study, which may seem overly broad or vague, is intentional. Throughout my research of relevant literature, I found that oftentimes research related to refugees in western countries relate solely to assessing the traumatic past experiences of resettled refugee youth (Birman, 2002), recommendations for educator responses to students with limited formal schooling (DeCapua, 2016; Birman, Weinstein, Chan, & Beehler, 2007), and experiences of

refugee students regarding literacy gaps and integration (Brown, Miller, & Mitchell, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model for human development supports my research analysis, as his theory allows for the inclusion of all the above components and more. When considering the intersection of school and community in relation to resettled refugees, the term "support" allows for a far broader investigation into policies, programming, and practices with the understanding all pieces are interrelated, including basic needs, employment, health, academic, and social wellbeing.

Additionally, Epstein's (1995) model of school, family, and community partnerships was influential in my understanding of support. Throughout her long career researching school partnerships, Epstein developed six types of involvement demonstrating how schools, community partners, and families may come together to support students. Integrally shaping my work is the sixth pillar Epstein outlines: that when community collaboration occurs via strengthening "school programs, family practices, and student learning," expected results include "increased skills and talents" for students, "knowledge and use of local resources... to obtain services" for the family, and "knowledgeable, helpful referrals" and "community resources" for teachers (Epstein, 1995, pp. 704–706). In her work Epstein also redefines "community," indicating what principles must be commonly understood in order to effectively involve communities and families in schooling. One of these revised definitions resonates with my own research where Epstein (1995) characterizes community as "all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the school" (p. 705). This perhaps less-often used understanding of community speaks to the broad engagement strategies under which staff operate at Hall.

Epstein's model supports my use of appreciative inquiry, as well as my model for analysis inspired by Bronfenbrenner, as she clearly defines the importance of including multiple agents in building and assessing a school environment. Given that this study occurs at a site that is defined as a "community school," viewing the environment through any other lens may fail to account for essential aspects of their work.

2.3.3 Key terminology

Refugee – Under the UNHCR 1951 Refugee Convention and subsequent 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is "someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" (p. 3).

Resettlement – According to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (2016), "resettlement is how Canada selects refugees abroad and supports their health, safety, and security as they travel to and integrate into Canadian society". The term often refers to the role of government in terms of enforced policies that relate to resettlement between nations.

Integration – according to Hyndman's (2011) research summary on refugee integration in Canada, there is "no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration" (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002, p.114; van Tubergen, 2006). Given that my research is not aimed at understanding what integration looks like or feels like, I turn to the simple description from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2017): "the goal of integration is to encourage

newcomers to contribute to Canada’s economic, social, political and cultural development” (pp. 21–23).

Community Council – The Community Council takes the place of a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) in a community school. The Community Council at Hall includes representative and members who are parents of Hall students, educators at Hall, residents of the neighbourhood and other community members such as business-owners or public servants. The Community Council meets monthly on a weekday afternoons and meetings are open to everyone who identifies as part of the community.

Community Room – at Hall Community School, the community room is a space (actually made up of multiple rooms) located at the east end of the school. There is a large common area with couches, public access computers, coffee and tea next to a classroom where community-based programming is held. Offices for the SWIS staff, Family and Child support worker, and community school coordinator are located here. Within the school, people often use the terms “community” or “community room” to refer to this part of the building.

SWIS – Settlement Workers in Schools: a federally funded initiative where settlement focused outreach staff work directly in schools supporting newcomer students and families. In the school district in which I studied, SWIS staff have a portfolio of schools they support the majority of their time with additional schools on an on-call basis. According to the local district, the SWIS program supports the following in over 15 languages:

• Outreach to new immigrant families	• Mentorship programs
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and counselling on settlement • Orientation to school and community services • Referral and service linking to community and government services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation circles and peer support programs • Settlement workshops • Youth programs • Parenting workshops
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2.5 Public schooling in British Columbia

“Aside from their educational mandate, schools are places where the local practices of integration are explored” (Basu, 2011, p. 1327).

Upon resettlement, immigrant youth often face complex challenges including language acquisition, cultural adjustment and potential recovery from trauma, all of which are interwoven and affect their daily lives (Joyce, Earnest, de Mori & Silvagni, 2010). In a nation such as Canada, where law mandates participation in primary and secondary schooling, there lies both the opportunity and responsibility for school systems to broadly support students in the K–12 environment. Schools have the potential to serve as more than a place for scholarly acquisition. Hyndman (2011) explores the work of Basu (2004, 2006, 2011) in her research of refugee integration in Canada, finding that integration on a local scale often takes place at the public school. According to Basu (2006), schools serve as “places for neighbourhood integration, social capital formation and the fostering of civil society” (p. 59). For recently resettled

immigrants, from any background, schools offer opportunities for newcomers to be introduced and engage in their new communities (Basu, 2006). As Hyndman (2011) summarizes, a school provides not only opportunity for learning but also serves as a “site where integration may take place” (pp. 18–19).

One overarching initiative supporting integration of newcomer students and their families is the Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program, supported by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Local Service Providing Organizations (SPO) work in partnership with school boards to place settlement workers in elementary and secondary schools with high numbers of newcomer students (Settlement at Work, n.d.). The provincial network of SWIS in Saskatchewan describes the initiative as “a school based outreach program designed to help newcomer students and their families settle in their school and community” (Saskatchewan SWIS Coordination, n.d., About). This is accomplished by a multi-partner approach supporting newcomers by involving provincially-directed school districts, the federally-governed IRCC, and locally-based SPOs. SWIS exemplifies a multi-faceted approach to multicultural integration and is evidence of the opportunities that exist when considering the role of schools more broadly in terms of resettlement support.

According to Saskatchewan SWIS Coordination (n.d.), the role of a school-based settlement worker is to “support successful school integration” for the resettled family, partially defined as the participation in school registration and orientation as well as parent/teacher meetings (About). Settlement workers are also responsible for collaboration efforts within the school, between counselling staff and teachers to support “culturally sensitive” guidance and practice (About). The SWIS initiative gives credence

to what psychology researchers Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) found: that schools are often “one of the first and most influential service systems” newcomers encounter upon resettlement (p. 30). Recognizing this, and thus understanding the public school as part of the resettlement sector, opens the door for great potential in conceptualizing support for refugee children and families.

2.6 Ecological analysis

To address the research question and allow for the inclusion of multiple perspectives, I will view my data through an ecological framework as conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and by Trickett and Birman (1989). The ecological approach accommodates analysis at multiple levels, with an effort to understand the individual as well as the community (Smith, 2008). Throughout the process, the child will be placed at the centre of data analysis. Bronfenbrenner (1979) applies his ecological systems approach to understanding human development, equating these interconnected relationships to nested “Russian dolls¹¹” (p. 3). In my work, the environment is a broad landscape of a community school in which settlement service organizations operate alongside educators. The individuals at the center are the children.

Leonard (2011) successfully utilized an ecological framework to analyze and assess the value of school-community partnerships in an urban American public school under the guiding premise of school reform. While this research does not specifically

¹¹ This analogy is used to express the multiple layers within an ecological framework beginning with the individual at the center, and building outward from the microsystem to the macrosystem.

address refugee youth in the school environment, it does lend support to the “examination of relationships, both within the school and between the school and outside partners” and their impact on student success (Leonard, 2011, p. 989). While Leonard’s research was not designed as an appreciative inquiry, Bronfenbrenner’s theory is particularly fitting for this methodology as “it is expansive, yet focused,” asking for a joint understanding of the complex environmental layers and the individual experience (as cited in Leonard, 2011, p. 990). In my work, experience refers to the practices of individuals who operate within the community school (educators, community workers, administrators, and organizational partners), which will then be analyzed in relation to the environmental factors (again, with the child placed at the centre).

One layer of the ecological analysis is the changing political landscape in which this study takes place. In 2015, the federal Canadian government implemented a new immigration campaign to resettle 25,000 GARs within twelve months, starting in November 2015 (IRCC, 2017b). Other relevant policies include the British Columbia School Act, which mandates school attendance for residents of the province ages five to sixteen, the British Columbia Ministry of Education *Students from refugee backgrounds* and the Vancouver School Board *Syrian refugees: a guide for educators* (School Act, 1996; BC Ministry of Education, 2015; Vancouver School Board, 2016). While this study is not primarily focused on policy, relevant policies (funding, community school documentation, etc.) provide extended context to the community/school partnership.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore and understand how schools and communities work together to support resettled refugee children and their families from the perspectives of staff members working at this intersection. The inclusion of both children and families in my research question is intentional and based on my understanding of Epstein's theories of school, family, and community partnerships. My research question was guided by conversations I had with those working in the resettlement sector as well as staff members working at Hall. This chapter outlines the ways in which I designed my study, then collected and analyzed the data while consistently reflecting on my research practices.

3.1.1 Understandings of positionality

As referenced in Chapter 1 (see section 1.2.2), my own experiences in immigration and living with a sense of 'otherness' alongside the knowledge that I was not seen as 'othered' by those surrounding me, are part of the essence of who I am. These pieces are also, thus, part of me as a researcher. When I consider positionality, particularly around race and gender, and privilege associated with both, I am discomfited by the idea that by simply making these statements, my work is better. The considerations of my positionality are constant in conversations with friends, as I discuss living on a Native American reservation in the United States, my own immigration stories, and perspectives gained going to university in a city steeped in

systemic racism in the Deep South of the United States. These experiences have shaped me and will continue to shape who I am in all parts of my life. Yet, stating these experiences, baring parts of me, to an academic world through writing has felt strange and uncertain. What is the value to the reader, who may not *know me* beyond the text written here, learning about these very personal and profound understandings of self?

Sara Ahmed (2004) speaks to the “non-performativity of anti-racism,” that such statements of race-based positionality and declaring “whiteness,” (and subsequently, perceived power and privilege in a research context) “do not do what they say” (Preface). Does stating what I understand to be true of myself influence your understanding of this product in front of you? Even more importantly, does the declaration of ‘self’ automatically result in work that is anti-racist and combats the privilege I know exists for my White, female, Canadian being in this world? Absolutely not. Stating such facts of my self—the colour of my skin, the sex of which I was born, the nationality and passport I hold—have inexplicably shaped my journey in this life. Yet saying this is not in itself productive—it does not create active change. It does not, in Ahmed’s (2004) words, “commit a state, institution or person to a form of action that we could describe as anti-racist” (para. 12). This is not to say that such understandings of self and subsequent declarations do not have value. It is to say that doing so is simply one step toward accountability in my work, that readers may know me to further understand the question, data collection, and interpretation presented here.

With writing about myself and my place in the world as I see it to be, I hope to share a bit more of who I am in this research and in this world. I also see positionality as aspirational and active, in that critical, self-reflective work is never complete. When

asked by a dear colleague and friend of mine about how I relate to Ahmed's work on anti-racism and non-performativity, I reflected on the ways in which I try to be and how I take up space in this world. I aim to operate with humility and love others actively through time, attention, and care. These qualities are the best I can do to describe the positionality of my heart, mind, and soul in research, particularly within contested considerations of community engagement and support.

3.2 Design specifics

3.2.1 Research design

The goal of my research is to be of value to the school site at which I studied, to support their practices when developing partnerships with community organizations in the future. I chose to highlight strengths of partnerships rather than weaknesses, taking an approach grounded in appreciative inquiry (AI). Appreciative inquiry is not simply a way to research through the use of strengths-based language and questioning (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). It is also "a way of living with, being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 131). This not only aligns with my insistence on taking a strengths-based approach to research but also with my personal ethos in building understanding through partnership and cooperation. A strengths-based approach to research disrupts the "traditional deficits-based orientations" where research participants are "too often viewed as deficient and different, and so in need of 'fixing'" (Maton et al., 2004). AI was borne in the field of organizational management in

the 1980s to promote change in a positive way and has since been used in numerous studies at school sites (see: Calabrese, 2015; Willoughby & Tosey, 2007; Calabrese, Hester, Friesen & Burkhalter, 2010).

For this study, appreciative inquiry serves as a methodology to conduct research that is community oriented and inherently strengths-based. Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, and Black (2009) used AI to develop more inclusive school environments for students with disabilities. In a day-long workshop, participants completed their interpretation of appreciative inquiry, utilizing four phases titled Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver (p. 81). This approach allowed for the participants' professional narratives to be included, with the goal of developing a common understanding of "good" inclusive education. A foundation of AI is the assumption that "organizations move in the direction of what they study," and thus, the approach asks us as researchers to guide our work in a way that seeks out strengths (Kozik et al., 2009, p. 80). By incorporating individual experiences that were positive in nature (i.e., values, historical knowledge, personal motivations), Kozik and colleagues' study led participants to collectively design their vision for the future.

Importantly, appreciative inquiry as a methodology is not without concern. When done superficially, it can be misunderstood as a trite "Pollyanna-ish" methodology to simply find the good, rather than being carefully leveraged to enact change (Grant & Humphries, 2006, p. 404). As Gervase Bushe (2007) neatly summarizes, AI is less about positivity and more about generativity. According to Bushe, "generativity occurs when people collectively discover or create new things that they can use to positively alter their collective future" (2007, p. 1). Note here, that collective discovery *precedes*

positivity. AI is not simply a vehicle for stating positive feelings; rather, it requires the questions of “what are we doing well” and “what we may want to do more of” to be critically asked and answered (Ryan, Soven, Smither, Sullivan & Vanbuskirk, 1999, p. 167). This, however, is only appropriate in environments where positive attributes are already recognized, and areas of growth have been initially addressed. As Rogers and Fraser (2003) find, AI is less useful as a methodology “when bad performance is not yet known and needs to be discovered” (p. 77). Rogers and Fraser also highlight the potential of AI research to “go dangerously wrong” without adequate management of the process (p. 80). For them, this is avoided by including a variety of perspectives and ensuring the role of facilitator (in this case, me, as the researcher) is filled by someone with affirmative qualities and experienced in group management.

In my study, the principles of AI directly influenced my interview questions, whereby I asked questions that were meant to elicit responses based on engagement and improvement to generate ideas for change (see Appendix A: Interview Guide). Additionally, AI shaped my general attitude during data collection and analyses. Recalling that AI is also about “being with, and directly participating in the varieties of social organization we are compelled to study,” I intentionally spent more time than perhaps expected with research participants and onsite at Hall (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 131). This gave me the opportunity to informally “soak in” my study surroundings and learn alongside those at Hall and Hope. On a personal level, I found great joy in regularly visiting the school site as it brought me back to my early years of teaching primary school in a similarly diverse setting.

3.2.2 Methods and participants

When first considering my graduate research, I met with community members who share similar interests in the topic I consider here. The input I received proved integral in designing relevant, community-engaged research. These casual conversations led me to incorporate semi-structured interviews with essential staff members (employed by the school, school district, and the community organization) working “on the ground” at Hall who are connected to the REAL course. Throughout this thesis, I use pseudonyms for each research participant, the school, and the school district to protect the privacy of those involved.

In late March 2018, I submitted my research proposal to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) at the University of British Columbia (UBC). I received minor revision requirements, primarily related to language use around anonymity and privacy. Given my position as interviewer, it is impossible for identities of the research participants to be factually anonymous; thus, privacy considerations were made to ensure identities of participants would not be publicly recognizable unless explicitly decided by research participants. Upon completing these revisions and receiving conditional approval from UBC, I submitted research requests to both the local school district and community organization. Both organizations provided letters of support for me to complete this research, with the school district including a caveat that their general approval would not override an individual’s decision to opt out of participation. On May 8, 2018, I received full approval from BREB to move forward with my study and I scheduled my first interview to take place the following week.

Keeping the scope of my study feasible, I completed interviews with 6 staff members: 2 each from Hall, Hope, and the school district, in the case of the settlement workers. I focused on perspectives of these staff members to understand the processes which contribute to or hinder partnerships supporting resettled refugees. Each research participant was informed of this study through word of mouth, with the exception of Simon with whom I met early on in my research design. After other participants heard of the study, I introduced myself and my own interests, passions, and work, then I described my aims for completing this study. Each participant was provided an electronic copy of the consent form (Appendix B) as well as a letter introducing the context for this study, as well as the rights of the participants (Appendix C).

Pseudonym	Organization	Position
<i>Simon</i>	Hall Community School	Community School Coordinator
<i>Brian</i>	Hall Community School	Principal
<i>Roxana</i>	School District	Settlement Worker in Schools (Hall is one of multiple sites Roxana supports)
<i>Gilbert</i>	School District	Settlement Worker in Schools (Hall is one of multiple sites Gilbert supports)
<i>Karen</i>	Hope Society	Instructor
<i>Gloria</i>	Hope Society	Program Manager

Table 3.1 Research participants

At the time of data collection, Gloria served as the Program Manager for Hope Society. She came to this work after years of volunteering with the organization and having used Hope Society services as a newcomer to Canada a “long time ago.” Gloria has a long history of working locally with immigrants and supporting community-based initiatives, including time spent working at a neighbourhood house in the Vancouver

area. Originally from Latin America, Gloria grew up in a politically active family and is committed to equity and representation, with a particular dedication to understanding power and privilege in the workplace. Karen at Hope has years of experience teaching adults in various settings, primarily with newcomers experiencing high barriers to integration and access to services. Her teaching is guided by a deep commitment to trauma-informed practice: watching her interact with women in the Hope course evidences this priority in her life's work.

Gilbert and Roxana have parallel histories working within the school district as Settlement Workers in Schools, having entered into their positions at similar times and supporting the same schools. Originally from the Middle East, Roxana worked with Afghani refugees in her home country and spent time volunteering with other immigrants upon resettling in Canada herself. Her passion for supporting families, and particularly women and girls, in their resettlement and integration journeys shines through in her work and words. Gilbert has lived in Canada nearly 30 years, moving here from the Central Africa. He started working with newcomers in 2001 with a local settlement service organization in metro Vancouver and transitioned into working with the school district in 2007. Gilbert has wide-ranging experiences working with refugees and is committed to serving his clients holistically and authentically. What struck me when speaking with Gilbert is the breadth of his experiences and his dedication to ensuring policies and practices truly serve those they are meant to.

Brian and Simon are both settlers in Canada who have spent the bulk of the last two decades working in education in British Columbia. Brian has worked with at-risk youth throughout his career, initially supporting pre-teens and teens as a Child and

Youth Care Worker, then as a teacher. Much of his early work centered on working with families and communities to support children, leading to his eventual entry into Hall Community School. Brian describes himself as “a big, ex-athlete” who was tapped by the school district to work with at-risk boys in an alternative class setting as a coach, mentor, and teacher to support students’ integration back into regular school environments. He studied behavior disorders, counselling, and education while continuing his professional work in schools. Brian was finishing his third year as principal at Hall during my data collection. Similarly, John’s background working in education before Hall is varied, having studied and worked in special education. Many of the community-based resources John accessed when working in special education were similar to those he now engages with as the Hall Community School Coordinator. I appreciated John’s reflections and openness when considering where community exists within the school, the neighbourhood, and beyond. He is creative in his approaches to working with various community organizations and members.

On-site data collection was conducted from May through July, 2018. Participants were recruited through word of mouth, following the time I initially spent with Simon discussing opportunities for research that would be relevant to those involved. I asked each participant if they wished a pseudonym be used in any writing containing their data; with the exception of one participant, each person chose to use their real name. However, due to the small number of participants in my study, I have given each person a pseudonym to protect individual identity. The school and community organization have also been given pseudonyms for privacy. No children under age 19 were recruited for the study and only working adults participated. This is essential to note as the

perspectives collected and shared in this study are limited to those of staff within Hope, Hall, and the school district. The study does not account for experiences of resettled refugees or community members beyond the staff included. Those additional perspectives are essential for understanding the full picture of effectiveness of support, and may be pathway for future research; however, given my limited resources as a master's student, it was not feasible to broaden the scope.

In terms of ethical considerations, I reflect closely on the critiques of Appreciative Inquiry, specifically those noting the potential for superficiality when examining organizational behaviours. Given my past experiences teaching in K–12 schools, training teachers in educational technology, and project management positions where I led focus groups and workshops, I felt well-equipped to fulfill the role as researcher in this study. I prepared for data collection by reading studies related to my methodological approach as well as refugee integration experiences (Reed, 2006; Morrice, 2011). These texts, in particular, provided invaluable context and understanding of the work I was beginning to undertake.

3.3 Data Sources and Analysis

3.3.1 Data generated

From May 2018 through July 2018, I completed interviews with six research participants between Hall Community School and Hope Society. During my visits to both locations for my interviews, I took notes in my field notebook related to the environment in which I was, including notes of fliers and brochures publicly announcing programming

and events. The chart below outlines the tangible data I collected in the form of notes, recorded interviews, supplemental documents provided by participants or publicly available onsite, and images of the Hall community school. Photos taken at Hall were intended to aid my memory and were not assessed as evidence within this research.

Field Notes			Interviews			Supplemental Documents			Images (all taken at Hall)	
Category	Location	Date Range	Person	Affiliation	Date	Category	Title	Doc Type	Type	Description
Reflection	Journal	May 2 2018–July 6 2018	Simon	Hall	May 18 2018	Hall	Community Scaling Tool	Handout	Artwork	Handprint tree in Hall School
Interviews (all)	Loose-leaf	May 18 2018–July 6 2018	Gloria	Hope	May 22 2018	Community	Hall Edge—City	Flier	Artwork	Tile map (3)
Hall	Journal	May 18 2018–June 21 2018	Brian	Hall	June 8 2018	Hall	[CITY] Children's Fund	Donation Letter	Display	Collection of fliers + pamphlets
Interviews	Journal	May 23 2018–August 4 2018	Roxana	District	June 26 2018	Class Lessons	Feelings/Drawing + Discussion Questions	Handout	Flier	Invitation—Intercultural Community Arts Fest
Hope Course	Journal	May 25 2018–June 8 2018	Gilbert	District	June 26 2018	Class Lessons	No Title (discussion questions)	Handout	Flier	Community events board (week at a glance)
Research Process	Journal	June 21 2018–present	Gloria	Hope	July 6 2018	Community	Cameras Child and Family Services	Flier	Flier	Immunization (community programs)
Reflection	Journal	Aug 27 2018–Dec 15 2018				Community	[CITY] Now—June 6 2018	Newspaper	Flier	Year End BBQ + BBQ Schedule
						Hope	Community English Classes for Women—BC TEAL	Newsletter	Flier	Sports day Concession
						Hope	EAL Program	Flier	Flier	Friendship Club + Eid Mubarak + Intercultural Fest
						Hope	Welcoming and Supporting Women Refugees	Proposal	Flier	Homework Club + BASES Thrift
						[CITY]	2018–2022 Financial Plan	Official report	Flier	Workplace communication training

									Flier	Early Dismissal
									Flier	Community schedule, full week
									Flier	June 2018 Calendar (?)
									Flier	Bridging the Gap charity ride
									Flier	Stories of Canada: Stories of Hall community
									Poster	Community Schools (SD) + Elements of Programs and Services (ACE-BC) (3)
									Poster	Hall End of Year BBQ (2)

Table 3.2 Data collected

Supplemental documents came to me through many mediums. I was provided programmatic documents from Hope and Hall to showcase the variety of services and programming, as well as their relevant designs. I followed my time onsite at Hall researching publicly available documents from both the city and district to understand the context in which my research took place. These publicly available documents (as cited in Chapter 5) were essential in my understanding of the history of the neighbourhood in which I studied as well as the funding and governance structures in place that impact local schools. Governmental policy—at the federal, provincial, municipal, and local levels—impact the operations of schools and community organizations and to further understand the context in which my research participants were working, I needed to strengthen my own knowledge of these policies. This included researching the history of community schools in British Columbia and Canada, as well as the funding patterns of community schools and immigrant-serving

organizations. I used this data to formulate a basic understanding of the governmental forces at play that advance or diminish school and community partnerships.

3.3.2 Interviews

Participant interviews ranged from 43:00 minutes to 70:00 minutes in length and were semi-structured in form, following a pre-written interview guide (see Appendix A). I offered to hold interviews at either the participant's workplace or in a public setting of the participant's choice. At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed the consent agreement and ensured each person was comfortable being audio recorded. Each interviewee agreed to being audio recorded and I used my cell phone to do so. After finishing the interviews, I saved the audio recordings on my encrypted and password protected laptop and deleted the original recordings from my phone.

Along with the recorded data, I took written notes during and after conversations with both Simon and Karen. As I spent more informal time (outside of our scheduled interviews) with them than with the others, it was important to me to remember parts of our casual chats. Thus, I have written notes rather than recorded data outlining the student population of Hall, the role of the community council within the school, and other practical information such as the start time of the school day and what district policies exist in keeping the building open outside of official school hours.

I interviewed Gloria from Hope twice, as her role was essential in my understanding of the pragmatic components of the partnership between her organization and Hall. In our initial interview I asked questions related generally to how she approaches partnerships in her work and how she views schools as part of the

resettlement sector. In the second interview, I reflected back on the information I had gained over six weeks visiting the REAL course and asked more targeted questions to fill in my gaps of understanding, such as how women were recruited to the course, what success for students means, and how this partnership with Hall would continue in the upcoming school year. All other research participants were formally interviewed once. Simon and I had multiple conversations spanning my time at Hall, where we would informally discuss current happenings in the school or upcoming plans for the community space.

3.3.3 Visiting Hall

From May 2018–June 2018, I visited Hall Community School eight times. At the start of my research, Simon invited me to simply visit Hall and be present in the space as this is where the best learning (of the school, of the community, of “partnerships in action”) would take place. I did not complete formal observations while at Hall, but rather worked on my own projects in the community room intermixed with causal conversations with Simon and others who dropped by or were present. Each Friday, I also joined the Hope REAL course in the community room. My time in the REAL course was not part of formal data collection, as I was not conducting interviews or observations with the women in the class. I simply participated as a volunteer, supporting Karen with course activities.

Throughout my data generation and analysis processes, I took brief notes of my experiences in my field notebook. I followed no other structure than jotting down what seemed particularly compelling to me, in relation to both my research question, my

experience with data collection, and my history as an educator. These notes range from questions of how the school welcomes visitors, to the logistical aspects of the course, to my own emotional responses to research. I was intentional about recording my journey through data generation for two reasons. First, I knew this period of research would be relatively short in the broader scheme of my master's program and I wanted to document my experiences as a first-time researcher. Secondly, when designing my research proposal, I found comfort reading other graduate students' theses, specifically their research designs and methodologies. My goal in taking copious field notes was to have written documentation that may be of use to other young researchers. Some excerpts of my notes are included below:

May 18, 2018 (arriving to Hall): "here for day one of research collection—eek! Walking up to the school—hard to find the entrance... No staff nametags, no requirement for me to sign in (did I have to [sign in as a visitor] the first time seeing Simon)?"

June 8, 2018 (after REAL class at Hall): "How do students get placed in this class? Levels, start day, etc... Bus cards. 2 [given out] each week?"

June 21, 2018 (in community room at Hall):

- random [to me] gentleman—dropping off bread/foods weekly?
- Group design a cookbook in English/Arabic and maybe Farsi; connected to grant funding letter?

July 20, 2018 (reflection): "Today I am going through my field notes and supplemental docs, organizing and labeling each piece by theme. This is organic. I am simply looking at the evidence and choosing a category to generally place it within. Put

simply, I am trying to draw out themes from each piece of evidence I have so I am well-equipped to analyze and not get lost in a shuffle of papers.”

3.4 Analysis of interviews

From July through September 2018, I assessed my audio recorded interviews, starting with an initial round of listening and followed by a second round 1–2 weeks later. Through each cycle, I took copious notes, listening for and noting themes that emerged in each interview. The first round of listening elicited wide-ranging themes as I was noting commonalities within and among each interview, while the second round proved more focused and I was beginning to see patterns emerge among the participants. These notes were completed using two different coloured pens (first round in black, second round in blue) as shown in Image 3.1. Knowing that I would have additional conversations with Simon and Gloria, I also jotted down a multitude of further questions I had about Hall and Hope, respectively, including school demographic information, REAL course intake processes, and other practical details.

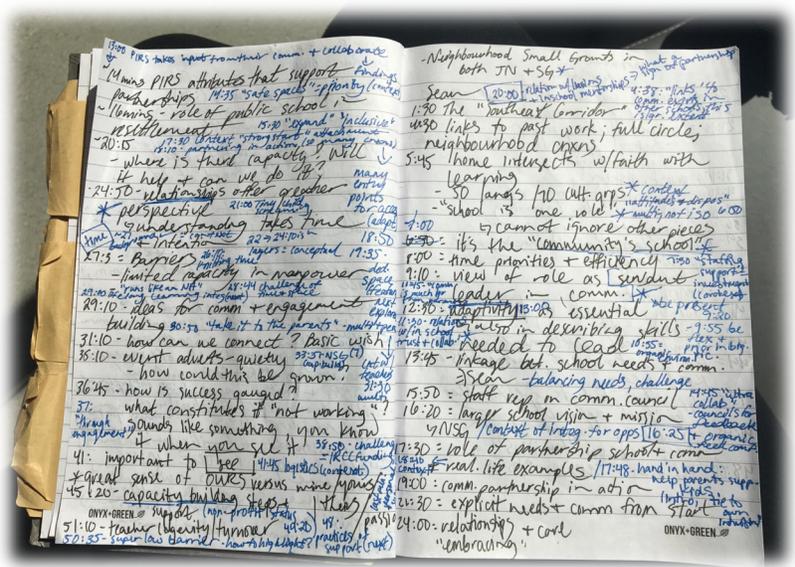


Image 3.1 Notes taken while assessing audio recorded interviews.

After completing the first round of interview note-taking, I reviewed the themes that initially arose, reflecting on the potential meanings within the context of the study. When listening to the interviews, I primarily heard key words, such as community, relationship(s), partnership(s), bridging, connecting, and empowerment. I began mapping out these terms, physically connecting dots between the words and who spoke them, for my own processing of the systems in which I was studying. In my second round of listening, I categorized parts of each interview using key words that I saw as being critical in constructing my future findings as well as key contextual understandings. When tagging these categorizations, I also noted the time stamp of the discussion so I could return easily to the place in the recording. I categorized anything related to logistics within the school, district, or REAL course as “context” and used the following terms repeatedly as conversations relating to each continued to emerge: adaptive, personal, bridging, capacity-development, relationship-building, collaboration.

As I began to clarify the themes emerging from my interviews, I again returned to mapping connections between terms, as well as experiences those terms referenced. This practice allowed me to see further connections and focus in on key findings in my work.

When it came to the process of writing my findings and working toward the completed product of my thesis, I used the categorizations I had made in my field notebook along with the related time stamps. I returned to the audio recordings, using the time stamp to navigate to specific points in the conversation and transcribed verbatim the sections of dialogue I use in Chapters 4 and 5. In areas where the participants stop to consider or change their words mid-sentence, I use an “em dash” indicating an abrupt pause. Where participants’ voices linger off mid-sentence, I use ellipses to show a leisurely transition. Finally, where emphasis through verbal inflection is heard in spoken words, I use italicized text to highlight the significance. As seen in direct quotes in the following chapters, I do not change grammar of the participants and only include additional words in brackets where contextual clarification seems necessary for comprehension.

I opted not to complete full transcriptions of the interviews as I have found the process to be limiting in the past. When listening solely to transcribe, I find that it can obscure the *hearing* of the meaning and focus primarily on simply the words which are stated. While listening to each interview, I let the words flow over me, recalling the time, place, and mood of the interviews. Nearly each audio recording begins with laughter, as I have turned on the recording in the midst of connecting over a silly personal or work-related experience.

3.5 Reflections and Considerations

I entered into each interview with the desire to first, lay the foundation for a personal connection and second, to listen and learn. I truly find my research inspiring, interesting, and useful, asking questions that we don't often have a chance to reflect upon in the very busy environments of education and non-profit organizations. I believe that forming a personal connection—one that is genuine and based on the understanding that knowledge-sharing is a two-way street—between researcher and participant is essential. Yet, I needed to balance this philosophy with getting to the questions and information I had determined would support the goals of this study. I easily could have spoken with research participants for a half a day; Therefore, it was necessary for me to remain conscious of balancing natural conversation development with the purpose of my study and being respectful of everyone's time.

The approach I took to conducting interviews as a space to share knowledge through personal connection formed an additional key component of my data collection. I often referenced my own experiences or my thoughts as to create more of a dialogue than a structured or potentially impersonal interview. While this was natural to me, it also harkens back to the principles of appreciative inquiry and community-based research where traditional power dynamics are intentionally disrupted to create a space of common understanding and mutual respect. While I cannot claim full success in doing so as my perspective as researcher is limited, I did approach my data collection from a place of wishing to learn rather than wanting to impart expertise upon research participants.

Reflection

Conducting research heavily immersed in community and partnership as a graduate student is not easy. It is not straightforward. Designing a study that may add value to the community it is meant to, be feasible for a Master's level student, and aligns with ethics approval processes, is tricky, fluid, and unknown. Community-based research is where my heart lies, where small sparks turn to glowing flames, where I believe true change is possible. Understanding how to do community-based research, when I am a novice—less than a novice, a total neophyte—without a clear road map, led to my ongoing growth, everlasting questions, continued learning. It was only possible due to the support of my professors, courses aimed at showing how research can be, and is, done “differently,” questions posed challenging the definition of engagement, workshops attended, never-ending guidance of my supervisor... This thesis is a product of many things, one of which being the dedication to studying in a way that aligns with my values and with my goals and the institutional support to do so.

Chapter 4: “It comes down to the relationships you craft”

4.1 Introduction

How do schools and communities work together to support refugee children and their families?

Using the REAL course held at Hall as the entry point to explore my research question allows me to narrow down a broad area of study and explore specific qualities of one partnership supporting resettled refugees. Within the following two chapters, I present different aspects of this partnership. Staying true to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological analysis model and inspired by Leonard’s (2011) use, I present my findings in ways that orient back to the student, as the child exists within the centre of both my conceptual framework and my strategy for analysis. While the study findings are presented in chapters and sections, there are overlaps and continuity throughout as none of these themes are mutually exclusive. The sections allow for greater reading clarity; however, support for refugee children and families is anything but segmented. The dynamism of community schools is showcased in Myers and Totten’s (1966) words of a learning environment where “no one segment stands alone” (p. 133). My aim throughout this chapter and the next is to highlight these as segments of an interrelated whole.

In this chapter, I explore how relationships and the processes of relationship-building within Hope and Hall support resettled refugee children and their families.

Relationship building is used often in community-based research or applied development work, from fields of social work, public health, social and economic development, leadership studies, and beyond (see Kretzman & McKnight, 1996; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). The term broadly refers to practices of building trust, communicating transparently, and developing working relationships where each individual feels valued (Pennsylvania State University, n.d.; Jackson, 2010; Wallerstein & Duran, 2006). Relationship-building is complex, and in my study I trace these processes using my conversations with research participants who highlight how relationships are built among the many actors at the intersection of school and community. It is important to recall that the processes I outline and explore here are by no means exhaustive, and I highlight only the perspectives of those I interviewed, namely staff members within Hall, Hope, and the school district.

4.2 The multi-dimensional nature of relationship-building

“Bottom line, it comes down to the relationships that you craft” –Brian

From the outset of my interviews starting in May 2018, “relationship-building,” “partnerships,” and “partnering” stood out as key terms often referenced by all those who participated in this research project. Simon and Brian at Hall, Gloria and Karen with Hope: each of them spoke of the essential value of *relationships* in their work. How they *could not do their work*, let alone do it *well*, without partnerships. Hearing the integral role of relationship-building from both the community organization and school perspectives, I dove deep into my interview data and supplemental documents to understand how these individuals define relationship-building in their work and what

evidence is presented showcasing relationships as being at the center of their day to day actions.

To contextualize relationship-building within this study, I look to the words expressed by each person I interviewed. When speaking with Roxana and Gilbert regarding their work as Settlement Workers in Schools, it became immediately apparent that their definition of relationship-building in their work is not strictly prescribed, but more responsive to the situations and experiences they encounter. They shared the need to be highly flexible when building relationships, to meet families where they are both in terms of their strengths and their needs. Gloria spoke of the need of relationships to be genuine and built collaboratively between self and others working in partnership with Hope. Highlighted by Roxana and Gilbert, when one person doesn't have the right resources, another one will. Based on my interviews with both school and community partners, three primary characteristics of relationship-building shone through, characterizing the process as multidimensional thus requiring personal presence, communication, and adaptability.

Within both Hall and Hope, new relationships are consistently being formed. As expressed by my research participants, to best serve resettled refugee children and families, multiple relationships are required throughout the school, community, and other organizations and entities. I designed Figure 4.1 based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory to map out the interrelationships that exist within this study, and more broadly to understand how the school intersects with organizations and individuals beyond the district. The image is meant to highlight the nested nature of relationships

within this study, that each child operates within an ecology of continuously interacting and intersecting individuals and organizations.

The child lies at the centre and, on a *microsystem* level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 23), engages closely with family members (the closest bordering circle) as well as administrators, teachers, and staff (shown as transcending child, family, and community through dotted ovals). The staff, teachers, and administrators are considered in Bronfenbrenner's (1979) language as actors in the *mesosystem*, as are the SWIS staff and Community Council (p. 25). Each of the entities represented in the lateral ovals move between two or more settings and groups, interacting directly and indirectly with children, family, and community members with the school, the district and beyond. In this study, community members include Hope and others who support Hall in a multitude of ways. I found that mapping out these relationships and actors that exist in simply one community school was a helpful and telling way of seeing overlaps, intersections, and influences.

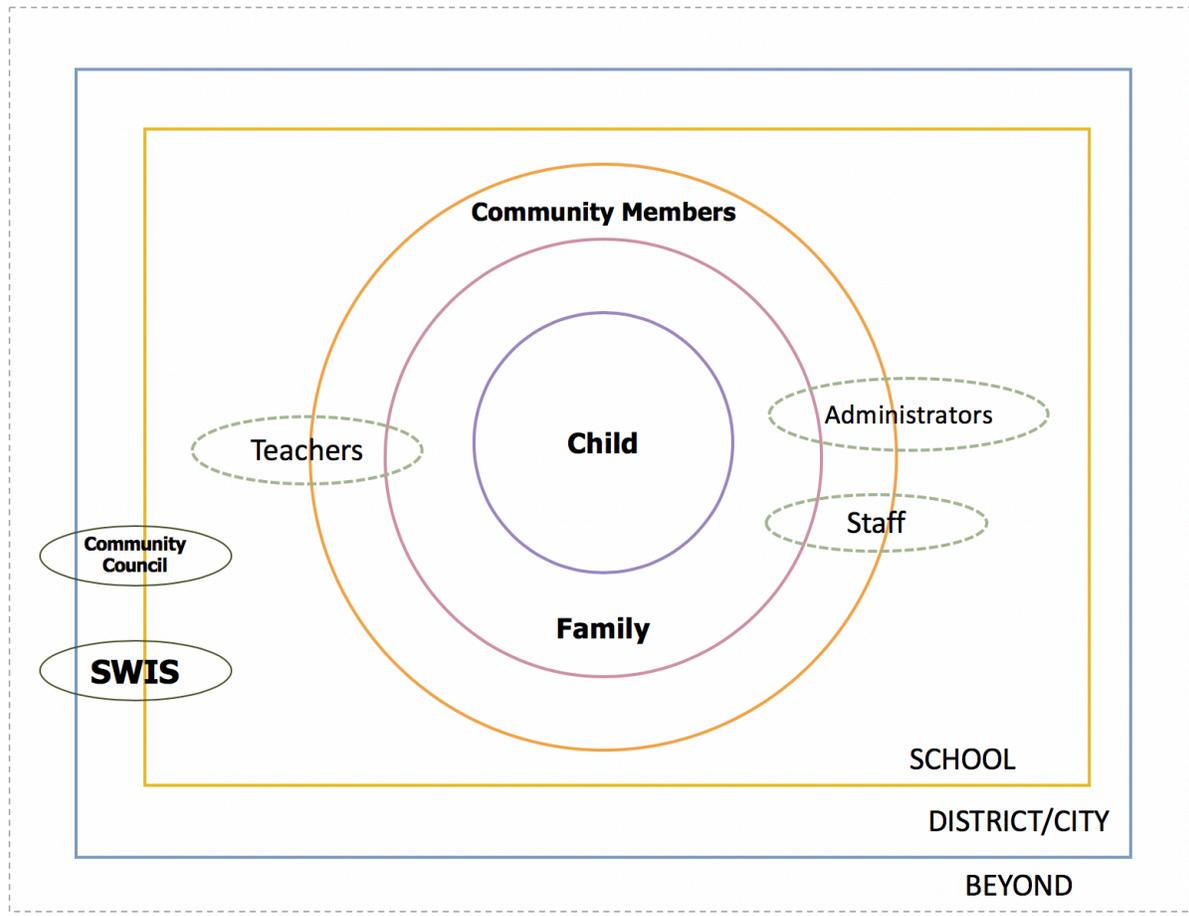


Figure 4.1. The many actors influencing resettled refugee children in the context of Hall Community School.

4.2.1 A welcoming and personal presence

An essential component of building relationships that transcend traditional bounds of the school, the family, or the community (Epstein, 1995) is creating a welcoming physical space that supports human connection. At Hall, this is two-pronged: first, the building itself is open to students, families and community members all day, every day. Secondly, the staff at the school actively welcome visitors into the building. My own time spent at Hall supports this: I would often sit in the community room,

completing my own writing or simply waiting to meet with Karen or Simon. Throughout my weeks at Hall, parents and community members entered the space, casually and with great ease, to drop off donated bread, fill out a grant application, discuss summer programming and just say “hello” to the staff. It was clearly a common occurrence for members of the Hall community, whether they be parents, neighbours, or program partners, to be welcomed into the space with great comfort. The Hall staff are intentional about creating a physical space that both welcomes visitors and provides easily accessible resources. As Roxana describes,

there is tea, coffee, everyday so [families] can sit, get connected. Either we outreach to them or they come and say “hello that we are new”... we show them the resources that’s available—like for a very brand new family they don’t know where to go even to *print* out the paper. So we provide the computers, faxing, printing stuff, and lots of resources we help them to reach, here in the community [room].

Having these resources easily available onsite reduces a barrier (in this case, free computer and printing access) families may experience when seeking support, while also serving as a catalyst to bring people together in the community space. While a new resident of the neighbourhood may simply come to Hall to print a paper related to their child’s schooling, they are welcomed to stay beyond fulfilling this need which creates a space amenable to building connection and community.

Moreover, this welcoming sense extends beyond the community room: the main entry doors of the school are unlocked all day, along with separate doors leading visitors into the community room. In the hallway outside the community room, bulletin

boards advertise school events alongside a table with “take as you need” non-perishable food and clothing items. In the main lobby of the school, tables and chairs set up in a “café style,” where parents sit and visit, or teachers may have one-on-one chats with students during the day. These tables are well utilized; I found myself sitting there frequently when transitioning in and out of the school. Brian, the principal, would often stop and check in with parents who seemed to be regular faces around the school. At lunch, older students (supported by staff) set up a long table in this common area to sell popsicles. The physical space of the school, including both the community space at the east end of the building and the academic wing, lays the foundation of relationship-building as visitors can depend on the space being accessible and welcoming.

In addition to my own observations at Hall, the welcoming environment of the school is touted by Roxana and Gilbert as a key component which allows newcomer parents and family members to be welcomed into the school community, no matter how new they are to Canada or the neighbourhood. When asked what happens at Hall on a daily basis or throughout the school year that makes a difference for newcomer families, Roxana responded

So at Hall, what’s really happening is that the school is always open to the parents... [here] sometimes as a principal or a staff you just go and say hello, introduce yourself, and that makes a relationship so [parents] feel comfortable [and] that you are there if they need any support or if they have any question... I think compared to other schools the parents feel more comfortable coming to the

community schools¹² and getting to know the people because they know that—if they go to the community [room] there's at least one person willing to listen to their concern and helping them.

Above, Roxana is describing an attitude she believes permeates throughout the community school—that all members of the community office, as well as staff throughout the school, are noticeably available to connect with parents and community members. This may be by simply introducing themselves or by answering a question about what time the school-wide Sports Day will end. Within Hall, Roxana described the willingness of staff, volunteers and other visitors to say, “I can't answer this, but I can find out how to help you.”

Simich (2003) reviews myriad studies highlighting the essential need for social networks in supporting refugee resettlement and integration. While her work is in relation to secondary-migration within Canada, the underlying tenet remains the same no matter the phase of the resettlement journey: refugees rely on social ties for support and to mediate the experience of migration, especially during “early resettlement” (p. 577). This fact is responded to organically by individuals within Hall, where the school and community partners serve to provide a social network for newcomers, offering not only access to resources, but also a listening ear and helping hand. Roxana made this experience clear, recalling that

sometimes [parents] come with the questions or the concern that's not *at all* related to us, so its family issues or something—it could be *very* private. But

¹² For explanation and discussion of “community schools,” please refer to sections 2.2 and 2.3.

because they feel very comfortable and they know that there's still one person [who can help].

Roxana expresses a personal comfort that exists between family members and SWIS staff, specifically within a community school. This comfort would not be possible without an intentional focus on relationship-building, which starts with welcoming people into the school environment and ensuring they are able to access resources and support as they need.

4.2.2 “We have to be quite flexible”—Adaptability in action

The second dimension supporting multifaceted relationship-building throughout the Hall community is the adaptable nature in which individuals operate, combined with a degree of flexibility within organizational structures. Being “adaptable” or “flexible” was highlighted by each interviewee in various contexts. Adaptability here speaks to the organic and instinctive approaches of building relationships with all types of partners.

Being adaptable on a personal level

Adaptability on a personal level—individuals responding reactively rather than strictly maintaining pre-determined processes or plans—builds upon the accessibility and personal connection which allows families and community members to access resources located at Hall. When asked what qualities are most essential for a leader of this school to have, given the many competing demands of both academic and community goals, Brian highlighted the necessity of individuals having the ability to be flexible and prioritize what is truly important. Beyond essential organizational skills, Brian described being comfortable and calm within the “organic nature of the school” as

integral core attitudes. These qualities are key for two reasons: first, as a school leader it is impossible to do everything alone, so relinquishing control to others must be accepted. Secondly, the needs of families and students are always changing; thus, the school programs and needs will consistently evolve as well. Roxana echoes this sentiment, recalling that as settlement workers,

we have to be quite flexible working with the families, so we can't just set some rules that work for us... We need to get to know our families that we are working with and then set our routines or rules based on the needs of the family.

Otherwise there is a disconnection and you lose the families in between.

A second aspect of personal adaptability is approaching relationship-building as a process necessitating responsive behaviours. Gloria described this as taking “different approaches in every relationship we have,” an intentional strategy based on needs and expectations. This is built through clear communication and a willingness to meet the partner—whether it be a client or program partner—where they are. This attitude is echoed by Simon in his work at Hall. I asked Simon how he navigates the many voices that exist within the community school, from the parents, the staff, the partner groups, the students, the city and district, and beyond. His answer was simple: “relationships. You [need to] know people, and [that] you're working with common understanding.” In Simon's case, this “common understanding” is prioritizing care for the child as well as the belief that it takes a village to both raise a child and build a supportive community.

Personal adaptability within the Refugee EAL (REAL) course held at Hall appears most clearly when considering the day to day content of the course as well as the ways in which women participate within the class. Karen, the course instructor at the

time of data collection, starts each term she teaches holding a discussion with the women to determine and define what areas they most wish to learn about. In 2017–2018, many women wanted support to study for their citizenship exams; thus, content was heavily centered on Canadian geography and culture. In other cohorts, women have asked for parenting advice or women’s health topics. This adaptability provides the opportunity for women to both personally invest in their learning, as owners of their education, and gives the instructor flexibility regarding what is taught throughout the year. Karen was able to tailor each lesson based on the women’s needs in their moments in life and adapt throughout the year as other topics or issues arose. For instance, during Ramadan—which nearly 100% of the women in the course observed—conversation questions provided by Karen prompted the women to explain the month-long period of reflection and prayer using English, to each other as well as the volunteers in the course.

The curricular flexibility expressed by Karen in our conversations also showcases the systematic adaptability of the REAL course design, where strictly defined learning objectives are not outlined in advance of women joining the course. However, the personal element of adaptability cannot be ignored. To remain true to the responsive nature of the course, where participants are empowered to share their needs and learning goals, the instructor must also align with the teaching philosophy around personalized learning. Additionally, the instructor must feel confident and comfortable in the many unknowns of the course: teaching content they may not have taught before; responding organically to discussions rather than maintaining a strict lesson plan; adjusting the course as women join or leave throughout the year. These potentially

unpredictable aspects have the benefit of allowing women to participate in the class as they are comfortable, but also necessitates an instructor who believes in these benefits and is willing to adapt.

Systematic adaptability

Beyond the personal flexibility which is apparent in staff member attitudes and actions at both Hall and Hope, there also exists a degree of adaptability on a system-wide level. System-wide adaptability refers to processes intentionally in place that allow for, or encourage, responsive behaviours from staff members. These responsive behaviours seen in, and described by, my research participants serve to support the changing needs of families, students, clients, and community members.

As described above, there is deliberate systematic flexibility within the curricular design of the REAL class, to meet the women's self-expressed needs and learning goals. Additionally, beyond the classroom itself, latitude exists regarding *how* students participate within the course. When students first enter the REAL program, the instructor assesses their English level and determines, based on the relative make-up of the class participants, how the class will continue. Those with a higher level of English may take a leadership role, serving as a volunteer tutor in the course rather than entering as student. This allows for women with various levels of English to participate in a way that suits their academic, professional, and personal needs while continuing to build leadership and language skills as part of the class community. In a past cohort, a woman with more advanced English skills and a background in Computer Science began teaching basic computer literacy to women who were particularly interested in

developing this skill area. The flexible nature of course design and entry into the REAL course allows women to participate and build connections while also ensuring skill development regardless of their starting point. Important to note is that these roles are not pre-determined: there is no way to predict the English levels of the women entering the class each day. On an individual level, Karen as the instructor is willing to meet and support each woman as they are, while considering classroom-wide content and approaches that fit a multi-level classroom. This may mean asking those with more English comfort to quiz other students or encouraging them to join a course with more targeted skill development.

At Hall, one aspect of adaptability exists in the flexibility community members have to access the school, whether that be through participating in regular programming, attending a casual drop-in or special event, and beyond. Simon highlights this accessibility and flexible access as a true strength, with there being a “whole host of different ways for people to access the school, and different language groups throughout.” By partnering with over 100 organizations and agencies, Simon and other staff working out of the community room continuously work toward creating an environment that allows families and community members to access the school in numerous ways, whether it be initially through a community-based language group meeting on a Saturday, or a provincially-backed StrongStart program held on weekday mornings. With these partners and programs available at the school in various forms, those I interviewed believe that community members are more able to access the school on their own terms and increase or decrease engagement as desired. While these staff members clearly highlighted their goals of creating an accessible space that

serves the needs of community members, I recognize this conclusion is limited by the perspectives of my research participants as *designers* rather than *users* of the space. To further understand true accessibility, the experience of community members must also be taken into account.

The numerous access points for engagement allows for connectivity between school, family, and community. Returning to Figure 4.1, these layers do not operate in isolation of one another but rather remain connected as the deliberate flexibility for individuals to enter the school and community spaces promote participation and engagement. As indicated above, people are noticeably comfortable entering the school to chat with staff members or drop by for a cup of tea. Roxana recalls the opportunities for family members, especially newcomers, to be involved in the Hall community, sharing that

...at least you can give them some options, you can give them some resources and that's the way they start coming back to the community. And there are lots of programs every day, for the parents. We partner with other agencies or with the settlement workers we have all these programs here, so the parents can stay here at school, they have an option to learn about the education system, they have options to learn about the Canadian culture, learn some skills about whatever they want and also participate in different activities, programs, events and there are lots of events, activities, going on through the year.

These many options are meaningful for community members as there is no pressure to participate in any particular way; rather, there is a menu of choices presented with various levels of commitment available to those who wish to engage.

While Roxana demonstrates the wide range of access points and opportunities for individuals to engage in the Hall community, there is an additional school-wide culture of adaptability regarding how programs come to be designed and offered. According to Simon, the community programs offered at the school are largely decided based on needs as determined through guided conversation circles with families, the Hall Community Council meetings and informal feedback from community members. These various methods for garnering feedback are designed by Simon and other staff in the community room intentionally, to create space for community members to voice opinions on what is needed, desired, and able to be offered.

One example of a program that stemmed from a conversation circle was a multi-generational, first-language reading program. Older members of the community joined children in StrongStart classes at a designated time to read books in their first language (Arabic, Tagalog, Punjabi, Farsi and more) side-by-side an English translation. This initiative came directly from community feedback of the need to engage older community members, as well as those with varied levels of English. This example highlights many aspects of Hall: first, the flexibility of staff at Hall to integrate new initiatives to support newcomers and build community throughout the year. Secondly, the genuine partnership that exists between community programming and academic aims within the school, and third, the belief that we are always learning, no matter our age or place in life.

Of course, when a good idea arises from a community conversation there are many elements to administrative and logistical decision-making that are required to ensure an idea may come to fruition. Some of the challenges facing Hall include time

and space constraints, as well as alignment of expressed need and available services. Brian highlighted an instance of balancing competing demands within the real landscape of limited resources. In the back of the Hall school building, a small gymnasium serves as childminding space for many of the programs that are offered onsite, allowing children to actively learn while their parents do the same in another room. If not used for childminding, the space would provide an opportunity for additional physical education time for educators and their classes. While the current set-up does allow for childminding to occur and students to obtain their physical education in the main gymnasium, this is a simple example (one of many, I am certain) where the reality of limited resources requires strategic decision-making.

Ultimately, logistical considerations and decisions at Hall lie with Simon and Brian, the two employed directly at the school. It is up to them to effectively receive feedback then navigate the many actors within the school community to bring responsive programming to fruition. Simon plainly approaches this decision-making by returning to the needs of the child, as he understands them to be. When needing to choose between two equally beneficial and appropriate partners, he focuses on partnerships that exist closest to the centre (see Figure 4.1). For example, a parent starting their own cooking class for other school parents, may be given priority over a cultural organization in the neighbourhood without direct child ties to the school. This decision-making process of Simon's is further clarified when viewed in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework (1979), as the child (being the individual actor) lies at the centre of the landscape's many layers and complexities.

This section has described the necessity of adaptability, both at a personal and systematic level, when forming relationships to support resettled refugee children and families. The flexible nature of the staff within Hall and Hope allows for relationships to form and develop naturally, within the context of the class, program, or event in which community members participate. Systematic adaptability provides a contextual culture in which relationships can be formed naturally, through various avenues to access the school and programming options. Despite operating within governmental institutions that often demand outcomes supported by quantitative data, the research participants highlight a culture of adaptability driven by the commitment to hear, then respond to, community needs. When considering how resettled refugees are best supported in British Columbia, adaptable structures and behaviours must continue to be explored.

4.2.3 Continuous flow of communication

The final dimension supporting the process of relationship-building is communication, both among individual organizations and between organization and client. Communication is viewed as a key aspect of any successful relationship by staff both within Hall and Hope. Neither of the relationship building processes presented above—welcoming presence and adaptable design—are possible without communication. There must also be mechanisms in place for individuals to first hear each other, observe strengths as well as needs, and then act. Communication must also exist throughout a relationship, not simply at the beginning, for there to be genuine adaptability and support as needs change throughout the relationship. Examples of such ongoing communication were presented by both Hall and Hope staff members. In

this section I first outline how communication impacts relationships between organizations, then between organization and client. These examples ultimately show how communication serves as a necessary component in the process of relationship-building.

Communication between organizations

Throughout the school year, Simon coordinates with over 100 partners who are connected to Hall through donations, programming or other support. The broadest level of collaboration is between the city and the school district, with scheduled meetings occurring three times per year. Representatives at these thrice-yearly meetings include elected Board of Education representatives and city employees from the respective departments of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services and Planning and Building, alongside community council members, district staff, school administrators and community school coordinators. Simon describes these meetings as a space where all the stakeholders are in the same room. He reflected that there is a

connection that is made between a school and a community. That's giving and receiving information with policymakers and decision-makers. So, how do the people who are in the schools or in the community inform how we use our scarce resources. And often, this is an opportunity to make that connection and to have those conversations happen... And then to have a way where that community council can actually share and have a voice, is powerful. And to be informed. Like city planning will present about what's happening and what the developments are. Parks and Rec will share programming, opportunities. The

district will share about different initiatives and they provide direction and help us find a meaning and purpose for what we're doing, in building community. And then we, we are *here* at the roots of the tree.

Simon mentions the roots of the tree, and this image is helpful when considering the many levels and layers that influence resettled refugee children and families. Returning to Figure 4.1, the child exists at the center, with the family and community surrounding. Interspersed throughout these three layers are the staff and administrators within community organizations and the school. Communication must flow continuously between the actors in order for the needs of the community, the family, and the child to be understood and then responded to.

Stemming from one of the district/city meetings Simon described was an assessment tool to understand how Hall is fulfilling each of the elements of the community school and to define how best to move forward regarding programming. Simon shared the assessment template with me and explained that the blank document was used by the Community Council at Hall in conversation circles to discuss each element. The completed chart was then returned to a district/city meeting and reported upon to share learnings from Hall with the wider community. Simon, through feedback from the community, identified that expanding parent engagement in the school and community is a priority for future initiatives. Supported by communication mechanisms in place between the school, the district, and the city, Simon was able to access a resource for the Hall community, assess parent and community member engagement, then strategize ways to move forward with support from district and city partners.

On a more individual level of communication between organizations, many examples were presented of ongoing conversations between Hope and Hall, when planning program logistics. Beyond the REAL course which my research focuses on, Hope hosts a handful of other classes and programs at Hall to support resettled refugee women and their children. When speaking with Brian, I asked directly what he saw as important for a partnership, specifically one similar to that of Hope with Hall, to be successful. His response was immediate:

I definitely think there needs to be lots of communication at the get-go before the programs get put in place, even well before the programs are designed, so that we—both—of our voices can be heard. Obviously, sometimes they have a certain agenda they need to adhere to in terms of what they are delivering, but oftentimes there's flexibility to meet an agenda that we have around parenting, or parenting support, or things that we have noticed within the community that we think they could maybe support us in.

Brian's reflection highlights yet another example of the culture of systematic adaptability, along with the role of communication in building strong relationships. For this to be successful, both parties need to be open to communication and consistent and responsive. Brian continued on to recall a specific instance of open communication leading to responsive action, when Hall was

having issues with our Community Council, getting people involved. We shared with Hope our issue that some of the women didn't feel that they had the [leadership] skills... [Hope] had this idea that fit with their mandate around women's leadership. So they actually organized a women's leadership course,

and we had a number of our community council members take part in that... So that was just through conversation and dialogue and sharing and being open to be a little bit flexible.

Communication, as one dimension of relationship-building, takes intentional effort from both parties to listen to each other and respond appropriately in a given situation. Hope operates in a way that allows them to adapt programs to place, understanding that what works in east Vancouver may not be the right fit for the neighbourhood surrounding Hall. Brian highlights this understanding on behalf of Hope as essential to his role as principal as his school is more than “just a rental space.” Because Hall has partners who are committed to offering programming at the school, consistent communication is essential to ensure that what is being offered does effectively serve the community.

The above examples highlight the intersections within relationship-building, where communication between organizations support systematic adaptability, and systematic adaptability is similarly impossible without a culture of open communication. Similar processes exist on an individual level, between staff in an organization to clients participating in programming.

Communication from organization to client (conversation circles and outreach)

As indicated above, one consistent strategy to receive feedback and build community at Hall is the use of “community conversation circles” hosted by Simon and others at the school, including language translators to ensure participation from the broad community, not simply those with English-speaking skills. Simon often referred to

these conversation circles as a space to identify issues in the community, receive feedback on expanding programming, or, as a specific example, understand what parent engagement looks like and means in different cultural groups. To define what culturally appropriate parent engagement may be, Simon describes having

community conversations [circles] in Arabic, in Farsi, in Tigrinya, English... and we had conversations with the teachers and education assistants, and then, because we work with so many newcomers and a lot of the newcomers are either government-assisted or sponsored through different groups... we'll work with the settlement agencies and the faith groups.

One challenge of this approach is navigating these multiple and varied voices when making decisions. Simon meets this challenge by returning to the foundational relationship built on common understanding. When asked what this common understanding was, he responded that it is "care, specifically focused around students, children, families, and elders. And community members." Organizations who partner with Hall must understand that these voices matter and that the school, as part of the community, serves more than just the child.

When Simon is presented with different views from multiple actors who are active in Hall, he returns to the parents, bringing questions back to the community and looking for common themes or consensus. Beyond hosting conversation circles, the Community Council at Hall serves as a clear entity toward which feedback and dialogue may be directed. Community Councils are the community school equivalent of a Parent Advisory Council, with the key difference being that there are members who do not have children in the schools. The Community Council at Hall meets monthly throughout the

school year and provides space for any member of the community—whether they be a parent, an owner of a neighbouring business, or a member of a nearby church—to participate, learn and respond.

Within Hope, communication between organization and client has structured components similar to the conversation circles and Council meetings at Hall, as well as distinct processes. When describing the intake process for women starting the REAL class at Hall, Gloria highlighted the role of Hope outreach workers who are also members of the communities in which they work and who speak the same language(s). She shared that intake to a Hope program often stems from natural connections, where an outreach worker may go “to public places, where immigrant and refugee women gather and they just make the connections.” This allows newcomer women to gain initial exposure to Hope opportunities without the potential barrier of traveling to a certain location or registering far in advance for a program. It is also very common for women to refer their friends, family members, and others in their community to Hope, thus bridging connections between newcomers. Both of these examples highlight the one-on-one nature of communication between Hope and newcomer women, establishing from the very start a sense of personal connection to Metro Vancouver and to the organization.

In this section, I highlighted processes that enable ongoing and genuine communication as one aspect of building authentic relationships. The words of Brian, Gloria, and Simon support my own observations made both within Hall and the Hope-led REAL course. Through my time meeting with staff members and listening to their interactions and reflections, I gained a true sense of care for their partnerships and knowledge that strong partnerships do not happen without intentionality. Their

intentionality comes in the form of open communication as staff choose to listen and respond to community concerns through established processes for feedback.

4.3 Discussion

“Healthy children have healthy families” – Simon

Relationships, as expressed by staff working in this partnership, are built through processes of actively welcoming through personal presence, adaptability, and communication. Each component plays an essential role in forming and building genuine relationships. I think of these components as a relationship-building “recipe for success” as without one dimension, the others will not be as strong and the outcome will be incomplete. This chapter illustrates many examples of one-to-one relationships, and when viewing each of these relationships as part of the ecological whole, we see that each process and relationship serves to build a network of support. These networks are built between refugee families as shared by Roxana and Karen, between school staff, family and children, as shared by Simon and Gilbert, and between organizations as highlighted by Gloria and Brian. Karen also speaks to the personal relationships that enter into the REAL course, between Hope staff and client, and among the women themselves.

The importance of relationships in supporting resettled refugee children and families cannot be overstated. Simon shared with me the conviction that “healthy children have healthy families.” When considering the many actors who play a role in supporting “healthy families,” especially when those families are newcomers to Canada, it is impossible to work in isolation, without partnerships or relationships. From the

private sponsors of a refugee family, to the settlement workers both in schools and in community organizations, to the faith-groups, the educators and school staff: all of these individuals play a role in influencing the arrival and integration of a refugee family. This is in addition to the primary role the refugee child and family members play themselves, as they too are part of the relationship-building processes described in this chapter. Their agency and decision-making of participating in their new communities cannot be discounted. Unfortunately, the scope of this study did not allow for resettled refugee perspectives to be directly incorporated. While all research participants shared examples of the *choice* families have in engaging in the Hall community or within Hope programming, these views are inherently limited as participants were speaking from their perspective and experiences as staff members.

When discussing how Roxana and Gilbert work together both at Hall and their other schools, Gilbert adamantly expressed that this type of work is something “no one can do by himself.” Newcomers cannot be supported by only one settlement worker or one institution; rather, we all must be present and willing to play a role in supporting newcomers adjust to their new lives. When grappling with the role of the community in the school, Simon remembered a conversation where the “community council chair said, you know what, this is why she loves this place. Everybody can come here, everybody can help. It takes a village to raise a child.”

Considerations of relationship-building

None of the dimensions come without challenges, particularly when considering adaptability and communication. In this section, I highlight some of the challenges expressed during interviews as well as those I anticipate being present.

Communication as part of building relationships is essential but does not come without challenges. There are the very real constraints of limited time and availability; while the staff at Hall do a fantastic job adapting to last-minute demands, and being available for child and family support, there remains limited physical time and staff availability. It is clear how quickly Simon, Brian, Roxana, and Gilbert must switch gears in their day-to-day work to balance their responsibilities at the school, community, and district levels. Genuine communication, and overall relationship-building, takes time. For Simon, he doesn't "really consider that I've understood anything about a community until three years... when I know the grandparents, then I feel like I've arrived." Roxana and Gilbert have worked in their roles for ten years each, yet they continue to learn and adapt to newcomer needs each and every day. While limited time did not appear to explicitly impede relationship-building at Hall, it is a factor that must be considered as a cost of open and ongoing dialogue to respond to community needs.

Additional considerations include language and cultural differences that exist among families in the school community as well as among students, families, and staff members. Brian provided the simple example of promoting family engagement by offering food at after-school events, oftentimes allowing the women in a family to bring their children without having the pressure of preparing dinner at home. Small considerations such as this are built over time through a willingness to listen to others

and understand potential barriers for engagement. Other examples include hiring settlement workers such as Roxana and Gilbert who can speak the native languages of many of the newcomers to Hall and hosting Tigrinya cultural groups on Saturdays. These steps are taken to allow those who have lower commands of English to more comfortably access the school. An additional resource available to district settlement workers is hiring third-party translators when there is a need. While language and cultural differences have the potential to serve as barriers for supporting newcomers, staff at Hall have made efforts to mitigate these differences.

Presented in this chapter are the processes that enable relationship-building as a key factor in supporting resettled refugee children and their families. Relationships are at the core of the work by staff at Hope and Hall. Starting with open and honest communication, providing personal presence, and allowing for systematic and personal flexibility throughout the work all lead to relationships that are genuine and effective.

Reflection

Sitting down to write findings is... an experience not for the faint of heart. The questions flood in, pile up, form inescapable doubts—can I do justice to this work? How can I, as the current keeper of this beautiful knowledge, take what has been shared with me and create a product of value? Can this product be of value to more than just myself?

What

*words do I choose,
sentences do I craft,
experiences do I share,*

do I do?

My response to all this? Start with one word, a word. Form sentences from bullet points.

Just begin, follow the pathway, and the destination will come.

Chapter 5: Practices Shaped through Shared Values

“We are what we treasure” —Gilbert

5.1 Introduction

Communication, as highlighted in Chapter 4, forms one piece of the successful relationship-building recipe. In this chapter, I discuss the importance of practices based on shared values to develop partnerships that support resettled refugee children and families. From a partnership perspective, common values cannot be defined or understood without communication; thus, this chapter expands on themes that often arose during conversations around transparent communication. When considering the orientation of the child at the centre of this analysis, I return to the mapping in figure 4.1. Showcased in this figure are some of the overlapping actors and institutions ultimately affecting the resettled child in the centre. Given the scope of this study I focus solely on the institutions and actors beginning with the city and district, moving inward.

What are the common values shared by staff at Hope and Hall? And, why are they important when considering partnerships between schools and community organizations? Based on my conversations with research participants, the values they share include a valuation of humanitarianism, an orientation towards hospitable reception of newcomers, and centralization of skill development and capacity building. The importance of these values become apparent as respondents narrated how they

make decisions on utilization of limited resources, including whom to partner with, what to offer, and to what extent. I also propose that the effectiveness of programs and initiatives is increased when stakeholders understand and share each other's values. In this chapter, I share evidence of these shared values from Hope and Hall staff which ultimately influence their practices when supporting resettled refugees.

To draw upon these common values in a partnership and put them into practice, one first must understand respective values of the self and others. When considering Hall, foundational values begin with the mandate of a community school as discussed in Chapter 2. When asked if there is a visible difference when the school by design is more connected to the community, Roxana emphatically agreed this is critical in supporting newcomers to Canada. Gilbert shared that beyond the stated values in district and school level policies, there is also the unstated culture of the school where emphasis is placed on holistic support of newcomers and families in need. With Hope, their organizational values are explicit in their mission statement. Hope employees live out their organizational mission, vision, and values visibly in the services and programs offered including the REAL class my research focuses on.

5.2 Connecting with others—the value of community

“It takes a village.” —Simon

Community is an elusive term. Present in a few of my research interviews were discussions of how community is defined or how this has shifted over time when working in education or resettlement. Recalling Epstein's (1995) redefinition of community, I consider how community can be conceptualized as connection with those

in your neighbourhood of residence, from your country of origin, your profession, or any number of other shared experiences. The importance of building community is stressed as critical by staff at both Hall and Hope, but also at a macro-level as Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (2017a) highlights “connecting with others” as an essential component of the resettlement process for newcomers, whether that is realized through immigrant-serving organizations (such as Hope), social clubs or associations, sports teams, places of worship or beyond.

How staff at Hall and Hope independently demonstrate their belief in community differs; yet, despite these difference, their approaches to collaboration commonly highlight the shared practice and value of building community in their respective professional spaces. As explored in Chapter 2, the notion of community is not without contestation, and I believe that assumptions made of “what” or “who” constitutes community must be questioned. Fully exploring the questions of “what” or “who” is community, and who do these definitions simultaneously include or exclude, was not feasible within the scope of this study. However, throughout my research interviews, questions and conversations centering the meaning of community continuously arose. This led me to the understanding that within this partnership context, as expressed by research participants, community is about making personal connections with other people around you.

5.2.1 Neighbourhood-based programming and connection

Hope, as a service providing organization, uses a place-based model where programs are held off-site from their office within the communities that they serve.

Gloria shared that while this approach creates some challenges in connecting participants from one program to the broader Hope network, the model ultimately serves to support individuals within their own communities, allowing for ease of access to programming that is specialized for the community. According to the Hope Mission, Vision, and Values (n.d.), their model of newcomer integration relies on the belief that through neighborhood-based programming, women and children will be supported to participate fully in Canadian life. This aim indicates the value of developing community on a micro-scale (neighbourhood) through person-to-person connection, strengthens the sense of community at the macro-level (country) as well.

Resulting from the neighbourhood-based approach Hope takes, women and children participating in courses and programming are often able to attend a class close to their home, reducing the need for potentially long travel and transportation arrangements. Beyond this ease of access (the benefits of which are many, but not to be explored in-depth here), Hope is also able to adapt more easily to the needs of the community in which they work. This is exemplified in the REAL course held at Hall: the women in the cohort during my data collection period were nearly all originally from Afghanistan. This homogeneity in country of origin allowed Karen to adapt content more directly to her class, as the women had similar cultural and religious backgrounds as well as previous experiences with public education. She could take into account the effects of Ramadan on the course, understanding that most women would observe this period and may be unable to participate in the class as usual. Hosting the REAL course in a neighbourhood-based setting encourages adaptations to be made based on the community of women and children who form the course.

Neighbourhood-based programming not only supports participants in accessing services and support, but also promotes a sense of belonging for newcomers in their new community. This is done through the formulation of Hope' English language curriculum incorporating the guiding themes of control, connection, and meaning as identified by Wilbur (2017). Connection refers specifically to facilitating women and children participants to connect with one another *as well as* with their new communities (Wilbur, 2017, p. 9). By holding programs in local schools, neighbourhood houses¹³, churches or community centres, Hope creates a space for connection by introducing women and their children to sites or services that may have been unfamiliar to them. One of Hope's organizational values is to work with a spirit of collaboration, "knowing that we are stronger together in providing transformative services to immigrants and refugees" (Website, Community Organization). The neighbourhood-based approach Hope uses showcases their deep commitment to building community, both in support of their clients as well as in partnership with other organizations.

5.2.2 City and district investment

The old adage "put your money where your mouth is," while playful, serves a purpose in assessing what an organization or individual cares about. Immediately upon starting this research, I recognized the investment of the district to intentionally build community through their schools. While I did not obtain specific funding agreements in

¹³ Neighbourhood Houses are unique centres for community development that are locally governed. For more information of Neighbourhood Houses in British Columbia, please visit anhbc.org.

my research¹⁴, they have a distinct mandate surrounding “community schools” with eight of their 49 schools falling under this categorization. Starting in 1976 stemming from a partnership between the city and the local school district, community schools are guided by the following values:

- Inclusiveness
- Self-determination & self-help
- Shared resources — human, physical and financial
- Leadership development
- Lifelong learning
- Interagency coordination, cooperation and collaboration
- Neighbourhood-based action
- Sustainability (Website, School District)

Locally, the district started with just one community school serving a few hundred students in 1976, while they now serve both elementary and secondary students across the district. These schools initially existed as any other public school but were redefined and restructured as “community schools” over the last four decades. As seen in the values above, the school district recognizes and values community by actively pursuing collaboration across agencies, including shared resources, as well as neighbourhood-based support and action.

¹⁴ Financial support for community school programming was referenced in a few of my conversations at Hall; however, the district budget documents I obtained do not clearly outline their financial investment.

The district's valuation of community is not simply evident in publicly available documents but is also shown in the district-wide community meetings held three times per year. According to Simon, these meetings are for stakeholders from the "roots of the tree to the very top" to learn from one another in the same space. The city planning department hears from the community school coordinators, who take back information and resources to their sites—it is a continuous cycle of communication and support based on the understanding that community matters. This is based also on the understanding that no one entity can fully support a person alone—whether that be a newcomer to Canada, a Canadian-born citizen, or anyone in between. As the district states, "we believe it takes a whole community to raise a healthy child. Healthy children and healthy families in turn build healthy communities" (Website, School District).

As of 2016, Metro Vancouver had a population of over 2.4 million people (Statistics Canada, 2017b). The city in which my research took place is home to over 230,000 people across nearly 100 square kilometres, and works closely with the school district on a number of priorities. As laid out in the city's four-year financial plan, they are partnering to develop daycare centres on school sites, bring public library resources to schools, and upgrade school-based recreation sites. In addition to these projects is the financial investment in the operation of community schools. The city budgets nearly half a million dollars per year toward a "community school grant" with costs projected for 2022 reaching \$503,000 (Financial Plan, City). This money is simply one form of financial support community schools such as Hall receives; according to both Brian and Simon the school applies for and receives grants and individual donations regularly throughout the year. However, it is unique within the context of British Columbia for a

city to partner so consistently with a school district to promote and maintain the existence of community schools. While community schools exist across the Lower Mainland, core funding comes from the provincial Ministry of Education (Vancouver School Board, n.d.), business and agency partners (School District No. 43: Community School Programs) or local entities (Bowen Island Community School). In contrast, the city has continuously committed funds to develop and strengthen community schools for over 40 years, laying the foundation of support.

Valuing community-building as a practice and understand the strength of working in collaboration is evident within the structures of Hope and Hall as well as in the behaviours and attitudes of their staff. During my interview with Brian, he referenced his work as principal at Hall, sharing that

you don't do well in a school like this unless you're listening to people's voices. And so those decisions [of program offerings, school availability, etc.] are often made through staff and collaboration, and staff needs and listening to the community itself and what they feel the needs are.

Both Hope and Hall staff whom I interviewed share the belief that a partnership and the corresponding programs must be built for, in, and with the communities they serve. This shared value allows for the segmented placements of the child, the family, and the community members highlighted in Figure 4.1 to be overcome through interconnected individuals who transcend those defined roles via their positions as staff, administrators and teachers. When considering how schools and communities work together to support resettled refugees, this interconnectedness as seen through the

shared practice of building community in relation to the child is what promotes effective and successful partnerships.

5.3 Actively supporting newcomers

“Other schools can learn from this community.” —Gilbert

The role of civil society in immigration is often categorized through the lens of economic benefit, stemming from a neoliberal cultural orientation. However, while both Hall and Hope certainly operate within this reality, my research reveals a strong humanitarian foundation to their respective approaches supporting newcomers. Within the neighbourhood, Gilbert recalls:

I want to be selfish to some extent that Hall and [neighbouring secondary school] are the most advanced schools in terms of welcoming newcomers [*Roxana in background voicing agreement*]. And this didn't happen in a day, in a week, it happened through time and a long-term commitment to and of people who have been devoted to this process and this community. So, it has become a way of doing things, a tradition of doing things, but it didn't happen over day it happened in the long term. And I think many schools can benefit from what we are doing here. Other schools can learn from this community.

Relating back to the guiding values behind community schools in the district, Gilbert and Roxana both agree that traditions developed within Hall and the local secondary school, as community schools, have been different. Together, their experiences working with newcomer students and families in both community and traditional schools suggest, using Gilbert's words, “it is more likely for community

schools to meet the needs of newcomers”. While their experiences are hardly exhaustive, they confirm what is publicly stated by the district: that interagency collaboration, a spirit of inclusivity, and neighbourhood-based action do make a difference in supporting learners of all backgrounds (Website, School District). While the district mandate around community schools does not explicitly highlight the impact on newcomers, these values are particularly impactful for those resettling to Canada.

Gilbert continued to recall that “*this community* has some key characteristics that makes it unique. And [these characteristics], becomes, I think, the cement of making sure that the process of integrating into the school system and the community to happen.” He continues to describe these characteristics as the

values carried by people within the community. I *think*, in this particular community we have people who believe in some values. There is a saying, I think that, “we are what we treasure”—something like that. In this community here, people treasure the idea of supporting newcomers... supporting people who are in *need* of something. And that is the basis, the foundation of the work being done here. To be able to make sure that newcomers, they feel they belong to the community.

Outlined here is the clarity of values that exist within Hall, specifically surrounding supporting newcomers in their community. The voices of Roxana and Gilbert cannot be used to represent the perspectives of the educators, administrators, or other school-based staff; however, given the position they have as settlement workers, Roxana and Gilbert have the unique perspective of working with both families and children, and seeing resources change over time and across schools. Their perspectives are critical

in understanding community values, as related to supporting resettled refugees. To them, actively welcoming newcomers means encouraging belonging, developing a sense of community, and encouraging skill development which is exemplified through their words.

Hope, given their organizational focus serving immigrant women and children, explicitly showcases their intention and foundational value of actively supporting newcomers in Canada. The mission of Hope (n.d.) is to "...empower immigrant and refugee women and children to fully participate in Canadian life through neighbourhood-based programs" (Website, Community Organization). This mission combined with their organizational values highlight the actions which underscore their intent to actively support newcomers. One value specifically highlights this intentional approach: Hope "reaches out to the most barriered and vulnerable immigrants and refugees to support them to make a successful transition into life in a new land" (Website, Community Organization). By reaching out to immigrants and refugees, Hope forms a bridge between those in need and services or programs available to them.

Without this value of welcoming newcomers, Roxana and Gilbert articulate that Hall would operate as many other schools do—without the unique care and resources made available in low-barrier ways to the community. In conclusion of this section outlining support for newcomers as a key value held by both staff at Hall and Hope, Gilbert identifies the essential role these values play in their work:

So there *must be* somewhere underground, without being said—without saying it—*key values* driving people in the community to make this school very unique. And, eventually people who are coming from somewhere else, come to teach here, to be part

of this complex work of helping newcomers. Those people coming in, they must carry those values otherwise they will be ejected very quickly. If you come to this community and you don't come in with those values, I think very quickly people feel that... they don't belong to this community... and those who stay here for many years are indeed people who are strong on those values of caring for other people. And this process, this long-term process of making sure that those values are embedded into daily actions are in fact the cement creating the uniqueness of this community.

While he speaks of staff members in the school community and their individual values, I believe that a similar alignment in values is essential for long-lasting external partnerships as well. This is seen in the work Hope does within Hall as both organizations are dedicated to actively supporting newcomers. While this dedication presents itself in various ways (in the classroom, in the community space, in program offerings, etc), the core value remains the same and supports a strong partnership. Both the Hall and Hope community members envision an environment that welcome newcomers and promotes engagement on various levels. This core value is strengthened by the additional shared belief around the aim to build capacity and support individual empowerment, as showcased in the next section.

5.4 Empowerment through capacity building

In this section, I explore empowerment through capacity-building as a common value in the approach taken to support resettled refugee children and families within both Hope and Hall. I first clarify this meaning as used by research participants then

describe the ways in which the focus on capacity-building comes to fruition both in Hall and Hope.

5.4.1 Defining capacity building

Capacity building as seen in this research refers to the attention paid to skill development opportunities for those families and individuals within the communities. Capacity-building was the term of choice by all of my research participants; thus, while capacity-building may refer to many things in academic literature, it is their usage that I return to: the development of skills based on individual interest and ability. My research participants did not define capacity-building as strictly to bolster skills valued in the workplace for economic benefit; rather, their focus related back to lifelong learning, self-sufficiency, and a sense of belonging, along with the development of personal empowerment and independence. Resettled refugee families are invited to participate in activities and initiatives that are aimed at empowerment and self-growth, as defined by those participating. Outlined in this section are examples of such opportunities for capacity-building and how Hope and Hall systematically support empowerment. Key to remember are the multiple entry points refugee families have when participating in capacity-building initiatives—as explored in Chapter 4, both Hall and Hope systematically allow for great latitude in how and when community members access programs and the programming processes.

5.4.2 Empowerment and building capacity

The mission statement of Hope, “to empower immigrant and refugee women and children to fully participate in Canadian life through neighbourhood-based programs,” clearly identifies empowerment leading to engagement and participation as the key aim guiding their work. While mission statements allow for assessment of what is publicly of value to an organization through a superficial glance, the great beauty of interviews, and spending time onsite with research participants, is the opportunity to deepen understanding of context that is not publicly available. To gain a sense of what empowerment means within the context of Hope and how this presents as a core value, I look to the words of both Karen and Gloria, as staff members working in various capacities of the organization.

When speaking with Gloria, I shared with her my observations of women in the REAL course at Hall supporting one another during classes. This conversation related back to the intake process for women entering the course—knowing that participants join the class throughout the year with varying levels of English, I was curious how this was managed. What both Gloria and Karen shared relates directly back to one of the core values of Hope, that “volunteerism [is] at the core of all we do” (Hope “About Us: Mission, Vision, & Values”, n.d.). When women enter the course with higher levels of English than the current course content, there are many pathways that allow them to participate in a way that builds community while also promoting skill development. As mentioned in Chapter 4, one woman with a background in technology started a digital literacy course for others. Other times a woman with higher levels of English literacy will enter the course officially as a volunteer, rather than a student. Karen and the Hope

outreach worker, as staff members onsite daily during the course, work together to intentionally create space for women to develop skills that match their own needs and wants. Women are encouraged to share their ideas for skill development, leading to greater engagement and individual sense of empowerment.

This core value also translates to engagement beyond the REAL course conclusion as women are connected to the many other opportunities within Hope and partner agencies, including leadership-specific programs or employment training classes. If additional training is not what a woman is looking for, there are options to volunteer more broadly within the Hope community. These opportunities are promoted through the Hope volunteer coordinator, who manages volunteerism throughout all of the organizational programming. As Gloria describes

...we want with our volunteer coordinator—we want for her to focus on opportunities for those women who are in a better, the level of English is a little bit higher and they want to continue development. What are the opportunities in terms of volunteering with different programs in Hope, so they can understand the whole organization... We want to complete the whole circle. How they can gain experience, in office, in program, in all those areas that might help them to define or decide which career they might want to take. If they are ready for employment. Or if they just really want to be in a place where they want to develop social relationships.

Gloria highlights the belief that there is no right or wrong way for a woman and her child to participate or engage. She speaks of a refugee's "journey of integration... [where they may ask themselves] Why do I live here? Why do I get all this? And, what is

the expectation of me once I am in a better place?” In her work, Gloria seeks to support newcomer women with refugee backgrounds settling in Canada in exploring these questions to ultimately reinforce the resettlement process. She continues to describe how Hope staff promote empowerment and capacity building through their programs by analyzing internally our power and privilege... and how we bring that to a more balanced level. That when we work with these women as well, how we support them to empower themselves. To do their work, to find meaning. If we can't really provide a stable full-time job, at least the time that we provide is meaningful and also allow them to learn other skills, you know, ongoing learning within the organization and the people we serve.

What Gloria is highlighting is an intentional approach to empowerment, with the understanding that empowerment and capacity building are ongoing processes for both individuals and organizations. As she states, Hope as an organization is internally very aware of this dynamic. Women entering their programming are supported with opportunities to build capacity in whatever way is fitting for them at that time.

A similar attitude of a strengths-based approach to empowerment opportunities exist within Hall as well. Roxana describes the value of parents and family members volunteering in the school community as they are able, taking their strengths and experiences to share with others. Roxana shares that

there are lots of options for [families] to get involved as volunteering, not specifically in the classroom but within the community, which is sometimes a better options for the parents because of the language barrier, they don't feel comfortable getting in the classroom, or basically, they are not able to

communicate and have some level of English that they can participate in the classroom activities... but they can help the other parents in the community. And [Hall] provide breakfast, lunch, snack, after school programs—So for all of that, we always need volunteers and usually the new parents when they start getting to know the community, eventually in a year or two, they will come and participate. To help with the community events, with the programs running.

Roxana describes capacity-building through a strengths-based approach, suggesting that family members may not “have some level of English... but they can help the other parents in the community” or serve in ways that do not require specific language skills. Rather than simply seeing a language deficit, Roxana illustrates opportunities for strengths to be shared and developed. Families and children are invited to participate with the recognition from staff members that the children and families in their communities have experiences to share and to contribute. Within Hall, community members often apply for grants through multiple organizations with recent examples of successful funding coming from the Vancouver Foundation through the Neighbourhood Small Grants initiative. Brian and Simon both shared that in 2017–2018, seven Neighbourhood Small Grants were successfully obtained for the Hall community, applied for and implemented by local families or staff. Brian described these as “small celebrations” brought to the community, by the community. Simon touted the great success of these events that parents and community members planned, including a Mexican Independence Day celebration with halal food, traditional games and artefacts, and a piñata. This event along with the others, were available to students, families, and community members to, in Simon’s words, “self-select their participation”

as they were held after-school and onsite in the gym. According to Simon, other events that the community received funding for and implemented included a women's group who hosted intergenerational Arabic storytelling with art; a Black History celebration hosted by a group of parents; and a community project caring for homeless people.

Beyond these grant-funded initiatives, there is also clear evidence of smaller scale projects to support peer learning within the Hall community. When I first visited the school to meet with Simon in fall 2017, he showed me fliers advertising courses at Hall developed and taught by immigrant women in their school community to bring other parents together through cooking classes, learning to drive, and more. Hall provides resources and support for these types of initiatives that not only encourage independent capacity-building and skill development, but simultaneously build community. Those leading the classes or applying for grants are proactively finding ways to share their skills and strengths with the community, encouraging others to participate while building upon their own leadership skills and engagement.

What this shared core value of individual empowerment means, is that staff at both Hall and Hope are intentionally building and maintaining opportunities for resettled refugees to not just *participate* in the community, but to *lead* as well. There are no prescribed right or wrong ways to do so. There is simply the recognition that we all have experiences and strengths to share and that this should be encouraged rather than tampered down to fit into a pre-determined box.

5.5 Discussion

In this chapter, I present the practices both Hope and Hall have that are grounded in three foundational shared values: valuation of humanitarianism, welcoming newcomers, and prioritizing opportunities for skill development and capacity building. Sharing these values allows for Hope and Hall to more effectively work together, bridging gaps between resource availability and programmatic focuses. Additionally, as Simon, Roxana, and Gloria all share, recognizing the strengths of each family and community members and providing pathways for contribution, allows for greater community connection and sense of belonging. In his interview, Brian shared that their families, students, and community members often say that Hall is home. It is their home which they return to after studying there or attending a community program. This connection of school to community, rather than isolation of the two entities provides essential representation of both Epstein's (1995) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) assessments of partnerships and child development.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1: Looking back

In this thesis, I conclude that Hall and Hope work in partnership through the use of key practices to build relationships, as well as shared values to support resettled refugees. The REAL course serves as an entry point to examine this partnership and provides specific context to examine how schools and communities work together to support resettled refugees. This partnership is effective in supporting newcomers due in part to the understanding of what both entities are working to achieve: communities that are stronger together, recognize strengths in individuals, and view the child as part of a larger ecosystem that includes the family and the community. In this final chapter, I expand on this conclusion, highlight additional challenges when considering partnerships such as the one explored here, and pose questions for further research.

In Chapter 4, I outline the key characteristics of relationship-building as seen through staff at Hope and Hall, and how collaboration between these entities serves resettled refugees. Through Roxana and Gilbert, we learn that Hall serves as a welcoming environment for newcomer families through their available resources, personal and consistent support, and many optional entry points for participation. These features encourage refugee families, including their children, to connect to their new community leading to genuine relationship and engagement. This is similarly echoed by Gloria and Karen regarding Hope: their organizational and individual flexibility allows immigrant and refugee women to engage in programming that recognizes and builds

upon their strengths. To achieve these outcomes, communication throughout relationship-building is essential, between partner entities and between teacher and student or staff member and parent.

The process of relationship-building as explored here is complex and multi-faceted. What remains clear and simple to interpret, however, is the clarity in which research participants referenced the importance of relationships in their work—between each other, their organizational partners, and the communities which they serve. Utilizing Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model aids in mapping the many actors and institutions within which relationships may be built. The micro, meso, and macro layers mapped out in Chapter 4 helps to understand where relationships exist and how they serve and support resettled refugees. This comes down to, as Simon echoes the philosophy of the school district, that “healthy children have healthy families” (Website, School District). Widen this view, and we can extrapolate that healthy families have healthy communities. Through the evidence shared in this study, supported by the work of Joyce Epstein (1995, 1997) I argue that a school cannot adequately support a resettled refugee child without recognizing and responding to these sentiments.

In Chapter 5, I thematically explored shared values and the practices rooted in these values within Hope and Hall. Common values support the effectiveness of partnerships as they provide a common foundation from which to operate. Gilbert expressed how the Hall community, both historically and today, is committed to actively supporting newcomers or those in need. This commitment allows for an organization such as Hope, whose mission is to serve immigrant and refugee women and children, to pinpoint a common value that allows for partnerships to begin and be sustained.

Without common values, and the transparent communication leading to this understanding, I conclude that a partnership between school and community—represented by Hall and Hope—would be far less effective, if not impossible.

When considering how schools and communities work together to support resettled refugee children and families, it is impossible to ignore the many people and entities who are involved in this work. With multiple actors involved, there is high potential for competing rather than aligned priorities, and dissonant rather than harmonious values. However, what we see in this partnership between Hope and Hall, is that the many voices present in the landscape of supporting resettled refugees can be more clearly understood when viewed through the mapping in Figure 4.1. Returning to the needs of the child, as Simon does, helps to prioritize decision-making, while staff at Hope orient their programming approaches toward the family (in their case, specifically women) members and children.

6.2 Missing pieces in the resettlement puzzle

At the end of Chapter 5, I reference how Epstein's (1995) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theories and frameworks for partnerships and child development are particularly compelling when considered shared values between school and community. I wish to expand upon this in future work, as the resettlement experience for refugees is unique as related to broad immigrant integration. Understanding the public school as part of the resettlement sector—based on Epstein's redefinitions of school, family and community—can be of benefit to assess and improve public schooling practices for resettled refugees in Canada. This one study, of one partnership, is not sufficient to

create a model for practice for other schools, especially those who do not have a history and systematic practice of engaging with their community.

In our interview together, Gilbert highlighted two key components that also need addressing when considering the school in resettlement and how schools and communities can work together. First, Gilbert alludes to the missing voices in immigrant (specifically those of refugee backgrounds) integration, sharing that among all the actors and entities present in resettlement decision-making, there must be room for the newcomer's voice and perspective to be accounted for as well. Roxana and Gilbert both mentioned their role as simply one piece of the integration puzzle, with an equally important piece being the individuals resettling as well. For support from schools and communities to be effective, Gilbert believes that newcomers must be "willing... to feel 'I will do anything I can to be part of this community.'" He is referring to the newcomer's individual sense of agency in developing personal connections and ultimately identifying as part of a new community. This sense of belonging is not something that can be forced upon anyone. Understanding of practices and partnerships that support resettled refugees will be enhanced by incorporating the experiences and perspectives of newcomers themselves.

The second area that Gilbert highlighted as essential for consideration is the role of teacher professional development in supporting resettled refugees. He highlighted that preparing teachers to understand trauma and diverse life experiences as vital to success in the classroom and in the community. While my research did not incorporate the views or experiences of K—8 classroom teachers at Hall, I would be remiss to ignore this reflection from Gilbert. From his perspective as a settlement worker, it is

essential for educators to be prepared through their university training to enter a classroom where students are seen first as children, with a variety of background experiences that may include trauma connected to displacement. For me, Gilbert's reflections also connect with Young's (1986) call to radicalize the notion of community and use a politics of difference to ensure equal space for divergent voices and perspectives. While my study primarily focused on what works in school and community partnerships, I am also compelled to consider where there may be room for growth.

6.3 Further Inquiry

To further this research, I propose an expanded examination of settlement service organizations, such as Hope, to gain a systematic understanding of existing partnerships between various schools and community organizations throughout British Columbia and Canada. While the federally-funded Local Immigration Partnership initiative provides a setting for partners to share experiences and lessons learned, to my understanding this is underutilized insofar as it incorporates deep examination of *public schooling* in resettlement (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2013). My understanding is based on conversations had with resettlement staff working in rural areas, discussions with members of various Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada, and my own observations in practitioner conferences and workshops. In a practical sense, my wish is to collate best practices along with systems and policies that hinder partnerships, to make policy recommendations that incorporate the role of the public school in resettlement.

An additional area for further research is exploring the ways in which knowledge is shared between community-based practitioners—such as teachers, settlement workers, and service providers—and university researchers and decision-makers. This conclusion stems from experiences expressed by Gilbert, who shared that while universities may say they wish to further engage community members in knowledge sharing, it is not seen sufficiently in action. He specifically references university-based teacher education in this assessment, highlighting that practitioners in the field of resettlement have key knowledge and experiences that are of value in preparing new educators. Gilbert describes this as a circulation of knowledge and ideas, from communities to universities, so that “people from the community can come to the universities and teach. Teach practical things.” Gilbert alludes to my own dedication to taking a strengths-based approach to research and learning, as he indicates that expertise comes not only from those *researching* but also those *practicing* in the field.

Based on this study, I first conclude that support for resettled refugees can be effectively achieved when schools and communities partner together, recognizing the strengths in each other and building upon them to best serve their children and families. Secondly, I propose that when schools and community organizations form and maintain partnerships, they consider the key characteristics outlined in this work. Studying Hope and Hall allowed me insight to a partnership that is effective in supporting resettled refugees insofar as it promotes their genuine engagement through multiple entry points in their new community.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview guide

Understanding communities of support for resettled refugee children and their families

Research Question: How do schools and communities work together to support refugee families and their students?

Interview Guide (semi-structured)

Background:

- What is your position and how long have you served in this role?
 - What did you do previously?
 - What led you to this work?
- Comparing this program to others you've engaged with, is this partnership unique to you? How so?

General expertise:

- What are the goals of this program? What are your individual goals in your work?
- What is the role of the school in this partnership? What is the role of Hope in this partnership?
- What is one wish you have when considering your work in schools/with community organizations?
- What is one wish you have for this specific partnership?

- What does this program do well? What is MOST important for the success of this type of program?
- Thinking back over your years of experience, can you recall a situation that was particularly motivating for you?

Student-centered:

- Can you recall an instance or scenario in this program where you felt you were making an impact in the lives of refugee women and their children?
- How do you see your work as supporting refugee students?
- What do you understand the role of the school/the community to be in the scope of supporting refugee children?

Appendix B: Documentation of consent

Consent Form for Research Participants

Title of Project: Understanding communities of support for resettled refugee children and their families

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully.

I. STUDY TEAM

Who is conducting the study?

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Hongxia Shan, Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia (UBC)
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Co-Investigator:

Rachel Goossen, M.A. Student
Department of Educational Studies, University of British Columbia (UBC)

This research is being conducted as part of Ms. Goossen's Master's thesis. As such, the study will be part of a published document accessible to the public through the University of British Columbia cIRcle digital repository.

II. INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

Why are we doing this study?

This study is being completed to better understand what policies and practices support school/community partnerships and will contribute practical knowledge to both the school and community organization. My study seeks to answer the question: "how do schools and communities work together to support refugee families and their students?"

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are involved in the design and delivery of the program as an administrator, instructor, or essential staff member.

III. STUDY PROCEDURES

How will the study be done?

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to be part of two semi-structured interviews. These will last up to one hour each, and take place at a public location that is easily accessible to you (workplace, local coffee shop, etc.).

The interviews will be about your knowledge of the program, your experience working in this partnership specifically, and your expertise regarding the intersection of resettlement support and public education.

IV. STUDY RESULTS

What will happen with my interview data and information?

After the interview you will have the option to review the transcripts. Once we transcribe the interview we will email it to you. You can make any changes to your interview up to three weeks after receiving the transcript. You may request that certain scenarios and/or sections of the interview be changed or not recorded. Should we not hear from you within three weeks, we will assume that you have approved the material in its original form. After these three weeks, you can withdraw from this study any time before September 1, 2018, when we will complete the report of preliminary research findings. No one outside of the research team will be informed if you withdraw, and all information you provide will be permanently deleted from the research database.

After your interview transcript is approved by you it will be analyzed by a team of researchers who will focus on patterns and practices rather than individual attributes. Your interview will be securely stored on a locked research computer, in password-protected files (audio and written). Only members of the research team will have access to your interview files. Research data will be stored for five years, before they are permanently destroyed.

The findings that arise from our analysis will be published in a Master's thesis, publicly accessible on the UBC cIRcle digital repository. Following data collection and initial analysis, a report will be provided to the non-profit and school participants regarding the preliminary findings and timeline for full analysis. Upon full analysis, a

written report outlining themes found during the study will be provided to the non-profit and school, along with the opportunity for the student researcher to synthesize findings in a public presentation. You may indicate your interest to be invited to the student researcher's thesis defense.

Findings will also be discussed in reports for other schools and community organizations working in partnership, as well as conferences, journal articles, and/or books. Some of the information you provide might be reported. If you decide to remain unidentified, we will alter your demographic information and use a pseudonym to reduce the likelihood of you being identified. If you are interested, these results will be made available to you via email communication.

V. POTENTIAL RISKS OF THE STUDY

Could this study be harmful to me?

We do not think there is anything in this study that could be harmful to you. While most of the questions will be general, some may seem personal. You do not have to answer these questions if you do not want to. There is minimal risk that people may associate the research data with you. Although the researchers know your identity, and your participation in the study is not completely anonymous, all data will be kept confidential and de-identified before any results are shared. Additionally, all members of the research team are committed to protecting your privacy.

VI: POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

Will this study help me in any way?

By participating in this study you will be able to share and express your professional experiences and expertise. Some people find it beneficial to share their ideas while others do not. However, it is essential to note that this study may help others in the future. Both schools and community organizations may benefit from analysis of this study, by understanding strengths and areas for growth in their program partnerships. This study may thus aid in the development of future program initiatives.

VII: CONFIDENTIALITY

How will my identity be protected?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and if you choose, confidential through the use of pseudonyms and altered identifying details. Information

that discloses your identity will not be released without consent unless required by law. All documents with your information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. All computer documents containing your information will be secured with a password and stored on an encrypted hard drive, accessible only to the research team members. The information you share in your interview(s) will be used in reports and you will not be identified by name, unless you choose to be. The researchers will use several mechanisms to ensure that it is impossible to identify you in the reporting of study results.

VIII: PAYMENT

Will I be paid for participating in this study?

You will not be paid for your participation in the study.

IX. CONTACT FOR INFORMATION:

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please feel free to contact the principal investigator, Dr. Hongxia Shan or the student researcher, Rachel Goossen. All contact information is listed at the top of the first page of this form.

X: CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS

Who can I contact if I have complaints or concerns about the study?

If you have any concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, contact the Research Participant Complaint Line in the UBC Office of Research Ethics at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

XI: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND SIGNATURE PAGE

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your employment or organization.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please indicate your approval for each item on the corresponding line(s) that grant me your permission to:

I grant permission to be audio taped: YES

NO

I wish to be kept informed of study results, publications, and/or reports:

YES NO

If yes, please provide your preferred contact information below.

Phone: _____ Email: _____

I wish to be referred to using a pseudonym in study publications:

YES NO

I wish to be referred to with my real full name in study publications: YES

NO

The pseudonym I choose for myself is:

Signatures (written consent)

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, 2) agree to participate in the study, and 3) have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Printed Name of Participant

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix C: Letter of introduction

*Rachel Goossen, M.A. Student
Department of Educational Studies
University of British Columbia*

Hello,

I am a Master's student in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia, here in Vancouver. As part of my thesis, I am conducting research regarding the intersection of community and public schooling in supporting resettled refugee children and their families. The perspective I aim to study is that of the staff members and administrators involved in a program conducted by [COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION], in partnership with [SCHOOL NAME] Community School. The research is titled: "Understanding communities of support for resettled refugee children and their families" and I will be taking a strengths-based approach to examine this partnership.

This study is being completed to better understand what policies and practices support school/community partnerships and will contribute practical knowledge to both the school and community organization. My study seeks to answer the question: "how do schools and communities work together to support refugee families and their students?"

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are involved in the design and delivery of the program as an administrator, instructor, or essential staff member. By participating in the study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews, lasting up to one hour each. The interviews will be about your knowledge of the program, your experience working in this partnership specifically, and your expertise regarding the intersection of resettlement support and public education.

Participation in this study is *absolutely voluntary*. You will have an option to review the interview transcripts and make changes to it within three weeks after receiving. You can also withdraw at any time from the study before October 1, 2018, when a report for the preliminary research findings will be produced. Please note that the researcher has employed several mechanisms to ensure that it will be impossible to identify any individual in the reporting of study results.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please contact me directly at goossenr@mail.ubc.ca for more information. If you have any questions, please email me or my research supervisor, Dr. Hongxia Shan, at hongxia.shan@ubc.ca.

Thank you for considering participating in the study and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Rachel Goossen