

Constructing Multi-Conscious Identities:  
Ethnicity, Socialization, and Schooling Among Sub-Saharan African Refugee Youth

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Community Research and Action

May, 2014

Nashville, Tennessee

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## DEDICATION

As a child of Nigerian immigrants born in the United States, I often wondered where I “fit in” within the various communities to which I belonged. At my predominantly White middle school, I was *the* Black girl. In predominantly Black spaces, I was not Black enough. When my family traveled home to visit our relatives in Lagos, Onitsha, and Ajalli, I felt accepted and welcomed, but also like a prodigal American Igbo (largely because I did not take advantage of opportunities to learn our tribe’s language). These different receptions forced me learn how to adapt as best I could as quickly as possible, but also left me with feelings of being an outsider despite wherever I was. In each space, I learned nuanced valuable lessons about race, ethnicity, and immigration, but did not know how to make sense of the convergence of these realities. Once I understood how knowledge is created and transformed, my questions became bigger than my slight anxieties surrounding tokenism at school, my turn to double-dutch, and family reunions. Almost twenty years later, I am excited to see the culmination of years of questions lead me down a very personal as well as significant path of inquiry for myself and others.

This work is dedicated to others who are also pushing boundaries to explore marginalized perspectives that enhance our understanding of the world. It is for people who pursue alternative analytic approaches when faced with the notion that “if I cannot be measured, it does not exist”. Knowledge is a process, and we can have an active role in shaping it. It is my hope that the insights gained from this work honor and support others who are engaged in this lifelong effort.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for providing me with the direction, strength, and support needed to begin and complete this research endeavor. My research reflects the pursuit of various God-given passions, and I am so grateful to have the opportunity to actively follow, investigate, and incorporate them into my work. I pray that I honor God as I serve him and my brothers and sisters in Christ through this work as well as other areas in my life.

Next, I am so thankful for the individuals and communities who participated in this work. The educational programs manager and other members of Refugee, Integration, and Aid (RIA), were so eager to help by putting me in contact with anyone and everyone they thought could help me gain insight into the refugee resettlement process. In addition, I wish to thank faculty and staff members of the Cultural Diversity School for providing me with access to their community. I sincerely appreciate the time and efforts involved in orienting me to various processes and programs within these organizations. The refugee and immigrant families I interviewed literally invited me into their homes regularly to conduct this research. I am still overwhelmed by how welcome each family made me feel. Moreover, I am humbled by everything that our conversations taught me. I learned so much from speaking with each individual I encountered, and am inspired to continue research in this area to better understand the complex processes that accompany immigration and resettlement in various contexts.

I could not have pursued my research questions without guidance and support from my dissertation committee. Dr. Stella Flores, Dr. Velma Murry, and Dr. William Turner, thank you for all of the ways in which you reflected an invaluable balance of encouragement and constructive criticism throughout. I would especially like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Sandra Barnes, for her leadership, patience, advice, inspiration, perfectionism, pep talks and all around tough love these past five years. There were countless times when I questioned my presence in this program and my ability to complete various goals. Yet Dr. Barnes never wavered in her faith in me, and never lowered her expectations so I could make it through. Instead, she did whatever she could to pull me up, and help me realize possibilities that I struggled to fathom. She has taught me so much about what it means to be an activist, scholar and mentor. Dr. Barnes, I have grown so much as a scholar and a person as one of your advisees. You are an inspiring person, and it has truly been such a privilege working with you.

My professional and personal support network also consisted of so many unofficial mentors and colleagues within and outside of my department. There are so many people I would like to thank, but I would like to specifically acknowledge Dr. Torin Monahan, Jennifer Mokos, and Krista Craven for input and feedback at various stages of my writing processes. I would be remiss if I did not thank so many members of the administrative staff (namely Sherrie Lane, Mary Miller, Mildred Tyler, Sandy Strohl, and Cherie Kelley) and friends, faculty members and students alike, who provided

priceless advice and emotional support. I am so glad that this program gave me the opportunity to get to know you.

Last, but not least, I wish to acknowledge my close friends and family members, without whom I would not be who I am today. I love you all, and thank God for putting each and every one of you in my life:

My mother and father, Mary and Eugene Nwosu, cultivated my love for learning and inquisitive spirit from an early age. I suspect that I inherited my activist bent from my mother. She unwaveringly speaks out against injustices that she observes, regardless of the circumstances. As long as I can remember, she has always defended what she believes to be just and morally right. In this sense, she is fearless. Mom, your actions remind me of how liberating and necessary it is to speak truth to power. In addition, I sense that my desire to achieve comes from my father. Ask anyone who knows him, and they will agree that he is compelled to excel in all that he does. More importantly, I have grown up watching him use his achievements to positively impact countless people within his sphere of influence. He does not hesitate to use his knowledge and skills to help people. Dad, your experiences and actions remind me that I should not feel entitled to anything; rather, with every accomplishment I gain increased responsibility for ensuring that I put it to good use for my communities and myself. Mom and dad, I have so much respect for you, and appreciate everything that you both have done to promote my emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth.

I would like to thank my siblings Ekene, Chiagozie, and Ifunanya Ifezulike for the various ways in which they supported me in this endeavor. Gozie, thank you for taking the time to read my major area paper, especially considering that fact that I did not feel like reading it when I was writing it sometimes. I cannot express my gratitude for our talks. Your interest in my work made me feel validated, and gave me hope that what I was doing was interesting to people outside of my committee and myself. Keke, thank you for your incredible sense of humor, healthy skepticism, and love of a good debate. Boys, I am so proud of the reflective, mature, hilarious, and intelligent men you both have become. I appreciate the different and countless ways that you have kept me going and encouraged me to persevere throughout this process. Ify (my twinny), thank you for giving me perspective through my tears and frustrations. You are such an intelligent, accomplished, and insightful woman, and I am blessed to have you in my life.

My fiancé, Jake Randolph, has been instrumental in the success of this manuscript. He has been by my side through the periods of elation, failures, self-doubt, and everything else along the way. Jake has seen the good, bad, ugly, and scary sides of me that this writing process has revealed, and unwaveringly loved me through it all. Ranging from talking me through temporary breakdowns to forcing me to eat because I sometimes forgot, I cannot even begin to recount everything he has done to support my emotional, spiritual, and physical health. Jake, thank you so much for your humor, strength, levelheadedness, patience, love and wisdom beyond your years. I admire you for so many reasons, and am so grateful to God for you.

Finally, there are so many people in my friendship circle I would like to thank. In no particular order Kristin, Patricia, Terry, Jackie, Debargha, Yi, Morgan, and Friederike are among the many friends who immediately come to mind when I think about valuable discussions that motivated me to continue and complete this work. I cannot name and thank you all individually here, but I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to those of you who prayed for and laughed with me, sent uplifting emails, and otherwise emotionally revived me when I was tired. Specifically, Terrie Tieu, I cannot thank you enough for all of the times you let me stay with you on short notice as I commuted between cities for data collection. Leslie and Nakia Collins, Ebony Duncan, Whitney Laster, and Whitney Lovett: thank you for welcoming me into your lives and allowing me to participate in our beautiful sister circle. You are all such talented, brilliant, and inspirational people. I am excited to see what is in store for our friendship in the future.

In sum, I am a better person because of love, support, and faith from so many individuals and groups whose paths I have been blessed enough to cross. Thank you all for believing in me and helping me in concrete as well as seemingly invisible ways.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Problem Statement: Sub-Saharan African Refugee Resettlement Experiences in the United States**

As a top country for refugee resettlement worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.), the United States (U.S.) admitted over 500,000 refugee arrivals<sup>1</sup> and more than 260,000 refugee asylees<sup>2</sup> between 2002 and 2011 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2012). Furthermore, over 20% of this population was from an African country. In addition to a better life, resettlement aims to provide refugees with access to protections and opportunities that are otherwise virtually unavailable to them in their home countries. However, refugees in general and Sub-Saharan African refugees in particular will continually be marginalized upon resettlement in the U.S. if realities associated with their resettlement experiences are not thoughtfully examined. This dissertation project represents one response to this challenge.

I contend that theoretical frameworks used to describe the experiences of Black Americans (i.e., African Americans) can be applied to address this need. Furthermore, an in-depth qualitative, multidisciplinary analysis that considers the experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee families, youth, and institutions such as schools that endeavor to assist them, will both add to existing literature and provide possible strategies and best practices to enhance the lived experiences and life chances of refugee youth.

## **Overview of Questions Directing Inquiry for Each Dissertation Article**

The first article is titled *African American Scholarship for Immigration Research: How Race Theories Inform Research on Identity Development upon Resettlement for Sub-Saharan African Refugees*. Here, I investigate two guiding questions in an effort to: 1) gain insight into the ethnic identity development process for Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, and South Sudanese refugee youth in the U.S.; and, 2) examine how structural forces in the U.S. interact with this process to influence how youth and their caregivers identify resources, challenges, and opportunities upon resettlement. These questions are:

1. How can the theoretical frameworks and methodologies employed within double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903/2008), Black Feminism (Collins, 1986; Collins, 1990/2009) and CRF (Wing, 2000) inform research on the ethnic identity development process for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth?
2. How can empirical findings on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. contribute to understandings of the relationship between ethnic identity development and acculturation for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth?

Answers to these questions will illumine how globalization and other structural forces can influence the ethnic identity development process for refugees in general and youth in particular with implications for their experiences with privilege, marginalization, and agency. Drawing from the fields of sociology, social psychology, and law, for example, this paper aims to advance scholarship on acculturation via examination of cross-disciplinary insights on the ethnic identity development process. Moreover, this theoretical piece informed the two subsequent empirical studies on aspects of the for Sub-Saharan African refugee experience in the United States (U.S.).

The second article is titled “*Just to Be What I Am and Where I Came From*”: *How Ethnicity Shapes Sub-Saharan African Refugee Families and Experiences in the U.S.* It examines the relationship between race, place, and ethnicity within socialization efforts in five families from four countries: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. Overall, I am interested in the implications for this relationship on the perceptions of belonging, opportunity, and challenges of refugee youth as they transition grow up in the U.S. The research questions directing this study are:

1. How do Sub-Saharan African refugee youth discuss ethnic identity? How does this influence the way they express their ethnicities and their perceptions of opportunities and challenges in the U.S.?
2. How do parents of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth discuss ethnic identity? How may parents’ views influence socialization practices to help youth navigate opportunities and challenges in the U.S.?

Consistent with discussions of the complexity of ethnic identification, this approach pursues nuanced depictions of this phenomenon, and endeavors to capture elements of the voices of both Sub-Saharan African refugee youth and their family members (Collins, 1990/2009; Wing, 2000). Studies about the vulnerable positions evident among youth will inform this work given the multiple ways factors such as age, poverty, language ability, nationality, and refugee status are expected to compound the vulnerability and hence voices of such youth (Berry et al., 2012; Collins, 1990/2009; MacLeod, 1987).

The final article, titled *Multi-consciousness, Ethnic Identity Development, and Institutional Transformation within Schools Serving Diverse Youth*, focuses on whether and how ethnic identity socialization is embraced, developed, and fostered by the

Cultural Diversity School (CDS). CDS is a public charter school outside of a metropolitan city in the southeastern region of the U.S. that serves students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Half of the students are refugees or from refugee families resettled in the community, and the remaining half are from non-refugee native-born and immigrant children within the county. The research questions directing this study are:

1. How does CDS' pedagogic approach conceptualize ethnic identity development?
2. Do the school processes present ethnic identity development as a tool for identifying opportunities and challenges within the U.S.? If so, how?

Findings illumine how the incorporation of positive ethnic identification into educational processes can assist schools with diverse youth in their efforts to create spaces where youth can learn how to contribute to and benefit from just inclusion in U.S. society. Each article is written as a self-contained document that is potentially publishable. Readers should note that the literature reviews and theoretical framework sections in each article are substantially longer than those typically included in a publishable submission. This additional information is deemed necessary to more fully inform the dissertation committee and can be edited when the papers are being prepared for publication. Finally, a broad overview document is provided here as well (under separate cover) that includes material not necessarily part of each paper. This overview document includes full versions of key concepts, all three theoretical frameworks, the literature review, methodologies, and analytical plans, which are presented in abridged formats within each article. The overview document is provided for the sake of completeness.

## CHAPTER II

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN SCHOLARSHIP FOR IMMIGRATION RESEARCH: HOW RACE THEORIES INFORM RESEARCH ON IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT UPON RESETTLEMENT FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN REFUGEES**

#### **Introduction**

Human migration is a common, worldwide, yet often controversial phenomenon, namely because it challenges and often problematizes how we define ourselves as existing members of a space as well as “the Others” who are relocating to that same space. This paper documents seminal theories and empirical literature about issues that illumine key dynamics associated with human migration experiences and subsequent identity development for Sub-Saharan African refugees, in general, and youth, in particular, who resettle in the United States (U.S.). This article does not include analyses, but rather provides the theoretical framing and existing empirical work that undergirds and informs the two additional empirical papers that comprise this dissertation project. Readers should note that my second paper examines actual experiences of Sub-Saharan African families in the U.S. who are negotiating acculturation and ethnic identity development; the third paper focuses on a multicultural charter school as a possible influential site for resettling immigrant youth.

I posit that three concepts are central to examine the issue of resettlement: globalization, acculturation, and identity development. I concede that each of these concepts can be defined in various ways. However, the following broad definitions provide an appropriate scholarly lens through which my research topic can be assessed. Each concept is defined here and detailed in subsequent sections. For the purposes of this

paper, globalization describes decreases in social and physical distance that increase how and the extent to which interactions (i.e., political, economic, informational, technological, and cultural) and processes (i.e., human migration and conflict) within and between nation-states occur (Appadurai, 2006; M. Suárez-Orozco, 2001). Acculturation, broadly defined, refers to the social, cultural, economic, and psychological changes affecting communities and individuals following sustained post-migration intercultural contact (Berry, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Rudmin, 2009). Identity development can be defined as a dynamic process involving an awareness of self, others, and “one’s place in the world” that results from interactions between individuals and their environments (Ngo, 2008; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009).

Globalization can affect acculturation and identity development in important ways, namely in its expansion and alteration of how individuals and groups understand their “place in the world” and how to navigate it accordingly (Erikson, 1968, as cited in Syed et al., 2011). It can catalyze changes in macrosystems, which implicitly and explicitly convey ideologies and values within a society that are perpetuated through laws, norms, customs, and practices (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Furthermore, it can directly impact how, when, and why people migrate. Thus globalization constitutes a powerful macrosystemic force that can permeate multiple aspects of an individual’s lived experience. Acculturation and identity development can be considered mutually reinforcing processes, which illustrates a need to consider the societal factors that impact them. In this sense, acculturation can be conceptualized as the social location where structure and agency intersect with meaningful implications for foreign-born individuals

and their changing communities. Moreover, although identity development can constitute a form of agency, it is heavily influenced by immediate settings (i.e., home or school) as well as the relationships between various settings, sometimes referred to as micro- and mesosystems, respectively (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Thoughtful responses to the tensions that can arise due to human migration consider the complex relationship between these three concepts.

Thus far, influential scholarship on globalization, acculturation, and identity development has provided valuable insight into issues of belonging and otherness within human migration in the United States (U.S.) and beyond (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2012; Portes & Zhou, 1993). However, as Waters (1999) study on West Indians demonstrates, racial discrimination can eclipse successful acculturation (as indicated by upward mobility) for immigrants racialized as Black in the U.S. Thus although current literature on acculturation has been crucially informative, research is needed to examine how structural forces—socially constructed systemic ideologies that influence societal norms, beliefs, and institutions, as well as individuals’ abilities to control their own lives—influence this phenomenon for Sub-Saharan African refugees in particular.

### ***Purpose of this Work***

In this article I argue that many racially Black foreign-born populations must negotiate possible privilege and marginalization in the U.S. in meaningful ways that have not been adequately explored in acculturation literature. Specifically, I hold that ethnic identification—an essential component of acculturation for ethnic minority immigrant populations (Portes & Zhou, 1993)—aids in the recognition and navigation of challenges and opportunities that Sub-Saharan African refugee populations face *despite* potentially

oppressive structural forces. Furthermore, based on broad phenotypical similarities, common resettlement patterns in or near largely African American communities, and documented experiences of people of African descent in the U.S., I maintain that this phenomenon can most appropriately be examined through the use of theoretical frameworks and empirical findings that focus on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. Thus a central premise of this analysis is that the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. can inform us about some important aspects of acculturation and ethnic identity development among Sub-Saharan African refugee families in the U.S. in general, and youth in particular. Although I concede and discuss several parallels between the immigrant African experience and those of other groups such as Latino immigrants, I posit that the current research focus will illumine important results based on my chosen scholarly lens. I draw from a synthesis of three theoretical frameworks—double-consciousness, Black Feminism, and Critical Race Feminism (CRF)—as well as seminal studies on African Americans to inform research on the identity development and acculturative experiences of a particular category of racially Black immigrants to the U.S.: Sub-Saharan African youth in refugee families.

By virtue of factors such as their race, legal statuses (i.e., refugees, minors), and ethnicities, Sub-Saharan African youth occupy a precarious space within families and schools. In light of their transnational experiences, what messages are they likely to receive about their place in the world and how to navigate it from their families and resettlement societies? Moreover, what resources are available to acculturating immigrant youth as they undergo identity development in multiple contexts? Research on the experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth resettled in the U.S. can expose



limitations within as well as nuance acculturation literature. In addition, rather than compare the successes and failures of Black refugees and immigrants to African Americans in the U.S., this inquiry can illustrate how both groups tend to recognize and respond to racism, an oppressive structural force, in similar or different ways. I focus on Sub-Saharan African refugee children whose families come from four war-torn nations where English is not a primary or commonly spoken language: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. This focus is because they are more likely to face social, economic, and academic challenges upon resettlement than their Black immigrant and/or political refugee counterparts who tend to have a more established immigration history with the U.S. (Hernandez, 2012).

This article investigates the following guiding questions in an effort to: 1) gain insight into the ethnic identity development process for Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, and South Sudanese refugee youth in the U.S.; and, 2) examine how structural forces in the U.S. interact with this process to influence how youth and their caregivers identify resources, challenges, and opportunities upon resettlement:

1. How can the theoretical frameworks and methodologies employed within double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903/2008), Black Feminism (Collins, 1986; Collins, 1990/2009) and CRF (Wing, 2000) inform research on the ethnic identity development process for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth?
2. How can empirical findings on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. contribute to understandings of the relationship between ethnic identity development and acculturation for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth?

Answers to these questions will illumine how globalization and other structural forces can influence the ethnic identity development process for refugees in general and youth in particular with implications for their experiences with privilege, marginalization, and agency. Drawing from the fields of sociology, social psychology, and law, for example, this paper aims to advance scholarship on acculturation via examination of cross-disciplinary insights on the ethnic identity development process.

In the sections that follow, I provide a broad overview of the experiences of Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, and South Sudanese refugees before and upon resettlement in the U.S. Then, I define and examine ethnic identity development, its relationship to race, and its role in acculturation. These sections set the stage for theoretical frameworks and empirical research on the African American experience that follow. Next, I briefly explore research on two specific contexts that influence ethnic identity development for refugee youth: families and schools. Lastly, I conclude with a discussion of the insights gained from the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. that are likely to inform the messages that Sub-Saharan African refugee youth receive about their place in the world and how to navigate it.

## **Factors Influencing Refugee Flight and Resettlement**

### ***Conflict in the Horn of Africa***

In order to better understand refugees' resettlement experiences, it is important to provide an overview of the historical and recent conditions taking place in some African refugees' countries of origin that have played a role in their forced migration. The Horn of Africa refers to a region in northeastern Africa comprised of Eritrea, Djibouti,

Ethiopia, and Somalia, although discussions involving nations in this region sometimes include Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda, and Kenya as well (The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars [TWC], 2011). Figure 1 provides a map of the political boundaries of the nations that currently constitute this region.

According to the Wilson Center's (2011) report on peace-building efforts in the region, countries in the Horn of Africa have collectively experienced over 200 armed conflicts since 1990, making it one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world. Between 1990 and 2010, political violence in the region has manifested in the form of 32 incidents of inter- and intrastate-based warfare, 179 instances of armed conflict between non-governmental actors, and 22 occurrences of violent state-led campaigns resulting in the massacre of civilians (TWC, 2011, p. 3). For example, genocide in Darfur, a western region in Sudan, represents one type of violence that has had a traumatic and life-changing impact on people within and outside of this region. It is currently difficult to find agreement on the casualties associated with the political strife in Darfur, yet investigation into the casualties associated with this conflict suggests that deaths approximated 400,000 people less than two years after reported eruptions of violence in 2003 (McCarthy & Hagan, 2009; Reeves, 2010). In addition, millions have been forcibly displaced within and outside of Sudan. Despite these figures, the Wilson Center suggests that interstate conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and intrastate violence between the Sudanese government and Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) have resulted in the most deaths in the region (TWC, 2011).

Ethnic conflict within and between nations constitutes one of many visible examples of the detrimental and lasting impacts of colonialism on the African continent.

The colonialists' division of the continent without regard for existing relationships and ways of life resulted in the displacement of indigenous ethnic groups. Local level conflicts also arise in response to control over coveted resources, religious and/or ethnic dominance, and election outcomes and regimes. Conflict at the national and regional level arises for similar reasons, includes clashes over political borders and violent attempts at border control, and sometimes involves mutual destabilization in which states support insurgent groups within other countries to gain political advantages. Figure 2 presents a map of the Nile River basin to illustrate one way in which shared resources function as constant physical reminders of the interconnectedness of multiple countries' fates. For landlocked countries in particular, access to larger bodies of water such as the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean can become a point of contention.

Furthermore, struggles for control over land and oil also factor into the political conflicts that arise in this region as well as other parts of the continent. International dynamics such as conflict over control of international aid, strained foreign affairs, and climate change have also had a detrimental impact on the political violence that has taken place in the Horn of Africa. Thus although political unrest is not the sole reason for suffering and conflict that takes place in this region, it undermines nations' abilities to respond to phenomena such as famines and illness. Collectively, these factors have contributed to myriad deaths, persistent violence, and the creation of millions of displaced people and refugees (TWC, 2011).

Globalization arguably plays an important role in the violence that has and continues to occur in places such as the Horn of Africa. It transforms social and physical boundaries and, as M. Suárez-Orozco (2001) writes, "results in the deterritorialization of

important economic, social, and cultural practices from their traditional moorings in the nation state” (p. 347). Appadurai (2006) asserts that such deterritorialization often results in eruptions of violence in an attempt to remain in control given nation states’ changing perceptions and presentations of collective identities relative to a global audience. I contend that this macro-level process has serious implications for the experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees in their countries of origin, as well as for their experiences upon resettlement.

### ***Sub-Saharan African Refugees in the U.S.***

The U.S. is a top resettlement country for refugees worldwide (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d.). Between 2002 and 2011, there have been 515,350 refugee arrivals admitted into the U.S. (U.S. Department of Homeland Security [U.S. DHS], 2012). Almost 27% of these arrivals are refugees from African countries. According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the term “refugee” describes any foreign-born individual who has fled their country of origin due to well-founded threat of persecution on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, or political orientation (U.S. DHS, n.d.). In addition, over 260,000 individuals have been granted asylum in the U.S. within this same period, with over one-fifth of refugee asylees representing individuals from African countries (U.S. DHS, 2012). Refugees tend to encounter multiple barriers to social integration in the U.S. as a result of factors such as: their flight circumstances (Davies, 2008; Naidoo, 2009; Roxas, 2008); historical resettlement patterns (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Singer, 2008); and, linguistic differences (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Ima & Rumbaut, 1989). Sub-Saharan African refugees often experience added difficulties as a result of racial

discrimination upon resettlement and their religious beliefs if they are Muslim (McBrien, 2005; Oikonomidou, 2009).

A growing body of scholarship provides much-needed insight into the difficulties that refugee children and families face post-resettlement (Boyle & Ali, 2010; Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services [BRYCS], 2009) and in schools (Davies, 2008; Dooley, 2009; Oikonomidou, 2009; Roy & Roxas, 2011). African refugee arrivals to the U.S. have changed historical migration patterns for immigrant groups from differing countries within this region (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012). For example, recent African refugee arrivals to the U.S. have settled in states such as Washington and Minnesota, often via cities that have experienced unexpected foreign-born population growth since the 1980s (Capps, et al., 2012; Singer, 2004; Singer, 2008). This has implications for the extent to which receiving communities accommodate them (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Singer, 2008; R. Smith, 2008). Thus Sub-Saharan African refugees encounter differential challenges and opportunities upon resettlement in the U.S. depending on their country of origin. Among the four countries of focus in this analysis, children in refugee families from Sudan and South Sudan are estimated to be at greater risk for hardship in the U.S. in comparison to their Black African immigrant and other African refugee counterparts due largely to increased relative poverty, limited English proficiency, and lower levels of educational attainment (Hernandez, 2012). Scholars have also discussed how separation changes families' structures and contributes to prolonged poverty upon resettlement among Somali refugees (Boyle & Ali, 2010), and upsets individuals' self-concepts and sources of support in the U.S. and abroad among Sudanese refugees (Jaekle & Georgakopoulos, 2010).

Empirical and U.S. census bureau data on demographic and socioeconomic trends have identified barriers to social, socioeconomic, and other forms of integration that African refugees currently face, as well as those that they are likely to experience. To reiterate, a substantial portion (nearly one-third) of refugee arrivals to the U.S. between 2002 and 2011 who are of African descent often lack many social, linguistic, and economic resources to facilitate their resettlement. However, investigations into refugee families and receiving communities' responses to expected hardships are critical sources of information that cannot be comprehensively assessed through use of large datasets alone, particularly where children are concerned. Thus it is critical to explore collective responses to the complex experiences and difficulties that refugee youth in particular may undergo. Dominant (as well as subversive) ideologies can manifest in social institutions such as families and schools with meaningful implications for individuals' identity formation and behaviors (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009, 2009; Roy & Roxas, 2011; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Thus specific attention needs to be given to the roles that families and schools actively play in producing, maintaining, and confronting social forces and inequities through socialization and how their efforts may influence refugee youth. The following section presents key definitions and assumptions related to ethnic identity development, and asserts the centrality of this concept for examining worldviews and perceptions of agency for Sub-Saharan African refugees.

### **Ethnic Identity Development, Race, and Acculturation**

Research suggests that refugee children face specific challenges (i.e., acculturative stress) linked to their ethnicities (Berry, 2009; Birman et al., 2008; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Acculturative stress refers to a

phenomenon in which newcomers tend to struggle with linguistic, social, cultural, psychological, and/or economic adjustment during the transition from life in one cultural context to life in another (Berry, 2009; Joyce, Earnest, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Ngo, 2008; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006). Thus acculturative stress is undoubtedly tied to the identity development process as individuals struggle to understand and redefine their “place” in a new context. By extension, *ethnic* identity development is central to the acculturation process given its ability to enable refugees to cultivate individual and/or collective views, beliefs, and personal profiles about themselves based on their histories and experiences in African countries and the U.S.

For the purposes of this work, ethnicity<sup>3</sup> is defined as a social construction used to broadly reflect one’s association with homeland (i.e., land masses) and associated cultural and social traditions. Anthropological and sociological definitions particularly point to perceived connectedness to locales. Furthermore, ethnic groups often self-identify with a certain heritage, ancestry, and belief system; examples of ethnic groups include Ethiopian, Italian American, German or German American, Puerto Rican, and Cuban. This conceptual designation suggests that such persons tend to associate themselves with a “place” or are associated with these spaces by other individuals. Moreover, the concept usually connotes psycho-emotional linkages for individuals that embrace it that can influence their attitudes and behavior. Particularly germane to the current analysis, transnational migration means that ethnicity may be linked to nationality for some groups entering the U.S. Further illustrating its socially constructed nature, some scholars contend that ethnic groups are actually “formed” as migrating groups move away from their place of origin to a new land or state.



A great deal of heterogeneity exists relative to what ethnicity can mean. However, for persons who embrace an ethnic designation, the concept suggests some broad understanding of belonging, personal placement, and historical connection that resonates with that individual (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994). Furthermore, ethnicity is comprised of social and cultural attributes (i.e., language, religion, dress, food, music, beliefs), as well as geographic and political markers (i.e., citizenship) that are encompassed by negotiable, flexible boundaries in an effort to create commonalities (Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Miles & Small, 1999). Ethnic groups can be generally broad or narrow, depending on how boundaries of belonging are defined. Thus ethnic identity refers to the social, cultural, geographic, and political signifiers that individuals rely on to negotiate their place in the world. Again, I acknowledge existing variations in this definition, but consider the above characterization both informative and germane to the current analysis. Moreover, ethnic identification is characterized and differentiated by claimed rather than imposed cultural signifiers (Miles & Small, 1999); although both are socially constructed, in this way, it is generally agreed in academia that ethnicity differs from the concept of “race” (Feagin, 2010; Omi & Winant, 1986).

Race is historically rooted in conceptualizations of real or imagined fixed biological differences and consequent attributes that supposedly result in the creation of naturally occurring groups (Miles & Small, 1999). However, the concepts and lived realities associated with race and ethnicity affect each other in meaningful ways. Although some individuals can “pass” to gain access to spaces and resources that are occupied by other races (Larsen, 1929/2003), racial groups are typically imposed in efforts to self-identify, other-identify, and consequently exclude “the other” (Bonilla-

Silva, 1999; Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999; Omi & Winant, 1986). Moreover, racialization (i.e., the process of imposing race in an effort to stratify) can take place regardless of ethnic distinctions in an effort to subordinate others and justify unequal treatment via social structures (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 1999; Collins, 1990/2009). Thus ethnicity, especially for marginalized members of society, is an ongoing construction that involves and requires negotiation of racialized social, political, and structural boundaries.

Exploring commonalities and distinctions between race and ethnicity are important for critically examining the “economic, political, and ideological forces” that affect constructions of and experiences within ethnic identification (Miles & Small, 1999, p. 140). In addition, examining conceptualizations and expressions of ethnicity are useful for exploring collective and individual perceptions, how groups navigate challenges and opportunities in the U.S., and how these experiences are linked to race. For example, for Sub-Saharan African refugees this means assessing how ethnic identity (e.g., Sudanese or possibly Sudanese American) may be different from and conflated with race (e.g., Black) and other structural forces at work in the U.S.

A large body of research suggests that one of the most important distinctions between the two concepts is the tendency for race to be used to essentialize individuals based on racial designations where a hierarchy of superiority and/or inferiority based on group position negatively influences treatment, opportunities, quality of life, and life chances (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999; Omi & Winant, 1986; West, 1982). Other studies show that ethnic identity is a three-part construct comprised of: *ethnic centrality* (i.e.,

whether ethnic group belonging is part of one's self-definition); *private regard* (i.e., in-group and personal affect toward one's ethnic group); and *public regard* (i.e., outside perceptions of one's ethnic group) (Sellers et al., 1997, as cited in Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Particularly for minority youth, ethnic identity development is influenced by ethnic-racial socialization within families and schools, as well as the media and broader community. Within families, ethnic-racial socialization consists of cultural socialization and preparation for bias; in schools, it can be examined through the lens of experiences with discrimination from teachers, staff, and classmates (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). To reiterate, applying and illustrating these broad concepts here means considering what terms like Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Sudanese that can connote ethnic distinctions and national ties as well as the broad racial category "Black" ultimately mean to Sub-Saharan African refugee families and youth, particularly in light of expectations about ethnic identity formation informed by existing theoretical and empirical studies.

Finally, immigration is a major aspect of ethnic identity development for refugees largely because the nature and scope of their immigration process influences acculturation. A central feature of this project is the selection of theory and comparative empirical work that highlights groups that have experienced involuntary immigration—in this instance, African Americans historically—to broadly compare and contrast to current day Sub-Saharan African refugees. For example, studies illustrate differential relocation and acculturation experiences for immigrant groups such as Irish Americans who were initially ostracized, devalued, and exposed to negative measures to "Americanize" them<sup>4</sup>. However, over time, this group gradually garnered "White" status and the associated group privileges as a result of their racial status as White, tendency to mistreat African

Americans, and acculturation into mainstream White society (Handlin, 1941; Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2007). A similar argument can be made that the dramatically different ways in which voluntary and involuntary immigrants enter the U.S. warrants careful attention to the groups used to inform an analysis on the African refugee experience (Ogbu, 1978, 1991).

In the first scholarly, systematic examination of the Black experience in America, DuBois (1903/2008) examines how private regard and public regard influence the worldviews and ethnic identity development of African Americans who were forced to migrate to the U.S. Over a century later, another form of forced migration involving refugees from African countries (and elsewhere) leaves scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers debating how to best understand and respond to the acculturative experiences of this population. In the following section, I employ research on African American experiences, framed by the theses of DuBois (1903/2008), Collins (1986; 1990/2009), and Wing (2000) to inform and extend the discourse about how ethnicity emerges for Sub-Saharan African refugees (i.e., transitioning from a primarily national identity based on their country of origin to a nuanced ethnic identity based on resettlement experiences). Although this analysis focuses on ethnic identity development for youth, it will be important to broadly consider this same dynamic for their families in light of the central role of families as their primary socializing unit.

### **The Latino Immigrant Experience**

Although this paper is largely a theoretical and empirical project that centers the African American experience as a comparative lens, several important points of

comparison exist based on literature on the Latino immigrant experience that are germane here. I reference several studies on Latino immigration and U.S. relocation challenges, familial support, and ethnic identity formation (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008) as additional research to illumine broad strengths, problems, and transition processes, as well as key distinctions that justify my current comparative focus.

Scholars acknowledge the significance of racial-ethnic identity formation and socialization in the lives of Latino youth and their families (Fuller & Coll, 2010; Rodriguez, Umaña-Taylor, Smith, & Johnson, 2009). For example, qualitative findings reveal the presence of culturally-embedded values within Latino families, such as *familismo* and the importance of being *bien educado*<sup>5</sup>, which differ from how similar values emerge in White families (Hagunseth, Ispa, & Rudy, 2006, as cited in Fuller & Coll, 2010). Such values are likely to be incorporated into the messages Latino youth receive within their families to increase their cultural pride, which may constitute an important factor in keeping Latino youth motivated and engaged in school despite discrimination and having fewer socioeconomic resources (Hughes, Witherspoon, Rivas-Drake, & West-Bey, 2009; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008). Thus given the salience of family socialization practices intended to protect youth from internalizing oppression, Latino immigrant experiences are likely to exhibit certain similarities with those of segments of the African American populace.

Latino youth in undocumented immigrant families are likely to share increased similarities with Sub-Saharan African refugee youth. Their immigration experiences are likely to be marked by disrupted family structures. Contingency plans in anticipation of separation are sometimes incorporated into undocumented parents' socialization

messages (C. Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & M. Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Parents' limited employment opportunities means working jobs with long hours, and leave older children responsible for the care of their younger siblings, extended family members, and other responsibilities. C. Suárez-Orozco and M. Suárez-Orozco (2001) observe that these realities restrict certain parents' opportunities to be "fully physically or psychologically available to their children" (as cited in C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011, p. 450). Economic constraints tend to limit parents' availability within certain African American families as well (Billingsley 1992; Tierney & Auerbach, 2006 as cited in Syed et al., 2011). Furthermore, Parents and children in refugee families from Sub-Saharan African countries are likely to have similar experiences marked by separation, strained resources requiring increased responsibilities for children, and reduced physical and emotional availability.

Based on the above summary, broad parallels are apparent for Latino and Sub-Saharan African immigrant experiences for groups with similar immigration experiences, demographic profiles and consequent preparation for discrimination, and social capital. Moreover, groups with traumatic experiences during and since resettlement have much in common (Portes & Zhou, 1993; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). For example, one would expect poor, darker complexioned Mexican immigrants who speak Spanish as their primary language to have relocation challenges similar to those of certain African immigrant groups. In contrast, Cuban Americans would generally be expected to have fewer immigration similarities to those of Sub-Saharan Africans immigrants from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan. A broad argument can be made that the closer immigrant groups are in terms of certain key characteristics, particularly traits that are

largely devalued in society, or the further their profiles deviate from those of mainstream White society, the greater the tendency for similar acculturation experiences as well as processes through which ethnic identity development to emerge. For this reason, when appropriate I reference literature on the Latino immigrant experience both in this paper and in the subsequent two analyses. While conceding that a comparative analysis based on the Latino immigrant experience would be a fruitful endeavor to pursue in future studies, the subsequent theoretical and empirical information provide a strong argument for the use of the Black/African American experience as the central comparative lens in this particular research endeavor.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications of Multidisciplinary Scholarship on Ethnic Identity Development: African American and African Refugee Youth and Families**

This section aims to address the first guiding question of this work: How can the theoretical frameworks and methodologies employed within double-consciousness, Black Feminism and Critical Race Feminism (referred to as CRF from this point on) inform research on the ethnic identity development process for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth? Here, I outline how these frameworks shape current understandings of African American<sup>6</sup> experiences as well as how these they will inform the acculturative experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees. I discuss the important overlapping themes that connect each framework. However, I also illustrate how each theory makes distinct contributions to research on the African American experience, with implications for research on the resettlement experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees in general and youth in particular.

### ***Multi-Consciousness Among Sub-Saharan African Refugees***

W. E. DuBois' (1903/2008) concept of "double-consciousness" represents a foundational lens of inquiry for the study of identity formation among Sub-Saharan African refugees. It provides a basis for consequent theories and research that have emerged on racial and ethnic socialization across disciplines (Collins, 1990/2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Waters, 1999). Research on identity development among African Americans in the U.S. is often characterized by the study of the social construction of minority status on the basis of race, and the consequent marginalization that racial minority status tends to entail (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Syed et al., 2011). Examining race as a socially constructed status involves identifying and challenging normative worldviews and institutions that dictate the boundaries of belonging and coercively respond to "deviance". Double-consciousness represents one of racial minorities' varied and collective responses to the structural economic, social, and political inequalities they often face as well as reactive and proactive socialization practices that take place within African American families and communities in light of oppression. DuBois writes:

The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which...only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world...this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity...One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings...this longing to merge his double self into a better and truer self...he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (pp. 12-13)

According to this scholar, double-consciousness describes a bifocal worldview marked by two competing realities. Thus it is a transformative contribution to current conceptualizations of structural forces. Moreover, it pioneered emergent theories on the



construction and role of race on minorities' lived experiences in the U.S., supporting continued investigation into the enduring limitations of American ideals for African Americans in the U.S. (Douglass, 1855; Larsen, 1929/2003; Woodson, 1933 as cited in Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Double-consciousness also calls attention to the need to consider how various processes, interactions, and experiences that may be central (or peripheral) to a given society's privileged mainstream may manifest differently for minority groups, such as Sub-Saharan African refugees.

DuBois' (1903/2008) work also speaks to the experiences of more recent immigrant groups. For example, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987/2006) uses the term *mestiza* to describe the hybrid identities navigated by Chicanas as well as other Latin American immigrants. She writes:

Within us and within *la cultura chicana*, commonly held beliefs of the white culture attack commonly held beliefs of the Mexican culture, and both attack commonly held beliefs of the indigenous culture. Subconsciously we see an attack on ourselves and our beliefs as a threat and we attempt to block with a counterstance...But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank, the split between the two mortal combatants somehow healed so that we are on both shores once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes. Or perhaps we will decide to disengage all together as a lost cause and cross the border into a wholly new and separate territory. Or we might go another route. The possibilities are endless once we decide to act and not react (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006, p. 422).

This *mestiza* consciousness can map directly onto that of African Americans, involuntary immigrants, as described by DuBois (1903/2006). Similarly, it is not unreasonable to expect that Sub-Saharan African refugees also experience and negotiate forms of *multi-consciousness* as a result of having had to transition into at least one new cultural context. Although it is important to consider the hardships that many refugees face that exacerbate transitions into a new life in a foreign country, it is crucial that refugees are perceived and treated as more than psychologically, economically, and socially needy.

In comparison to the attention that is given to the difficulties that Sub-Saharan African refugees experience upon resettlement, investigation into the resources that they have and utilize in light of their past and ongoing experiences is scarce. As Portes and Zhou (1993) describe, the outcomes of ethnic identification with American mainstream and subcultures are not the same *across* ethnic groups. Likewise, perceptions of ethnic identity and consequent perceptions of how to successfully navigate American society are not the same *within* immigrant groups. Thus theoretical frameworks to describe minorities' experiences must simultaneously allow for nuances within individuals' shared experiences of marginalization as well as for intragroup diversity. Multi-consciousness reconciles tensions between diversity and distinctiveness in multiple ways. I contend that DuBois (1903/2008) provides an early, yet enduring framework for exploring how this marginalized group within the U.S. navigates the acculturation process for groups excluded from assimilation into the White mainstream.

This lens makes two important contributions to this work. First, it is a narrative presentation of the relationship between the lived experiences of African Americans and structural constraints as well as their attempts to be adaptive and resilient in light of social challenges. Second, it explains why scholarship should focus on the experiences of minorities rather than assume their shared experiences with dominant or other minority members of mainstream society. This perspective undergirds key methods used to conduct research on experiences within the African American community in the U.S. (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009; hooks, 1990/2006). Moreover, the concept can be applied to provide a better understanding of: dynamics associated with acculturative stress; the reality of positive and less positive attitudes and behavior in the African

American community; as well as the simultaneous existence of chronic inequities and thriving sub-groups in the Black community (Billingsley, 1992; DuBois, 1903/2008; Macleod, 1987). To my knowledge, whether and how these and other dynamics manifest among Sub-Saharan African refugees has yet to be systematically examined.

### ***Multi-Consciousness and Intersectionality: Key Concepts within Black Feminism***

Double-consciousness calls attention to disparate realities and distinctive voices for people of color in the U.S. based on a bifurcated worldview. However, Black Feminism highlights how multiple socially constructed minority statuses—such as race, class, gender, and sexuality—can result in compounded experiences of marginalization. Furthermore, the intersectionality of these multiple statuses are characterized by changing, context-dependent experiences that are ultimately correlated with oppression. Although I focus on Collins’ (1990/2009) seminal work, this theory has been influenced by other notable scholars, such as bell hooks (1990/2006) and the Combahee River Collective (1979/2006), whose work is cross-referenced in this analysis as well.

Patricia Hill Collins’ (1990/2009) *Black Feminist Thought* is a critical social theory that assesses the lived experiences of oppression among poor and near poor Black women. Collins (1990/2009) uses self-reflection, multi-sitedness, and intersectionality as methodological tools for examining the relationship between theory and the realities of Black women’s lives. Her work deftly bridges macro- and micro-level theoretical theories to demonstrate the importance of relying on an array of experiences to attend to power and its influence on individual experiences. *Black Feminist Thought* exhibits clear connections to DuBois (1903) by studying how structural forces influence the everyday experiences of minority groups (in her case, impoverished Black women and for DuBois,

Blacks in general). Both scholars also examine how these oppressed groups attempt to push back against forces that would silence their voices and squelch their lives. Given the tendency to directly or indirectly ignore or forget youth vulnerabilities and voices, acculturation research can benefit from increased documentation and illumination of the voices and experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth in particular (Berry et al., 2012; Collins, 1990/2009; MacLeod, 1987).

Black Feminism asserts three tenets that are particularly important to research on Sub-Saharan African refugee experiences in general. First, individual perspectives (i.e., thoughts and actions) cannot be examined without consideration of “the historical and material conditions shaping the lives of its producers” (Collins, 1986, p. S16). In this way, an examination of poor and near poor Black women’s lived realities is crucial for gaining insight into the complex relationship between structure and agency among such women. Intersectionality, a robust concept within Collins’ (1990/2009) framework, is vital for understanding how other marginalized groups—such as refugees from Sub-Saharan African countries—experience and perceive opportunity and adversity, and behave accordingly. Secondly, despite nuanced experiences, commonalities exist such that: (1) the perspectives of poor and near poor Black women help broadly unite them as a unique social group; (2) their experiences inform understandings of how disenfranchised groups define themselves in transformative ways; and (3) such women are engaged in ongoing acts of resistance that harness subjugated knowledges for group and individual empowerment. Although refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, and South Sudan are also likely to have varied experiences as a result of ethnic differences,

many refugees from African countries arguably undergo shared experiences of flight from the Horn of Africa, as well as adversity upon resettlement.

I am interested in applying this paradigm to examine the duality of possible oppression and resistance for Sub-Saharan African refugee families in general and youth in particular. Just as Collins documents how many poor and near poor Black women attempt to counter a multiplicity of negative forces to restore their voices and develop positive self-identities, I expect that a similar process could manifest among my study population. Furthermore, Collins illustrates how people and groups indigenous to the Black community such as families, Black churches, women's groups, and music are used by such women to combat discrimination. For example, she writes:

Black women's efforts to find a voice have occurred in at least three safe spaces...relationships with one another...family interactions...Black women's organizations...the blues tradition in African-American culture" (1990/2009, pp. 96, 100)

My work will consider the possible influence of families and schools to accomplish similar objectives for a sample of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth.

Third, this framework attends to differential within-group experiences that result from variations in factors such as socioeconomic status, religion, age, and sexuality (Combahee River Collective, 1979/2006; hooks, 1990/2006). Again, this intersectional approach advocates for insight into how disadvantage and opportunity differentially manifest among and between Sub-Saharan African refugee sub-groups, particularly refugee youth. Black Feminism provides an invaluable framework here as a method for exploring how individuals perceive themselves, their own experiences, and others despite potentially negative counter-narratives. In *Another Kind of Public Education*, Collins (2009a) extends her theoretical model about identity development;

Disempowered people can develop a distinctive consciousness or “way of knowing” about their oppression...African Americans have developed cultural messages that refute dominant ideas about African American inferiority and that create alternative perspectives not only on themselves but also on whites (p. 9).

I contend that this theoretical framing will inform the experiences of my research participants. As a result, investigation into how Sub-Saharan African refugee youth and families perceive themselves in relation to others plays a crucial role in understanding their views of structure and agency, as well as variations in some of the choices they ultimately make.

I posit that this same paradigm underscores the potential that schools can play in ethnic identity development. Collins (2009a) focuses on the concept of *democracy* as a standard when evaluating public education and possible educational alternatives. She contends that democracy is a process such that “strong democratic societies meld the different talents, experiences, and skills of their citizenry to build effective neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and communities” (Collins, 2009a, p. 12).

Moreover, she questions the beneficence of assimilation models in public schools, cites the strengths of multiculturalism, but ultimately contends that schools are best served by democratic practices informed by *mestizaje*, a mixing bowl or “in-between place” perspective where diversity based on factors like race, language, history, and place of origin is acknowledged, cultivated, and celebrated. This third way of envisioning democratic spaces is most appropriate based on, among other dynamics, “mass migrations of people” that now constitute the U.S. populace (Collins, 2009a, p. 16).

Particularly germane to my overall project, this same scholar notes:

One reason that alternative schools of all sorts (both private and public charter schools) are successful is that they create safe and free spaces for kids. They put the kids in the center of education and develop everything in response to what the kids in front of them

actually need. Tremendous variability shapes what kids need, and, as a result, the kinds of safe and free spaces that schools can create are endless. (Collins, 2009a: p. 95)

Thus it is important to study educational alternatives that reflect the nature and spirit of Collins' challenges to illustrate the possible existence of educational cultures that foster democracy, citizenship, cultural sensitivity, self-reflection, as well as everyday resistance, and provides students with tools to practice resistance.

Additional concepts within *Black Feminist Thought*—subjugated knowledges, intersecting oppressions, controlling images, and self-definition—constitute other significant contributions to this analysis. Although DuBois (1903/2008) makes general references to these concepts, Collins (1990/2009) provides a detailed understanding of marginalization despite its inherent complexities. Thus her model is essential for research on the acculturative experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth in general and how families and schools affect ethnic identity development. The analyses in my two subsequent papers are informed by this important paradigm.

### ***Pursuing Institutional Change: Key Contributions from Critical Race Feminism***

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is derivative of Critical Race Theory (CRT), “a body of legal scholarship...committed to the struggle against racism, particularly as institutionalized in and by law” (Bell, 1995, p. 898). Given its anti-racist goals, CRT strategies involve a blend of criticism and radicalism to enact change. Thus CRT is jointly deconstructionist and reconstructionist in its attempts to transform rather than subvert discriminatory social structures. Adrien Wing (2000) describes CRF as a theoretical perspective that incorporates minority women's experiences of discrimination, agency, and resourcefulness into its analysis and the larger CRT framework. Similar to

Collins' (1990/2009) concept of intersecting oppressions, Wing's (2000) reliance on the concept of *global multiplicative identities* is useful for examining how identification (i.e., religious, sexual, gender, ethnic, racial, national, linguistic, age, and class, for example) results in contextually-based privilege and/or oppression. In this way and like Black Feminism, it illustrates how concepts within Collins' framework, which are based on the experiences of poor and near poor Black women, can also be applied to other marginalized populations as well as another discipline (i.e., law). Given the relevance of language, nationality, and other markers when discussing ethnic identification, and considering this analysis' dual focus on ethnic identification as a source of both privilege and/or oppression, her multiplicative identities concept is useful.

As noted above, CRF is deeply committed to examining how the legal system and the general ideology underlying human rights perpetuate inequality, as well as how laws can be changed to better protect the disenfranchised. Refugee status in the U.S. and worldwide is largely dependent on international recognition of suffering and/or justification for intervention. If "categories of legal protection reflect power differentials," (Romany, 2000, p. 55), then refugee status represents a manifestation of privilege that is not afforded to other immigrant categories. CRF scholars have illustrated how this privilege is often coupled with subjugation in the U.S. For example In her analysis of poor immigrant and minority women's experiences in the U.S., H. Lewis (1996/2000) observes that, "the broader goals of social development—access to basic needs and an improved quality of life—are denied to millions of people in 'developed' nations as well" (p. 95). As she illustrates, efforts to economically integrate women tend to further marginalize them via exploitation of their labor. Many programs tend to be



motivated by the prospect of capitalist gain, and consequently do not meet broader social development goals for women despite their workforce participation. This reality is germane to the study of Sub-Saharan African refugee families' experiences upon resettlement because it calls attention to how societal institutions' responses to minorities' needs can further marginalize them.

Furthermore, this analysis examines the intersection of race and ethnicity as a compounded and confounded manifestation of minoritization for refugees within another influential social institution—the school. For adults, resettlement country policies and programs influence access to opportunity via economic integration (i.e., work, welfare, childcare). For refugee children, resettlement country policies and programs primarily affect their access to opportunities via schools. CRF scholars, like their CRT predecessors, agree that the law has never been neutral, color-blind, objective, or determinate, and consequently do not subscribe to a singular approach to institutional transformation (Wing, 2000, p. 4). Thus although many CRF scholars embrace the need for grassroots change and collectivism alongside Black Feminists, many also aim to transform and harness the power of social institutions to affect large-scale change (Collins, 2009a). In this way, CRF can inform how ethnic identity development manifests within schools.

The models presented in this section reference theoretical frameworks that draw attention to the relationship between privilege and oppression as well as structure and agency for the study of the Black Americans' experience(s) in the U.S. Moreover, I contend that they are robust enough to be applied to the experiences of other disenfranchised groups. The following section reviews empirical findings documenting

African American experiences. Here, I examine how research on ethnic identity development among African Americans has emerged within families and schools. In some ways, the insights gained from this scholarship are likely to inform research on the relationship between ethnic identity development and successful acculturation for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth given the similar racial boundaries that they and their families may encounter upon resettlement.

### **Ethnic Identity Development as Cultural Capital for Sub-Saharan African Refugees**

Ethnic identification is important for individual perceptions and expressions of agency, but is influenced by social forces that manifest in social institutions. As discussed throughout, macrosystemic factors such as racism, globalization, as well as microsystemic contexts such as families and schools, heavily influence the ethnic identity development process (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Collins, 1990/2009, 2009a; Syed et al., 2011; Telles & Ortiz, 2008). A rich body of literature on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. illumines how this nuanced process unfolds with implications for how individuals and families identify opportunities, and challenges. The resources, difficulties, and knowledges examined in this scholarship are likely to inform future and ongoing research on acculturation in the U.S. for incoming populations who are likely to experience complex manifestations of privilege and compounding marginalization. In this section, I summarize research that presents racial and ethnic socialization as a form of cultural capital within minority families. In addition, I explore similarities and contrasts in how ethnic identity may function as a resource within African American and Sub-Saharan African refugee families.

### ***Ethnic Identity Development as Cultural Capital within the African American Family***

Socialization that takes place within the family affects the information that youth receive about how to recognize and respond to challenges and opportunities that they and their families encounter in society. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *cultural capital* is important for understanding why this holds true. Cultural capital refers to a symbolic resource comprised of "knowledge and manners that do not make individuals more productive in and of themselves, but that permit them to be more effective as actors within a particular social context" (Massey, 2008, p. 18). For example, Calarco (2011) observed differences in how White middle-class and working-class elementary school students sought help from teachers, such that middle-class students "received more help, spent less time waiting, and were better able to complete assignments" (p. 863). Based on her observations, middle-class elementary students tended to vocalize their needs for clarification and information, asserting their need for help even if it meant interrupting others. Working-class students tended to wait patiently and quietly, sometimes at the expense of their ability to complete their assignments during designated time frames. Others attempted to problem-solve on their own, which was also at the expense of their ability to complete their work accurately and on time. Overall, middle-class students were better able to navigate academic success than their working-class peers due to cultural capital that was fostered within their families. Anyon (1980) observes how social class divisions are reproduced by pedagogical and cultural aspects in schools for working, middle, and upper-class youth. She finds that the differing environments cultivate different skill sets intended to help children succeed in blue-collar, white-collar, and

leadership positions, respectively. Thus cultural capital can be cultivated in families and reinforced in schools with implications for students' life chances.

Worldviews and adaptive strategies such as double-consciousness and subjugated knowledges illustrate how these navigational resources can differentially manifest among the marginalized (Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008). Although being an ethnic minority in the U.S. is often viewed as an ascribed disadvantage, it is important to study how groups and individuals employ ethnic identification as a symbolic resource for navigating challenges and opportunities in adaptive, resilient ways. Moreover, ethnic identity development can be viewed as a form of cultural capital because individuals can choose to affiliate or dissociate themselves with aspects of their ethnicity—some aspects more easily than others—in an effort to gain access to, navigate, and possibly succeed within power structures (Larson, 1929/2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999). Furthermore, preparation for bias constitutes a pivotal feature of the ethnic socialization process, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008). This particular socialization component can constitute a form of resistance:

But surveillance goes both ways. In the course of watching you from my structural position of relative powerlessness (as a slave, servant, or student), I see things about you that routinely escape your attention. I learn your vulnerabilities by watching you, knowledge that may be useful to me in navigating the unequal power relation that joins us (Collins, 2009a, p. 105).

As Collins (2009a) articulates, minority groups can and do incorporate countersurveillance into their ethnic socialization processes as youth are made aware of their subjectivity in mainstream culture.

Although referred to by the racial designation “Black”, this same group is also be referred to by its ethnic designation that connotes ties to “Africa” and “America”. This

latter descriptive associates such involuntary immigrants of African descent in the U.S. with ties to Africa as a homeland as well as identification with its history. Moreover, the label “African American” illustrates ancestry and experiences in the U.S. Despite heterogeneity, a large body of literature broadly connects African Americans as a collective to a shared way of life (Abizadeh, 2001). Furthermore, West (1982) provides an important definition germane to my research that links negative structural forces and agency to identity development for this group:

Who is really black? First, blackness has no meaning outside of a system of race-conscious people and practices. After centuries of racist degradation, exploitation, and oppression in America, being black means being minimally subject to white supremacist abuse and being part of a rich culture and community that has struggled against such abuse. (p. 25)

For West, many African Americans possess internal acumen as well as community institutional supports that enable them to forge a positive self-identity an adaptive counter-narrative. However, this same scholar describes angst and nihilism, particularly among poor urban African Americans as a result of micro-aggressions and imprudent decisions. When historical empirical studies are considered, the discourse surrounding the roles of African American (Moynihan, 1965) and minority immigrant (O. Lewis, 1959) families has often been negative. Such scholars argued that dynamics internal to Black families or socio-psychological challenges meant Black families and, by default, Black youth, tended to live deficient lives.

Yet significant work has been performed on the insight and adaptive strategies such families offer their children despite their social classification as “disadvantaged” (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 2009a). In-depth analyses of a variety of African American and African family structures reveal the presence of consanguineous and unrelated members who serve specific functions that are vital to the socialization that takes place

within the family unit (Billingsley, 1992; C. Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008; Sudarkasa, 1980). For example, Yosso (2005, as cited in Syed et al., 2011) describes how families—biological and fictive kin, as well as broader communities of color—can provide resources in the form of “community cultural wealth”, such as “a sense of community, belonging, and shared experience that serves as a resource in times of struggle” (Hill, 1972/2003; Stack, 1974; Syed et al., 2011, p. 452). Furthermore, Tierney and Auerbach (2006, as cited in Syed et al., 2011) examine “invisible strategies”—such as financial sacrifice and verbal encouragement—as efforts to advance children’s opportunities within minority families. As the authors discuss, whereas White middle-class families may attend parent-teacher conferences or volunteer to remain involved and in communication with the school, minorities families’ time and/or financial sacrifices are likely to be among strategies used to help their children succeed.

Billingsley (1992) chronicles proactive, intentional efforts within African American families to socialize children to embrace their racial and ethnic heritages, maximize their potential as U.S. citizens, and negotiate often racially-challenged American spaces. Moreover, this same scholar provides qualitative and quantitative results to illustrate how African American families successfully buttress the acculturation process and racial identity development via double consciousness as well as tapping into efforts of organizations such as churches and schools. This seminal work describes key aspects of a process by which African American families endeavor to “help their children accept, understand, and cope with their status as blacks in a white-dominated society” (Billingsley 1992, p. 223). Several additional observations from this same scholar are central for my research:

Social scientists refer to this practice as “racial socialization”. What this means is that black parents recognize the double burden of preparing their children like all other parents to function successfully in society, *and in addition* [emphasis is mine], preparing them to function in a society that may often be arrayed against them. They cannot simply be brought up as American children. *They must be brought up as American and as black in white America* [emphasis is mine]... This makes it exceedingly difficult for parents to provide their children with positive self- and group – identity. The fact that a majority of parents succeed in doing so is surely among the most remarkable strengths of black families (pp. 223-224).

Racial socialization process includes the following types of activities; buffering children from hostile spaces in the wider society; exposing them to Black history and culture; cultivating strategies to act and/or react to racism and other forms of discrimination; emphasizing the importance of formal education; fostering Black community-mindedness and racial solidarity; promoting self-esteem; and, discouraging personal bigotry against Whites. This lengthy, often arduous process varies across Black families, has varied levels of success, but increases the likelihood that African American children will be adaptive and resilient.

Additionally, numerous scholars have explored ways in which the Black poor navigate poverty in an effort to improve the lives of their children, with particular attention to impoverished mothers negotiating and financial constraints (Barnes, 2005; Edin & Lein, 1997; Rosier, 2000; Stack, 1974). Thus racial identification processes often manifests in African American families and can function in ways that provide groups and individuals with empowering frameworks for interpreting and responding to prejudice as well as structural inequality in the U.S. Because the family is the first and arguably the most important socializing agent for youth (Billingsley, 1992), it is important to examine its influence on the acculturative experiences and ethnic identity development process for Sub-Saharan refugee youth.

### *Ethnic Socialization as Cultural Capital for Immigrant Groups*

Scholarship documents ways in which social networks also benefit immigrant populations in multiple ways. For example, social networks provide families with access to observable forms of assistance, such as childcare, as well as valuable information such as opportunities for work (Portes & Zhou, 1993; C. Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). Levanon (2011) shows how jobs obtained through relatives have the potential to benefit the community by providing individuals with opportunities for workforce training and skill development that otherwise may not be available. However, refugees tend to differ from immigrants in their lack of established networks upon resettlement. This is particularly the case for refugees from Sub-Saharan African countries who have a shorter history of immigration to the U.S. Such resources may be similar or different for refugees from Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, or Eritrea, however these dynamics are yet to be systematically explored.

Waters (1999) also presents a view of minority resistance to oppression that is derived from lived experiences. She observes that West Indian parents' reactions to racism in the U.S. are different from those of their children. Waters (1999) attributes this lack of internalization of discrimination to their experiences growing up in the West Indies. For example, West Indian parents were less likely to be concerned by an observed scarcity of Black people in positions of authority in the U.S., and less likely to internalize or quietly accept interpersonal racism and attribute it to intrinsic shortcomings than their second-generation children. Furthermore, this decreased expectation of and refusal to internalize interpersonal and structural racism reduced barriers in forming relationships with White Americans in ways that were difficult for African Americans considering that



interpersonal and structural racial oppression are large components of African Americans' collective memory (Collins, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; West, 1994; Wilson, 1978). Thus life experiences in the West Indies provide parents with a point of comparison that is employed when they initial encounter racial and socioeconomic stratification in the U.S. However, their children often do not have this same experiential lens (C. Suárez-Orozco & M. Suárez-Orozco, 1995; C. Suárez-Orozco & M. Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Waters (1999) notes that the structural realities of racial discrimination inevitably “catch up with” and frustrate West Indian first- and second-generation immigrants. It is also important to point out that the presence of Black people in positions of power in the West Indies does not suggest the complete absence of forms of social stratification that are similar to the ways in which discrimination operates in the U.S. Instead, for the purposes of this study, Waters' (1999) work provides an interesting and valuable example of how ethnic identification meaningfully shapes first-generation immigrants' perceptions of their opportunities and challenges, as well as their strategies for overcoming problems. I contend that such experiential reference points and consequent worldviews function as forms of cultural capital that are incorporated into parents' strategic socialization efforts to help youth gain access to power structures, achieve upward mobility, and view themselves in positive ways.

### **The Role of Schools**

Despite increases in the educational attainment levels of females and racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S., economic inequities persist. In addition, U.S. policy makers, researchers, and practitioners observe that on average, refugee and underprivileged

minority students tend to academically underperform their White and advantaged minority peers (Louie, 2005). These trends call into question the extent to which education currently functions as the panacea or leveler it is often touted and expected to be. Despite these odds, studies find that African American students recognize the existence of racial and/or ethnic discrimination, yet do not exhibit fatalist or defeated attitudes (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1999; Barnes, 2002; MacLeod, 1987). Thus schools can still serve as meaningful intervention sites to help minority students realize their goals and potential. Although I focus on the impact of schools on ethnic identity development, a summary of this important socializing agent is provided here to undergird and inform my overall project.

### ***Schools, Socialization, and Implications for Ethnic Identity Development***

Schools are expected to provide students with the content knowledge and, arguably, the skills needed to pursue higher education and/or become gainfully employed (Collins, 2009a; Anyon, 1980; Louie, 2005; MacLeod, 1987). They are also important socializing agents and environments that are expected to convey information about appropriate and normative beliefs, worldviews, attitudes, and behaviors. Education has been the primary avenue by which many African Americans have gone from working class to middle class in a single generation in the U.S. Billingsley (1992) describes school settings, particularly those with culturally sensitive teachers, as spaces where Black American youth have historically obtained cultural and social capital to foster economic mobility and an improved quality of life. However, prior to the last several decades, many scholars believed African American youth rejected the importance of formal

education and the upward mobility it could afford. Germane to my research, the premise for this prevailing thesis was linked to minority immigrant status.

Ogbu (1978, 1991) posited differential views about the value of formal education and mainstream values between voluntary minority groups such as Asians and Whites and involuntary minorities such as African Americans. He suggested that youth from the latter group tended to exhibit oppositional culture characterized by disdain for education and their high achieving peers. Moreover, such children associated academic success with “acting White”. In contrast, members of the former groups embraced positive views about educational and occupational success. Personal limitations and cultural flaws were the causes of Black students’ underachievement rather than systemic forces associated with racism, classism, and inequities in educational systems (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1978; 1991). Although this thesis was based on anecdotal and qualitative studies and most of its tenets had not been carefully tested, a plethora of researchers embraced it and considered it central to understanding the socialization process of African American youth as involuntary immigrant group members. However, more recent work based on large national samples have debunked key predictions from this model and find that African American youth are actually more likely to embrace the importance of education than their White counterparts (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; MacLeod, 1997). Furthermore, they tend to esteem their high achieving peers. Based on these results, contemporary scholarship on educational outcomes and aspirations for Black youth critique the role of social forces in undermining the positive aspirations of African American youth (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey, 1998; Harris 2006; Murry, Berkel, Brody, Miller & Chen, 2009).

The prevalence of an oppositional culture thesis highlights challenges associated with identifying and testing ethnocentric models commonly associated with the African American experience in particular (Moynihan, 1965) and the minority immigrant experience in general (Lewis, 1959). It also calls for research that carefully considers the experiences of involuntary minorities such as Sub-Saharan African refugees in culturally informed ways. Moreover, in addition to rejecting Ogbu's thesis, scholars such as Collins (2009a) now reframe the understanding of "oppositional culture" to refer to minority youth such as African Americans, Latinos, and impoverished youth who thoughtfully and proactively strive to develop positive individual and group identities despite negative images about them in mainstream society.

Collins (2009a) also provides a sobering response to what she perceives to be the failings in the public school system to address the educational needs of students of color. She provides a pointed argument and corresponding theoretical framework to transform the existing public educational system into a process to more effectively serve students. Furthermore, increasing numbers of African American families are educating and socializing their youth to anticipate success and learn in safe, culturally sensitive, rigorous schools that are sponsored by Black churches (Barnes, 2010).

Many schools present ethnocentric curricula that position racial and ethnic minorities at the periphery of American society (Sizemore, 1990). For immigrant populations in particular, schools are expected to "Americanize" students who are unfamiliar with U.S. culture (Olsen, 2001). Such ethnocentric curricula position racial and ethnic minorities at the periphery of American society. Thus schools can represent sites of discrimination and oppression for Black youth. This reality has been well

documented for Sub-Saharan African refugee and Black youth alike (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Collins, 1990/2009; Naidoo, 2009; Oikonomidou, 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; R. Smith, 2008). However, despite these odds, studies find that African American students do not exhibit fatalist or defeated attitudes but rather maintain positive aspirations and have more positive views about the importance of education and their high-achieving peers than do White students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1999; MacLeod, 1987). Yet the negative realities associated with race and poverty can level aspirations for second-generation immigrant and African American youth alike (MacLeod, 1987; Waters, 1999). Thus although ethnic identity development is undoubtedly shaped by experiences within the family, it is also heavily influenced by the content and pedagogy associated with learning that takes place in schools. School curricula, practices, and culture must be examined with particular attention to how these features inform knowledge about race, constructions of ethnicity, and outlooks for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth resettled in the U.S.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The acculturative experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees resettled in the U.S. are likely to reflect a complex relationship between intersecting privileges and compounding oppressions. Given that racial discrimination within societal institutions tend to create barriers for social mobility for individuals racialized as Black in the U.S., acculturation research must take this and other structural forces into account. Thus far, I have drawn from double-consciousness, Black Feminism, and Critical Race Feminism (CRF) to inform research on the experiences of a particular category of racially Black immigrants to the U.S.: refugee youth from Sub-Saharan African countries. Research on

African Americans provides insight into ways in which crucial aspects of the acculturation process, namely ethnic identity development, aid in the identification and navigation of challenges and opportunities for Sub-Saharan African refugees *despite* oppressive structural forces.

Although existing bodies of literature on other immigrant groups to the U.S., such as Latinos and Latinas, can provide insight on emerging transnational identities (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006), research on how African Americans in the U.S. navigate race is crucial for Sub-Saharan African refugees in the U.S. who are likely to be racialized as Black. Scholars have made significant gains related to research on immigrant acculturation (Berry et. al, 2012; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999) and academic adjustment (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Davies, 2008; Oikonomidoy, 2009; Roy & Roxas, 2011). However, work remains to be done on how ethnicity, race, and refugee status affect these processes and worldviews for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth and their families. Thus the experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees in general, and youth in particular, occupy an under-examined realm as Black minority group that employs ethnic resources to negotiate dynamic transnational cultures.

The above theoretical and empirical article provides the framework for empirical studies on the acculturative processes of Sub-Saharan African refugees resettled in the U.S. It specifically undergirds future research on ethnic identity development and comparative work based on the experiences of involuntary immigrants such as African Americans. In addition to identifying, analyzing, and documenting experiences of the former group, this current review will help assess how ethnicity identity development will manifest and be nuanced in families and as a result of educational imperatives and

strategies. For example, will Sub-Saharan African refugee youth tend to exhibit attitudes and behavior that can be associated with DuBois' (1903/2008) double-consciousness, Collins,' (1986, 1990/2009, 2009) multi-consciousness, or Wing's (2000) global multiplicative identities? Or will youth embrace an identity commonly associated with mainstream White society? It is quite possible that an ethnic identity typology may emerge based on factors such as trauma from home, skin color, language, religion, school influence, and/or familial social capital.

Moreover, an examination of the socialization that takes place within African American families, as well as the challenges that African American youth face in public schools can provide further insight into similar experiences that Sub-Saharan African refugee youth may face. Thus, this research can aid in the identification of resources (i.e., worldviews, networks, etc.) that exist outside of classrooms to improve academic adjustment. More importantly, attention to the worldviews of minority and refugee youth can aid in the creation of educational spaces that aim to increase access to opportunity as well as embrace empowering identity development for children in public schools.

## Appendix



*Figure 1.* Map of the geographical region called the Horn of Africa. This map depicts the political boundaries (as of March 2014) of the countries that comprise this region, as well as bordering countries and bodies of water. Full image attribution information in the bottom right corner reads “Map data: ©2014 Google”.





*Figure 2.* Map of the Nile River basin. Provides a visual representation of how the Nile River connects ten countries in North East Africa. From north to south, these countries are: Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania.

Source: Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) via the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI). Retrieved from [http://nilebdc.org/2014/03/15/nile-summary/?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed%3A+nbdnews+%28Nile+BDC+news%29](http://nilebdc.org/2014/03/15/nile-summary/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+nbdnews+%28Nile+BDC+news%29). Image licensed for use under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License. To view license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

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### **Endnotes: Chapter 1**

<sup>1</sup> According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the term “refugee” describes any foreign-born individual who has fled their country of origin due to well-founded threat of persecution on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, or political orientation (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, n.d.).

<sup>2</sup> Although the term “refugee arrival” applies to individuals outside of the U.S. who declare their need for sanctuary before traveling to the U.S., the term “refugee asylee” refers to individuals who meet the definition of a refugee, but who wait to declare their need for sanctuary after arrival in the U.S. in order to be allowed to legally remain in the country (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.).

<sup>3</sup> Definitions of ethnicity and culture are often conflated because the term culture can evoke different meanings within several disciplines (P. Smith, 2000). Within the fields of history and genetics, scholars view culture as a product of social interactions passed down from one generation to another. Sociologists and anthropologists, for example, emphasize its influences on shared norms, values, ideals, symbols, and meaning within a community. Psychologists focus on “its role as a problem-solving device, allowing people to communicate, learn, or fulfill material and emotional needs” (P. Smith, 2000, p. 3). Thus culture is comprised of shared practices and meanings (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003). Whereas culture is dynamic and transcends physical location, ethnicity links culture to place(s); this is crucial for the study of transnational groups such as Sub-Saharan African refugees whose worldviews and actions may continue to be shaped by their lives in prior locales even after they have left them. Consequently, I focus on the concept of ethnicity rather than culture throughout this paper, acknowledging that cultural traditions manifest for various ethnic groups.

<sup>4</sup> Some scholars argue that the Irish immigrant experience reflects a certain level of forced immigration given that many persons left Ireland to escape certain death during the Potato famines (Roediger, 2007). However, the experiences of this ethnic group differs dramatically from that of most immigrants of African descent.

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<sup>5</sup> According to Fuller & Coll (2010), *bien educado* connotes a collection of behaviors exhibited by manners and respect for authority when appropriate, for example. *Familismo* refers to strong family commitment and relationships such that the family's interests are considered more important than those of any individual member.

<sup>6</sup> Readers should note that "Black" or "African American" can be used interchangeably.

## CHAPTER III

### **“JUST TO BE WHAT I AM AND WHERE I CAME FROM”: HOW ETHNICITY SHAPES SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN REFUGEE FAMILIES AND EXPERIENCES IN THE UNITED STATES**

#### **Introduction**

Ethnicity is a complex social construct. This reality becomes increasingly evident as the experiences of different ethnic and racial groups are examined. How are race and ethnicity related? How are they distinct? Is it possible to discuss one construct apart from the other? And how does culture factor into how individuals understand ethnicity and race? I attempt to engage these types of queries in this paper. This study examines the relationship between race, place, and ethnicity for a group of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth and their families who have relocated to the United States (U.S.). This in-depth qualitative, multidisciplinary analysis includes interviews with 14 youth from 5 families, participant observations, and document reviews to explore whether and how ethnic identities linked to acculturation are understood in their lives. Furthermore, I examine how their transnational experiences influence and have been affected by ethnic identity formation processes, perceptions of belonging, opportunities, and challenges, particularly among refugee youth, as they transition to life in the U.S. The research questions directing this study are:

1. How do Sub-Saharan African refugee youth discuss ethnic identity? How does this influence the way they express their ethnicities and their perceptions of opportunities and challenges in the U.S.?

2. How do parents of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth discuss ethnic identity?

How may parents' views influence socialization practices to help youth navigate opportunities and challenges in the U.S.?

Informed by Duboisian and Black Feminist theoretical frameworks narrative analyses, this study attempts to illumine nuanced depictions of this phenomenon, and endeavors to capture elements of the voices of both Sub-Saharan African refugee youth and their family members (Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903; Wing, 2000). Moreover, studies about the vulnerable positions among youth, in general, and youth that are part of disenfranchised groups, in particular, inform this work given the multiple ways factors such as age, poverty, language ability, nationality, and refugee status are expected to compound the vulnerability and hence influence the voices of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth (Berry et al., 2012; Collins, 1990/2009; MacLeod, 1987). Findings are expected to have academic and applied import to better understand the experiences of this understudied population.

**Ethnicities, Race, and Identity Development: Black Experiences and Acculturation**

Existing studies examine the acculturation experiences of refugee and immigrant children as they relocate and attempt to transition into new spaces; many of these same studies document specific challenges they face (i.e., acculturative stress) linked to ethnic identity development (Berry, 2009; Birman et al., 2008; Joyce, Earnest, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Broadly speaking, identity development refers to a dynamic process involving an awareness of self, others, and “one’s place in the world” that results from interactions between individuals and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986;

Schwartz et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). Acculturative stress describes new immigrants' linguistic, social, cultural, psychological, and/or economic struggles during transition from life in one cultural context to life in another (Berry, 2009; Joyce et al., 2010; Ngo, 2008; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006). Thus acculturative stress is undoubtedly tied to the identity development process as individuals attempt to understand and redefine their "place" in a new context. By extension, ethnic identity development is central to the acculturation process given its ability to enable Sub-Saharan African refugees to cultivate individual and/or collective views, beliefs, and personal profiles based on their histories and experiences in both African countries and the U.S.

Scholars have shown how race and ethnicity drastically influence identity development processes (Collins, 1990; DuBois, 1903; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011) and perspectives about opportunities and challenges for African Americans and other African diasporic people (Barnes, 2002; MacLeod, 1987; Waters, 1999). However, this has not been sufficiently explored for Sub-Saharan African refugees, whose differences from American mainstream society have the potential to further marginalize them in their resettlement society.<sup>1</sup> I posit that due to the history and continued effects of racial and ethnic inequality in the U.S., the acculturation and identity development of African Americans are undoubtedly germane to those of many African refugees, especially for refugees who are likely to be racialized as "Black" upon resettlement. Moreover, possible commonalities across experiences for Sub-Saharan African refugees and African Americans may inform us about some of the ways the former group may have

experiences that can be considered both “African” and “American”. Several additional concepts are central to an investigation of resettlement experiences for this group.

Ethnicity can be broadly defined as a social construction used to capture an individual’s association with a “place” or homeland and its corresponding cultural and social traditions. Additionally, ethnic groups often self-identify with a specific ancestry, heritage, and belief system. The concept also typically connotes some degree of psycho-emotional connectedness for people that can influence their attitudes and actions.

Germane to a study on the Sub-Saharan experience, transnational migration means that ethnicity is often linked to nationality for some immigrant groups.<sup>2</sup> Although scholars debate what ethnicity actually means, for those who acknowledge such a designation, it can represent a nuanced, dynamic, and broad understanding of belonging, personal placement, and historical connection that resonates with individuals (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994). Furthermore, ethnicity is comprised of social and cultural attributes (i.e., language, religion, dress, food, music, beliefs), as well as geographic and political markers (i.e., citizenship) that are encompassed by negotiable, flexible boundaries in an effort to create commonalities (Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Miles & Small, 1999). Ethnic groups and hence ethnic identification can be generally broad or narrow, depending on how boundaries of belonging are defined, and are characterized and differentiated by claimed rather than imposed cultural signifiers (Miles & Small, 1999).

I acknowledge existing variations in this definition, but consider the above characterization both informative and relevant to the current study. Literature suggests that although both are socially constructed, ethnicity differs from the concept called “race”. Race is historically rooted in conceptualizations of real or imagined fixed

biological differences and consequent attributes that supposedly result in the creation of naturally occurring groups (Miles & Small, 1999). Studies also show that one of the most important distinctions between “race” and “ethnicity” is the tendency for the former concept to be used to essentialize people based on a hierarchy of superiority and/or inferiority or perceived group position (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999; West, 1982). Thus the concepts and lived realities associated with race and ethnicity affect each other in meaningful ways. As Waters (1990) notes in her research on ethnicity for Whites, “all ethnicities are not equal, all are not symbolic, costless, and voluntary” – as they tended to be for her respondents (p. 160). Although some individuals can “pass” to gain access to spaces and resources that are occupied by other races (Larsen, 1929/2003), racial groups are typically imposed in efforts to self-identify, other-identify, and consequently exclude “the other” (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999). Moreover, racialization (i.e., the process of imposing race in an effort to stratify) can take place regardless of ethnic distinctions in an effort to subordinate others and justify unequal treatment via social structures (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 1999; Collins, 1990/2009). Thus a strong argument can be made that ethnicity, especially for marginalized groups, is an ongoing construction that involves negotiation of racialized social, political, and structural boundaries.

Evaluating commonalities and distinctions between race and ethnicity are important for critically examining the “economic, political, and ideological forces” that affect constructions of and experiences within ethnic identification (Miles & Small, 1999, p. 140). Furthermore, examining conceptualizations and expressions of ethnicity are



useful for exploring collective and individual perceptions, how groups navigate challenges and opportunities in the U.S., and how these experiences are linked to race. For Sub-Saharan African refugees this means assessing how ethnic identity (i.e., Sudanese or possibly Sudanese American) may be different from and/or conflated with race (i.e., Black) and other structural forces at work in the U.S. Thus ethnic identity development can be considered a simultaneously agentic and marginalizing process influenced by structural forces for Sub-Saharan refugees resettled in the U.S. (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Hernandez, 2012; McBrien, 2005; Nwosu, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). Thus acculturation theories and efforts to successfully resettle refugees need to thoughtfully attend to the significance of such forces. The experiences of historically oppressed groups in the U.S. such as African Americans and the poor, can inform current understandings of acculturative experiences. I posit that research on Black American experiences contains rich empirical findings expected to be relevant to the study of challenges, opportunities, and agency among immigrants in the U.S. in general, and Sub-Saharan African refugees in particular.

### **Theoretical Frameworks: Synthesizing Race Theories to Examine African Refugee Experiences**

This work is grounded in aspects of several theoretical umbrellas, including; the Duboisian (1903/2008) concept, “double-consciousness” and Collins’ (1986; 1990/2009) Black Feminist thought. These frameworks shape current understandings of Black American experiences and can inform our understanding of ethnic identity formation for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth. I also describe how each theory continues to make distinct contributions to research on the Black experience, with implications for research

on the resettlement experiences and ethnic identity development of Sub-Saharan African refugees in general and youth in particular.

***Double-consciousness as a Foundational Lens for Inquiry***

W. E. DuBois' (1903/2008) concept of double-consciousness provides the important basis for consequent theories and research that have emerged on racial and ethnic socialization across disciplines (Collins, 1990/2009; Murry et al., 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Waters, 1999). Double-consciousness describes a bifocal worldview marked by two competing realities. The first reflects the observable systematic oppression of African Americans by segments of White America, while the second reveals African Americans' attempts to create positive, adaptive counter-narratives based on experiences navigating subjugation. Double-consciousness calls attention to the need to consider how various processes, interactions, and experiences that may be central (or peripheral) to a given society's privileged mainstream may manifest differently for minority groups, such as Sub-Saharan African refugees. DuBois (1903/2008) provides an early, yet enduring framework for exploring how a marginalized group largely marginalized in White mainstream society in the U.S. navigates the acculturation process. Particularly germane here are the critical roles played by Black families as well as institutions in Black communities such as schools to socialize African American children about their roles as both "African" and "American". In the current study, I am interested in whether and how these dual roles manifest among a group of Sub-Saharan African refugees.

This process of racial socialization" means helping Black youth understand their minority status in a predominately White society in adaptive, resilient ways. Organized

collectives like families and schools spearheaded this socialization process by providing youth with skills and strategies to: create and maintain positive self-identities; counter negative experiences, beliefs, and images in the broader society; know and appreciate their cultural heritage; and participate in racial and community uplift. Although the process is not considered utopian and will not guarantee developmentally healthy youth (West, 1983), studies suggest that, without it, many African American youth would have little personal buffer to the onslaughts of systemic racism and discrimination (Billingsley 1992; Collins, 1990/2009, 2009a; Murry et al., 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Waters, 1999). In addition to considering possible manifestations of double-consciousness, it is reasonable to expect that Sub-Saharan African refugees may experience and negotiate forms of *multi-consciousness* as a result of transitioning into at least one new cultural and ecological contexts. This study focuses how individuals and families' experiences may reflect double- or multi-consciousness, and consequently contribute to cultural capital that is useful for navigating experiences and opportunity in the U.S.

### ***From Double-Consciousness to Intersectionality: Key Concepts within Black Feminism***

Black Feminism highlights how multiple socially constructed minority statuses, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, can result in compounded experiences of marginalization. Furthermore, the intersectionality of these multiple statuses is characterized by changing, context-dependent experiences that are ultimately correlated with oppression<sup>3</sup>. Collins (2009a) details how intersecting oppressions can be institutionalized within societies in her systems of power framework. This model describes how societal structures, interpersonal relations, ideologies, and modes of social

control operate to marginalize people and ideas, as well as provoke acts of resistance. This framework is essential for the study of complex communal and individual constructs such as ethnicity, and ultimately stems from her 1990 seminal work, *Black Feminist Thought*. Black Feminism is a critical social theory that assesses the lived experiences of oppression among poor and near poor Black women that may be germane to my population of interest here.

Collins (1990/2009) deftly bridges macro- and micro-level theoretical theories to demonstrate the importance of relying on an array of experiences to attend to power and its influence on individual experiences. One key tenant within Black Feminism is that commonalities exist such that: (1) the perspectives of poor and near poor Black women help broadly unite Black women as a unique social group; (2) their experiences inform understandings of how disenfranchised groups define themselves in transformative ways; (3) decisions to resist inequality are political in nature and result in individual and group uplift; and, (4) despite oppression, such women are often engaged in ongoing acts of resistance that harness subjugated knowledges for group and individual empowerment.

Akin to diversity among African Americans, refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan are also likely to have varied experiences as a result of ethnic differences, many refugees from African countries can arguably be grouped due to shared experiences of discrimination or disadvantage they are likely to experience upon resettlement. However, this tendency does not imply that differences in experiences across ethnicities will be ignored. Another tenant of this theory considers differential within-group experiences that manifest as a result of variations in socioeconomic status, religion, age, and sexuality (Combahee River Collective, 1979/2006; hooks, 1990/2006). Thus Collins' intersectional

approach advocates for insight into how disadvantage and opportunity differentially manifest among and between Sub-Saharan African refugee sub-groups, particularly refugee youth.

Three specific concepts within *Black Feminist Thought* constitute major contributions to this study. Tensions between oppression and activism in the lives of African American women give rise to subjugated knowledges, or insider beliefs, insights, wisdom, and strategies for survival and/or resistance in the midst of oppression. In this way, subjugated knowledges constitute a form of cultural capital or skill set to help groups and individuals gain access to, navigate, and, if possible, succeed within power structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Collins 1990/2009). Subjugated knowledges arise from an awareness of and responses to intersecting oppressions (hooks, 1990/2006) as well as potentially controlling images (Combahee River Collective, 1979/2006; DuBois, 1903/2008). Furthermore, Collins (1990/2009) examines how such knowledge reveals clashes between negative portrayals and lived experiences, inciting Black women to question and harness “the power to define” (p. 160).

Throughout the ethnic identity development process, self-definition is political and transformative because it requires individuals to challenge institutions and ideologies that assume the power to define (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). My analysis considers whether and how ethnicity emerges as a form of self-definition, as well as whether and how subjugated knowledges emerge in parents’ ethnic socialization processes within refugee families. Overall, the above models reference theoretical frameworks that draw attention to the relationship between privilege and oppression as well as structure and agency for the study of African Americans experiences in the U.S. I apply research and

theory documenting their experiences to inform my research on ethnic socialization Sub-Saharan African refugee families.

### **Ethnic Identity Development as Cultural Capital for Sub-Saharan African Refugees**

Ethnic identification is important for individual perceptions and expressions of agency, but is influenced by social forces that often manifest in social institutions. Macrosystemic factors such as racism, globalization, as well as microsystemic contexts such as families and schools, heavily influence the ethnic identity development process (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Collins, 2009a, 1990/2009; Syed et al., 2011; Telles & Ortiz, 2008). A rich body of literature on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. illuminates how this nuanced process unfolds with implications for how individuals and families identify opportunities, and challenges. The resources, successes, difficulties, and knowledges examined in this scholarship are likely to inform future and ongoing research on acculturation in the U.S. for incoming populations who are likely to experience complex manifestations of privilege and compounding marginalization. In this section, I provide an overview of research that presents racial and ethnic socialization as a form of cultural capital within minority families. In addition, I explore similarities and contrasts in how ethnic identity may function as a resource within African American and Sub-Saharan African refugee families.

### ***Ethnic Identity Development as Cultural Capital within the African American Family***

Socialization within families affects the information that youth receive about how to recognize and respond to challenges and opportunities that they and their families encounter in society. Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *cultural capital* is important for

understanding why this holds true. Cultural capital refers to a symbolic resource comprised of “knowledge and manners that do not make individuals more productive in and of themselves, but that permit them to be more effective as actors within a particular social context” (Massey, 2008, p. 18). Worldviews and adaptive strategies such as double-consciousness and subversive knowledge illustrate how these navigational resources can differentially manifest among the marginalized (Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008). Although being an ethnic minority in the U.S. is often viewed as an ascribed disadvantage, it is important to study how groups and individuals employ ethnic identification as a symbolic resource for navigating challenges and opportunities in adaptive, resilient ways. Moreover, ethnic identity development can be viewed as a form of cultural capital because individuals can choose to affiliate or dissociate themselves with aspects of their ethnicity—some aspects more easily than others—in an effort to gain access to, navigate, and possibly succeed within power structures (Larson, 1929/2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999).

Historically, much of the discourse surrounding the roles of African American (Moynihan, 1965) and minority immigrant (Lewis, 1959) families has often been negative. Such scholars argued that dynamics internal to Black families or socio-psychological challenges meant Black families and, by default, Black youth, tended to live deficient lives. Regardless, many African Americans possess internal acumen as well as community institutional support that enable them to forge a positive self-identity an adaptive counter-narrative (Collins, 1990/2009; West, 1982). Significant work has been performed on the insight and adaptive strategies such families offer their children despite their social classification as “disadvantaged” (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 2009a).

In-depth analyses of a variety of African American and African family structures reveal the presence of consanguineous and unrelated members who serve specific functions that are vital to the socialization that takes place within the family unit (Billingsley, 1992; C. Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008; Sudarkasa, 1980). For example, Yosso (2005, as cited in Syed et al., 2011) describes how families—biological and fictive kin, as well as broader communities of color—can provide resources in the form of “community cultural wealth”, such as “a sense of community, belonging, and shared experience that serves as a resource in times of struggle” (Hill, 1972/2003; Syed et al., 2011, p. 452; Stack, 1974). Furthermore, Tierney and Auerbach (2006, as cited in Syed et al., 2011) examine “invisible strategies”—such as financial sacrifice and verbal encouragement—for advancing children’s opportunities within minority families. As the authors discuss, whereas White middle-class families may attend parent-teacher conferences or volunteer to remain involved and in communication with the school, minorities families’ time and/or financial sacrifices are likely to be among strategies used to help their children succeed.

Billingsley (1992) specifically chronicles proactive, intentional efforts within African American families to socialize children to embrace their racial and ethnic heritages, maximize their potential as U.S. citizens, and negotiate often racially-challenged American spaces. Moreover, this same scholar provides qualitative and quantitative results to illustrate how African American families successfully buttress the acculturation process and racial identity development via double consciousness as well as tapping into efforts of organizations such as churches and schools. This seminal work describes key aspects of a process by which African American families endeavor to “help



their children accept, understand, and cope with their status as blacks in a white-dominated society” (Billingsley, 1992, p. 223). Several additional observations from this same scholar are central for my research:

Social scientists refer to this practice as “racial socialization”. What this means is that black parents recognize the double burden of preparing their children like all other parents to function successfully in society, *and in addition* [emphasis is mine], preparing them to function in a society that may often be arrayed against them. They cannot simply be brought up as American children. *They must be brought up as American and as black in white America* [emphasis is mine], (p. 223).

This racial socialization process including the following types of activities; buffering children from hostile spaces in the wider society; exposing them to Black history and culture; cultivating strategies to act and/or react to racism and other forms of discrimination; emphasizing the importance of formal education; fostering Black community-mindedness and racial solidarity; promoting self-esteem; and, discouraging personal bigotry against Whites. This lengthy, often arduous process varies across Black families, has varied levels of success, but increases the likelihood that African American children will be adaptive and resilient.

Additionally, numerous scholars have explored ways in which the Black poor navigate poverty in an effort to improve the lives of their children, with particular attention to impoverished mothers negotiating and financial constraints (Barnes, 2005; Edin & Lein, 1997; Rosier, 2000; Stack, 1974). Role models, institutions, and other local agentic groups are central to this racial socialization process (Barnes 2008; Collins, 2009a; Harris, 2006). Thus racial identification processes often manifest in African American family and can function in ways that provide groups and individuals with empowering frameworks for interpreting and responding to prejudice as well as structural inequality in the U.S. Because the family is the first and arguably the most important

socializing agent for youth (Billingsley, 1992), it is important to examine its influence on the acculturative experiences and ethnic identity development process for Sub-Saharan refugee youth.

### *Ethnic Socialization as Cultural Capital for Immigrant Groups*

Scholarship documents ways in which social networks also benefit immigrant populations in multiple ways. For example, social networks provide families with access to observable forms of assistance, such as childcare, as well as valuable information such as opportunities for work (Portes & Zhou, 1993; C. Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008). Levanon (2011) shows how jobs obtained through relatives have the potential to benefit the community by providing individuals with opportunities for workforce training and skill development that otherwise may not be available. However, refugees tend to differ from immigrants in their lack of established networks upon resettlement. This is particularly the case for refugees from Sub-Saharan African countries who have a shorter history of immigration to the U.S. Such resources may be similar or different for refugees from Sudan, Ethiopia, or Eritrea, however these dynamics are yet to be systematically explored.

Waters (1999) also presents a view of minority resistance to oppression that is derived from lived experiences. She observes that West Indian parents' reactions to racism in the U.S. are different from those of their children. Waters (1999) attributes this lack of internalization of discrimination to their experiences growing up in the West Indies. For example, West Indian parents were less likely to be concerned by an observed scarcity of Black people in positions of authority in the U.S., and less likely to internalize or quietly accept interpersonal racism and attribute it to intrinsic shortcomings than their

second-generation children. Furthermore, this decreased expectation of and refusal to internalize interpersonal and structural racism reduced barriers in forming relationships with White Americans in ways that were difficult for African Americans considering that interpersonal and structural racial oppression are large components of African Americans' collective memory (Collins, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; West, 1994; Wilson, 1978). Thus life experiences in the West Indies provide parents with a point of comparison that is employed when they initial encounter racial and socioeconomic stratification in the U.S. However, their children often do not have this same experiential lens (C. Suárez-Orozco & M. Suárez-Orozco, 1995; C. Suárez-Orozco & M. Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

It is also important to point out that the presence of Black people in positions of power in the West Indies does not suggest the complete absence of forms of social stratification that are similar to the ways in which discrimination operates in the U.S. Instead, for the purposes of this study, Waters' (1999) work provides an interesting and valuable example of how ethnic identification meaningfully shapes first-generation immigrants' perceptions of their opportunities and challenges, as well as their strategies for overcoming problems. I contend that such experiential reference points and consequent worldviews function as forms of cultural capital that are incorporated into parents' strategic attempts to gain access to power structures and upward mobility and view themselves in positive ways. In light of the above scholarship, it will be important to assess whether ethnic socialization is considered a form of cultural capital for Sub-Saharan African refugee parents and their children.

## Methods

### *Participant Observation*

Given that my broader research agenda focuses on the educational and acculturative processes at a multicultural, ethnically diverse school (Nwosu, 2012), I chose to carry out observations in nearby refugee resettlement communities that impact this and so many other schools in the area. Between May 29, 2013, and October 3, 2013, I engaged in participant observation in multiple sites within and surrounding Haventown<sup>4</sup>, an ethnically diverse, working-class community and unexpected gateway city. With nearly 40% of its inhabitants born outside of the country (U.S. Census, 2010), it is located on the outskirts of the 6<sup>th</sup> largest state of residence in the U.S. for refugee arrivals between 2010 and 2012 (Martin & Yankay, 2012). I began observations at my first site as an intern for Resettlement, Integration, and Aid<sup>5</sup> (RIA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving refugees immigrants, asylees, and victims of human trafficking statewide. RIA operates as a liaison between international, national, and local organizations and their clients to deliver a wide range of services including assistance with immediate (e.g., medical attention, food, clothing, and shelter) and long-term (e.g., employment, education, immigration and citizenship) essentials for successful resettlement. I contacted RIA to: 1) inform them of my research interests; and 2) ask about opportunities to become more familiar with their activities and meet potential interview partners. When informed of their opportunities for nine unpaid intern positions for the summer, I applied for a position in the educational programs department. My role as an intern lasted from May 29, 2013, to July 24, 2013.

During the school year RIA collaborates with the county's school board to operate after school programs in three middle schools funded by the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. In connection with this ongoing effort, my internship responsibilities largely consisted of working as a teaching assistant during a three-week long summer enrichment day camp for recently resettled refugee and immigrant youth. As a classroom assistant for seventh graders, I spent time: tutoring students in individual and small group settings; supervising students during afternoon enrichment activities; assisting with daily facilitation, set-up and break-down of activities; and, assisting with classroom management. Working with RIA in this capacity enriched my insight into refugee students' educational and social adjustment experiences in an academic setting.

This program resembled a typical school day in many ways. For instance, camp lasted from 8 o'clock in the morning until 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Students received breakfast in the morning, lunch in the afternoon, and rode buses from their neighborhoods to the campus and back if they did not live close enough to walk. However, the program's schedule was intended to distinguish it from a typical school day to combine academics with fun. Instruction in mathematics and language arts took place from approximately 8:30 until noon. After lunch, the program offered a variety of activities such as Congolese dance, soccer, basket weaving, and art. For the most part, teachers in the program and RIA staff members volunteered their talents to create and lead these activities.

Consistent with my research goals, working closely with the students on a daily basis introduced me to refugee youth and teachers who served as key informants to help

identify and reach potential respondents. During the summer enrichment program, I paid attention to the school's physical setting and social climate, namely student-teacher and student-student interactions. I also documented my interactions with the students in my teaching assistant role, largely because it provided useful insight into challenges teaching English Language Learners. DuBois (1903/2008) makes a strong argument for the value of different perspectives in research. Thus in addition to my primary role as a researcher, I assessed how these various roles offered different insights on my research process.

Although the summer enrichment program lasted a few weeks, I continued to observe RIA's resettlement activities for refugee families from June 20, 2013, until October 3, 2013. This largely emerged through conversations with families and youth during commitment acts and/or after interviews. I was particularly interested in the challenges (i.e., unemployment, lack of transportation, and medical needs) that the refugee families identified and RIA's responses in an effort to meet their needs. These observation periods also provide context for the resources and challenges that may be discussed by refugee children and their caregivers during interviews. The participant observation instrument is found in the Appendix (refer to Schedule A).

### ***Interviews***

Documenting the narratives of Sub-Saharan African refugees was primarily performed through in-depth interviews (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). Between June 18, 2013, and October 3, 2013, I conducted a total of 14 in-depth interviews with refugee youth (N=9) and their caregivers (N=5) from Eritrea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan to gain insight into the role of ethnic identity development in the acculturative experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees in America. Respondents are either

residents in Haventown or South Haven, a small nearby community with a growing international population. Through employment at RIA, I was introduced to a variety of potential interviewees. My goal was to invite a group of diverse youth participants based on their country of origin, gender, and length of time in the U.S. between the ages of 12 and 15. However, a number of barriers to securing interviews arose that required greater flexibility in my sampling approach. Qualitative research in particular typically requires time dedicated to gaining access and building trust (Feldman, Bell, & Berger, 2003). My ethnicity, gender, and possibly my age were advantages in this particular endeavor. Yet language barriers required me to rely heavily on introductions from RIA staff members and snowball sampling to secure respondents.

After selecting potential youth for interviews, I sought and obtained parental assent and youth consent. I also extended interview invitations to one of their primary caretakers. I employed a semi-structured interview guide to ensure that questions relative to the ethnic identity development process were covered. However, this format also allows for flexibility to probe by asking questions that may not be on the questionnaire (refer to Schedule B). Depending on whether the respondent was an adolescent or a caregiver, a total of 7 closed-ended questions and 15-17 open-ended questions were posed, respectively. The instrument was developed in a tiered fashion such that certain questions were posed to each respondent while caregivers and youth were also asked certain specific questions to reflect their experiences and demographic profiles.

Interviews averaged about 1 hour in length for adults and 30 minutes in length for youth and took place at a locale determined by the parents. Respondents were given gift cards as a small token for their participation in the process. Interviews were audiotaped and

transcribed by this researcher. These data are central in illuminating Sub-Saharan African refugee youth experiences and presenting their voices (Collins, 1990/2009; Wing, 2000).

### ***Document Analysis***

Documents collected during my time at RIA provide detailed insight on and a record of the organization's activities. These materials help contextualize interview and participant observation findings. Examples of the documents amassed include: material used for training and professional development; information used to educate others on their activities; and, promotional content for fundraising and RIA-sponsored events.

### **Participants**

Interview findings document the voices and perspectives of five families represented by at least one youth and one of their parents. As noted earlier, I interviewed 5 parents and 9 youth. Collectively, the parents' ages range from 31 to 43 years old, and the youths' ages range from 13 to 21 years of age. The sample was overwhelmingly female; three respondents are male. Among the parents, four of the five parent respondents are single-mothers. The sole respondent who is a father is married and jointly cares for his children with his wife. The majority of the interviewees are newcomers to the U.S., with lengths of residence at the time of interview ranging from 2 months to almost 5 years. Although some of the respondents' stories are described in detail throughout the findings, their demographics are detailed in the Appendix (Figure 1). I have made an effort to provide each respondent with a culturally relevant pseudonym to protect their identities, but preserve valuable aspects of their cultures. The small sample size and limited inclusion of male respondents preclude possible generalizability of these



findings. However, although I am interested in emergent themes, generalizability is not the goal here, but rather to illumine aspects of the experiences and perspectives of my research partners. Despite the various foreseen and unforeseen circumstances that arose during the data collection process, the findings obtained from all interviews provide invaluable insight into the role of ethnicity in the lives of immigrant and refugee youth and their families from countries in the Horn of Africa alike.

### **Coding and Analysis**

Three analytical approaches within narrative analysis—content analysis, structural analysis, and dialogic/performance analysis—were used to analyze the in-depth interviews as well as written content collected from RIA. Whereas content analysis largely focuses on *what* is being said, structural and dialogic/performance analyses focus more on *why* information is conveyed in a particular way (Reissman, 2008). Content analysis is primarily concerned with the interpretation of data according to themes developed by the investigator, prior research, and/or theory. The frequency of emergent themes and language, for example, were useful in uncovering patterns across the data as well as relationships between my data, theory, and findings discussed in existing literature (Krippendorf, 1980).

Unlike the most straightforward forms of content analysis, which seldom question language use or choices, structural analysis examines how narratives are organized to gain insight into relationships between language and meaning. Dialogic/performance analysis particularly values the role of context on data gleaned from personal narratives. This allows for insight into dynamics such as current and past events, researcher qualities, and power differentials that influence respondents' choices to divulge

information or remain silent. Rather than impose meaning onto respondents' narratives, this analytical approach may allow me to account for contextual factors that are otherwise missing from transcript data. I employed aspects of these narrative analysis approaches to aid in the identification of patterns, themes, biases, and meanings interpreted in interview transcripts, documents, and observation field notes.

For the purposes of this work, personal narratives are defined as a spoken or written account surrounding critical life events (Reissman, 1993; Reissman, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007). Reissman (1993) maintains that as "essential meaning-making structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators, who must respect respondents' ways of constructing meaning and analyze how its accomplished" (p. 4). Thus in addition to words and phrases, stories comprised a central unit of analysis in my coding process that were employed to examine interviewees' worldviews: "narratives are composed for particular audiences at moments in history, and they draw on taken-for-granted discourses and values circulating in a particular culture" (Reissman, 2008, p. 3). Personal narratives are complementary and contradictory components of collective memories as well as shared, yet diverse experiences (Collins, 1990/2009). Given its focus on examining how individuals perceive their experiences, narrative analysis is invaluable for research on identity, and especially important for individuals who may choose to share traumatic experiences, such as refugees (Reissman, 1993). Overall, I maintain that identifying broad themes as well as analyses that consider personal narratives will be important to more thoughtfully assess parent and youth commentary, particularly in light of particular challenges that may arise as they locate

their voices and share their stories (Berry et al., 2012; Collins, 1990/2009; MacLeod, 1987).

A combination of inductive and deductive categorical schemes for coding data was employed. For deductive approaches, major concepts from theoretical frameworks described in prior sections of this paper guided my identification of behaviors or language that may constitute, for example, multi-consciousness or intersectionality. Thus I approached the data with some ideas of concepts related to ethnicity, marginalization, and socialization in mind. However, this approach did not restrict other possible categories that emerged. Thus I began with an open coding process achieved through an inductive approach, and gradually transitioned to a deductive approach in an effort to address my research questions. A close reading of the data enabled me to illumine four ways in which ethnicity or ethnic formation emerged during interviews. Subsequent sections detail the salient themes as well as representative quotes and stories.

### **Salient Themes: New Spaces, New Experiences, and Emerging Ethnic Identities**

Meaning and identity are ongoing constructions that change throughout different points in our lives. For recent Sub-Saharan African migrants and adolescents in particular, thoughts and worldviews may drastically differ from time to time as daily experiences shape and test individuals' assumptions about how to understand and navigate a new context and their place in it. Thus the findings below reflect meaning-making processes while in transition, and in doing so provide a valuable opportunity to assess potentially mundane experiences and concepts through new lenses. Discussions about ethnicity reveal its function as a social construct with at least four components: cultural practices; family bonds; belonging; representations of power and conflict.

### *Ethnicity as Cultural Practices and Family Bonds*

The place and importance of family origins in general and specific land masses informed how some respondents understood and described ethnicity. These instances inform us about the importance of homeland as an important initial, tangible marker for respondents' views about identity. For example, when asked, “what does it mean to be Sudanese?” or “Ethiopian” some youth referred to their birthplace or heritage (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994):

I don't know. But I guess my mom tell me I'm Sudanese and I'm just like okay, (laughs) I'm Sudanese. I don't know. (Aluel, 13-year-old Sudanese girl)

That's where my great great—okay. Where I came from... I was born there and my father was from there. That's all. (Desta, 20-year-old Ethiopian and Eritrean young woman)

The above remarks both an awareness of place of origin as well as a certain degree of uncertainty about what such designations mean beyond their literality. These comments also point to the importance of family members in general and parents, in particular, in reminding and reinforcing past ethnic and cultural markers to youth (Fuller & Coll, 2010; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rodriguez, Umaña-Taylor, Smith, & Johnson, 2009; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). However, more often than not, ethnicity and ethnic expression was explained in terms of cultural attributes (Miles & Small, 1999). Specifically, foods, celebrations, dress, values, language and traditions were named when describing the things people love and miss the most about living in their home countries. These elements were also discussed when explaining practices and aspects of their culture that they continued in the U.S. For example, when asked about how she continued her ties to Sudan while in the U.S., Yar, a 13-year-old South Sudanese girl answered, “I listen to music...it keeps me Sudanese.” In addition, respondents sometimes credited interactions

with members of their immediate or extended family with helping them feel connected to their culture (Fuller & Coll, 2010; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rodriguez et al., 2009; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011). These cultural practices also represented dynamics of which respondents were proud as well as tangible aspects of their prior experiences that inform their current experiences.

Few respondents discussed their relationships with people from their countries of origin during the interviews. This was largely due to the fact that most of the families were relative newcomers to the U.S., having lived in the country or the state for two to sixteen months at the time of the interview. This omission was also true for the one family who had lived in the U.S. for almost five years. However, I consistently witnessed meaningful interactions with neighbors as I visited families. For instance, Nigisti, the Eritrean 43-year-old single mother of Desta and Simret, regularly opens her home to the 5-year-old daughter of her Ethiopian neighbor. The sharp, sweet, and funny young girl's name appropriately means "star" in their shared language. Having lived in the U.S. for only two months, Nigisti was waiting to hear from RIA about employment and ESL classes. As she waits, she and her daughters care for Star when her mother is working. When she first meets me, Star introduces herself as Nigisti's daughter, and Desta and Simret's little sister. The ladies laugh and agree; they tell me that she often sleeps and eats there, even though her apartment unit is directly behind theirs. Desta and Star are particularly close, with Star closely trailing her older sister everywhere around the apartment, and Desta chasing Star down to make sure she brushes her teeth after eating sweets. Some days, Simret and Star take the bus to the nearby public library. An avid reader, Simret tells Star that she needs to check out at least one book if she also wants to

borrow DVDs of *InuYasha*, Star's favorite Japanese anime series. At home, Simret ensures that Star reads before she is allowed to watch any episodes.

These fictive kin networks help families transition into their new lives upon resettlement (Billingsley, 1992; Stack, 1974; C. Suárez-Orozco & Carhill, 2008; Sudarkasa, 1980). Furthermore, the benefits of these relationships continue as families rely on each other for financial, emotional, and cultural support (Barnes, 2005; Edin & Lein, 1997; Hill, 1972/2003; Stack, 1974; Yosso, 2005, as cited in Syed et al., 2011). Star's accent is barely recognizable when she speaks English; she sounds like any other cheerful and breathy child, talking excitedly and rapidly about whatever is on her mind. Yet she, Desta, and Simret speak their shared language regularly, and in doing so increase the likelihood that Star will remain fluent in it as she grows up in the U.S. This scenario suggests that family, friends, and the continuation of cultural practices that emerge within such relationships promote cultural retention and expression for resettled refugee families.

### ***Ethnicity as Politics of Inclusion***

Conversations with youth and their parents reveal that ethnicity in the U.S. is also very political (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). It is never a matter of *whether* some aspects of one's identity will be expressed, but *how* and *when*. Certain expressions, such as an accent, are out of one's control. Yet this feature has serious implications for inclusion and participation in the U.S. (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Ima & Rumbaut, 1989). Ezkeiel, the 40-year-old Ethiopian married father of three, explains this reality as follows:

EZ: And the other point to make is, you know, those who are born in Ethiopia and those who start speaking Amharic language and they start to learn the English. There is accent barrier or so, you know accent? ... Usually in Ethiopia you learn, you know, British system. British English, the accent is different. Here, you know the—for example. Here

you say “wat-er”; there you know, “wa-ter”. There is accent problem. Even I myself sometimes being challenged by the accent, you know.

ON: Right. And do you worry that the accent is something that could—that the accent could be a problem for the children?

EZ: Yeah, yeah! If you don't know and listen the accent correctly, how can you understand? It's difficult.

The above comment illustrates the detailed observations evident among respondents as they strive to negotiate new spaces in the U.S. Awareness of specifics such as language inflections suggests that Ezkeiel understands some of the potentially positive as well as negative implications of being different or “out of place” that may undermine successful transitions for he and his family (Ngo, 2008; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009). Ezkeiel is deeply invested in his children’s success while in the U.S. At home, he, his wife, and his children have set personal goals to achieve in school, work, and in general. They share their goals with one another, try to help one another when challenges arise, and encourage each other to stay motivated. His children’s success is extremely important to Ezkeiel, which is why any barrier to their ability to communicate constitutes a threat that he wants them to overcome. He hopes his children can become fluent in English and downplay their accents through interactions with their American classmates and teachers at school (Larson, 1929/2003; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999). This latter desire also confirms the importance of formal institutions such as schools in mediating the transition process in the eyes of most adult respondents here (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 2009a).

Whereas some respondents choose to try to diminish their noticeably ethnic accents in order to participate in society, others try to find more accepting spaces. For example, Kuol is a 15-year-old South Sudanese boy with an ear for music. I was introduced to his talent one afternoon during the RIA summer enrichment camp when he

was sitting on the bleachers listening to his iPod rather than launching rockets on the field with the other kids. Kuol, another RIA volunteer, and I started talking. I had the opportunity to listen to two tracks that he had produced (I assume using the Macintosh software *GarageBand*) in a music class for talented youth he had taken earlier in the year. He delivers his lyrics in heavily accented-English with a smooth hip-hop flow layered over a blend of hip-hop and electronic beats. He is an extremely talented young musician. However, by the time I interviewed him in October, his interests had changed:

ON: I was asking you earlier about your music and you were telling me that you were dancing now.

KU: Eh-heh.

ON: You said you don't sing anymore—

KU: Yeah.

ON: Right? And you were saying its because of—

KU: I don't speak English that much. I have accent.

ON: But did someone tell you that you shouldn't sing anymore, or you just decided for yourself?

KU: No, a lot of people told me so because I used to sing in my church events. Yeah. A lot of places.

Kuol's sobering comments above suggest that he felt dissuaded from pursuing a musical career. In contrast to studies that show the beneficence of institutions such as churches in helping historically disenfranchised groups navigate double-consciousness (Barnes, 2008; Billingsley, 1992), it appears that Kuol's musical aspirations and thus this dimension of his "voice" was somewhat *leveled* as he interacted in certain formal institutions (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). Kuol feels that his accent bars him from success with his music goals. Yet his decision to take break-dancing lessons represents a form of subjugated knowledge that will enable him to "speak" creatively and express himself in what he considers more socially acceptable ways (Collins, 1990/2009). Although the class usually costs money, his talent and charm have allowed him to take lessons from a nearby studio for free. Passionate about this new interest, he makes a 40-minute round trip commute on his



bicycle on Wednesday nights to attend class. This youngster's decision also reflects the adaptive, resilient nature often found among disenfranchised groups as they attempt to negotiate new spaces in empowering ways (Billingsley, 1992). Yet language fluency is an established and understandable barrier to participating in any society (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Ima & Rumbaut, 1989). However, these accounts demonstrate that for some, especially foreign-born individuals, there is meaning attached to *what* is said as well as *how* it is said. Although many people have accents, not all accents are "equal" in practice. In fact, they can restrict opportunities for advancement and diminish feelings of acceptance in the U.S.

Overall, ethnic expression is also a matter of choice, but the real question is *whose* choice? Interview responses show that ethnicity is a fluid construct tied to factors such as place, citizenship and time. When asked what it meant to be Sudanese or Ethiopian, respondents gave answers relating to certain aspects of birthplace, culture, and family history. When asked what it meant to be "American", responses typically pertained to full participation in American life and privileges. For immigrants, some of these are features that can come with the passage of time as they gain legitimacy and "fit in" (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Ezkeiel's answer to the question provides a good example of how ethnicity operates for most parents in this sample:

ON: Do you think of yourself as a person who is American?

EZ: Actually you know its a difficult question...I think the question is not clear. It seems vague to me. Because you know, I'm not an American. And my family is not—my children are not American. We are Ethiopian. Maybe after some time we are going to be an American. My kids they are going to—I don't know. Right now we are not American. I don't consider myself American. And also you know, I don't want to lose my identity, you know. To me, I don't want to lose my identity.

The above respondent is quite clear that he does not consider himself American; he is equally clear of his Ethiopian identity. The question of identity itself seems puzzling to

him in light of his current reality. Moreover, Ezkeiel concedes the possibility of becoming an American – and a processes linked to the passage of time. However, he expresses some concern that such a transition in identity might come at the expense of current national identity. This same father predicts a slightly different outcome for his children:

Translator: How about for your children?

EZ: Eh, it's up to them. It is their decision. They can be an American, they can be an Ethiopian, eh? So it's their decision. But the most important thing, what I want to have is, you know, they have to learn in this good environment, this good technology. So they have good skill and knowledge about science and technology, things they are learning here in America. But as far as their identity is concerned, it is they themselves who decide it, either American or Ethiopian.

ON: Are you finding it difficult to hold on to your identity as an Ethiopian while you're here? Do you find it difficult to hold on to your culture as an Ethiopian person while you're here? Is that hard?

EZ: It is not difficult to me...I have to categorize, you know. I should keep my good identity and culture from Ethiopia, and also I want to gain good culture and identity from America. But I don't want to gain bad culture here. And also I don't want to keep my bad culture. You get my idea?

Ezkeiel wants his children to be agentic in deciding their ethnic identities. In contrast to existing studies that predict double- or multi-conscious identity development processes for immigrant groups (Collins, 1990/2009; Wing, 2000), he appears to assume the process will ultimately mean choosing either *one or the other designation* rather than creating a nuanced profile such as “Ethiopian American” or “Black American”. This father appears much more concerned about whether his children will acquire the needed social capital and character traits to be successful citizens in the U.S.

In general, Ezkeiel’s response is describes an ongoing internal challenge to actively develop his identity. Embracing American culture can be associated with identity loss, but this is not necessarily a coercive process. Ezkeiel expresses that he wants the freedom to choose what he wants for himself according to what he values (DuBois, 1903/2008; Anzaldúa, 1987/2006). His categorical approach to his ethnic identity

development reflects his agency in this process. Yet, based on his discussion about accent barriers, societal pressures can be institutionalized to challenge aspects of his autonomy during this endeavor.

### *Ethnicity as Politics of Exclusion*

For refugee families, discussions about ethnicity also reflected systems of power and histories of conflict. Their responses illustrate some of the inter-global systemic forces that can undermine inclusion, democracy, safety, and one's ability to self-define (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009, 2009). For example, Simret, who is half Ethiopian and half Eritrean, explains how conflict affects her understanding of ethnicity and culture:

SI: Yeah, um. Eritrea—it wasn't so bad. But life was not easy, and because we were segregated—you know. My dad is Ethiopian, my mom is Eritrean. So people don't accept it and there is segregation. That's why we decided to leave Eritrea and come to Uganda from there. As refugees we came here...

ON: You were saying that in Eritrea, you were segregated because your family was mixed?

SI: Yes. Which is—before that [segregation] there was peace, or there was no segregation. But after they [her parents] got married and there was war, then many soldiers died among all of them. And then people can accuse you. They say, "because of you, because of you". Something like that. So it wasn't very good...I can't say I'm not proud to be Ethiopian or Eritrean because that's what my parents were. And then I still accept that I'm Ethiopian or Eritrean and I know that I'll be living with it. I can't say it's something bad about Ethiopia or Eritrea because their people are the ones who are segregating, not the country. I still love my country...

ON: And so, then you consider yourself very much both Eritrean and Ethiopian?

SI: Yes.

ON: And you said whereas some people make it out that there's a clash, for you the two work together very well. They don't clash.

SI: Yes. If there was peace then there would probably be agreement—there'd be peace!

ON: Right.

SI: That's what I hope.

Eritrea used to be part of Ethiopia prior to a 30-year war for independence that ended in 1991 (Keller, 1992). The geographic area that is now Eritrea currently blocks Ethiopia's formerly direct access to the Red Sea, which provides access to the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal in the north and the Indian Ocean in the south. Simret identifies

languages and peoples as a few of the many commonalities between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Thus the differences between their cultures are purely political in her eyes. Moreover, the division and consequent discrimination that characterizes her family's experiences while living there are more closely related to blame and government politics rather than cultural incompatibility. Simret's thoughtful comments suggest exposure to trauma has resulted in wisdom beyond her years. Whereas others may consider her the product of two ethnicities (or histories or cultures), she views it as one. When specifically asked whether it is difficult to hold on to her ways as an Ethiopian-Eritrean person in the U.S., she asserts that it is not. Her thoughts allude to an emerging multi-conscious ethnic identity forged during trials as a result of segregation (Wing, 2000). Her remarks also parallel those of immigrant groups who respond to mistreatment in proactive ways by maintaining key aspects of their cultural heritage via usage of familial ties and community organizations (Fuller & Coll, 2010; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Simret is interested in attending a technical college after high school. For her, the challenges associated with orienting herself in the U.S. are more pragmatic and have more to do with succeeding in high school, getting a part-time job outside of school, and otherwise learning how to navigate opportunities in the U.S. Thus far, her ethnic identity and aspirations do not clash.

Interviews with the mothers of all three Sudanese families emphasize the role of systems of power on their understandings of ethnicity and how it operates in their lives. Nyandeng, the 31-year-old single South Sudanese mother of three, identifies as Bor Dinka. According to Nyandeng, the name "Bor" refers to people of the floodplains and connects two South Sudanese tribes to a specific geography in their country (Beswick,

2004). Yet she describes the other meanings that Bor has taken within Sudan before South Sudan became its own state:

NY: Yeah. Because we are Sudanese like—in the language of the Arab. Arabs say, “Black people”. That's what they say—that is what means Sudanese...South Sudan it is called Janubi. Janubiyyin is, eh—because we are black people but they are not black.

ON: Mm-hm.

NY: Yeah. That is the meaning. We are called Sudanese.

ON: Right. And to you what does it mean? Do you think its the same?

NY: To me there is another one, the name is called 'Bor'. Sometime when the rain coming, streets close, everything—the home is going to be put in the water. That is what we are calling Bor in my language, yeah...

ON: So just to repeat, for Sudanese it means to be people from a certain—a specific region—

NY: Yeah, but Sudanese, we are two kinds. Because you say Sudanese she have South Sudan, she have North Sudan. North Sudan, she's for Omar al-Bashir, the president in cartoon. And Salva Kiir is the president of South Sudan. This one is in North and this one is in South. But all the same, we are Sudanese all. All in my country we are Sudanese. But if you are going to say Sudanese two types, it's South and North. North is for Omar al-Bashir, South is for Salva Kiir... Yes we are different because North, they are talking Arabic, but South, we have many many many languages. We use Dinka, yeah...like um Bahr el Ghazal, she has a language. And Morelei also, she has her language also. And Dinka Nuer, we have Dinka Nuer, she's have a language. We have Dinka Abye, she's have her own language. But we call South Sudan...[describes the vegetation and resources in South Sudan] Oil, its there. It's down there. But that is—Arab wants, he wants that fuel. That is the problem during the war in Sudan—in Janubi. In Sudan we are called janubiyyin—Arabs is call us janubiyyin. We are called janubiyyin.

ON: And what is janubiyyin?

NY: Janubiyyin meaning—its black people.

Though a brief lesson on the culture and history of various tribes and groups in Sudan and South Sudan, Nyandeng provides insight into some of the sources of struggle in her country. Tensions and conflict in South Sudan are closely tied to racism and control of resources. Moreover, language that connotes group position and subsequent power dynamics inform her understanding of both ethnicity and phenotypical differences (Blumer, 1958). Her remarks also allude to a complex process of *imposed double-consciousnesses* by powerful neighboring groups linked to languages, land masses, and the desire to appropriate valuable local resources - rather than as a strategy to encourage a

nuanced, more authentic identity for her people (Abizadeh, 2001; DuBois 1903/2008; Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; Miles & Small, 1999).

Kaheela, the 32-year-old single Sudanese mother of three, also tells a similar story when describing the causes of war. She and her daughters are practicing Muslims with dark brown skin. She was born in Geneina, a city in the southwestern region of what is now northern Sudan. She lived in Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, for some time before. She explains the reasons for war as follows:

KH: Right now it's kind of war. So in western Sudan we have war. So my family they are not in Geneina because when it's the war too many people trying to run to go another place. My mom now, she is in Chad.

ON: And the war, what was it about? What was involved? And where were you?

KH: The war is just about—you know, in my country we have—it's like Arabic people...we have that rival from color, you know...the people from North, they try to take everything. They try to control the whole country. So sometime even if you're educated you don't have that right to get many things. To get the same thing like Arabic people...And the war start about, you know in the western Sudan we don't have nothing...like the highways they don't have. To go over there sometime it take you seven days. Or sometimes it may take you two weeks to go where you want to go...And they don't have transportation...So when the people start to say, "Now we need this. We don't have this, we don't have this," and the North people, they say, "You don't have rights. Who are you? You want to talk? You don't have right to say we need highways, we need companies, we need this—" So that's why the war start over there.

ON: And you said because of color?

KH: Right.

ON: What does that mean?

KH: Mean if you are Black and someone is Arab, they're not going to respect you, even if you're educated. Nobody's going to respect you. You're not going to have a right to get the same thing that the North people are getting...the oil is in South, but they're [North Sudanese Arab government] trying to take it for themselves.

The word *janubi* that Nyandeng mentions in her account means “southerner”. Terje Tvedt and Raphael Badal (1994) explain that *Janubi* is often contrasted with classifications such as *Awlad Al Balad*, which means “sons of the land”. It is a geographic term used to socially construct Black inhabitants as “Other” and Arab inhabitants and those belong. This social division is not along religious lines, although there are religious tensions between Christians and Muslims in the country. It is a manifestation of racism in Sudan

(Collins, 2009a). The term *janubiyin* refers to the bottom rung of a historically five-group social hierarchy that positions Nubian and Arab people at the top (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999; West, 1982). It collectively includes all Southern Sudanese groups regardless of their tribe, as well as peoples with origins along the southern part of the Nile River (e.g., some Kenyans, Tanzanians, Egypt and Chad).

Nyandeng and Kaheela's accounts illustrate how racism as a system of power operates in Sudan and South Sudan (Collins, 2009a). Racial practices are institutionalized via governmental structures that aim to restrict the power to control resources and development. The terms denoting a real or imagined social hierarchy justify racist ideologies against particular tribes and ethnic groups. Nyandeng reveals anti-racist subjugated knowledge in her response that South Sudan does not mean Black people for her; instead, it represents a collection of diverse, yet unified tribes, languages, and cultures in the region (Collins, 1990/2009). As Kaheela reveals, such terms also fuel strained interpersonal relations between people belonging to different categories. Janubiyin are not respected or considered full participants in society. Their group position relative to Arabs means their voices are squelched and rights are constrained (Blumer, 1958). Thus the structural, ideological, disciplinary, and interpersonal tensions surrounding this racist system of power have erupted in wars within Sudan for decades. The above accounts also reinforce the importance of place and space as factors that shape how many Sub-Saharan African refugees were considered in their home countries – and how they strive to participate in what they consider more democratic spaces in the U.S. (Collins, 2009a).

Yet, at least one scholar describes how moving from one racist system of power to another affects the worldviews of Sudanese immigrants. In *The Power of Creative Reasoning*, Dr. Lual A. Deng recalls the following incident as a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison:

A Northern Sudanese colleague of mine from the days of the University of Khartoum and I were filling out registration forms when I noticed he had ticked “others.” I asked him if he knew what he was doing...He told me that Sudanese were not blacks. The reality of his identity would, however, prove him wrong three years later. We were having coffee near the state capital in Madison, Wisconsin, in the spring of 1985 when an American young man walked up to where we were seated, looked at my friend, and said with a loud voice, “Hay, you Niger! [*sic*] Can I take this chair?” My Northern Sudanese friend was visibly shocked. He left the place without finishing his coffee (p. 96).

As Deng writes, racialization as Black in the U.S. is a jarring experience, particularly for immigrants who have constructed their identities in drastically different terms (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006; DuBois, 1903/2008). Although others’ experiences may not be as dramatic, but they constitute major upsets in individuals’ worldviews nonetheless. For others, such as Sudanese refugees, whose residence in the U.S. is a direct result of similarly oppressive racist systems of power, this reality is still challenging. For example, Kuol’s decision to stop singing because of his accent suggests the presence of a system of power that subordinates deviations from mainstream English patterns of speech (Perry & Delpit, 1998). Similarly, his decision to dance illustrates subjugated knowledge and an attempt to use his voice (in this instance, his body) to combat marginalization (Collins, 1990/2009).

### ***Consciousnesses, Challenges, and Choices: Theoretical Implications***

Double-consciousness and Black Feminism informed the above findings in several key ways. First, in examining the experiences of refugees from four newly-created states, I was able to assess whether and how double-consciousness emerged and was affected by structural forces such as discrimination, poverty, and segregation for



some respondents. For instance, Ezkeil's description of his desire to choose which aspects of his culture and American culture that he wants to keep is especially relevant through the lens of double-consciousness, which explicitly considers African-ness and American-ness (DuBois, 1903/2008; Billingsley, 1992). His experience suggests that over a century later, the struggle for this freedom to choose persists for some Black immigrants. In addition, this two-ness often leaves individuals feeling barred from opportunities and full participation in American society. Ezkeil's following statement illustrates this point:

America is better for my kids. But it's not better for me...in Ethiopia...I was working in the ministry of agriculture. I was earning a good salary. That salary was enough for me and the work is professional work, you know. When we came here, you can't get this professional work...you can't get it...The work here is general level...And so it's challenging. But for our children it's better, better than our country for them.

By virtue of his country of origin and immigration pathway, Ezkeil reports that he is having difficulty finding gainful employment. He currently works at the International Farmer's Market. Yet he earned a Bachelor's degree in Ethiopia and is thus highly overqualified for the position. He acknowledges the opportunities that the U.S. has to offer, and expresses his desire for his children to be able to access them. However, for him, there are numerous barriers to overcome. Yet this reality does not deter him from his aspirations to earn a Master's degree at some point in the future given his awareness of the importance of formal education as a form of social and cultural capital in the U.S. (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 2009a).

Simret's explanation of her ethnic identity, which is a blend of two cultures that formerly coexisted in the same country, further illustrates the utility of double-consciousness for examining the experiences of Sub-Saharan African immigrants and refugees (DuBois, 1903/2008; Billingsley, 1992). Her experiences with discrimination as she grew up in Ethiopia and Eritrea were marked by the ongoing construction of social

divisions where none previously existed in order to justify persecution (Blumer, 1958; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small). However, her knowledge of her family's multi-ethnic background and the two countries' histories validates her existence as a reflection of cultural compatibility. Thus any "unreconciled strivings" that she encounters are attributed to political motivations as well as socially constructed distinctions (Wing, 2000).

This same example can also be informed by concepts central to Black Feminism. For example, in the midst of oppressive discourses that create and perpetuate controlling images, Simret holds firmly to the power of self-definition (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009, 2009). In doing so, she refuses to internalize perspectives that problematize the blended cultures that comprise her multi-ethnic existence. It is the power of self-definition that allows individuals to achieve a form of "second sight" (DuBois, 1903/2008) that emerges through both "serpent and eagle eyes" (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006). For instance, in her explanation of the terms *Janubi* and *janubiyyin*, Nyandeng explains her ethnicity and national allegiance in multiple terms. She is proudly Dinka Bor, one of many tribes who comprise the political territory now known as South Sudan. Her description of the ways in which the racial term *janubiyyin* is used demonstrates her awareness of her ideological justifications for division in what was formerly Sudan. Despite the tensions that have erupted, she asserts, "All in my country we are Sudanese," but then explains that if one must differentiate, the contentious distinctions are politicized in a number of ways.

In both cases, the power to self-define is fostered through subjugated knowledges that emerge within their families and communities. In Simret's case, it is likely that the communities that existed along the areas that eventually became the border between

Eritrea and Ethiopia were also forced to make sense of their histories and possibly reconstruct their nationalities in light of the new state. This meaning-making process is often collective (Collins, 1990/2009; Reissman, 2008). Furthermore, it is likely to clash with narratives surrounding the causes for bloodshed and war that pit ethnic groups against each other. In Nyandeng's case, her subjugated knowledges concerning her identity are tied to her ethnic groups' history, which involves coexistence with other ethnic groups that have historically occupied the region, as well as shared experiences of discrimination from dominant groups in northern Sudan (Collins, 1990/2009).

As illustrated thus far, the connections between double-consciousness, the power to define, and subjugated knowledges are particularly evident in interviews with Ezkeil, Simret, and Nyandeng, although similar themes emerged during conversations with other respondents as well. Respondents who were 17 years of age and older shared experiences that exemplified these concepts more clearly. However, youth respondents who were between 13 and 15 years of age arguably showed signs of multi-consciousness, particularly when I asked them about their race. Overall, many respondents expressed confusion about the concept, whether the term was associated with a place of origin, and if the term related to tendencies to engage in specific behaviors. Although many respondents have encountered racial oppression in their countries of origin and previous residences, their transnational experiences and short length of time in the U.S. complicate their ability to understand how race is defined and operative in this new context. These findings suggest that I have captured many of the *initial* experiences, tensions, beliefs, and understandings that are part of an on-going process in which respondents are engaged to think about "self" and life in the U.S. As individuals continue to live in the U.S. it will

be important to revisit them to ascertain how their views about ethnicity, ethnic identity formation, and acculturation have changed and what experiences and factors were most influential in those processes.

Double-consciousness and multi-consciousness also provide crucial lenses for examining agency and societal transformation. For instance, Kaheela's understanding of the tensions between Black and Arab Sudanese groups in the North illustrates a rejection of institutionalized racism in the country (Collins, 1990/2009; Wing, 2000). Although aware of their minority and severely subjugated status, Black Sudanese people evoked their rights as citizens and demanded acknowledgement from their government (Williams, 1991). One prominent feminist critical race scholar explain why this is crucial:

For blacks then, the battle is not deconstructing rights, in a world of no rights; nor of constructing statements of need, in a world of abundantly apparent need. Rather the goal is to find a political mechanism that can confront the *denial* [sic] of need. The argument that rights are disutile, even harmful, trivializes this aspect of black experience specifically, as well as that of any person or group whose vulnerability has been truly protected by rights" (Williams, 1991, p. 152).

In a society that has ideologically and structurally constructed them as inferior, marginalized groups have availed themselves of their denied privileges as citizens of a purportedly democratic republic. This has been a foundational approach of societal transformation, albeit formally, for African Americans in the U.S. (Bell, 1995; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Brown, 1995; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999; West, 1982; Williams, 1991). Thus their various combinations of privilege and oppression are evident in their multiple identities (Wing, 2000) or intersectionality (Collins, 1990/2009), and is consequently acted upon.

This expression of agency also emerged during interviews with one respondent in particular. Nyandeng expressed a desire to thank the U.S. government for their

involvement with Sudan, specifically in reference to the acceptance of Sudanese refugees. She asked for my help drafting a letter to Former President George W. Bush because she cannot read or write in her native language or English. I obliged, and shortly after our interview her project was underway. Having worked as a seamstress while living in a refugee camp in Uganda, she used her skill to sew images of flowers, the South Sudanese flag, and the American flag onto a white bed sheet. The handmade gift to the former president and former first lady was sent to the George W. Bush Presidential Center in Dallas, Texas. It was accompanied by a letter that she dictated thanking the president for his role, as well as a request for continued help to ensure the success and stability of South Sudan.

As a refugee in the U.S., Nyandeng relayed experiences of frustration or acculturative stress as she tried to socially and economically adjust to this new context (Berry, 2009; Birman et al., 2008; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006; Trickett & Birman, 2005). She is a single mother of three with a low-paying job as a member of the housekeeping staff at a major hotel. She is not fluent in English, and speaks with a heavy accent and consequently may be perceived as difficult to understand. Thus Nyandeng is circumstances disadvantage her in terms of access various opportunities in the U.S. in many ways. However, she also recognizes her privileges and uses them to her advantage, as demonstrated by her request to President Bush. In this way, this scenario demonstrates one way in which double-consciousness and global multiplicative identities—which both describe multiple ways of making sense of one’s advantage and disadvantage in a society—can shape worldviews and influence expressions of agency (Bell, 1995; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; hooks, 1990/2006; Wing, 2000). Nyandeng, Kaheela, and three

Sudanese youth respondents ultimately express the desire to help people in their families as well as within and outside of their communities as an important cultural value and example of subjugated knowledges (Bourdieu, 1986; Collins 1990/2009) that illustrates another seminal dimension of ethnic identity development among Sub-Saharan African refugees resettled in the U.S.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Although the above narrative analysis cannot do justice to the complex, nuanced experiences of the Sub-Saharan African refugee adults and youth who participated in this project. These narratives reflect some of the voices, views, experiences, and challenges of resettled refugee youth and their parents from Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia. Respondents' discussions about ethnicity align with various approaches to the construction and development of ethnic identity. Ethnicity is a collectivity that can be physically embodied by individuals (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994). As refugees, many of the respondents with whom I spoke lived in multiple locations before coming to the U.S. Sometimes, respondents and their siblings were born in different countries as they escaped war and persecution to find safety. Others fled with their parents as two-year-olds and have spent the majority of their lives in refuge outside of their homeland. Yet they ethnically identify with their parents' and ancestors' geographic, political, and historical communities because cultural practices are maintained through interactions with families and friends (Fuller & Coll, 2010; Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rodriguez, Umaña-Taylor, Smith, & Johnson, 2009; C. Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Upon resettlement in America or any other context, respondents discuss how they make choices about what cultural practices they value about their new contexts and how

to integrate them into their lives. Likewise, decisions are made about which practices to reject and how to avoid them. Based on observations and the conversations that emerged during my time spent with respondents, this process is not intrinsically a source of internal stress when in a new context (Berry, 2009; Birman et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2006). Rather, according to them, the source of the cultural conflict when acculturating is an external one that they are often forced to bear (Appadurai, 2006). This friction can be internalized and individuals feel forced to choose (if possible) between the way they express some cultural markers and their ability to reach their goals or live peace-filled lives (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006; Barnes, 2005; DuBois, 1903/2008). Thus acculturative stress can be understood as a symptom of societal pressure on individual agency. Using Collins' (2009) system of power framework, it is a reflection of one tension within structural, ideological, disciplinary, or interpersonal domains in American, or any, society.

Although many parents expressed an interest in, or gave examples of how they would like to influence their children's ethnic identities, many realize (and fear) that their children's trajectories are in many ways out of their control. As the literature reveals, many immigrant parents share this concern (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Sluzki, 1979). Parents, like Nyandeng and Kaheela for example, come equipped with the family and cultural knowledge that instills a strong sense of identity, cultural pride, and the ability to marginalization when it is encountered in broader society (Billingsley, 1992; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2006; Waters, 1999). Yet this was obtained in the presence of their communities in their countries of origin and resettlement. In other words, these subjugated knowledges stemmed from their collectivity (Collins, 1990/2009). However,

upon resettlement their lives can be marked by isolation in comparison, especially within their first year.

Between working low-income jobs with long hours, becoming familiar with the legal requirements of the U.S., and sometimes dealing with violence and theft in their low-income neighborhoods, many parents do not have the time or energy to interact much with their children. This particularly tends to be the case because the majority of the parents in my sample are single-mothers. Thus although they would appreciate greater opportunities to parent, their current circumstances often relegate them to caretakers (Tierney & Auerbach, 2006, as cited in Syed et al., 2011). This dynamic parallels studies on the Black poor and near-poor experiences and illustrates some of commonalities among my respondents and segments of the African American community (Barnes, 2005; Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009, 2009). This reality also highlights the importance of the role that churches, mosques, schools, and other community organizations play in the development and socialization of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth, as well as other youth in similar conditions (Barnes, 2008; Billingsley, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; DuBois, 1903/2008).



Appendix

<b>Surname</b>	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Pathway to the U.S.</b>	<b>Length of time in U.S.</b>
Wek	Nyandeng Wek	Bor (South Sudan)	31	Christian	F	Sudan, Uganda, U.S.	4 months
	Yar Wek	South Sudan	13	Christian	F		
Alazar	Ezkeil Alazar	Ethiopia	40	Christian	M	U.S. Diversity Visa Program <sup>6</sup>	1 year, 4 months
	Lulit Ezkeil <sup>7</sup>	Ethiopia	14	Christian	F		
Bol	Ayen Bol	South Sudan	39	Christian	F	Sudan, Egypt, U.S.	Almost 1 year
	Marial Bol	South Sudan	21	Christian	M		
	Kuol Bol	South Sudan	15	Christian	M		
	Aluel Bol	Egypt	13	Christian	F		
Lemuel	Nigisti Lemuel	Eritrea	43	Christian	F	Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda, U.S.	2 months
	Desta Yonas	Ethiopia	20	Christian	F		
	Simret Yonas	Ethiopia	17	Christian	F		
Mohamed	Kaheela Mohamed	Sudan (North)	32	Muslim	F	Sudan, Ethiopia, U.S.	Almost 5 <sup>8</sup> years
	Fasiya Mohamed	Sudan (North)	15	Muslim	F		
	Ramzia Mohamed	Sudan (North)	14	Muslim	F		

Figure 1. Demographic summary of interview respondents.

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### Endnotes: Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> Too few approaches to the study of identity development among this population consider how ethnic and/or racial socialization as well as identity development function as resources for newcomers as they formulate responses to oppressive structural forces—socially constructed systemic ideologies that influence societal norms, beliefs, and institutions, as well as individuals' abilities to control their own lives. Hence concerns about acculturative stress are often met with desire to move individuals through various stages of the acculturation process: contact, conflict, crisis, and adaptation (Joyce et al., 2010; Williams & Berry, 1991). Such approaches problematize an individual's presence in a new space, rather than question and critique the conditions of the space that may trigger crises or consider the potentially nuanced ways different contemporary groups may experience acculturation.

<sup>2</sup> Further illustrating its socially constructed nature, some scholars contend that ethnic groups are actually "formed" as migrating groups move away from their place of origin to a new land or state.

<sup>3</sup> Although this work focuses on Collins' (1990/2009) seminal work, this theory has been influenced by other notable scholars, such as bell hooks (1990/2006) and the Combahee River Collective (1979/2006), whose work is cross-referenced in this section.

<sup>4</sup> A pseudonym for this and all communities referenced throughout.

<sup>5</sup> A pseudonym used to protect the identity of the organization.

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<sup>6</sup> RIA personnel recommended this family for interview because his daughter, who I met through the summer enrichment camp, gets along well with many of the RIA staff members at the after school programs throughout the year. However, at the time of the interview, after the meeting had been planned with a translator present, he revealed that he and his family were not refugees, which was a surprise to the RIA staff member translator who assisted with our interview. Regardless, I we proceeded with the interview because the meeting was already taking place and valuable information relevant to the research questions could still be acquired.

<sup>7</sup> Ethiopian surnames represent the father's first name, rather than a shared family name.

<sup>8</sup> All respondents were reached through RIA contacts or its summer enrichment program, with the exception of Kaheela Mohamed's family. Kaheela and her daughters live in the same neighborhood as the Bol family. I was introduced to this particular contact through Aluel Bol, who introduced Fasiya and Ramzia as her friends.



## CHAPTER IV

### **MULTI-CONSCIOUSNESS, ETHNIC IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION WITHIN SCHOOLS SERVING DIVERSE YOUTH**

“It is no longer the case that historically marginalized groups are simply *excluded* from good schools, jobs, neighborhoods, and the like. Rather, the terms of their *inclusion*—the rules that regulate their participation—have grown in importance.”

Patricia Hill Collins (2009a), *Another Kind of Public Education*, pp. 4-5

The terms or *politics* of inclusion refer to the implicit and explicit guidelines that define the circumstances under which groups, individuals, and perspectives are considered legitimate or mainstream within society. Studies suggest that at least three elements of globalization have contributed to the controversy surrounding the current politics of inclusion in the United States (U.S.) in the late twentieth century (M. Suárez-Orozco, 2001). The first involves advancements in communication technologies, which have facilitated multilateral exposure and access to information, communities, and ideas. A second facet pertains to the emergence of global economies that demand education and expertise, as well as cheap labor for successful expansion in the “Information Age”. Lastly, war, climate change, political uprisings, and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement have resulted in record levels of immigration and displacement. Globalization means that knowledge and education are invaluable resources for potential advancement in any society now more than ever before. Thus the rules that regulate the participation of foreign-born groups in the U.S. have important consequences for individuals’ immediate circumstances and future possibilities. This is especially true for immigrant and refugee youth whose primary instruction in the politics of inclusion in the

U.S. often takes place in American public schools (Collins, 1986, 2009a; Sizemore, 1990).

In this analysis, I consider the politics of inclusion in educational spaces, particularly for a multicultural school serving a diverse student population. These politics (i.e., processes, people, mission, and school culture) can shape and be affected by the identity development of youth in American schools, which then impacts how well students are prepared to participate in a globalized world. Ethnicity tends to have a more salient impact on how racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. see themselves, the world, and their opportunities for advancement within it (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Waters, 1990). Thus ethnic socialization is an important part of the identity development that takes place in schools for racial and ethnic minority children, such as Sub-Saharan African refugee youth. Politics of inclusion that ignore, downplay, or dismiss the experiences and worldviews of minority youth in their classrooms are ethnocentric. Consequently they constitute racist and classist structural practices within public schools that continue to render such students and their histories as marginal at best (Sizemore, 1990). Conversely, schools can also house spaces of resistance that can equip students to identify and respond to inequalities that threaten their life chances as well as educate them to become informed, confident, and culturally aware citizens (Collins, 2009a). In the following sections, I discuss whether and how one school strives to create such spaces in its education of Sub-Saharan African refugee and other minority youth.

### *Purpose of the Study*

I specifically examine key aspects of the cultural, social, pedagogic, and programmatic environment of the Cultural Diversity School<sup>xv</sup> (CDS) with attention to messages that the school conveys about ethnic identification. CDS is a public charter school outside of a metropolitan city in the southeastern region of the U.S. that serves students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Half of the students are refugees or from refugee families resettled in the community, and the remaining half are from non-refugee native-born and immigrant children within the county. A previous study of CDS' educational, social, and physical environment provided valuable insight into its socialization practices, including student preparation for navigating opportunities and challenges based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, class, and religion (Nwosu, 2012). Understandings of ethnic identification processes and power appear to be central to the school's socialization process to prepare students for real world situations. This finding is especially important considering how many minority and immigrant groups in general—particularly refugees from Sub-Saharan countries—are expected to experience linguistic barriers, social discrimination, and socioeconomic disadvantage in the U.S. that can ultimately undermine their inclusion in society (Hernandez, 2012; McBrien, 2005).

Although informed by the previous study's findings, this analysis focuses on whether and how ethnic identity socialization is embraced, developed, and fostered by CDS. The research questions directing this study are:

1. How does CDS' pedagogic approach conceptualize ethnic identity development?
2. Do the school processes present ethnic identity development as a tool for identifying opportunities and challenges within the U.S.? If so, how?

Findings illumine how the incorporation of positive ethnic identification into educational processes can assist schools with diverse youth in their efforts to create spaces where youth can learn how to contribute to and benefit from just inclusion in U.S. society. Given CDS' existence as a unique learning environment, it would be useful to examine how aspects of this space could potentially impact the diverse ethnic identity development processes that emerge within the broader resettlement community. Ultimately, this analysis may provide a comparative lens to understand ethnic socialization in schools for immigrant youth who do not attend this particular multicultural school. Thus I examine whether CDS' can inform educational practices to improve ethnic identity development within schools for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth in particular, as well as other minorities who contribute to rapidly diversifying student populations in the U.S.

### **Ethnicity, Race, and Identity Development: Black Experiences and Acculturation**

Refugee and immigrant children face specific challenges (i.e., acculturative stress) linked to ethnic identity development (Berry, 2009; Birman et al., 2008; Joyce, Earnest, de Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Trickett & Birman, 2005). Identity development can be defined as a dynamic process involving an awareness of self, others, and "one's place in the world" that results from interactions between individuals and their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Schwartz et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Acculturative stress describes newcomers' struggles with linguistic, social, cultural, psychological, and/or economic adjustment during transition from life in one cultural context to life in another (Berry, 2009; Joyce et al., 2010; Ngo, 2008; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006). Thus

acculturative stress is undoubtedly tied to the identity development process as individuals try to understand and redefine their “place” in a new context. By extension, ethnic identity development is central to the acculturation process given its ability to enable Sub-Saharan African refugees to cultivate individual and/or collective views, beliefs, and personal profiles based on their histories and experiences in both African countries and the U.S.

Scholars have shown how race and ethnicity drastically influence identity development processes (Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011) and perspectives of opportunities (Barnes, 2002; MacLeod, 1987; Waters, 1999) for African Americans. However, this has not been sufficiently explored for Sub-Saharan African refugees, whose differences from the American mainstream have the potential to be marginalized within their resettlement society<sup>xvi</sup>. The experiences of Latino immigrant populations share similarities to those of recent African refugees (Huynh & Fuligni, 2008; C. Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & M. Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Yet I posit that due to the history and continued effects of racial and ethnic inequality in the U.S., the acculturation and identity development of African Americans are undoubtedly germane to those of refugees, especially for refugees who are likely to be racialized as “Black” upon resettlement. Moreover, possible commonalities across experiences for Sub-Saharan African refugees and African Americans may inform us about some of the ways the former group may have experiences that can be considered both “African” and “American”.

Ethnicity can be broadly defined as a social construction used to capture an individual’s association with a “place” or homeland and its corresponding cultural and

social traditions. Additionally, ethnic groups often self-identify with a specific ancestry, heritage, and belief system. The concept also typically connotes some degree of psycho-emotional connectedness for people that can influence their attitudes and actions.

Germane to a study on the Sub-Saharan experience, transnational migration means that ethnicity is often linked to nationality for some immigrant groups.<sup>xvii</sup> Although scholars debate what ethnicity actually means, for those who embrace such a designation, it can represent a broad understanding of belonging, personal placement, and historical connection that resonates with that individual (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994).

Furthermore, ethnicity comprised of social and cultural attributes (i.e., language, religion, dress, food, music, beliefs), as well as geographic and political markers (i.e., citizenship) that are encompassed by negotiable, flexible boundaries in an effort to create commonalities (Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Miles & Small, 1999). Moreover, ethnic identification is characterized and differentiated by claimed rather than imposed cultural signifiers (Miles & Small, 1999). Ethnic groups can be generally broad or narrow, depending on how boundaries of belonging are defined, and are characterized and differentiated by claimed rather than imposed cultural signifiers (Miles & Small, 1999).

I acknowledge existing variations in this definition, but consider the above characterization both informative and germane to the current study. Although both are socially constructed, in this way, ethnicity differs from the concept called “race”. Race is historically rooted in conceptualizations of real or imagined fixed biological differences and consequent attributes that supposedly result in the creation of naturally occurring groups (Miles & Small, 1999). Studies also show that one of the most important distinctions between “race” and “ethnicity” is the tendency for the former concept to be

used to essentialize people based on a hierarchy of superiority and/or inferiority (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999; West, 1982). The concepts and lived realities associated with race and ethnicity affect each other in meaningful ways. As Waters (1990) notes in her research on ethnicity for Whites, “all ethnicities are not equal, all are not symbolic, costless, and voluntary” - as they tended to be for her respondents (p. 160). Although some individuals can “pass” to gain access to spaces and resources that are occupied by other races (Larsen, 1929/2003), racial groups are typically imposed in efforts to self-identify, other-identify, and consequently exclude “the other” (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999). Moreover, racialization (i.e., the process of imposing race in an effort to stratify) can take place regardless of ethnic distinctions in an effort to subordinate others and justify unequal treatment via social structures (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 1999; Collins, 1990/2009). Thus a strong argument can be made that ethnicity, especially for marginalized groups, is an ongoing construction that involves negotiation of racialized social, political, and structural boundaries.

Evaluating commonalities and distinctions between race and ethnicity are important for critically examining the “economic, political, and ideological forces” that affect constructions of and experiences within ethnic identification (Miles & Small, 1999, p. 140). In addition, examining conceptualizations and expressions of ethnicity are useful for exploring collective and individual perceptions, how groups navigate challenges and opportunities in the U.S., and how these experiences are linked to race. For Sub-Saharan African refugees this means assessing how ethnic identity (i.e., Sudanese or possibly

Sudanese American) may be different from and/or conflated with race (i.e., Black) and other structural forces at work in the U.S. Thus ethnic identity development can be considered a simultaneously agentic and marginalizing process influenced by structural forces for Sub-Saharan refugees resettled in the U.S. (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Hernandez, 2012; McBrien, 2005; Nwosu, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Thus, acculturation theories and efforts to successfully resettle refugees need to thoughtfully attend to the significance of such forces. The experiences of historically oppressed groups in the U.S. such as African Americans and the poor, can inform current understandings of acculturative experiences. Research on Black American experiences contains rich empirical findings expected to be relevant to the study of challenges, opportunities, and agency among immigrants in the U.S. in general, and Sub-Saharan African refugees in particular.

### **Schools, Socialization, and Implications for Ethnic Identity Development**

Public education is one of few universally mandated social services that exist in the U.S. for children. Thus schools have the opportunity to serve as intervention sites for federal and state policies that respond to inequalities observed in minority populations' social and socioeconomic realities. Schools are expected to provide students with the content knowledge and, arguably, the skills needed to pursue higher education and/or become gainfully employed (Louie, 2005; MacLeod, 1987). Yet it has been debated whether these institutions reduce or actually exacerbate societal inequities (Collins, 2009a). For immigrant populations in particular, schools are expected to "Americanize" students who are unfamiliar with U.S. culture (Olsen, 2001). Although families play central roles in ethnic identity development, youth are also heavily influenced by the



content and pedagogy associated with learning that takes place in schools (Collins, 2009a). It is thus crucial to analyze school pedagogy and culture with particular attention to how they inform race, ethnicity, and issues of inclusivity.

### ***Schools as Intervention Sites***

Schools serving low-income students have found that many students enter schools with needs beyond those met by free and reduced lunch programs; this is especially the case for students from refugee populations (Louie, 2005). Experiences with interrupted schooling (Dooley, 2009; National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], 2005), language barriers (Hek, 2005), and jarring cultural differences (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Roxas, 2008; Smith, 2008; Wilkinson, 2002) tend to be characteristic of refugees from non-English-speaking countries. Thus practitioners and scholars have explored how schools and communities respond to such disadvantages that are likely to affect refugee students (see Smith, 2008; Lee & Hawkins, 2008). In particular, community-based responses to refugee students' academic needs are valuable for building community support, but can be limited in their effectiveness for academic outcomes if they do not help students meet the academic expectations within schools. For example, Lee and Hawkins (2008) observe disconnects between the educational services offered at a community center and the academic expectations of the school that low-income Hmong refugees and immigrants students attended. Thus schools and communities must work in tandem to increase opportunities for academic success for struggling refugee students.

Communities and schools must also collaborate to foster refugee students' personal development, especially because schools can be sites where low-income and minority students in particular tend to encounter marginalization (Collins, 2009a). Such

students can face discrimination from teachers and peers (Collins, 1990/2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009), underrepresentation in curriculum (Sizemore, 1990), and overrepresentation in lower-level educational tracks (Metz, 1978; Mickelson & Heath, 1999; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). Thus students' ethnic identity and academic development are related in meaningful ways. School expectations and practices also tend to privilege middle-class students' learning styles over those of other students in ways that are likely to influence their academic outcomes and development. For instance, Calarco (2011) observed differences in how White middle-class and working-class elementary school students sought help from teachers, such that middle-class students "received more help, spent less time waiting, and were better able to complete assignments" (p. 863).

Research suggests that student behavior and teachers' subsequent interpretations and actions are influenced by the former's profile. For example, concerning misbehavior, Calarco (2011) notes that teachers in her study consider "acting out" an inappropriate help-seeking approach that would not meet with success. This is problematic considering that minority and White students' misbehaviors tend to be interpreted and responded to differently. In their study of 11,000 urban middle school students, Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson (2002) find that White students were often referred to the office for smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language. Black students were typically referred for disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering. Yet significantly higher proportions of the students suspended (68.5%) or expelled (80.9%) for their offenses after referrals were African American<sup>xviii</sup>. Among refugee students, Roy and Roxas (2011) show that teachers tended to classify their Somali Bantu students'

behavior, learning needs, levels of motivation, and values of education as cultural issues. Thus Somali Bantu refugee students' infractions, such as fighting, were classified and responded to differently (i.e., through character-building sessions) than those of their peers who were addressed on a case-specific basis. These results illustrate the need to reassess both school environments as well as faculty and teacher views and training to address an increasingly diverse student populace. More schools function as influential socializing agents; ethnic identity development plays an important role in self- and other-identification. Thus, the knowledge conveyed and interactions that take place in schools actively influence how students view themselves and the world as well as how they understand themselves in relation to others.

### **Theoretical Framework: Synthesizing Race Theories to Examine African Refugee Experiences**

This endeavor is undergirded by aspects of several theoretical umbrellas, including; the Duboisian (1903/2008) concept, “double-consciousness”, Black Feminism, and Critical Race Feminism (CRF). These frameworks shape current understandings of Black American experiences and can inform our understanding of key dimensions of the acculturative experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugee youth. CRF is highly influenced by Black Feminism, which finds its roots in double-consciousness. Thus I discuss the important overlapping themes that connect each framework. I also illustrate how each theory continues to make distinct contributions to research on the Black experience, with implications for research on the resettlement experiences and ethnic identity development of Sub-Saharan African refugees in general and youth in particular.

### ***Double-consciousness as a Foundational Lens for Inquiry***

W. E. DuBois' (1903/2008) concept of double-consciousness provides a basis for consequent theories and research that have emerged on racial and ethnic socialization across disciplines (Collins, 1990/2009; Murry et al., 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Waters, 1999). Double-consciousness describes a bifocal worldview marked by two competing realities. The first reflects the observable systematic oppression of African Americans by White America, while the second reveals African Americans' attempts to create positive, adaptive counter-narratives based on experiences navigating subjugation. Double-consciousness calls attention to the need to consider how various processes, interactions, and experiences that may be central (or peripheral) to a given society's privileged mainstream may manifest differently for minority groups, such as Sub-Saharan African refugees. DuBois (1903/2008) provides an early, yet enduring framework for exploring how a marginalized group excluded from White mainstream society in the U.S. navigates the acculturation process. Particularly germane here are the critical roles played by Black families as well as institutions in Black communities such as schools and churches to socialize African American children about their roles as both "African" and "American" (Billingsley, 1992; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009).

This process of racial socialization" means helping Black youth understand their minority status in a predominately white society in adaptive, resilient ways. Organized collectives like families and schools spearheaded this socialization process by providing youth with skills and strategies to: create and maintain positive self-identities; counter negative experiences, beliefs, and images in the broader society; know and appreciate their cultural heritage; and participate in racial and community uplift. Although the

process is not considered utopian and does not guarantee developmentally healthy youth (West, 1983), studies suggest that, without it, many African American youth would have little personal buffer to the onslaughts of systemic racism and discrimination (Billingsley 1992; Collins, 1990/2009, 2009a; Murry et al., 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Waters, 1999). Similarly, it is reasonable to expect that Sub-Saharan African refugees may experience and negotiate forms of *multi-consciousness* as a result of transitioning into at least one new cultural context. This study focuses on a school as a specific site of consciousness-raising efforts for students with diverse profiles. Specifically, the analysis considers whether and how CDS contributes to students' multi-consciousness as an important aspect of the ethnic socialization process for refugee youth in general. Later I discuss the implications of my findings for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth in particular.

### ***From Double-Consciousness to Intersectionality: Key Concepts within Black Feminism***

Black Feminism highlights how multiple socially constructed minority statuses, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality, can result in compounded experiences of marginalization. Furthermore, the intersectionality of these multiple statuses is characterized by changing, context-dependent experiences that are ultimately correlated with oppression.<sup>xix</sup> Patricia Hill Collins' (1990/2009) *Black Feminist Thought* is a critical social theory that assesses the lived experiences of oppression among poor and near poor Black women. Collins (1990/2009) deftly bridges macro- and micro-level theoretical theories to demonstrate the importance of relying on an array of experiences to attend to power and its influence on individual experiences. One key tenant with Black Feminism

is that commonalities exist such that: (1) the perspectives of poor and near poor Black women help broadly unite Black women as a unique social group; (2) their experiences inform understandings of how disenfranchised groups define themselves in transformative ways; (3) decisions to resist inequality are political in nature and result in individual and group uplift; and, (4) despite oppression, such women are engaged in ongoing acts of resistance that harness subjugated knowledges for group and individual empowerment.

Akin to diversity among African Americans, refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, and Sudan are also likely to have varied experiences as a result of ethnic differences, many refugees from African countries can arguably be grouped due to shared experiences of discrimination or disadvantage they are likely to experience upon resettlement. However, this tendency does not imply that differences in experiences across ethnicities will be ignored. Another tenant of this theory considers differential within-group experiences that manifest as a result of variations in socioeconomic status, religion, age, and sexuality (Combahee River Collective, 1979/2006; hooks, 1990/2006). Thus Collins' intersectional approach advocates for insight into how disadvantage and opportunity differentially manifest among and between Sub-Saharan African refugee sub-groups, particularly refugee youth.

Three specific concepts within *Black Feminist Thought* constitute this theory's most significant contributions to the current analysis. Tensions between oppression and activism in the lives of African American women give rise to subjugated knowledges, or insider beliefs, insights, wisdom, and strategies for survival and/or resistance in the midst of oppression. In this way, subjugated knowledges constitute a form of cultural capital or

skill set to help groups and individuals gain access to, navigate, and, if possible, succeed within power structures (Bourdieu, 1986; Collins 1990/2009). Subjugated knowledges arise from an awareness of and responses to intersecting oppressions (hooks, 1990/2006) as well as potentially controlling images (Combahee River Collective, 1979/2006; DuBois, 1903/2008). Furthermore, Collins (1990/2009) examines how such knowledge reveals clashes between negative portrayals and lived experiences, inciting Black women to question and harness “the power to define” (p. 160). Throughout the ethnic identity development process, self-definition is political and transformative because it requires individuals to challenge institutions and ideologies that assume the power to define (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). Thus although schools can be spaces where students experience oppression, they can also cultivate subjugated knowledges to help students become active participants in and beneficiaries of society (Collins, 2009a). My analysis considers whether CDS promotes opportunities for self-definition, spaces where the politics of inclusion are proactively considered, as well as the exploration of subjugated knowledges in their ethnic socialization processes.

### ***Key Contributions from Critical Race Feminism (CRF)***

Lastly, Critical Race Feminism (CRF) arose out of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in legal scholarship, which is, “committed to the struggle against racism, particularly as institutionalized in and by law” (Bell, 1995, p. 898). CRT attempts to transform rather than subvert discriminatory social structures in an effort to enact social change (Bell, 1995; Harris, 1994 as cited in Bell). CRF reflects the incorporation of minority women’s experiences of discrimination, agency, and resourcefulness into its analyses and the larger CRT framework (Wing, 2000). Thus using systematized legal as well as formal and

informal political measures to promote inclusion represent central features of this thesis. Overall, this framework is deeply committed to examining: (1) how the legal system and the general ideologies underlying human rights perpetuate inequality; and (2) how laws can be altered to reduce disenfranchisement. Refugee status represents a manifestation of privilege that is not afforded to other immigrant groups. Privileges are often coupled with subjugation in U.S. social development efforts (see Lewis, 1996/2000), which considers how societal institutions' responses to minorities' needs can further marginalize them.

For refugee adults, resettlement county policies and programs influence access to opportunity via economic integration (i.e., work, welfare, childcare). For children, access to certain opportunities to acquire important beneficial skills and experiences is expected to be provided via schools (Collins, 2009a). Given CRF's dedication to transforming and challenging oppression in societal institutions to improve social equity, it is important to examine whether and how CDS reflects an intentionally *political* space, broadly defined, where inclusivity, multi-consciousness, and positive ethnic identity development are normative (Bell, 1995; Wing, 2000). Furthermore, findings from this analysis may be used to tangibly improve opportunities for and the experiences of diverse students in general, and Sub-Saharan African refugee youth in particular. Overall, the above models reference theoretical frameworks that draw attention to the relationship between privilege and oppression as well as structure and agency for the study of African Americans experiences in the U.S. I apply research and theory documenting their experiences to inform my research on ethnic socialization in a school setting.



## **Studying CDS: Site Description and Methodology**

### ***Site Description***

This study reflects an ethnography of educational and socializing practices at CDS, a charter school outside of a U.S. metropolitan city in the southeastern area of the U.S. The project includes a triangulation of data collected via personnel interviews, curricula and document reviews, as well as participant observation between May 2010 and October 2011.<sup>xx</sup> Open since 2002, CDS is located in Schooltown, a predominantly White, middle-class community. Although some of the native-born and immigrant students who attend CDS reside in this area, many of the refugee, immigrant, and local native-born students live in Haventown, an ethnically diverse, working-class community and unexpected gateway city. U.S. Department of Homeland Security 2012 figures show that both communities are located in the 6<sup>th</sup> largest U.S. state of residence for refugee arrivals between 2010 and 2012 (Martin & Yankay, 2012). According to 2010 census data, nearly 40% of Haventown's inhabitants were born outside of the U.S. CDS has a large refugee and immigrant population that comprises about half of its 400-person student body. CDS began with what is now its Main Campus, which serves students in kindergarten through fourth grade, and expanded to include a second campus that houses fifth and sixth graders. There are three classrooms for each grade level with an approximate 10:1 student-teacher ratio for each class. More than 35 countries and 15 distinct languages are represented at CDS. Each data gathering method is summarized below.

### ***Participant Observation***

In May 2010, I engaged in participant observation at CDS to assess dynamics such as iconography, school displays, activities, student-teacher classroom interaction, language usage, and other measures used during the educational process that may provide insight into the programmatic, social, and educational environment of the school (refer to Schedule C in Appendix). Participant observation began on March 18, 2010, and lasted for seven days dispersed over a two week period. Existing professional relationships granted me access to this site.<sup>xxi</sup> Observations lasted from approximately 9:00 a.m. until about 3:30 p.m. In addition to a working knowledge of the school's operation, this period provided further insight into how management, operations, and values play out on a daily basis. In addition, these dates coincided with the end of the school year, which gave me access to special events, programs, celebrations, and the culmination of final projects typically presented at this time. I observed the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade science fair; visited classes while in session; attended the 1<sup>st</sup> grade school play; visited both campuses (although the majority of time was spent on the main campus); witnessed a "Passport Around the World" - themed Field Day; observed 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> graders' French and Spanish vocabulary bees; and, observed the school-wide choir concert. Overall, these experiences provided a greater understanding of CDS' unique culture and the various factors that influence it. I use these data to assess whether and how they facilitate aspects of ethnic identity development for refugee students in general and Sub-Saharan African refugee students in particular. I am specifically interested in whether and how school processes and programs reflect and promote dynamics such as double-consciousness, multi-consciousness, "Africaness", and/or "Americanness" as well as whether and how CDS

attempts to influence possible socialization processes for African immigrant students as “African” and/or “American” in the U.S.

### ***Document Analysis***

The school’s curriculum consists of content from both International Baccalaureate (IB) and state-mandated curricula. An analysis of fourth grade students’ curricular units provided insightful results about methods used to educate students about themselves, their cultures, and the cultural experiences of other people. Data collection and analyses also included other written material used to academically engage students as well as educate them about their own and other countries, ethnicities, people, and cultures. With permission, I photocopied pamphlets, fliers, maps, and announcements made publicly available to the CDS community. Furthermore, census data of local demographics were collected to contextualize the findings and identify aspects of the surrounding community that may influence CDS’ objectives and functionality. For the purposes of this study, I analyze these secondary sources with a specific focus on whether and how they document systemic, intentional attempts by CDS to facilitate ethnic identity development among Sub-Saharan African students.

### ***Interviews***

I identified informants during the above participant observation process. Between August 4<sup>th</sup> and October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011, I interviewed a purposive sample of five personnel. One fourth grade teacher, one former fourth grade teacher, two program coordinators, and the media specialist took part in the interviews. Although he approved the project and facilitated our field work, logistics prevented a formal interview with the principal. Yet I

contend that this sample reflects personnel most intimately involved in shaping the CDS educational experience on a daily basis. The in-depth interviews, approximately one hour in length, were audiotaped. Interviews provided insight into the educators' views about and experiences with Sub-Saharan African refugee students, as well as some of the values and perspectives that influence the culture and environment at CDS (refer to Schedule D in Appendix). I concentrated on faculty views and experiences with fourth graders rather than other grade levels at CDS because they are the senior class at the main location and most have matriculated for years at CDS. Thus their experiences are expected to provide the most insight into the socialization processes at the school. Interviews focused on: 1) processes, methods, and strategies that inform students about their culture as well as other ethnicities and cultures; 2) overall CDS missions and goals; and, 3) whether and how school personnel approach academic performance, truancy, and students who are struggling academically. Although it would be important to document student views, this work focuses on the school environment as a force that plays an active role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors about themselves and others. Future studies on this topic will include interviews with CDS students and graduates to document their perspectives in their own voices.

**CDS personnel profiles.** This sample reflects information and perspectives from some of the personnel who are intimately involved in shaping the educational experiences of CDS fourth graders on a daily basis. Five of the six individuals petitioned for interviews opted to participate in this study. Each faculty or staff member had worked at CDS for at least six years. At the time of the interviews, the informants' ages ranged from 28 to 60 years old. Thumbnail descriptions of each interviewee<sup>xxii</sup> are provided below.

- Kevin David is a 50-year-old African American male of Puerto Rican descent. He has taught fourth graders at CDS for at least eight years. In addition, he has been the grade-level coordinator for seven years. A part-time employee at the metropolitan zoo, Kevin uses his networks to organize field trips to the local science center for the school. Furthermore, as the only African American male classroom teacher, he deeply his unofficial positions as mentor and role model to his students.
- Kim Mueller is a 35-year-old White female who grew up in New Jersey. She has worked at CDS as a librarian and/or media specialist for at least seven years. In addition to her official responsibilities, Kim is also an effective fund-raiser and gatherer of educational resources for the school. The media center is often used to host gatherings, meetings, and events involving students, parents, teachers, and guests, so her unofficial role as scheduler is vital to the smooth operation of various school affairs. Like many of the faculty and staff members at CDS, Kim unofficially mentors and emotionally supports a variety of students.
- Léon Girard is a 38-year-old first generation American male of Haitian descent. Having worked with youth development for over a decade, Léon has put his expertise to use at CDS as the After Class Institute (ACI) program director, and director of special programs at CDS for at least seven years. He coordinates tutoring and cultural exchange activities through the ACI program when funding permits. His position provides him valuable access to parents, so he often serves as a liaison between parents and teachers, relaying information and concerns. In addition, his position provides him with insight into students' academic and

personal struggles. Léon considers himself an activist and, like Kevin, acknowledges the importance of his supportive and positive Black male presence on campus. He uses his influence to enrich students' understandings of their communities and their opportunities for personal advancement and social change.

- Shawna Hargrove is a 28-year-old African American female of West Indian descent. Although currently the school counselor for both of CDS' campuses, Shawna has also held positions at CDS as an assistant teacher for the fifth grade, a fifth grade teacher, and fourth grade teacher over the course of her six years at the school. In addition to her administrative roles, Shawna is also one of the after school dance teachers. Her various perspectives have allowed her to build meaningful relationships with students and faculty members. Shawna's goals as an educator involve fostering a safe environment for students, advocating on behalf of their needs, and constantly reminding them about their individual agency and responsibility to affect positive change in their communities.
- Susan King is a 60-year-old White female who has been the Inner School (IS) program coordinator for six years. As a retired public school teacher, Susan pairs refugee students with volunteers who are retired principals and teachers. She then liaises between students, volunteers, and classroom teachers to ensure that participants' needs are met. Susan also coordinates outings and activities for students and volunteers to provide them with multiple opportunities to build lasting and supportive relationships.

These profiles reflect a multicultural team whose responses elucidate key processes witnessed during participant observation and document collection. Member checks were conducted throughout interviews as well as via email in April 2012.

### **Analytical Process**

I utilized a social anthropological approach to qualitative data analysis, including content analysis, which aims to “identify and explain the ways people use or operate in a particular setting and how they come to understand things, account for, take action, and generally manage their day-to-day life” (Berg, 2009, p. 340). Content analysis is a systematic analytical technique that aids in the identification of patterns, themes, biases, and meanings that emerge in records of social communication (Berg, 2009; Krippendorf, 1980). Thus it can be employed to assess various forms of human communication, such as speech, written documents, and field notes. I analyzed the data below with particular attention to reoccurring words, themes, characters, and concepts. Rather than record the frequency of certain interactions within artifacts, I am more interested in the meaning underlying the data. The frequency of emergent themes and language, for example, were useful in uncovering patterns across the data as well as relationships between my data and theory and findings discussed in existing literature (Krippendorf, 1980).

A combination of inductive and deductive categorical schemes for coding data was employed. For deductive approaches, major concepts from theoretical frameworks described in prior sections of this paper guided my identification of behaviors or language that may constitute, for example, multi-consciousness or subjugated knowledges. Thus I approached the data with some ideas of concepts related to ethnic identity development and inclusivity in mind. However, this approach did not restrict

other possible categories that emerged during data immersion. For example, the importance of cultural brokers represents one theme with consequent codes that emerged via an inductive coding process. Thus I began with an open coding process achieved through an inductive approach, and gradually transitioned to a deductive approach in an effort to address my research questions. A close reading of the data enabled me to illumine: CDS's overall mission and goals; respondents' views and experiences with refugee students; and, processes, programs, and strategies that influence ethnic identity development and inclusivity.

**Salient Themes: Multi-consciousness, Ethnic Identity Development, and Institutional Transformation at CDS**

Efforts to increase ethnic, cultural, and racial representation in the content of American academic institutions are continuing and controversial struggles. For example, English-only movements (Padilla et al., 1991) and the controversy surrounding Arizona *House Bill 2281* (2010) reveal sensitivity and indignation about whose language is privileged, how history is conveyed, what constitutes knowledge, and which ideas are constructive versus divisive.<sup>xxiii</sup> Questions about place and belonging in the past and ongoing history of the U.S. are at the heart of these issues. Transnational student populations only highlight the complexity of these matters. CDS personnel interview responses provide a glimpse of the various challenges and choices that refugee students and parents face in educational environments as they try to find or establish their places in the world. Moreover, a profile of students' social and academic experiences can be used to inform teachers at other educational settings who may be unsure of how to



understand and respond to refugee students' academic and social in needs, particularly in connection with students' ethnic identities.

Findings in this section focus on two primary emergent themes; “Emerging Ethnic Identities within CDS” and “Creating A School for Multi-Conscious Youth”. Each theme is further detailed based on several sub-themes. I posit that these topics reflect critical school features strategically embedded in the processes and programs by key CDS personnel to educate and socialize students about ethnic identity development and inclusivity. First, I present CDS faculty and staff descriptions of the emerging identities among their refugee youth. These results provide insight into unconventional expressions of self and personal experiences that schools serving transnational youth in general and refugee youth in particular should be prepared to encounter. Furthermore, findings set the scene for the practices that emerge in the second theme. Next, I analyze how CDS values, practices, and personnel endeavor to create a positive, inclusive, and resistant space for diverse youth to be themselves. Finally, I conclude with a discussion that includes implications for schools and individuals as well as for improving our current understanding of identity development for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth.

### ***Emerging Ethnic Identities within CDS***

**Transnational identities and revised expectations.** According to CDS personnel, most immigrant students initially have challenges negotiating their new experiences in the United States. Respondents describe some of the experiences and challenges such students face as they begin to re-consider their identities in this new space. Moreover, respondents describe how CDS can assist students to transition into various environments, including the U.S., their city, community, and the school. CDS

educators have observed their refugee students' struggles with the concept of belonging and identity as they confront conflicts between geography, politics, and culture in their lives. For example:

The reality is that so many kids don't really fully understand just who they are. It's a life process. If you are refugee—in my earlier years a lot of our children...they were born, for example in their native country. What I see now...the children that I had last year, for example, they were born in refugee camps, which means they weren't born in their native countries. They came as very young children to the United States. Their parents are from their home country, they were born in, you know, let's say Egypt, for example, lived most of their life in the United States. So what culture do you teach them? Where are you from? It's a tough question for many children; it's a huge question. (Kevin David, fourth grade classroom teacher)

Some children are knowingly displaced due to political unrest, whereas others, who are somewhat unaware of their refugee status, move to the U.S. after living elsewhere. The above comment illustrates the conundrum school personal believe many immigrant youth face regarding issues of allegiance and belonging. Likewise, educators are apprehensive about what locale should be considered the student's "homeland" – their birthplace, which may differ from their parents', or the U.S. Literature suggests that such questions are central to how individuals begin to think about ethnic identity development and identity consciousness (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994; Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Syed et al., 2011). Furthermore, their experiences with involuntary migration can leave youth and their resettlement community neighbors feeling conflicted (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006; Davies, 2008; Dooley, 2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Oikonomidou, 2009; Roy & Roxas, 2011). Kevin David, a fourth grade classroom teacher, also describes how well intentioned gestures can quickly become problematic in light of this reality:

I remember—this is years ago, but one of the kids—they were refugees from the Congo. Their father was imprisoned in the Congo, and then he was later moved to a prison in Russia...So do you want these children to embrace the Congo? It's one of those kinds of things. So for example, during UN day we march for our various home countries. Back

then we were very strict: You are from this country, you represent this country. And it was always a huge problem for those children because they were made to march for Congo, which is a country that did not embrace them, their family—and it was tough. But I think we got smarter after, which is why now we [say], “Hey you should march for wherever you want to march for.”

These examples attempt to capture one aspect of the identity questions with which some refugee students wrestle. The case involving the Congolese refugee students above is a reminder the fact that refugees tend to leave their countries due to persecution as well as social, political, and economic exclusion (McCarthy & Hagan, 2009; Reeves, 2010; The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars [TWC], 2011). Migration does not change the realities associated with one’s place of birth; rather, national allegiance are complicated for individuals who may feel or actually be stateless. As cultures, families, and heritages transcend geopolitical boundaries, oversimplified concepts of place and belonging leave immigrant individuals with inadequate language for constructing their transnational identities (Appiah, 1994) as they begin to navigate their “place in the world” (Erikson, 1968, as cited in Syed et al., 2011). Furthermore, when youth choose or attempt to simplify their ethnic identities, their choices are often challenged. One informant describes how this takes place:

I know the families are...afraid of, you know, “where are you from?” [Students] say, “Connecticut.” Or, “I’m from Georgia.” And people look and them and say, “you know, where are you *from*?” They want to hear, “I’m from Iraq.” And they’re like, “*No*, I’m from Georgia.”... We have a lot of kids from Burma here now. So those are the ones that you’ll ask, “where are you from?” “I’m from Burma. I’m a refugee from Burma.” But most of the kids now that I taught...they say, “I’m from Georgia.” Or, “I’m from Minnesota.” Because they were born here. They hear the stories from their parents, but to them, they live in a regular neighborhood, they’re American kids. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

Refugee and immigrant youth face opposition on at least two fronts. As Shawna notes, parents sometimes expect or desire children to strongly identify with the parents’ cultural heritage. Scholars have noted how this friction constitutes intergeneration

conflict between first- and second-generation immigrants (Sluzki, 1979). The above remark alludes to burgeoning dual- and possible multi-consciousness where immigrant parents are attempting to socialize their children toward a national identity while simultaneously contending with influences of a burgeoning “American” identity based on their current place of residence. In addition, Shawna’s account reveals that refugee youth encounter expectations of their origins based on their appearance or speech. Reactions from the general public can pressure second-generation immigrant and refugee children to identify with prevailing expectations of race, ethnicity, and place (Portes & Zhou, 1993). It is unlikely that the question, “where are you from, *really?*” would be asked of Caucasian students without noticeably foreign identity markers such as an accent or traditional ethnic attire. Furthermore, the above comments also suggest that an emerging “sense” of Americanness is influenced by residence, tensions, and interactions with members of society (Billingsley 1992; Collins, 1990/2009, 2009a; DuBois, 1903; Murry et al., 2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009; Waters, 1999). Although multicultural acculturative spaces aim to accommodate diversity, hybrid identities can struggle to fit in (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006; Collins, 2009a). Thus even within theoretically inclusive spaces that endorse multicultural politics of inclusion, preexisting notions of place and belonging are restrictive.

The above vignettes suggest a changing relationship between culture, place, and identity for refugee youth, and that schools must learn to accommodate this reality (Collins, 2009a). Moreover, they illustrate some of the broad challenges students and their families may face as well as how CDS has attempted to facilitate student transitions. For some groups, such as members of the Burmese refugee community who attend CDS,

country of origin may be linked to valuable aspects of heritage as well as students' expressions of identity. However, schools and other members of rapidly diversifying societies need to update their understandings of concepts such as ethnicity and belonging to improve relationships with transnational youth as well as youth from émigré families (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Davies, 2008; Oikonomidou, 2009).

**Safe and vulnerable spaces for hybrid identity youth.** Collins' (2009a) analysis and challenge to cultivate democratic public schools informs the CDS environment. According to Collins, it is incumbent upon society to purposefully and strategically transform public education such that an ever-more diverse student population can receive a comprehensive education that includes traditional skills as well as socialization to become full members of society. Central to her thesis is the need for schools to reflect "safe spaces" where diverse students, particularly those from vulnerable populations, feel comfortable speaking their voices, expressing their varied cultural heritages, and providing deviant views and opinions. Furthermore, schools like CDS must respond to the needs and experiences of immigrant youth populations that enter their doors. In this vein, ethnic identity development and exploration take place differently for CDS students. During the interview with the school's librarian and media specialist, Kim Mueller mentions that many of the refugee students live in the same apartment complexes and residential communities. Thus some students' cultural languages and heritages are reinforced by their interactions with others in their internationally diverse neighborhoods (Singer, 2008; Waters & Jiménez, 2005). Léon Girard, the ACI program director, references this community resource in his response to questions about ethnic and cultural socialization within his program:

- ON:<sup>xxiv</sup> For instance, if you had a student who was Burmese and... maybe, because they were young, they weren't in touch with their Burmese culture—or if you had a kid who was Sudanese who grew up in a refugee camp, are there attempts to—
- LG: You'll likely not find that in the [Haventown] area. Because the community is very small—I live in [Haventown]... it's kind of a tight knit community. So culturally, there are kids who were born here, but still speak with an accent... I'd say I haven't seen—I wouldn't want to say it never happens, but I'd definitely say I've never seen that.
- ON: Someone who was just far removed—
- LG: Just far removed. I've never seen that. [There are] kids who were born here and they're age seven or eight and still have an accent. And it's just because at home, this is how—English is just your second or third language, you know?
- ON: Right... So most of that linguistic and cultural learning takes place more at home and not so much at the school?
- LG: Oh yeah, definitely. I think there's some level of reinforcement here because... there's been kids who I've seen have a full conversation in Spanish... and then speak to you and you wouldn't even know that they could speak another language. You thought all they could speak was English. But yeah, I think home is the thing, because I've run into kids who speak three or four languages. It's not uncommon.

As Léon and Kim's accounts reveal, many refugee and students do not lack access to opportunities for cultural retention within their communities. Many students reside in Haventown, a working-class suburb with a substantial proportion (45.6 percent) of foreign-born residents. Whereas 90 percent of the community was White in 1980, it dropped to 19.2 percent in 2012 (Lohr, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Furthermore in 2010, among the foreign-born, 67.3 percent of residents were from countries in Africa, 22 percent were from countries in Asia, 10.1 percent were from Latin American countries, and 0.6 percent from countries in Europe (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Haventown has seen a drastic level of White flight in response to an unprecedented volume of immigration in a short period of time. As residents, businesses, and property owners evacuated the area, immigrant groups moved in to take advantage of the available, albeit low quality housing, and establish small businesses. In many ways, Haventown fits the description of an ethnic enclave on the fringe of an emerging gateway city that has the

potential to offer cultural and linguistic support for foreign-born newcomers in general, and refugees in particular (Levanon, 2011; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Singer, 2008).

However, as some scholars have observed, residence in ethnic enclaves does not mean that youth are immersed in and consequently choose to express their ethnic identities in their appearance, language, attitudes, and behavior (C. Suárez-Orozco, Pimentel, & Martin, 2009; Zivkovic, 1994 as cited in Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005). Shawna provides two examples in her account of changes that she has observed in students at CDS:

It definitely feels different though. I know these kids. Even the ones that were here before have kind of strayed away from their id—where they're from. Almost as if once they left CDS it was bad to be different. I've seen them go into middle schools and not wear hijab anymore and, you know, change their clothes and change the way they talk and change their group of friends...almost as if they're ashamed of it.

One analysis of Shawna's above reflection could be that students are simply exploring various aspects of their identity, which is typical for early adolescents (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Additionally, these student explorations are political in nature because they represent instances where youth are attempting to negotiate spaces where difference is often devalued. According to Shawna, some students acquiesce to the influence of broader social forces that engenders acculturative stress (Birman et al., 2008; Rudmin, 2009; Schwartz et al., 2006) and ultimately assimilation rather than a multi-ethnic identity (DuBois, 1903/2008; Collins, 1990/2009; 2009a). Unfortunately, discrimination and bullying are also normative features of middle and high school students' educational experiences, which could drastically impact individuals' perceptions and choices throughout the identity development process. Religious and racial discrimination within U.S. schools are repeatedly cited among barriers to positive academic and social adjustment for Sub-Saharan African refugee youth (Alitolppa-Niitamo, 2004; Davies,

2008; Oikonomidou, 2009), as well as among immigrant and refugee youth from other regions (Birman et al., 2005; Hughes, Hollander, & Martinez, 2009; Portes & Zhou, 1993). Thus it is likely that Shawna's account further attests to the harassment that refugee, immigrant, and other minority students potentially face within the middle and high schools that they attend after CDS (Collins, 2009a; Olsen, 2001).

Parents, teachers, and students alike are aware of this reality. For example, Shawna also communicated the experience of a CDS "poster child," a high-performing graduate who was given a scholarship to attend a prestigious nearby private school. As an immigrant female from a low-income family, her difficulty socially adjusting to the school left her feeling depressed. Consequently, she left after two years. In the below excerpt, Shawna recalls how this student's experience may have impacted the attitudes and behaviors of former CDS students and parents who pursue a quality education at the same prestigious private school:

- SH: There's two assistants that had kids here, and one of them actually is at [prestigious nearby private school] right now...[the student]'s there now, but she's also kinda taken away from being Bosnian, you know, because she blends in with them. So now her hair is blond. And she's got this different group of friends...it is interesting. You see them just blend in or—sometimes parents push them into that.
- ON: Mm-hm. Just—
- SH: Yeah.
- ON: Just to make life easier—
- SH: Make life easier—
- ON: So you won't go into depression—
- SH: Exactly.

The students and parents' actions are reminiscent of some minorities' responses to politics of inclusion that stress assimilation, particularly for immigrant groups who can be racialized as White (Collins, 2009a; Cummings, 2012; Portes & Zhou, 1993). For example, Cummings (2012) recounts how Lenape high school students' initial attempts to



challenge mainstream misrepresentations of their own and other Native American cultures are silenced or oppressed. Consequently, some students are discouraged from openly discussing their heritage at school by the emotional energy it takes to, “fight the stereotypes, ignorance, and abuse that comes from such discussions. They can pass for Caucasian and for the most part, that’s what they do” (Cummings, 2012, p. 260).

Although, the student’s choice to dye her hair blond could possibly represent self-expression and agency on her part, the context in which she made this choice is significant. As members of the CDS community, she and her mother were likely aware of the immigrant CDS alumni’s experience. Thus, her decision was likely impacted by expressed and subtle messages about acceptance she encountered from the nearby prestigious private school.

The above more sobering accounts point to some of the tensions and problems immigrant students experience as they attempt to negotiate societal spaces in general and peer pressure in particular. Ideally, multicultural spaces would be expected to reduce student tensions to discard critical dimensions of their cultural heritage. Such counter-spaces would reflect a *mestizaje*, mixing bowl or “in-between place” perspective where demographic heterogeneity based on factors like place of origin, nationality, ethnicity, class, and race are acknowledged and celebrated (Collins, 2009a). Furthermore, these comments suggest that the potentially empowering influence of institutions such as CDS on identity consciousness and ethnic identity development are often undermined when other institutions as well as societal norms and expectations are equally or more influential (Billingsley, 1992).

**Ethnic identity development and students' learning needs.** In addition to impacting students' social adjustment, CDS educators and parents believe that ethnic and cultural markers, such as language, are significant for students' academic well being (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994; Miles & Small, 1999). However, this learning must be done in conjunction with students' families (Billingsley, 1992; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991):

In the beginning of the year we'll explain the whole language thing—we have an open house. And they explain during the open house that... your native language is encouraged if you're going to continue that. We encourage you to continue it because academically it's actually the best thing for your child. If they're able to do it, they do... Um, if they don't, they don't—You've got a family population that some of them are highly educated, some of them just wound up in the United States, don't have English, don't have their own native languages—to be honored. They don't have literacy, they don't have much. So, you know, how do you make that point? You don't. So you continue. You just move on. (Kevin David, fourth grade teacher)

In addition to having parents who cannot teach their native language(s) to their children, some choose not to teach their children their native languages, sometimes out of fear that it may confuse their child or otherwise compete with their ability to become fluent in English. This decision is not made out of ignorance of educational benefits; rather, it is often strategic in light of experiences with stigmatization for speaking with an accent (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Ima & Rumbaut, 1989; Waters, 1999). Despite sometimes holding differing viewpoints about language acquisition, CDS faculty and staff members encourage, but do not impose their values onto students and parents in order to make them feel accepted. If parents choose not to ethnically socialize their children in recommended ways, their choices are respected. Overall, there is more of an emphasis on preventing students from feeling socially or academically isolated because of their backgrounds and experiences (Birman, Trickett, & Buchanan, 2005; Ima &

Rumbaut, 1989). Thus, students' challenges are seen as opportunities for improving teaching and learning methods at CDS (Collins, 2009a).

Moreover, as CDS faculty, staff, and some parents have learned, fluency in English does not preclude students from academic difficulty. In his explanation of why the Inner School (IS) program was created, Kevin David, describes an early and challenging experience as a new teacher who was trying meet the needs of a refugee student who was struggling academically:

The [IS] actually started as a result of all of the sessions with the counselor because he got really angry...He couldn't read anything...He was from an English speaking country...in any case, he could not read. He did not know letters. He spoke eloquently. He could calculate in his head, but he couldn't form numbers as of yet. So he knew how to add, he knew how to subtract, he knew how to do all of that stuff—and he would just shut down. He just got so mad...It was only our third year [as a school], and we were learning the best way to be successful with a very different population. It was my first year as a teacher and I was like, okay I have a fourth grader who really doesn't know letters. How do I teach a class when most of the kids do know and you have one that doesn't? Or how do I teach a class that knows math very very well, but can't read the math problems? They know how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide, but...they don't know the words.

The situation that Kevin describes is serious for both the school and the student. For charter and public schools whose funding relies on students' scores on state-wide standardized tests, illiterate and English language learner (ELL) students can be seen as a burden (Louie, 2005; Smith, 2008). For a student who has experienced interrupted schooling, or who is otherwise underprepared for academic expectations in American schools, such circumstances can leave them feeling frustrated, defeated, and isolated. Rather than view his expressions of anger as indicative of behavioral problems that could be resolved via tracking, detention, suspension, or other punitive measures (Roy & Roxas, 2011), the student's outbursts were countered with counseling and genuine concern about his circumstances. In fact, as was indicated earlier, the student's

experience was important enough for CDS to implement a school-wide program to address his and other students' learning needs.

In summary, an important proportion of students' ethnic identity development processes involve schools in ways that influence and are affected by their academic and social success, as well as their broader worldviews (Bell, 1995; Wing, 2000). Education is an established social service for youth in the U.S., although the inadequate quality of these institutions has also been a longstanding reality, especially for minority youth (Collins, 2009a). Educational attainment is becoming even more important for youth and adults in the U.S., especially as opportunities for advancement require individuals to be savvy communicators with international counterparts. Ideally, schools and educators would be compelled to improve how they relate to their refugee, immigrant, and minority youth to avoid marginalizing them. Regardless of whether such motivation exists, the fact remains that public schools are often financially accountable for the outcomes of the youth (including their minority, immigrant, ELL, and refugee students) they serve. Thus the schools and students' livelihoods jointly depend on the efforts that educational institutions are willing to make to appropriately address the needs of diverse student populations (Collins, 2009a; Olsen, 2001; Sizemore, 1990). The findings presented in this section reveal the need for schools to recognize the existence and influence of hybrid ethnic identities on students' academic and social experiences in educational settings (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006). As students devote themselves to the exploration of who they are, where they belong, and where their lives are headed, schools should cultivate and constitute spaces that prepare students to succeed in light of the challenges they are likely to face in broader society and the future.

### *Creating A School for Multi-Conscious Youth*

The following section focuses on the second broader theme of CDS' efforts to address students' needs. Below, I examine how the school translates its values into practice through the incorporation of student, faculty, and staff members' experiences that help students understand and see the effects of power, privilege, and marginalization. This transformation gives way to multi-consciousness and agency, which can be used to enhance the academic and personal development of all students in general, and refugee students in particular.

**International mindedness as multi-consciousness.** The history behind the creation of CDS provides insight into the values that have driven the structure, culture, and functioning of the school since its inception. CDS was founded in an effort to create a space where refugee, other immigrant, and native-born U.S. children could draw from the many strengths of their rapidly diversifying community (*CDS History and Data*, personal communication, June 29, 2010). In an effort to create and maintain diversity, the school's founding team and volunteers developed and fostered existing relationships with refugee families in the area to canvass support for enrollment at the school. As a result, 48 to 51 percent of the school's population was comprised of refugee youth between 2002 and 2008 (*CDS History and Data*, personal communication, June 29, 2010). The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) curriculum, which is taught in conjunction with the state-mandated curriculum, was chosen and implemented because the IB mission and values align with those of the school:

[CDS] provides refugee, immigrant, and local children with an international education. The school explores and celebrates cultural differences in a challenging, nurturing and intentionally multi-ethnic environment. (CDS mission statement, CDS Board of Directors meeting minutes, April 26, 2010)

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. To this end the organization works with schools, governments, and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment. These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right. (IB mission statement, International Baccalaureate Organization [IBO], 2009)

CDS and the IB curriculum view international mindedness as a crucial component of the teaching and learning process. International mindedness can be defined as an awareness of self and others that stems from multiple perspectives of one's own experiences and backgrounds. According to the IBO (2009), "this sharing experience increases the students' awareness of, and sensitivity to, the experiences of others beyond the local or national community...[an international perspective] must begin with each student's ability to consider and reflect upon the point of view of someone else in the same class" (p. 6).

The IB concept of international mindedness shares important similarities with double-consciousness, which describes the value and significance of alternate worldviews for marginalized African Americans in the U.S. (DuBois, 1903/2008; Billingsley, 1992). Paralleling DuBois' assessment, this belief and subsequent strategy is purposeful in promoting students who are both capable and comfortable with a hybrid identity and understanding what that sense of self means for them as individuals and for other students with similar profiles. In this way, international mindedness is a core concept within the IB curriculum framework and CDS mission statement that aids the development of multi-conscious worldviews for all students. Moreover, it is an important aspect of the school's socialization processes that requires self-reflection and the exploration of students' own and others experiences—which regularly involves ethnic identity development in this

intentionally multicultural school (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994; Collins, 2009a; Olsen, 2001; Sizemore, 1990). For students who may be grappling with two or more ethnic identities, this multi-consciousness framework may aid students in their attempts to make sense of their simultaneous and seemingly conflicting worldviews (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006). The exploration of personal, alternative, and competing worldviews fulfills at least three crucial purposes: 1) it de-prioritizes hegemonic perspectives; 2) it allows for the acknowledgement and examination of noteworthy differences; and 3) it fosters the ability to imagine new possibilities (Collins, 1986, 2009a).

**The development of multi-conscious youth.** Exposure, reflection, and inquiry are important components of efforts to develop multi-conscious students at CDS. These three components lay the foundation for the recognition and creation of subjugated knowledges in the face of marginalization (Collins, 1990/2009). Moreover, diversity within the student body, faculty, and staff tends to propel an awareness of differing perspectives:

You put kids from fifty or sixty different countries together, and we all have a relationship with the rest of the world 'cause they're here in our classroom, you know? And especially as the students get older and are learning more about things like famine, genocide, and really hard concepts for them to understand, because they have a classmate who lived during the time of the Rwandan genocide...we did have someone who taught here a couple of years ago and he lived through it and had stories about being a child soldier. In fact, some of our students may have had experiences like that, older brothers or sisters [who] were in a really terrifying predicament in a different country...they're mature from an early age because of the adversity that they've faced already in their few years. But because we're an IB school of course, learning in an IB fashion, encouraging and just teaching the students about what's going on in the world is just a part of our [culture]...Our kids are so aware of what's going on in the world...so it just kind of naturally comes up in conversation every day...because kids like to talk about themselves. Even the little kindergarteners—I'll say, "what did you have for dinner?" "In my country we eat," you know? "In my country—" "...So just bringing in this enthusiasm for themselves and their own culture...that's a relationship with the rest of the world. (Kim Mueller, librarian and media specialist)

Abstract concepts (e.g., causes and effects of conflict and intolerance) and difficult topics (e.g., famine and genocide) become concrete through the bodies and experiences of students, teachers, and staff that comprise the CDS community. Just as students can interact with their classmates, this powerful learning approach motivates students to engage and grapple with various issues. In his analysis of how globalization affects the phenomenon of violence towards and the oppression of minorities, Appadurai (2006) describes the existence of marginalized groups as follows:

But minorities do not come preformed. They are produced in the specific circumstances of every nation and every nationalism. They are often the carriers of unwanted memories of the acts of violence that produced existing states, of forced conscription, or of violent extrusion as new states were formed... Minorities of the sort that I have described—the infirm, the religiously deviant, the disabled, the mobile, the illegal, and the unwelcome in the space of the nation-state—blur the boundaries between “us” and “them,” here and there, in and out, healthy and unhealthy, loyal and disloyal... (pp. 42, 44)

This excerpt, when examined in conjunction with Kim Mueller’s response above, reveals the strength of multi-consciousness for creating empathy, which can facilitate positive intercultural relations and ideally foster a sense of oneness. As Appadurai (2006) asserts, minorities tend to be the “carriers of unwanted memories” of violence and oppression; they tend to be resourced and disheartened by their “gift of second sight” (DuBois, 1903/2008). However, incorporating multi-consciousness into CDS pedagogy and culture requires students to consider others’ memories and possibly validate different experiences, thereby altering previously held worldviews. This also means that CDS students are able to cultivate subjugated knowledges that despite a history of intersecting oppressions ultimately enable them to have “voice” and define themselves, their school peers, and other groups that may be “different” in positive, empowering ways (Collins, 1990/2009).



Unsurprisingly, interpersonal conflict tends to arise in the midst of such starkly different lived experiences. As Léon recalls:

We have problems. We have kids that don't understand certain things too, and may say something here or say something there. But for the most part, you're getting recognition of [acceptance] from the IB curriculum; you're getting recognition of things being okay from the adults.

Leon's comments suggest the reality that even students who are being educated to become change agents, may still exhibit inappropriate attitudes and actions common to other students at that developmental stage (Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Yet skills for effective conflict management are especially crucial in order to support the processes at work at the school. However, as the CDS and IB mission statements suggest, multi-consciousness is the starting point for conflict resolution. Shawna reaffirms this assertion as she shares an example of how she discusses the concept of conflict with her students:

ON: And like you said, conflict resolution, is that focused on because of the IB or is that—

SH: It's because we feel like it's an integral part of our world today. Whenever I would cover the Civil War, or even the American Revolution with the kids, they don't get it. I would have students be like, "Ms. [Hargrove], I don't understand that. That's stupid. Why?" Those kinds of questions, you know, "why is that?" Okay, let's see why that is. Why is it that we can all sit in this classroom today and nobody has a problem with that?

ON: Right.

SH: You know, why can you be friends with this person? You know, it wasn't always that way. So we talk about those different conflicts, how they resolved those things...Is it still happening today? How can I change that, just within my classroom? How can I change that in my household?

Consistent with IB teaching guidelines and CDS values, Shawna redirects students' questions toward personal inquiry (e.g., sitting in same classroom and friendships), followed by the identification of different worldviews (e.g., "it wasn't always that way" and "is it still happening today?"). After these positions are examined, students are encouraged to problem solve and affect positive change considering their own as well as others' needs. Multi-consciousness provides opportunities for students to develop a sense

of empathy that aids them in their understanding of themselves and their place in the world. As Collins (2009a) writes, “we each have a partial point of view and we need each others’ partiality to make more sense of our own” (p. 101). Moreover, the development of empathy in classrooms through multi-consciousness is fundamental for recognizing and challenging oppressive power structures (Collins, 2009a).

Self-reflection and exploration of multi-consciousness takes on various forms at CDS. Recently, for instance, in March 2012 the school organized a Trail of Tears Walk to supplement the information that second graders were learning about the forced migration of the Cherokee, Muscogee, and other Native Americans from the southeast to Oklahoma (Umwali, 2012). Approximately 60 second grade students walked for an hour, then broke into discussion groups to consider the strategies that some Native American groups may have used to survive. Part of the assignment also required students to reflect on their own feelings about what happened to the Native Americans after the hour-long walk. Susan King, the IS coordinator, also describes how a similar event takes place among third grade students:

Third grade just had this...Living Wax Museum. And the kids, as part of their social studies, they pick a historic figure that they want to be and they dress up like the person...maybe they’re Rosa Parks. They dress up like Rosa Parks and they each...you go in and they’re very still, you know because they’re supposed to be statues. But they have this little button—or on a piece of paper there’s this black circle. If you push it they come to life and they talk about that person. So, as in any school, they study the history of the country and the laws.

Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Nelson Mandela were also represented among the figures in 2012 (Umwali, 2012). This particular project required students to embody historical persons, and present aspects of the figures’ narratives as their own. Such learning exercises intentionally introduce a note of levity to serious matters, but this does not detract from the depth of learning that can take place.

Collins (2009a) provides the following strong criticism of superficial multicultural politics of inclusion: “Some multicultural initiatives have evolved into benign celebrations of cultural differences, such as differences in food and clothing. Because these approaches detach social groups from social inequalities of class, race, and gender, for example, they tend to erase the workings of social power” (p. 15). This is arguably not the case for CDS. Instead, light-hearted celebrations accompany the observable effects of oppression, privilege, agency, and conflict experienced by oneself as well as others inside and outside of the school community. Faculty and staff often do not evade tough subjects in an effort to avoid discomfort; doing so would require them to dismiss the power structures that create the school’s distinctive diversity. Instead, conversations take place about differences between governmental actions that protect and discriminate. This practice is in the spirit of CRT in order to help students understand and thus participate in the transformation of discriminatory structures in society (Bell, 1995; Wing, 2000). For example, Susan referenced a fourth grade class’ discussion of Troy Davis’ execution a day before it took place. In addition, during an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) class, the teacher used Aung San Suu Kyi’s house arrest in Burma to explain differences in how governments respond to dissent. In addition to introducing concepts related to democracy and citizenship, such conversations illustrate that workings of social power are approached often and from an early age at CDS, although differences in approaches exist depending on the educator (Bell, 1995; Collins, 2009a; Wing, 2000).

This also holds true for the school’s UN Day, an annual tradition that takes place in the beginning of the school year. UN Day is a celebration that involves a school-wide

parade, families, teachers, and students and an array of food, clothing, and music from the diverse populations represented in the CDS community. However similar forms of expression are carried on throughout the year; in this vein, teachers, school-wide programs, and assignments consistently collaborate to promote a safe environment for self-reflection and expression. The outcomes of this effort are as diverse as the backgrounds represented at CDS. For instance:

- SK: Sometimes the girls will—you see the pictures with the girl that has the little yellow circles?  
ON: On her cheeks.  
SK: Sometimes they'll wear that, just to school and it's not a big deal. You know, it's something they do in their country...I think if you just suddenly showed up in some schools they'd be like, "what's wrong with you? Did you get bitten by a spider?" But here...they're just taught it's just an accepted thing.  
ON: Right.  
SK: That people do different things in different countries, boy isn't this interesting? It's not to be judged, it's just to be celebrated in its glory.

As Susan describes, many Burmese refugee students choose and are encouraged to continue cultural practices at CDS such as the use of thanaka paste on their cheeks. Thanaka paste, which comes from the ground bark of a thanaka tree, is applied as a traditional cosmetic and often incorporated into skincare regimens as a sunblock and/or treatment to prevent acne (Sein, 2013; Turner, 2012). Such practices give voice to youth from various backgrounds, and aim to strengthen cultural as well as school pride (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008). Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former teacher, summarizes CDS' multi-consciousness socialization efforts as follows:

Kids are learning how to accept others, and they realize that everyone here looks different. And I think it starts with this little community that we have...some people wear hijab, some people celebrate Hanukah, not everybody celebrates Christmas...And it's more accepting because it's more of the norm instead of being someone that's different. In the general population, everyone is different. And difference is the norm.

Thanaka paste and hijab are worn in conjunction with the required school uniforms. Whereas some schools may regard these expressions as dress code violations (Roy & Roxas, 2011), CDS encourages such contributions to the school's varied worldviews (Collins, 2009a). Consideration of alternate perspectives and experiences is central to the values, functioning, and effectiveness of CDS. Thus programs, practices, and individuals mutually reinforce this reality.

***Multi-consciousness, subjugated knowledges, and voice.*** Multi-consciousness, which fosters ethnic identity development, and collaboration are also incorporated into components of the learning experience that are used to empower students. It is within collaborative efforts that students can encounter subjugated knowledges, even if their perspectives are not being marginalized in that particular space (Collins, 1990/2009). For example, Kim reports:

We just enrolled a student from a different country—and he speaks this...interesting, unusual dialect. So we're using our students as translators to communicate with their classmates. [It adds to] their sense of responsibility and their sense of empowerment.

Student-initiated learning and empowerment emerge in other ways as well. Shawna Hargrove describes how the IB and classroom teachers support these processes through assessments:

Instead of creating a test based on what the unit covered—for example, if it was about migration or religion, how do you assess what you've learned? [A student may respond] "Well, I'm going to go interview my mom who is from Burundi and talk about how she moved from this country to another country," and things like that. So, helping them create their own assessments was how I was able to [participate in student-initiated learning] with them instead of coming with just a general test that kind of assessed what they did. (Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former classroom teacher)

This learning approach informs students' understandings of what constitutes knowledge, as well as who can create and convey it. Student-initiated learning provides them with opportunities to investigate their experiences, and, more importantly, regard this learning

process as legitimate. In some spaces, the Burundian student's choice to learn through interviewing her mother would be pejoratively labeled "mesearch" and dismissed as an invalid and/or unreliable form of inquiry (Nash & Bradley, 2007). However, CDS represents a space where the value placed on multi-consciousness validates this approach to learning as necessary. Language is a major and emotional component of ethnic identity development and expression. As one prominent immigrant scholar writes, "if you really want to hurt me, talk badly about my language. Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity – I am my language" (Anzáldua, 1999, p.81). Thus attempts to suppress language use or enforce the use of English over mother tongues can constitute controlling images for non-native English speakers. As apparent in Kim's account above, previously subjugated knowledges (Collins, 1990/2009), such as languages, are appreciated and encouraged at CDS. Kim and Shawna's responses illustrate how linguistic awareness emerges during the school day. Below, Susan discusses how it also arises in her program:

We do a lot in here to make them realize that their country is an interesting place to us, and it is. It really really is...a lot of the tutors say, "well how do you say 'thank you' in your language?" Or "how do you say 'hello'?" And we try to learn a little bit...one little boy was working with geometric shapes, and he was naming them...but you know his tutor said, "well, make your house in Burma." So he stacked up the shapes to show, what the house was like, and that got the kid so excited. (Susan King, IS coordinator)

From an early age, CDS aims to equip its students with the tools to identify and value the knowledge that their experiences have already created. Unfortunately, however, an appreciation for this knowledge is not sustainable by itself. Students require the ability to recognize, rather than internalize, the possible devaluation of their developed knowledge. In this sense, adults who can model the multi-consciousness despite opposition from controlling images (Collins, 1990/2009) are a crucial element of students' ethnic identity development processes at CDS.

*The role of multi-conscious cultural brokers.* A plethora of studies illustrate the centrality of relationships with adults for healthy youth development. Furthermore, adult buffers in minority spaces such as families, schools, churches, and other neighborhood institutions help provide safe spaces where appreciation for diversity can emerge (Billingsley, 1992; Billingsley & Caldwell, 1991; Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; DuBois, 1903/2008). As CDS, faculty and staff play an instrumental role as mentors, role models, and cultural brokers. As such, these individuals reflect on and share their own experiences in an effort to prepare diverse students for cultural competence and success in the face of adversity. Léon Girard, the ACI program director, illustrates how this takes place:

Look at how the staff is made up, and it won't take you a couple of minutes to realize, that by design the staff reflects the communities that our kids come from... I think there are a great number of people here who have some level of understanding of why the kids are in the position to have to become refugees in the first place. And I think what winds up happening is if you have a bunch of adults around that get it, the kids will begin to get it. So there's an understanding of what happened in Somalia, and why we have a number of students from there. There's an understanding of what happened in Bosnia and why we have a number of students from there and so on... People's backgrounds, I guess. You know, I'm a first generation American. My family comes from Haiti. I was a Peace Corps volunteer, so I've lived overseas. So... everybody has something similar that makes them understand the plight of being an émigré or a refugee.

CDS is comprised of diverse faculty and staff whose diversity complements the multicultural student body. However, unsolicited information about the incorporation of informants' own cultural backgrounds arose during interviews with or in the presence of faculty and staff who were racial or ethnic minorities. Although almost every informant provided insight into their experiences working with diverse populations to some extent, faculty and staff that were racial or ethnic minorities made direct connections between their lived experiences and the discrimination or challenges that refugee, immigrant, and minority youth were likely to also encounter (Billingsley, 1992; Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-

Silva, 1999; Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999). For instance, Shawna Hargrove, school counselor and former fourth grade teacher, shares the following:

I tell them all the time, you know—they lose the language, a lot of them—don't lose who you are. Don't be ashamed of that...we try to foster that here. Love who you are. It's different; it's great. But, I guess my hope is that they don't lose that, and I try to tell them, you don't want to lose that. I'm—my parents are West Indian and I will tell you 'til you're blue in the face about that because I don't deny it, 'cause it's definitely a part of who I am. And I know how it feels to be—have an accent or, have a different family and things like that, and people to look at you like, what is going on and why do you talk so proper? You know, just in general...You're not black enough. I'm never white enough. So what is it, what am I going to be?

Shawna's lived experiences have taught her that it is better to develop her own sense of self based on her heritage because the stereotypes and expectations that tend to be associated with other, particularly racial, categories do not reflect or accept her worldview. Thus she also encourages her students to defend their cultural experiences despite pressures to be embarrassed by them (Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). Familiarity with conflicting views on language retention introduces a deeper level of understanding to the conversations that Kevin David has with CDS students and parents:

It's kind of difficult to maintain all of that [native language learning] because again each family is going to be a little bit different in what their, you know, the languages might not be something that they want their children to have. You know, "we're in America now," so that's the school of thought. You can't fight it...I have a grandmother from Puerto Rico. You know, fifty years ago you didn't embrace that kind of thing so she never taught her kids Spanish. It just wasn't done. Fifty-six, sixty, seventy years ago, she didn't teach her kids those languages. But now, whether or not it's done—and you can see it in some of the families they're very important. Like, they go to a school, like Saturday schools, so that they can keep that culture available. And for others...unfortunately, it becomes lost.

Although, as discussed earlier, he encourages parents to be involved in cultural retention, his knowledge of different worldviews within his family fosters a sense of respect for difference, rather than a perspective that ironically suppresses differences in an effort to



celebrate them (Collins, 2009a). In this way, CDS educators are genuinely trying to create an environment that supports different expressions of ethnicity and freedom.

CDS educators also draw from their experiences to anticipate the challenges that multi-conscious students with composite ethnic identities are likely to face. In response to a question I pose about the challenges he faces in his role as ACI program coordinator, Léon Girard relays the following:

LG: In a lot of instances it's a money issue...in some places, to take it a step further, it's political, you know?

ON: Yeah.

LG: I find that some policies that are a detriment to some of our families, and you know, it's typical American racism.

ON: Right.

LG: The way they may be treated when they go—certain municipal appendages treat and speak to them a certain way. I run into kids at the grocery store and the cashier's giving the mom a hard time because she doesn't understand what she's being told or something. And I actually step in and say something...So for me, there's a bigger picture that I always look at. You know, how are you treated, just in general in society, and then how does that affect things like school and your job, or how you're growing up?

In the first part of this excerpt, Léon identifies both structural injustices (e.g., poverty, policies, and government) and individual prejudices (e.g., discrimination) as challenges to his goals as an educator at CDS. As an educator who is concerned with his students' personal as well as educational development, harassment for linguistic differences constitutes coercion and intolerance from mainstream members in society. Micro-aggressions like these influence how CDS students and parents develop their sense of place as well as opportunities upon resettlement (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Hernandez, 2012; McBrien, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). As he continues, he discusses how multiple factors compete with the values and practices students encounter at CDS:

ON: Pretty much, what I feel like you're saying is that CDS can only reach so far—

- LG: It can only reach so far. You still live here in the United States. There's still—to me there still is the critical issues of race, gender, economic bigotry, you know. All these things still affect you when you leave here [CDS]...if you're from Africa, you're still—you might be a boy. You might get tall and bigger at age twelve and become an adversary as opposed to a kid. You understand?
- ON: Right.
- LG: You threaten people. And these are the things that I have to deal with as just a black man, you know. You become intimidating, you know what I mean?
- ON: I understand.
- LG: So you still have these things. If you're a young lady and you're from a particular culture, there's still an expectation of you...that I think my own daughter, should I have one, wouldn't be faced with...she's gonna be able to pretty much just do her thing. But some of these kids here, you wonder what's gonna happen ten years from now. Is she gonna have to do this...will the boys get to go to school and the young ladies won't? I don't know. I worry about that type of stuff.

In addition to voicing frustrations about conflict between the messages taught within and outside of CDS, Léon expresses a deep concern for students' life chances. He acknowledges that class, gender, and racial discrimination will drastically impact students' opportunities for success (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). Léon explicitly voices concern for young males who are likely to be racialized as Black upon resettlement. The tone of his rhetorical question, "you understand?" conveys that this particular concern stems from experience as a large Black man in the U.S. as well as his educational background. In addition to becoming socially conscious to circumvent structural barriers to opportunity, Black boys and men must also do so in an effort to diminish threats of violence and incarceration (Billingsley, 1992; West, 1993). When it comes to immigrant females, he expresses his concerns about how one manifestation of gender inequalities in some cultures—lowered expectations of educational achievement for women—might manifest later for his female immigrant students. Although students and their families are now living in a new society, Léon acknowledges that structural inequities may also travel transnationally (Collins, 1986, 1990/2009). Although he and other CDS educators are

trying to equip students with the skills and worldviews they need to confront power structures, he does not underestimate the gravity of this challenge.

Harsh realities, challenges, and adversities that seem surmountable, can become opportunities to positively impact their community. For instance, as Kevin David, a fourth grade teacher, voices his frustrations about limited resources for the school, his classroom assistant joins the conversation to offer another perspective:

- KD: We will find a way. This is what poor people or lost people say, but somehow we will survive. We are survivors.
- CA: And I think that's also—the power of being a refugee. You survive.
- ON: Right.
- CA: You don't look for the things, you just—whatever you have, let's work out with that.
- ON: Right.
- CA: And I think that's how the school is too.
- KD: So it is. We are a refugee school in more ways than one. It's kind of frustrating though, incredibly frustrating,
- CA: It is.

Whereas the term refugee can connote terms such as helpless, needy, and disadvantaged, this fourth grade classroom assistant, who came to the U.S. as a refugee, draws her perspective from an experience marked by resourcefulness and perseverance. Because she has been adaptive and resilient in the face of a myriad of odds, the above assistant has gained confidence in her ability to survive. Moreover, she associates this same perseverance with CDS (Billingsley, 1992). Similar to Collins' (2009a) assessment of how many under-resourced schools somehow manage to create spaces to effectively educate, equip, and empower students, the above comment illustrates how challenged institutions can rally limited human and economic resources similarly. However, as the above conversation reveals, this perspective does not imply that individuals mask their feelings of indignation. Yet CDS faculty and staff encourage students to channel their feelings into action:

You have teachers here who have been activists. You have the mentality that the world needs to be changed, you're going to need to be the person to do it. And you have the capacity to do it within you, you know. So it's not uncommon for the kids to organize. I could show you right now they made the decision that they wanted to take an art class [pulls out the students' hand-written ballots, received from the kids during that day's after school]. So they got together, they got a list of who wanted to be in it. And this was for me to pick if they could or couldn't. (Léon Girard, ACI program director)

In addition to the timely example that coincided with the interview, Léon shared that he had also been picketed because students took issue with the differential treatment that they perceived in his ACI snack distribution system. Overall, students seem to be taking advantage of opportunities to identify, express, and advocate for their needs in a safe learning environment. Furthermore, CDS personnel are comfortable when students stand up for their beliefs because their social action reflects the school's culture. Students' ability to both understand social issues and feel empowered to act on their beliefs provide evidence to CDS staff that they are effective in their roles as cultural power brokers (Collins, 2009a).

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

An analysis of interviews with CDS personnel reveal a growing need for a different approach to understanding identity, place, and belonging in American society in general, and schools in particular. Explicitly assimilative politics of inclusion have arguably become taboo in light of colorblind rhetoric (Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 2009a; Feagin, 2010). However superficial multicultural politics are similarly oppressive, particularly for immigrants and minorities who still encounter pressures to "fit in" to expected molds (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006; Collins, 1990/2009; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). The above findings provide a glimpse of how the experiences of transnational youth are challenging what is currently understood about the relationship between identity and

knowledge production/consumption. Both CDS students and the school itself reveal how multi-consciousness, rather than the ignorance of meaningful differences, can provide students with an education and perspective that prepares them well to identify and navigate power, privilege, and marginalization in multiple social contexts.

When I revisit the two original research questions in light of my results, it is apparent that CDS personal believe that the school, its purpose, and programs endeavor to promote multiculturalism, positive ethnic identity development, and the inclusion of all students. Difference is identified, acknowledged, and celebrated. Respondents contend that students are socialized to follow suit. Furthermore, CDS' educational pedagogy means that the curricula, planned activities, iconography, teaching approaches, and diverse personnel are all part of a generative process to engender multi-consciousness, cultural sensitivity, and affirmation of diversity. I posit that these school features undergird *multi- ethnic identity development* such that students become self-aware of their unique profiles and their place in the world. Furthermore, they better understand and appreciate their peers and learn strategies to combat acculturative stress (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, 1986; Schwartz et al., 2006; Rivas-Drake et al., 2009). Personnel further believe that students who embrace their cultural heritages, however conceptualized, are better able to negotiate major pitfalls in society that would tend to "other" them (Blumer, 1958; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Collins, 1986, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008; Feagin, 2010; Miles & Small, 1999). In contrast, students are taught that being different provides them with different perspectives and approaches that will help them in life.

For African American, Sub-Saharan African refugee, and other minority youth who are likely to be racialized as "Black" in the U.S., educational spaces such as CDS

decentralize hegemonic worldviews that are often laden with negative controlling images (Collins, 1990/2009). An understanding of the relationship between power, privilege, and marginalization can help youth make sense of the frustrating dissonance between their multi-conscious perspectives (Anzaldúa, 1987/2006). It can also inform their understanding of what inclusivity should mean for themselves, their peers, and members of the larger society. Moreover, it can create a space for the frustration to translate into activism (Collins, 2009a). CDS personnel describe a student population characterized by the intersection of various traits such as nationality, ethnicity, race, class, and original locale. Many staff have similar backgrounds and experiences that they draw on when interacting with students. Such features are often met with discrimination in the larger society (Bell, 1995; Collins, 1990/2009; Wing, 2000). Yet, at CDS, they are acknowledged and celebrated. However, personnel do not present the school as a utopia and describe how processes and programs can and have been revised, as needed, to remain relevant to the student body. Equally important, they describe how the process of cultivating multi-conscious spaces and healthy ethnic identity “look” on an everyday basis. Their insight is critical to better understand how tangible resources such as curricula, events, and food must be thoughtfully combine with intangible school resources associated with its mission and vision to effect change in students’ lives (Collins, 2009a)

As noted earlier, public schools and the diverse students they serve rely on each other to achieve success (Collins, 1986, 2009a; Olsen, 2001; Sizemore, 1990). It is imperative that academic institutions are aware of how student identities influence and are shaped by the educational and socialization practices that take place in schools. This

analysis of CDS illustrates how empathy functions on personal and structural levels within the school to promote multi-consciousness (Collins, 2009a). Thus it is arguably an important starting point for schools and educators who desire to see their institutions and students succeed. These results suggest that CDS personnel understand the potentially deleterious conditions to which many of their students are exposed that can squelch their views and voices. Thus they provide critical counter-narratives that enable students to: develop hybrid identities if they desire them; question and challenge existing norms, values, and expectations in society as well as at CDS; protest about perceived inequities; and, voice their options, even those that are dissenting. In this way, when multi-consciousness emerges in the student population, so do subjugated knowledges (Collins, 1990/2009). In the spirit of the race theories synthesized here that are designed to center the lives of historically oppressed groups in varied ways, future studies on this unique teaching/learning community should ultimately focus on student experiences in their own voices.

## Appendix

### **Schedule A: Participant Observation Rubrics for Refugee Integration and Aid (RIA) Site Experience and At-Home Interview Settings**

#### Summer Enrichment Program Observation Rubric Days: June 1, 2013, to June 20, 2013

- Program description
- Description of landscaping
- Description of facility and location
- # of classrooms
- # of students
- Description of décor, posters, etc.
- Student-Teacher ratio
- # of Staff
- # of desks and chairs
- Languages spoken
- Dress code?
- Description of dining hall, menu, and schedule
- Daily enrichment program schedule
- Staff Schedules
- Program Policies
- Curriculum and written instructional/learning materials
- Computer center and library description
- Student-student interactions
- Student-teacher interactions

#### RIIA Office Observation Rubric Days: Between May 29, 2013, and October 30, 2013

- RIIA mission statement and objectives
- Organizational policies and handbook
- PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and documents available through internship training
- Significant events referenced or organized by RIIA
- Staff interactions with clients
- RIIA partnerships with other social service organizations

#### At-Home Interview Observation Rubric Days: Between June 2013, and October 30, 2013

- Neighborhood description
- Physical conditions of home interior and exterior



- Noteworthy community events
- Home furnishings
- Respondent attire
- Language use (during and beyond interview)
- Presence of other individuals (i.e., family members, neighbors, friends)

**Schedule B: Exploring Ethnic Identity Development Among Sub-Saharan African  
Refugees Interview Guide**

Respondent #: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Corresponding Caretaker Respondent #: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions. If you prefer not to answer a question, just let me know. You do not have to answer any or all of the questions below.

Demographic Survey:

Gender:        M        F

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Country of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Highest Educational Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time in Clarkston, GA: \_\_\_\_\_

A. Questions for all respondents:

1. Where are you from?
2. Where is your family from?
3. When did you/your family move to the United States? Why did you/they come?
4. How do you feel about living in Clarkston, GA? Explain.
5. Explain what it means to be (a person from specified country/countries of origin)?  
From where does this perspective come? (probe: Personal experience? School? Parents?)
6. Do you consider yourself a (person of specified nationality)? Explain why or why not.
7. Explain what it means to be an American? From where does this perspective come?  
(probe: Personal experience? School? Parents?)
8. Do you consider yourself an American? Explain why or why not.
9. What is a refugee? Do you consider yourself (and/or your family) a refugee? From where does this perspective come? (probe: Personal experience? School? Parents?)

10. What is your native language? Do you speak any other languages? If so, what are they? Where did you learn them?
11. Do you have any religious beliefs? If so, what are they? Where did they come from?
12. Are you trying to hold on to your ways/beliefs as a person from [country of origin]? Explain. (Probe: Please give me one example.)

B. Questions specifically for children: (A + B = 15 Q's total)

1. Do you talk to your parent/caretaker about (country of origin)? If so, what do you talk about? (probe: Through stories about past experiences? Through updates about distant relatives?)
2. Do you have anyone outside of your house who is "like family" to you? (probe: Do you have any adults in your life who are "like a mother/father/aunt/uncle" to you? Do you have any people in your life who are "like a sister/brother" to you?) What do you like about your/your family's relationship with her/him?
3. Which school do you attend? Tell me about your time there? (probe: Do you like it? Hate it?) Give me an example of something you like/do not like about it.

C. Questions specifically for parents/caretakers: (A + C = 17 Q's total)

1. Do you talk to your child/ren about the country you come from? If so, how? (probe: Through stories about growing up? Through updates about distant relatives?)
2. Do you talk about what it means to be American with your child/ren? If so, how?
3. Please describe your family. Who lives in the same house with you? (probe: Do you have a spouse, partner, or co-parent living in the same house with you? How many children live in the same house with you?)
4. Describe an adult outside of the house who is "like family" to you? (probe: Do you have any adults in your life who are "like a mother/father/aunt/uncle" to your child/children? Do you have any people in your life who are "like a sister/brother" to your child/children?) How did you meet him/her/them? What do you like about your/your family's relationship with her/him?
5. Which school does your child attend? Do you think it is a good place for your child? Explain. Give me an example of something you like/do not like about it.

Thank you for participating in this study. If you have questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me, Oluchi Nwosu, at 912-398-0156, or [oluchi.c.nwosu@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:oluchi.c.nwosu@vanderbilt.edu). Concerns can also be directed to the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 615-322-2918.

**Schedule C: CDS Site Visits: Main and East Campuses**  
Days: May 18, 2010, to May 28, 2010  
Observation Rubric (for each campus):

- Lot size
- # of parking spaces
- # of buildings
- Description of facility
- Description of landscaping
- Playground?
- Main entrance location and description
- Administrative office location
- Campus layout sketch
- # of classrooms
- # of windows and exterior doors
- Description of walls, floors and lighting
- Description of décor, posters, etc
- Student-Teacher ratio
- # of Staff
- # of desks and chairs
- Physical size of classrooms and administrative offices
- Languages spoken
- Dress code?
- Description of dining hall
- Description of Before/After School Programs
- School Day Schedule
- Staff Schedules
- School Policies
- Curriculum and written instructional/learning materials
- Computer center and library description



21. What does the school teach students about their relationship with the rest of the world (i.e., the effect of their actions and inactions, how events in other parts of the world relate to their lives, etc)?

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### Endnotes: Chapter 3

<sup>xv</sup> A pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the school.

<sup>xvi</sup> Too few approaches to the study of identity development among this population consider how ethnic and/or racial socialization as well as identity development function as resources for newcomers as they formulate responses to oppressive structural forces—socially constructed systemic ideologies that influence societal norms, beliefs, and institutions, as well as individuals'

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abilities to control their own lives. Hence concerns about acculturative stress are often met with desire to move individuals through various stages of the acculturation process: contact, conflict, crisis, and adaptation (Joyce et al., 2010; Williams & Berry, 1991). Such approaches problematize an individual's presence in a new space, rather than question and critique the conditions of the space that may trigger crises or consider the potentially nuanced ways different contemporary groups may experience acculturation.

<sup>xvii</sup> Further illustrating its socially constructed nature, some scholars contend that ethnic groups are actually “formed” as migrating groups move away from their place of origin to a new land or state.

<sup>xviii</sup> In comparison, 30.9% and 17.0% of White students' referrals were met with suspensions and expulsions respectively. (See Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002.)

<sup>xix</sup> Although this work focuses on Collins' (1990/2009) seminal work, this theory has been influenced by other notable scholars, such as bell hooks (1990/2006) and the Combahee River Collective (1979/2006), whose work is cross-referenced in this section.

<sup>xx</sup> I focus on school practices and personnel rather than student grades because language challenges can undermine grades and provide a myopic understanding of positive immigrant and refugee youth acculturation and development (Nwosu & Barnes, 2014).

<sup>xxi</sup> After the CDS was launched in 2001, its founders created a non-profit organization to support the school and the creation of programs to meet the needs of its diverse families. Between May 20 and July 31, 2008, I worked as an intern for this organization. Responsibilities included: gathering information on charter school practices; grant-writing; creating a personnel manual; assisting with the food distribution program to newly resettled refugee families; and assistant teaching with an independent summer program that took place on CDS' main campus.

<sup>xxii</sup> Each informant has been given a pseudonym.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Effective December 31, 2010, Arizona House Bill 2281 prohibited school districts and charter schools from teaching any courses that: (1) promote the overthrow of the United States government; (2) promote resentment toward a race or class of people; (3) are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; and (4) advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals. Although not explicitly stated, the statute was designed to target Mexican American Studies. However, it specifies provisions for the experiences of specific groups: “nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict or prohibit the instruction of the Holocaust, any other instance of genocide, or the historical oppression of a particular people based on ethnicity, race, or gender” (House Bill 2281, 2010).

<sup>xxiv</sup> “ON” is the acronym for the interviewer.



## EPILOGUE

Ethnicity is a dynamic, context-dependent social construction (Abizadeh, 2001; Appiah, 1994). It is highly influenced by macro-level factors, such as globalization (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011), as well as interactions within and between communities during acculturation experiences (Berry, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Rudmin, 2009). Moreover, ethnicity greatly influences how individuals perceive and respond to their “place in the world” (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006; Syed et al., 2011). Thus an exploration of the ethnic identity development process provides insight into where and how structure and agency may interact and influence individuals and communities. In my analyses, I examined the role of ethnicity within Sub-Saharan African refugee families from four countries in the Horn of Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan. I also explored the role of ethnic identity development in the socialization and educational processes of a unique charter school for diverse youth. The objectives of this dissertation work were twofold. First, I aimed to combine past scholarship with current observations to enhance research on ethnicity in globalizing contexts. Second, I endeavored to inspire practice through an increased awareness of the significance of ethnic identity development, particularly within schools serving broadly diverse and/or international youth.

### ***Final Thoughts on Theory and Future Directions***

The first article examined research on the experiences of African Americans in the U.S. (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009; DuBois, 1903/2008) to understand how ethnic identity development can operate as a form of cultural capital for individuals racialized as Black in particular. I employed three theoretical frameworks, which are

drawn from African American scholarship and experiences, to identify the presence and utility of specific navigational resources that foster wisdom, adaptation, and resilience despite pervasive structural inequalities and various forms of prejudice. DuBois' (1903/2008) concept of double-consciousness, combined with Collins' (1990/2009) concepts of intersectionality, subjugated knowledges, and the power of self-definition within Black Feminism illumine how experiences of oppression shape a crucial awareness of self and others in changing social contexts. Wing's (2000) global multiplicative identities presented within Critical Race Feminism (CRF) complements Collins' intersectionality. Although, these theoretical lenses are important for understanding individual development and agency, they are also useful for examining why and how individuals can respond to oppressive structures. Specifically, concepts within Collins' (1990/2009) framework illustrate how marginalized groups recognize and respond to power in an effort to meet social transformation goals that are valued within double-consciousness, Black Feminism, and CRF.

Double-consciousness, Black Feminism, and CRF, which are lenses that have emerged from experiences marked by racism in the U.S., are germane to the study of ethnicity for several reasons. First, although these theories focus on racism as a system of power, Collins (1990/2009) and Wing's (2000) frameworks in particular illustrate how experiences of resistance and oppression can emerge due to marginalization on the basis of gender, nationality, sexuality, and class, for example, as well as nuanced combinations of these factors. Ethnocentrism is another system of power that influences opportunities to fully participate in a society on the basis of cultural belonging. This analysis demonstrated how concepts such as double-consciousness, subjugated knowledges, and

the power of self-definition are useful for understanding how ethnic expression and manifestations of ethnocentrism can influence worldviews for individuals and communities.

Second, ethnicity and race are related social constructions. For example, Sub-Saharan African refugees are likely to be racialized as Black upon resettlement to the U.S. despite their cultural and geographic affiliations. For many minority groups in the U.S., ethnicity does not negate race, and vice versa (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1990; Waters, 1999). Thus it is important to examine how both constructs influence individuals' views and life chances. Lastly, refugees represent a socially constructed subgroup within immigrants whose experiences of oppression have been internationally acknowledged and sometimes met with opportunities for asylum. Hence they are likely to have experiences marked by oppression within their native countries. In this way, it would not be unreasonable to expect that they share experiences with many African Americans in the U.S., a nation whose history of slavery institutionalized their subjugated participation in American society. This comparative lens illustrates how scholarship on African American experiences can be useful for examining perspectives of other minority groups within disciplines such as sociology, for example. In addition, it illustrates how the study of identity development, which is often examined primarily at the individual level within fields such as social psychology and human development, requires an analysis of how individuals perceive this phenomenon and process *and* can collectively impact communities, institutions, and ideologies within their societies.

Further insights could be gained from theoretical frameworks pertaining to immigrants' experiences in the U.S. or other contexts. For example, research on broadly

or narrowly-defined groups of Latino immigrants in the U.S. may aid in the identification of specific cultural processes within ethnic communities, as well as how they influence ethnic socialization within families. This comparison could enhance this research on the experiences of Sub-Saharan African refugees in particular, as well as the emergence of multi-ethnic or hybrid identities in globalizing societies. My future work with Sub-Saharan African refugees aims to explore and incorporate this valuable perspective. Thus the first article provides necessary context to guide the investigation of ethnic socialization within families and schools. Below, I present and discuss the implications of main findings from both analyses.

***Unique Contributions: Hybrid Identities and Multi-conscious Brokers***

The second article examines how ethnicity is expressed, discussed, and socialized within refugee families from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. Individuals' responses illustrate important connections between their combined experiences of inclusion, marginalization, and resilience in their countries of origin, and how they navigate their experiences in the U.S. Double-consciousness (DuBois, 1903/2008) was particularly valuable for detecting adaptation and resilience in the face of oppression when analyzing experiences of persecution in respondents' native countries. Moreover, this multi-sightedness continued to operate as individuals adjusted to various contexts along their path to resettlement in the U.S.

Broadly speaking, respondents' relocation experiences necessitated constructions of self that are flexible enough to help them safely identify and respond to opportunity and challenges in changing surroundings, yet stable enough to protect against unwanted portrayals that could negatively impact their self-perceptions regardless of where they

are. Thus I observed how double-consciousness met this need, but also was nuanced to reflect forms of multi-consciousness due to time spent in multiple acculturative contexts. This finding highlights the first of two unique contributions from this work: the construction of *hybrid identities*. I contend that these multi-consciousnesses have facilitated the emergence of multi-cultural or hybrid identities that reflect the subjugated knowledges gained from personal international experiences as well as collective memories within families and communities (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009). Given that these subjugated knowledges reflect insights from various contexts, I argue that they also constitute forms of multi-cultural capital. Although it is likely that some forms of cultural capital, as described by Bourdieu (1986), are distinct from one society to another, multi-consciousness and the insights gained from regularly operating as an individual with some form of a minority status is useful across contexts (Collins, 1990/2009; Wing, 2000).

The third article assesses the role of ethnic identity development in a multi-cultural elementary charter school for immigrant, refugee, and local-native born children. Findings suggest that ethnic identity development is evident within the intentionality surrounding the people, programs, and practices at the Cultural Diversity School (CDS). For example, refugee and immigrant students with hybrid ethnic identities continue to challenge and reconstruct the schools' understandings of ethnicity, place, and belonging. As a school that was designed to improve students' understandings of diversity and inclusion, their perspectives align with and further CDS goals. Investigation of this site also provides insight into how multi-consciousness is incorporated into school culture and curricula for two critical reasons. First, multi-consciousness promotes individual-

level objectives in its ability to enhance personal development. Second, multi-consciousness assists CDS in its desire to function as a reflection of institutional change, as well as its efforts to produce social change agents. Thus this highlights another unique contribution of this work: the presence of multi-conscious *cultural brokers* at CDS. I posit that cultural brokers represent the faculty at CDS who are strategically presenting knowledge to students to meet the school's individual-level and macro-level goals (Billingsley, 1992; Collins, 1990/2009).

Overall, these findings support a paradigmatic shift away from models that are contingent upon binary views of the acculturation process that simply associate individuals with their culture of origin *or* the culture(s) associated with their resettlement community (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2012; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Rudmin, 2009). However, findings also suggest the need to reject myopic reflections of integration that do not account for the nuanced ways in which individuals are actively and strategically defining whether and how they will participate in response to socially constructed constraints in multiple or specific contexts. My research on Sub-Saharan African refugee experiences demonstrates how individuals may be actively involved in and may be a reflection of multiple international, national, and local contexts. Thus I contend that further exploration of hybrid identities can continue to capture important aspects of this process. Individuals and their contexts develop simultaneously. Although changes arguably take place at different rates, individuals and institutions can play an active role in impacting various spaces within their communities. Furthermore, cultural brokers within schools, for example, can and do intentionally help youth make decisions about how and when to participate as well as challenge politics of inclusion or exclusion.

These intermediaries are important for the development of privileged and minority students alike, as well as the cultivation of critical and reflective civically engaged global citizens.

### ***Implications for Practice and Policy***

Findings from both studies provide insight into the importance and role of ethnic identity development in socialization and educational processes within school and other academic settings. For example, this information can be delivered in the form of workshops for members of the CDS community, and combined with various forms of feedback, both written and oral, to help them build on current strengths and assess opportunities for growth. Additionally, this information can be presented to members of Resettlement, Integration, and Aid (RIA) for similar reasons as they continue their summer and after school enrichment programs. Written documentation of the individual and collective processes that emerged during this research is expected to be helpful to my research partners (families, youth, and school faculty) as they continue to engage in or facilitate identity development processes. Teachers and students' exploration of their own and others' hybrid identities constitutes important aspects of individual development, relationship building, and the deliberate valuation of the students' voices. For refugee and immigrant children who do not attend schools such as CDS, programs within RIA that incorporate multi-consciousness into their values and practices can cultivate crucial multi-cultural capital to prepare youth and families to become effective participants in U.S. society. Overall, these findings are expected to also comprise professional development material for teachers who may be unsure of how to address increasing diversity in their classrooms. Moreover, it can benefit youth and educators who may not

understand how their own or others' differences can enhance their personal development and ability to navigate globalized contexts.

Fears about increased diversity can manifest in policies such as Arizona House Bill 2281. Effective December 31, 2010, this statute prohibited school districts and charter schools in Arizona from teaching any courses that are characterized by the following descriptions: (1) promote the overthrow of the United States government; (2) promote resentment toward a race or class of people; (3) are designed primarily for pupils of a particular ethnic group; and (4) advocate ethnic solidarity instead of the treatment of pupils as individuals (House Bill 2281, 2010). Although it is not explicitly stated, this bill targets and consequently bans Mexican American Studies (MAS) in public schools. MAS and other curricula that focus on the experiences of marginalized groups are not designed for Mexican American students to the exclusion of students from other backgrounds. Frameworks and findings presented within this and similar studies can help communicate the advantages of multiculturalism for all students to policymakers in states with rapidly increasing rates of diversity. Findings from this dissertation represent the first of future academic and applied endeavors to further illumine the experiences, challenges, and voices of Sub-Saharan African refugees as they endeavor to be adaptive and resilient in a U.S. context.



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