Coming to America

Living in Freedom, Cultivating Dreams, Facing Challenge while Developing a Bi-Cultural Ethnic Identity as Bhutanese Refugee Children

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Abstract

Utilizing a Community-Based Participatory Research model, faculty members of a local university school of social work completed a qualitative needs assessment study of an emerging Bhutanese refugee population's perceived barriers for socio-economic-cultural and geographical integration in their new country's community setting. The study participants included: (1) fifty-two Bhutanese refugees participating in six focus group sessions, led by bilingual facilitators (English & Nepali) along with two social work faculty members and four Bhutanese bilingual indigenous community leaders. This study found that Bhutanese refugees identified unmet needs in the areas of health care, ESL education, lack of bilingual (Nepali & English) social workers/mental health professionals, and the problem of Bhutanese children losing their ethnic language and culture as the most significant issues in the Bhutanese community. The study findings point to the benefits of an Interdisciplinary, Empowerment Collection of Bhutanese Voices to Implement a Community-University Action Model to develop the Bhutanese children's bicultural & bi-ethnic integration by: (1) opening a Bhutanese Cultural Center to host a weekend Nepali language program for Bhutanese youngsters; (2) offering a full scholarship (with weekly lessons and the provision of an instrument) for thirty local Bhutanese children from K to 12 in the local university String Project, and (3) the weekly "Girl Power" Bhutanese cello group which is moderated by an MSW student under the supervision of a social work faculty member.

Keywords: Community-Based Participatory Research, Bhutanese Refugees, Empowerment, Culture.

Problem under Study

In 1989 the King of Bhutan declared a "One Bhutan, One People" policy which result in political persecution and forced resettlement resulting in more than 100,000 Lotshampas becoming stateless people (IOM Damak, Nepal 2008; Evans, 2010; and Shrestha, 2011). This group of Lotshampas was forced to flee their homes in Bhutan to escape discrimination, imprisonment, and torture perpetrated by their own government and political system. Many Bhutanese have lived in refugee camps in Nepal for years and these Bhutanese refugees were relocated to the U.S. to seek a better life. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United States of America has accepted 78,473 Bhutanese refugees out of the 92,639 who have been resettled from 2007 to January 2014 (UNHCR, 2014). Faced with the task of rebuilding their lives in a new country while oftentimes still recovering from traumatic life circumstances, refugee-status families must rely on designated resettlement agencies "to provide

appropriate reception and integration services" (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2002).

Current refugee resettlement policy limits the provision of reception and integration services to ninety days post arrival and places economic, social and cultural strains on suburban communities and small cities that, historically, have not considered it to be their responsibility to invest in human capital development.

Utilizing a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model that: (1) views the community as the unit of identity and a partner in a co-learning process, (2) focuses on systems development and community capacity building, (3) balances research with action, and (4) promotes activities that are participatory, cooperative, empowering, and evidence-based, the qualitative study was implemented. This qualitative study which collected data through four Bhutanese indigenous leaders and six focus groups with fifty-two Bhutanese refugees was facilitated by a bilingual moderator along with two social work faculty members. The recording of each interview and focus group session was fully transcribed by two separate bilingual transcriptionists and then translated into English for the current analysis. The content was analyzed independently by two coders in condensing and analyzing the focus group discussions. This study found that Bhutanese refugees identified unmet needs in the areas of health care, ESL education, lack of bilingual (Nepali & English) social workers in service agencies, and the problem of Bhutanese children losing their ethnic language and culture as the most significant issues in the Bhutanese community.

As an outcome of the study, an Interdisciplinary, Empowerment Collection of Bhutanese Voices to Implement a Community-University Action Model was developed: (1) the Bhutanese refugees opened a Bhutanese Cultural Center to host a weekend Bilingual Language Program with Nepali language studies for Bhutanese youngsters; (2) the music department of the local university offered a full scholarship (with weekly lessons and the provision of an instrument) for thirty local Bhutanese children from K to 12 in the University String Project and, (3) the Bhutanese cello players in the string project participate in a weekly "Girl Power" group which is moderated by an MSW student under the supervision of a social work faculty member.

Research Study Preparation

Using Saleeby's (2006) strengths perspective, research team members took leadership roles for various project tasks over six months. The pre-research study field work consisted of community networking, such as meetings with bilingual (English & Nepali) community leaders and instrument development, methodology issues, sampling activity, and data analysis.

Conduct of the Study

This study, utilizing an interdisciplinary, community-university empowerment action model, reports on the findings of concern about sustaining the bi-ethnic identity of emerging Bhutanese refugee children in a suburban community in Northeast Pennsylvania. The task of immigrant refugee groups is to achieve successful biculturalism based on the key steps of balancing the

values of American ideology, customs, and individualism with their own ethnic identity while at the same time living in the U.S.

Empowering Communities to Identify Their Issues

Design

The need assessment phase included individual interviews with Bhutanese community-based indigenous community leaders and service providers and focus group sessions for Bhutanese residents. For this study, the primary purpose was to discover the Bhutanese residents' subjective view of their living experiences in the local communities.

Procedure

Acknowledging that the researchers are viewed as "outsiders" in the communities, whenever convenient dates and times for community-based service providers, indigenous leaders and community residents who offered their willingness to participate in the study, university researchers accepted their invitations and conducted the study.

The Samples

Using purposive sampling methodology, the university researchers had face-to-face semi-structured interviews with three community-based resettlement agency service providers and four Bhutanese indigenous leaders. In addition, fifty-two Bhutanese community residents participated in six focus group sessions. The indigenous leaders and service providers recruited focus group participants from their communities who self-identified as Bhutanese and were 18 years of age or older.

Demographic Information

The Bhutanese participants' average length of time in the U.S. was a little over two years. The majority, 52%, was between 19-21 and 31-40 years old; 62% were married and 54% had Nepali as their dominant language and 44% were bilingual (English & Nepali). The majority, 33%, were high school graduates; 44% had full-time jobs and 55% earned between $10,000 and $20,000 annually; the average family size was five. *(See Appendix 1)*

Measures

The question protocols for the indigenous leaders, once developed by the researchers, were reviewed by two independent researchers in the university before their use. The questions for the indigenous leaders asked them to identify the services that had been helpful and the gaps and/or barriers to accessing public/private services in the communities. The focus group members were asked to complete a fifteen-item Nepali language demographic profile, followed by a group discussion focusing on the following: (1)What were your most needed services when you immigrated to the U.S.?; (2) What services do you receive now?; and (3) What are the barriers to access services (private/public) in the communities? (See Appendix 2)

Data collection

The researchers identified service needs through qualitative analysis of the shared data of the community-based indigenous community leaders and all the focus group participants. A bilingual moderator facilitated each focus group session, lasting between 40 and 60 minutes each. A copy of the Nepali language consent form was provided to each participant that explained the nature of the study, indicated the voluntary nature of their participation, and cautioned participants not to use identifying information during the discussion. A fifteen dollar incentive gift card was given to focus group participants upon the conclusion of each session. The university researchers received the internal research grant and the incentive gift card was purchased from that grant. The recording of each interview and focus group session was fully transcribed by two separate bilingual transcriptionists and then translated into English for the current analysis. The contents were analyzed independently by two coders in conducting and analyzing the focused group discussions. The focus groups produced data detailing their life experiences and beliefs with their own words and context. These data serve to highlight the participants' lived experiences and to illustrate the context for priority needs categories identified in this study.

Findings

Community-based service providers, indigenous leaders and Bhutanese refugee residents reported numerous barriers to the unmet needs in the areas of health care, ESL education, lack of bilingual (Nepali & English) social workers in service agencies, and the concern that Bhutanese children would lose their ethnic language and culture as the top priority of their concerns and wanted take immediate action to address them.

Bhutanese refugee's voices:

"We want to preserve our culture. We are concerned that whether we will be able to preserve the culture. We cannot expect for the next generation to do that because they are not very aware of the culture. What it means is that we want to living in harmony with our American neighbors, and assimilate in the community…along with preserving our own culture…we are not trying to be unique…or isolate or anything of that sort. It is very important for us to assimilate and work hand in hand with the community. We do not want to lose our culture identification."
"Language and culture is one of our most important issues right now. We are facing problem right now. Our elders don't know English at all. At the same time we want to preserve Nepali language among the children and teach them Nepali. We are afraid that the Nepali culture will be extinct if we don't do this. So we would like to find a common place, a space where we can teach language regularly."

"We need the community space for teaching Nepali classes to children, hold cultural programs, have meetings among ourselves, religious programs.

"In my opinion, the main objective of living in America is that, before living in camp for the past 18-20 years, we were living in our own country with our own King and our God, our land, house, we had everything that we needed but when we came to Nepal we were refugees, just

thinking about it gives me heart ache. Our main objective in living in America is our successful life. Specially for future generation. Let somebody help us preserve our cultural identity."

"Our children are forgetting our own language. So, if only there would be a room we would use it for multi-purposes."

"I feel like the American culture will bring about rift in children and parents. In our system there is an expectation that you are supposed to take care of your parents. I feel like that culture will be completely lost in the coming years. Because the children will learn the culture here...like staying independently. So I feel that will have a huge effect in our society (Bhutanese refugee community)."

"Some of our children are starting to forget our own language. We have been talking about this in our community. So, if possible we would like to hold a class for the children. If they would introduce one class of Nepali learning in school that would be wonderful, the language and culture would be preserved. So we have to celebrate our festivals so that the kids see and learn about their culture and not forget."

"We need support to preserve this…our children should not lose their culture. If there would be an agency who would be interested in prompting the Nepali culture then it would be wonderful. Nepali class for our kids is very important, like she mentioned earlier, second is that if we would have a Hindu temple then our children would also learn about our religion."

"We stayed in Nepal for 20 years. We ran (from Bhutan) in the middle of the night with our kids, leaving everything behind...just educate our children...some were able to get education and were able to become teachers. The objective of coming to America is that we have been living a life of refugees for a while…after coming here we can do something for ourselves and advance our life style as well as built a bright future for our children. Our culture, tradition…should be remembered by the children as well as parents. Main thing is that we have to continue to follow our tradition and culture to preserve it. We have to show our children how it is done."

Literature Review

The Bhutanese population in the United States has not been studied to any great extent due to this population's relatively recent arrival into the United States—2008, to be exact (Department of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2011). Lacking sufficient numbers of Bhutanese specific studies, a deficit that the authors of this study desire to remedy, the vast majority of articles utilized in the Literature Review focused on other immigrant populations.

The literature has identified the following as factors to be considered when developing bicultural ethnic identity for the Bhutanese children/adolescents in the U.S.: (1) Difference between Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity, 2) Difference in the Generational Acculturation process between 1st and 2nd Generation, 3) Social Identity Theory & Ethnic Identity Development, and 4) Development of Bicultural Ethnic Identity: Bi-lingual Ability & External Influences.

Difference between Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity

Ethnicity is a birthright. Every individual is born into a certain ethnic group whose members share a culture and history. People learn the unique norms and values of their ethnic group as they mature. Ethnicity is perceived as central to what an individual believes in and an individual should respond to. It involves patterns of thinking, feeling and behavior both covertly and overtly. Ethnic identity is distinguished from ethnicity in that ethnicity refers to group patterns and ethnic identity refers to an individual's acquisition of group patterns. Ethnic identity includes many components:

1) Ethnic awareness—understanding one's own community and other groups. Awareness involves knowledge of their cultural attributes, characteristics, history and customs as well as the difference between his/her self and others;

2) Ethnic self-identification—the label is used for one's own group based on the perception and conception of themselves as belonging to an ethnic group;

3) Ethnic attitudes—feelings about one's own and other groups; and

4) Ethnic behaviors—behavior patterns that are specific to an ethnic group.

In terms of ethnic identity development, these components may be involved along with or in combination with others. Mintz and Price (1992) stated that ethnic identity should be examined as a system or pattern in the social context. Ethnic identity development is a continual socialization process, in conjunction with an individual's cognitive, social and behavioral development that involves active maintenance of cultural boundaries while engaging in social interaction with others. An important aspect of identity for adolescents is the awareness of one's own ethnic or racial origins, so called "roots." Adolescents struggle to integrate their feelings regarding cultural, ethnic and racial origins. They are struggling with whether they are going to accept their roots as a positive and essential part of their emerging identity or reject them in the interest of their own new self (Erikson, 1968).

Previous research suggested that immigrant parents and their children have a different integration process in the U.S. (Lee, Choe, Kim, & Ngo, 2000; Lee, Su, & Yoshida, 2005; Sohng & Song, 2004; Ying, Coombs, & Lee, 1999; Zhou & Lee, 2004). The Asian immigrant children and adolescents while living in the U.S. find this process of ethnic identity development very difficult because they struggle with integrating the immensely different elements of Eastern and Western cultures. In the process of integrating these two different cultures (the person's own and the host culture), immigrant children/adolescents are actively exploring the roles and behavior of American culture in which personal independence is an important value and in which individuals are defined by their achievements. This entails redefining their values and self-concept, mastering the language and renegotiating social roles and family relationships. Perhaps, Bhutanese families tend to maintain their own culture which differs significantly from that of the West, so that children from Bhutanese families experience two major sources of difficulties while developing a bicultural ethnic identity:

1) Pressure from peers to reject their own cultural identity and values in order to assimilate into the main culture and

2) Pressure from their parents and their ethnic community to conform to ethnic/cultural norms and traditions (Chrispin, 1998). Immigrant children are in two different worlds, the immigrant world and the American world, and at times they are not fully comfortable in either one (Kibria, 2002).

Difference in Generational Acculturation Process

To understand the immigrant children and adolescents' ethnic identity development process, it is imperative to understand the generational differences in the acculturation process among immigrant families. There are two different types of generational differences. The first is interfamily dynamics (parent-child relationship) and the second is concerned with the influence of the immigration experience. The generational differences among members of immigrant families occur because of cultural and developmental influences, especially between parents and grandparents who were raised in a more traditional ethnic culture and children who were greatly influenced by the prevailing American culture. The immigration experiences are confronted with differences due to one's pattern of acculturation, which is dependent on the time period of residence in America, the educational level of the immigrants and the reason for immigration to the U.S. For less educated immigrants from poor villages who did not have the ability to speak English, their acculturation process might be slower than immigrants who are well educated, have English language skills, and have emigrated for economic and educational reasons and, perhaps, have different attitudes toward acculturation and the acceptance of American values.

According to Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936), acculturation is defined as a cultural exchange that results from ongoing, first-hand contract between two distinct cultural groups. Mutual acculturation can be expected between different cultures, but in fact most changes occur in the non-dominant group as a result of influence from the dominant group. Berry, 2003; Phinney, 2003; Mendoza and Martinez, 1981, also defined acculturation as the process of cultural and psychological change at the same time to accumulate and incorporate one's beliefs and customs from an alternative culture. Acculturation thus involves changes in the behavioral and subjective domains of ethnicity. For successful acculturation and adaptation in culturally plural societies, individuals and groups must confront two important issues.

First is the maintenance and development of one's ethnic distinctiveness in society; each person needs to decide whether one's own cultural identity and customs are of value and should be retained. The other issue is whether relations with the larger society are of value and should be sought. Graves (1967) addressed the concept of psychological acculturation which means changes that an individual experiences as a result of participating in the societal level of acculturation that his or her cultural or ethnic group is undergoing. Psychological acculturation distinguishes between two levels: the population, that includes the ecological, cultural, social, and institutional dimensions, and the individuals that includes behavioral and personal traits. At the population level of acculturation there are changes in social structure, economic base and political or social institutions and at the individual level there are changes in identity, values, attitudes, and behaviors.

Padilla (1980) noted that a model of acculturation has two aspects: cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty. Cultural awareness refers to an individual's development and knowledge of cultural traits, such as language, history, and cultural heroes of the traditional and host cultures. Ethnic loyalty is defined as the preferences for one's own culture over other cultures. The less acculturated will be more likely to prefer ethnic-related activities. Berry (1980) also defines acculturation as the ways in which individuals incorporate two cultures in their lives as they undergo cultural transition (including the immigration process or resettling as a refugee). Berry (2006 &1986) also developed a bi-dimensional model of acculturation, which can result in four acculturation styles: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization.

The assimilation option is defined as relinquishing one's cultural identity and moving toward the larger society's cultural identity. It can take place by the non-dominant group's merging to form a new society, as in the concept of the "melting pot." The integration option implies that an individual's decision is to integrate his or her own group's cultural identity and at the same time become an integral part of a larger societal framework, so that the option of integration is to retain one's cultural identity and also move to join the dominant society's culture.

The separation option is to keep people in 'their place' by the dominant group. Separation can be a reaction followed by exclusion. The separation option is different than segregation since the ethnic group's separation option is the maintenance of a traditional way of life with no full participation in the larger society. The marginalization option is characterized by striking out against the larger society along with the feeling of alienation and at the same time a loss of one's ethnic identity. This group loses cultural and psychological contact with their traditional culture and the larger society altogether.

A bi-dimensional model asserts that an individual can acculturate to a new culture independent of maintenance of the native culture, and those beliefs, values and behaviors from more than one culture can be integrated (Telzer, 2011; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Despite differences between the linear and the bi-dimensional models, both assure a one-to-one relationship between culture and ethnicity. Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) report that the psychological aspects of a person's well-being and social skills are essential for a person to function successfully in a culturally complex world. Berry, Phinny, Sam and Vedder's (2006) study, with 7,997 adolescents from 26 different cultural backgrounds who lived in 13 different countries (including 5,366 immigrant youth and 2,631 national youth, ages 13 to 18), concerns in the psychology of immigration, acculturation and adaptation experiences. The study outcome clearly demonstrated that immigrant youth should be encouraged to retain their own ethnic heritage identity while closely tying into the larger national society. Positively integrating, blending and merging are possible ways to maintain the best of both worlds and adolescents who are confident with their own ethnicity and have in pride in their own ethnic heritage may better handle discrimination.

The experience of immigrants, as with any minority experience, assumed that living in two different cultural worlds would result in intense conflict and confusion due to the discrepancies between two competing cultural systems. The concept of acculturation in which individuals acknowledge and incorporate two competing cultures into their schema also entails a

psychological element, which is termed psychological acculturation. (Berry, 2006, LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993; Graves, 1967) refer to the fact that the acculturation process stimulates psychological changes within both the immigrant population and the receiving communities. In the assimilation process, individuals do not maintain their own cultural heritage, but rather assume a new cultural identity within the new culture (Berry, 2006; LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton, 1993). In contrast to the assimilation model, the acculturation model argues that individuals maintain their identity within their own cultural heritage, but also become a productive member within the new culture.

Social Identity Theory & Ethnic Identity Development

Taifel (1978) notes that in human societies an individual strives to achieve a satisfactory image of him/herself. This was the base of Festinger's early theory of social comparison (1954). An individual's self-definition is based on the fact that he or she is a member of numerous groups and that his membership contributes positively or negatively to his/her personal image. Social categorization is often related to value differentials; for example, divisions of people into social categories, which matter to the individual, are usually associated with positive or negative evaluations of these categories. In all social categorizations, distinctions are made between the individual's own group and the out-groups which are compared or contrasted with it. There are social divisions between "us" and "them." Social identity will be understood as part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group with the values and emotional significance attached to the membership. An individual's social identity can only be defined through the effects of social categorization segmenting an individual's social environment into his own group and that of others. If adequate conditions for the preservation of a positive social identity are not offered by a group, then an individual will leave this group psychologically, objectively or both. A social identity with a group only remains when one positively values its distinctiveness from other groups in society (Hogg, 2003; Hogg, Hardie, & Reynolds, 1995; Turner, 1987).

The concept of social identity is linked to the need for a positive and distinctive image of the in-group. Taifel's (1978) social identity rests on three main assumptions: 1) individuals define and evaluate themselves in terms of their social groups; 2) an individual's social identity is either positive or negative (satisfactory or unsatisfactory) according to the subjective status of the individual's group in society; 3) other groups in the social environment constitute the frame of reference for evaluating an individual's group prestige. The in-group's prestige depends on the outcome of comparisons between the in-group and the relevant out-group. These comparisons take place in terms of valued characteristics and behaviors (e.g. wealth, skin color, power, ability, etc.). Thus a positive comparison provides a satisfactory social identity and negative comparisons result in an unsatisfactory social identity.

Taifel (1978) assumes that people strive to define themselves positively. In order to maintain the self-esteem of members, social groups must preserve a positively valued distinctiveness from relevant comparison groups. Turner,1981; Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006, states that the elements that affect social identity include intra-individual, interpersonal factors and mostly intergroup relations of status, power and material dependence. The relationship between self-concept and group membership was established by applying social identity theory.

Individuals perceive themselves as belonging to social groups or categories; men, women, black, white, etc., and social categories tend to be associated with specific characteristics, such as loyalty, aggressiveness, and zeal, and individuals may gradually incorporate such categories or traits as inherent features of their self-concept or self-definition. Since the value of a social category is established through comparison with other relevant social categories, the assumption is that individuals will try to differentiate their own group from other relevant social groups in positively valued ways.

Having direct status hierarchies reflects the dominant values in society and people show greater regard for them. The two variables of social identity theory are:

1) The status positions which groups occupy in society and

2) The permeability of group boundaries; that is whether individuals are free to join or leave the groups.

Social identity theory assumes that a) an individual will tend to remain a member of a group or seek membership, if these groups have some positive contribution to make to the positive aspect of his/her social identity; b) if a group does not satisfy this requirement, the individual will attempt to leave it, unless leaving the group is impossible for some objective reasons or it conflicts with important values which an individual takes as part of his acceptable self-image; c) if leaving the group presents difficulties then at least two solutions are possible (Taifel & Turner, 1979; Abrams & Hogg, 2010).

The first is to change one's interpretations of the attributes of the group, so that its unwelcome features, such as low status, are either justified or made acceptable through a reinterpretation. The second is to accept the situation for what it is and involve in social action, which would lead to a change into a desirable situation. The interaction of group status and the permeability of group boundaries indicate strategies available for the enhancement of individual members' social identity (Brown, 2000; Taifel, 1978 & Taifel & Turner, 1979). The social identity theory indicates that individuals with a high social status contribute to their groups' positive social identity while those of low social status have a negative effect on their group's self-esteem, (Benet-Mattinez et al., 2002; Brown & Lohr, 1987, Wagner, Lampen & Sylwasschy, 1986), and as a result members of a group identified as having a low social status try to dissociate themselves psychologically from their group (Verkuyten, 2006; Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, 2007).

When group boundaries are impermeable, members of lower status groups will try to enhance their social identity by improving the position of their present group as a whole. In some situations, changing group membership is virtually impossible (in a strongly segregated society). One strong option would be to elevate the status of their group as a whole by competing with higher status groups. If upward mobility is not a possible option then one salient choice is to engage in intergroup competition to improve the relative position of the group as a whole. Researchers, Ellenmers, Van Knippenberg, Devries and Wilke (1987) found that the most important results with regard to in-group identification were: a) members of high status groups showed stronger in-group identification than members of low status group; b) in low status

groups, permeable group boundaries invoked significantly lower in-group identification than impermeable boundaries; c) in low status groups, in-group identification decreased as individual ability increased, while in high status groups there was no such relationship. Perhaps impermeable boundaries help to reconcile subjects to their group membership, but they are not necessarily satisfied with the status of their group.

An important finding supporting social identity theory was the understanding the dynamics of in-group and out-group favoritism. Sachdev and Bourhis (1985) found that higher power groups showed much stronger in-group favoritism than low power groups. Also, more discriminatory behavior was found in high and equal status groups than in low status groups. Moscovici and Paicheler (1978) stated that in-group and out-group favoritism may have different meanings for minorities and majorities in different circumstances.

1) Minorities who are in an insecure position and lack a binding assertive in-group ideology will show out-group favoritism.

2) However, self-confident and assertive minorities who have a clear purpose and a consistent ideology will tend to show in-group favoritism, for example, the Zionist movement for Jews and the Black power movements in the U.S.

3) Insecure and threatened majorities will show strong in-group favoritism. Their unstable intergroup relationships may evoke defensive reactions from high status groups. Also, among majorities who have difficulties in defining a positively valued social identity may display strong in-group favoritism.

4) Stable and secure majorities can afford to benevolently concede advantages to non-threatening minority out-groups. Stroink & Lalonde's (2009) study with 124 East Asian Canadian undergraduate students (102 women and 22 men, in all, 58 participants born in Canada and 66 participants born outside of Canada) found that a strong and positive heritage identity should present no barrier to an equally strong and positive Canadian identity, resulting in a simultaneous personal identification associated with one's balanced dual ethnic identity.

For adolescents, achieving one's sense of identity is one of the most important psychological tasks. In understanding the study of children's ethnic identity development, a number of different theoretical and empirical approaches have been applied. Erikson (1968) outlines identity as rooted in one's culture and it is expressed differently at each development period. Cognitive development psychologists (Aboud, 1977; Katz, 1973a; Kohlber, 1976) study the child's increasing ability to discriminate, differentiate and integrate ethnic stimuli and experience. Phinny and Rotherm (1987) state that children's early understanding is inconsistent, concrete and idiosyncratic. Children's sense of their own ethnic group membership (their own ethnic identity) also undergoes clear developmental changes. In young children, their development of ethnic identity can be conceptualized as learning that ethnic identities are based on objective criteria. For example, children's ethnic identity is copied from their parents.

Beginning in early adolescence children become aware of options in the extent to which they behave and consider themselves to be members of an ethnic group. Ethnic identity in

adolescence includes both the objective criteria of ethnicity learned in childhood and subjective criteria reflecting their personal choice of a reference group. For example, some Bhutanese adolescents stop speaking Nepali and associate mainly with Anglo-Americans and think of themselves as White, in contrast with others who retain language and customs of their parents and consider themselves as Bhutanese. The impact of ethnicity on children's development is related to whether they are members of a minority or a majority. Minority children are more aware of their own ethnicity and their ethnicity is evident to their children. Inevitably, minority children seem to be aware of ethnicity differences between their own group and the majority group children. In contrast, majority group children may not be aware of such differences in society because they usually perceive themselves as an ethnic group in the main society.

Social psychologists examine the processes of social comparison between oneself and others in ethnic identity development (Hewstone, Jaspars & Lalljee, 1982;Taifel, 1973). Ethnic identity is consistently related with an individual's subjective affiliation rather than the external ascription of a person or people. It is the subjective identification with an ethnic group, assimilated into one's feelings of belonging that leads to the development of social identity based on ethnic group membership. Keyes (1976) called it a sense of shared descent, such as in-group communion—an unspoken but shared understanding that excludes no group members.

Lyman and Douglass (1973) said that identifying one's ethnic group is like building the invisible bonds resulting from an individual's unique experiences as a member of an ethnic group which unites them with one another and separates them from others. Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder, 2006; DeVos, 1980, state an acculturating person utilizes the integration strategy that he/she integrates/adapts not only the individual's relation to the ethnic group, but that group's place in the wider social setting. When individuals can differentiate clearly between their own and other groups, they will develop a firmer and better sense of ethnic identity and, at the same time, they would be able to integrate both worlds (their own ethnicity and a larger society).

Development of Bicultural Ethnic Identity: Bi-lingual Ability & External Influences

Children of immigrants who were born in the United States or who came at an early age adopt the host culture, language, customs, and lifestyle more easily and quickly than their parents. Children/adolescents of immigrants become fluent in English within several years and are able to participate actively in the mainstream society. Many of them, however, experience difficulties in maintaining their ethnic language fluency. As a result children and adolescents are influenced by two very different cultures.

Living in two different worlds, immigrant children/adolescents experience conflict when their parents try to propagate ethnic culture at home and the host culture is presented by everything outside of their home environment. Lo, Gidlow & Cushman's (2014) research study, of interviewing 28 participants (14-to-18 year) who are attending a local adventure education program in Vancouver, Canada, found that, even though the participants' first-generation Chinese parents have been living in Vancouver for more than 30 years and speak relatively good English, they did not have any or many Canadian friends and their social circles were still rooted in Chinese communities and their own families. In addition, the parents emphasized the importance on their children to keep the traditional Chinese "collective" culture, and thus to

minimize the intergenerational cultural conflict with their children and practicing "selective acculturation" (Costigan & Dokis, 2006; Keefe & Padilla, 1987). As a result, their children attempt to balance their parents' and the dominant culture as a working compromise (Kwak, 2003).

Bhutanese children/adolescents perhaps adopt individualistic values relatively more quickly than their parents. They accept a view of the parent-child relationship that is consistent with American culture, which emphasizes independence, autonomy and self-reliance. On the other hand their parents try to maintain a traditional collectivistic orientation that emphasizes a strong sense of relatedness, devotion and interdependence. Gudykunst (2001) notes four different reasons why language is an important aspect of ethnic identity.

First, language is one of the major criteria for joining ethnic membership. The ethnic group won't survive without their ethnic language. The second reason is that language is used by out-group members to categorize individuals as members of the ethnic group. When Bhutanese people speak the Nepali language, other people make the inference that they are identifying with the other ethnic group. The third reason is that language provides the emotional component of ethnic identity. Members of the ethnic group feel closer to one another when they speak the ethnic language. The fourth reason is that it facilitates in-group cohesion. Speaking the ethnic language clearly separates members of different ethnic groups. To some extent, the external influences that mass media or technology have on immigrants or refugees tend to 'Americanize' instead of affirming a bicultural identity (Willgerodt, Miller & McElmurry, 2002; Moon & Park, 2007; and D'Mello, 2010). However, online ethnic media would positively impact acculturation, allowing Bhutanese refugees to connect with other refugees more quickly and actually assist in maintaining ethnic identity. Thus, this function of the media works positively toward acculturation (D'Mello, 2010; Lu, 2001).

The literature regarding the relationship between acculturation, religious coping and linguistic ability also affirms that knowledge and understanding of the host countries' language while maintaining fluency in one's ethnic language of origin and maintaining religious beliefs fosters the maintenance of a multilingual identity and the development of a bicultural identity (Rumbaut, Massey & Bean, 2006; Hagan, 2004; Feliciano, 2001: and Benson, Sun, Hodge and Androff, 2011). In addition, Rumbaut, Massey and Bean (2006) and Lee and Jeong (2013) affirm that bilingual language fluency is an asset and that knowledge of dual languages represents a valuable resource in a global economy, thus immigrants' efforts to maintain this part of their cultural heritage and enhance the ethnic identities of their children. Furthermore, Lu (2001) also presents a study of bicultural identity development through a bilingual language immersion program in Chinese schools in Chicago. He interviewed more than 100 American-born Chinese students and their first generation Chinese parents. The study reports that being bilingual and bicultural are an advantageous tool to develop bicultural and bi-ethnic identity development while living in the U.S.

The ethnic composition of one's living environment is another important factor for positive immigrant acculturation and adaptation (Myles & Hou, 2003). Children who live in multiethnic neighborhoods and attend integrated schools will have a greater awareness of the characteristics of other groups than those who live in more homogeneous neighborhoods. Majority children

largely can ignore the minority culture, if they are not exposed to it themselves in integrated schools and neighborhoods. A child's increasing self-awareness of group differences could lead them to accurate self-identification and also to a greater acceptance of one's group, so that self-awareness is linked both to self-identification and ethnic attitudes. A study regarding the transitioning of Hispanics into Southern communities by Archuleta (2011) indicated that perceived expectations and pressures in communities influence expectations and comfort in intercultural interactions. Thus, this study suggested the needs of supportive networks and tackling acculturative difficulties in the resettlement communities. Meanwhile, Park (2004) notes that many immigrant Korean parents contribute to the racial socialization of their children by selecting an ethnically oriented neighborhood for their family home.

Birman, Trickett & Vinokurov's (2002) study, with 20 Soviet Jewish refugee high school students in a suburban Maryland community, indicated that in the family domain, parents' positive acculturation to both the American and the Russian traditions contributes to the entire family's positive adaptation. Sullivan et al. (2007) also examine three hundred thirty eight Hispanic families who had a child in eighth grade in a low-income Miami area and found that adolescents that assimilate to U.S. culture without retaining their Hispanic culture demonstrate the highest level of aggressive behavior, while adolescents that integrated the U.S. and Hispanic cultures have the highest levels of parental involvement, family support and positive parenting.

An Outcome of the Study

As an outcome of the study, an Interdisciplinary, Empowerment Collection of Bhutanese Voices to Implement a Community-University Action Model was developed to: (1) open the Bhutanese cultural center, (2) a weekly "Girl Power" group session which is moderated by an MSW student under the supervision of a social work faculty member, and (3) offer Bhutanese children the opportunity to enroll in the University String Project.

As a background for the Bhutanese Cultural Center, researchers (Lu, 2001; Lee & Jeong, 2013; Barns & Aguilar, 2007) report that an ethnic cultural center has a pivotal influence on the cultural and language preservation of immigrants and refugees, as well as supporting their social-cultural-spiritual adjustment and transition into American society.

The weekly Bhutanese "Girl Power" group develops an empowerment model to encourage the Bhutanese girls to select their own group topics and lead their own discussions. The self-selected topics are: conflicts in developing a bi-ethnic identity (Nepali & American), conflicts between first and second generations' socialization process in the U.S., experiences of bullying, the development of positive body-image, teen-dating, positive relationship building strategies, etc. Each element in the program is directed towards enabling these Bhutanese children to develop a confident bi-cultural ethnic identity.

For the String Project, the local university is home to one of the nation's 40 String Projects. The National Consortium of String Projects was started in 1998 under the auspices of the American String Teachers' Association (ASTA). Each string project is housed by a university and is designed to provide low cost string education to children of all backgrounds from across the region, while also training undergraduate and graduate string majors to teach under university

faculty supervision. It is a win-win design. This university's String Project was started in 2001. In 2014 the Music Department collaborated with the School of Social Work to enable 30 Bhutanese children and their families to participate in the program. The initial challenge was to provide free tuition and instruments to the refugee students. The university collaborated with an area music store for rentals at half the usual cost and an anonymous donor provided 19 instruments. Continuing publicity has resulted in more instruments being donated. The student teachers and faculty had never worked with an immigrant group in this way.

Through its collaboration with the School of Social Work, preparatory meetings and discussions were held, including one in which two Bhutanese mothers described their lives prior to entering the U.S. and on their arrival. These preparations fostered an open-minded approach and full commitment to making it a successful experience for all involved. The children and families already in the program welcomed the Bhutanese children and families. During the first semester, it became evident that this was also an education for the Bhutanese parents. The children need parental support to enable them to practice, take care of the instruments and to be able to attend the weekly classes punctually. Ways to communicate with the parents beyond the linguistic boundaries were found and through meetings, discussions and observing their children in the classes and concerts, a sustainable relationship between the Bhutanese community and String Project has been established. The current beginner class is 75% underrepresented minority students from the Hispanic and Bhutanese communities. The children and parents have exhibited a desire to fully participate with the other children, for example choosing to wear the same concert attire, but they have also shared their own culture through food and language. There is an easy cultural cross-flow in the classes. Music requires discipline, self-awareness, emotional expression, and team work. As a result, music has proved to be a means of coming together to promote social and cultural transformation in a shared activity of human value while also having space to express difference.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the study, it recommends that a push towards macro-level concerns regarding effective refugee resettlement orientation policy may be stepping-stones towards more effective acculturation and resettlement models. On the meso-level, with the rapid growth of the Bhutanese refugee population in local communities and throughout the U.S., it is imperative that public & private K-12 school settings provide viable multicultural education for all children. In addition, community service providers and colleges & universities intentionally engage and create collaborative community-academia service action to promote bilingual education (English & Nepali) as well as educating small suburban communities, as "host cultures," about the significant roles they must play in providing a culturally sensitive environment that is open to and welcoming of diversity in population and culture. In micro-level aspects, the refugee individuals (children & parents) need to access services that empower refugee members to become bilingual, bicultural and interdependent contributors to society.

Discussion

A critical strength of an Asian community, such as the Bhutanese, is the strong family and social ties that buffer many individuals from the devastating consequences of life crisis. A basic

function of families across human cultures is to nurture adaptive life skills and positive emotional attachment by the support of family membership over the life span. This is a series of complex processes in a single cultural context, and it could become an even harder and more challenging process when families must bridge two sometimes conflicting cultures. Culture is not homogeneous or static, but rather is tempered by what exists in the present historical time, which is varied by the family's socialization with their attitudes, values and behavior. Thus an individual person's cultural schema is of a piece with an individual's interpretation of a family's perception and the socialization of culture within a given historical time and this is continually revised over a lifetime.

Family socialization is a reciprocal process flowing from older to younger family members, with younger family members also socializing with their elders. To a large degree, Asian-American ethnic self-identification results from a positive socialization process that is dependent on the person's parents, extended family members, the presence or absence of other ethnic members in their own ethnic group, and other ethnic groups, including the majority group. The social identity theory explains how interactions with members of other groups can result in the motivation to consider social group membership as an aspect of one's identity. Kim (2004) described two socialization goals that have been adopted by minority families. The first one is a positive orientation toward one's ethnic group, which ultimately promotes biculturalism and an acceptance of the orientation of the ancestral world. Thus successful acceptance of one's ethnic background will help minority children to be able to relate with their heritage and be aware of the racial barriers in society. The second goal of socialization is interdependence, which promotes a connection to the extended family and the ancestral worldview of collectivism. Thus, parents encourage the development of personality traits that are consistent with interdependence, such as cooperation, obligation, and sharing.

Bhutanese refugees coming to North America are confronting contrasting value systems with very little institutional or social support. There is a constant challenge between the two contrasting cultures and a struggle to adapt to the new living environment. What are the possible solutions for Bhutanese refugees in the United States? They could give up their heritage and culture in favor of the host culture by so called assimilation. This implies separation from and abandonment of their culture, community and family values, norms and traditions. The emotional and psychological cost of such a choice could be enormous. Another option is to cling to their heritage and culture and remain loyal to their native culture, so called separation. The third option is to synthesize or adopt both cultures (the ethnic heritage culture and the host culture), so called integration or biculturalism. Integration refers to a bicultural mode of acculturation in which an individual maintains his/her heritage culture while participating actively in the host culture.

The goal of integration is to acquire, synthesize and integrate new cultural elements so that individuals can function effectively in both cultures. The bicultural model would allow a continuous sense of personhood, family integrity and cultural identity. Moreover, it is correlated with high life-satisfaction and low mental health problems in Canada and the U.S. Studies by Archuleta (2011), Goodkind and Foster-Fishman (2002), Skop and Li (2005), Zarrugh (2008), Garcia (2009), and Hume and Hardwick (2005) indicate that host communities play a dynamic role in the efficacious resettlement of immigrant populations. Welcoming attitudes, abundance of

employment opportunities, family-friendly environments, and appreciation of diverse cultures are key to successful host community integration. Former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in Aug. 27, 1996, remarked "It takes a village to raise a child," and Garbarino & Abramowitz's (1992) study of the ecology of human development focuses on how the whole society functions to raise the children within their environment. From an ecological perspective, individuals and their environments mutually shape each other's systems. Thus, opportunity for development of a child means that the environment offers material, emotional and social opportunities. An individual child's living experience is like being in a set of nested structures—"a set of Russian dolls," in which all four systems (micro, meso, exo, and macro) constantly interact with each other and each system can provide positive opportunities or sociocultural risks for a child's bio-psycho-social-cultural and spiritual growth in the living environment.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest a number of avenues for future research in the areas of promoting positive bicultural ethnic identity development for Bhutanese refugees in suburban communities. Increasing social support, ameliorating discrimination and stereotyping, inclusive multicultural educational opportunities, cultivating bi-lingual (English & Nepali) classes and collaborating community-university programs would increase social-economic-cultural development opportunities for Bhutanese refugees as well as creating the common goods for all community members.

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Appendix 1

Demographics of Focus Group Participants: Bhutanese: (N=52, Male=38 Female=14) Age	18-21	15	28.80%
22-25	6		11.50%
26-30	8		15.40%
31-40	12		23.10%
41-50	5		9.60%
51-60	2		3.80%
61 and over	4		7.70%
Marital Status	Single	17	32.69%
Married	32		61.54%
Living together	3		5.77%
Separated	-		-
Divorced	-		-
Widowed	-		-
Primary Language	Nepali	28	53.85%
Bilingual	23		44.23%
Years of Education	Elementary	12	23.10%
High school/GED	17		32.70%
Some college	3		5.80%
2year college	5		9.60%
4year college	5		9.60%
Master	1		1.90%
Other	9		17.30%
Annual Household Income	Less than $9,999	19	37.00%
$10,000-$19,999	28		54.30%
$20,000-$29,999	3		6.50%
$30,000-$39,999	1		2.20%
$40,000-$49,999	0		0
$50,000-$59,999	0		0
Housing	Rent home	29	55.77%
Rent apartment	22		42.31%
Own home	-		-
Family Size		5.4	
Employment Status	Full-time	23	44.23%
Part-time	8		15.38%
Looking for work	5		9.62%
Not looking for work		-	
Homemaker	8		15.38%
Retired	-		-
Student	5		9.62%

Appendix 2

Interdisciplinary Team Project

Focus Group Questions for the Bhutanese Participants

1) a) When you immigrated to the U.S., what were the most important services for you and your family? Such as,

   Housing,
   Social services,
   Employment,
   Health care services,
   Local school registration,
   Transportation,
   Ethnic grocery shopping,
   Language and cultural barriers, and
   Other_____

   b) What person or organization supported you and your family in addressing these challenges?

2) What services or programs are assisting you now? Such as,

   Social services
   ESL program
   Health care services
   Job training program
   Transportation
   Other: _____

3) Are there any services you or your family need that are not available?

4) Are you able to save some money every month?
   If yes, how do you intend to use these savings?

5) What are your motives for living in the U.S.?

6) In what way, do your family relationships affect your living here?