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ABSTRACT

Access to Malaysian government schools is prohibited for refugee children, and hidden refugee schools only reach a minority of Burmese students in Malaysia. This study used a participatory culture-specific consultation (PCSC) approach to examine the perspectives of Burmese refugee teachers on Burmese refugee student socioemotional issues and classroom management using interviews, observations, a preliminary refugee teacher focus group (N = 10: 4 men, 6 women; M age = 26 years), and a primary focus group with refugee teachers who were Burmese refugees (N = 9: 6 men, 3 women; M age = 30 years). First, themes suggested that societal pressures have an effect on the classroom environment. Second, refugee student behavior and emotions ranged from externalizing to internalizing. Third, refugee teachers relied on traditional Burmese methods for managing serious misbehavior. Fourth, with mild misbehaviors, teachers employed more "modern," student-centered methods. Results inform culture-specific consultation designed to meet refugee education needs.

Burmese ethnic minority adults and children continue to flee Burma[1] despite recent international pressure to improve human rights (Kristof, 2014). Rohingya and Chin ethnic minority groups from Burma typically cross borders to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Malaysian government has taken a strong stance against refugee adults and children by committing human rights abuses against refugees (Amnesty International, 2009; Nathan, 2012; Zusman, 2010) and barring refugee children from attending government schools (Malaysia Immigration Act, 1959/63; Nathan, 2012; U.S. Department of State, 2014); both violate the United Nations Convention Related to the Status of Refugees (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951), which Malaysia has refused to sign. In turn, refugees have started their own hidden "informal learning centers" for refugee children. These refugee schools are hidden because the refugee students and teachers are targets for harassment by citizens or detention, caning, and deportation by immigration officers (Amnesty International, 2009; Nathan, 2012).

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[1]We selected the label Burma, not Myanmar, as our name of choice because that country's name is commonly used by supporters of ethnic minorities in Burma (Economist–Bangkok, 2013).

What is not known is how Burmese refugee students function socioemotionally and how refugee teachers manage socioemotional problems in the classroom. The goal of this study is to give a voice to refugee teachers, who are the clients in this consultation process, and this voice is a unique contribution to consultation research. We articulate their views on refugee student socioemotional problems and classroom management, and we explore possible sociopolitical and cultural influences on the problems and management. Our goal is to build a culture-specific model before conducting a consultation intervention, and we rely on the participatory culture-specific consultation approach (PCSC; Nastasi, Varjas, Bernstein, & Jayasena, 2000), which argues that it is important to first investigate client perspectives.

Using a focus group, semistructured interviews, and classroom observations, this qualitative study also makes a unique contribution as the first to examine classroom management in postconflict refugee schools in Malaysia. As an important step in the PCSC phase of culture-specific consultation model development, our qualitative research is necessary before development of a culture-specific consultation prevention program (Nastasi & Jayasena, 2014). In this case, the consultation relationship is conceptualized as a collaboration among the authors, refugee school directors, and Malaysian psychology faculty and graduate students, who will develop a culturally informed intervention based on the results of this article. In our literature review, we address refugee education in Malaysia, the PCSC framework, and existing research on refugee socioemotional problems and classroom management.

Refugee education in Malaysia

Fifty-eight percent of refugees living in nonindustrialized countries are currently in urban areas, and over 85% live in Asia or the Middle East (UNHCR–Malaysia, 2013). Malaysia ranks fourth in the world as a destination country for new asylum seekers, with most living in squalid apartments in the capital of Malaysia—Kuala Lumpur; of the 146,000 registered refugees in Malaysia, approximately 33,580 are below the age of 18 (UNHCR–Malaysia, 2013). Over 92% of the refugees in Malaysia are Burmese, comprising approximately 52,600 Chins, 29,200 Rohingyas, and 25,000 Burmese of other minority ethnicities (UNHCR–Malaysia, 2013). Given the recent genocide of Rohingyas in Burma, the number of Rohingya refugees is rapidly increasing in Malaysia (Buckley, 2015; Kristof, 2014; UNHCR–Malaysia, 2013).

Approximately 109 of the 118 refugee schools serve Burmese students, and UNHCR–Malaysia (2013) has estimated over 400 refugee teachers in Malaysia, most of whom are Burmese. Only 39% of primary school–aged refugee children (ages 6 to 11) and 7% of secondary school students (ages 12 to 18) are getting a rudimentary education via refugee schools (UNHCR–Malaysia, 2013; U.S.

Department of State, 2014). These refugee schools have little to no financial support and are hidden in overcrowded apartments, garages, and basements.

Theoretical models

This study relies on the PCSC model, which provides a framework for the culture-specific development of interventions in new cultures. Before interventions are developed, PCSC posits the importance of first building relationships. During that process, one starts learning the culture (e.g., common practices regarding mental health) and forming collaborations with key stakeholders. In collaboration, goals and target problems are identified.

Our collaborators were refugee school leaders in addition to HELP University psychology professors and graduate students. We were not providing consultation to our collaborators. By collaborating, we mean that our collaborators and we decided on the focus group goals together, but we researchers implemented the focus groups, interviews, and observations. We viewed the refugee teachers as clients. Through our indirect work with our collaborators, the refugee teachers are our target clients who will benefit from the future collaborative training intervention, and, in turn, teachers' students would benefit from the teachers receiving the training.

HELP University has the strongest psychology program in Malaysia and was the home base for the American author during her Fulbright award. Our academic relationships at HELP University opened doors at World Vision and UNHCR, who then opened the hidden doors of our refugee school collaborators. Over green tea and Burmese and Chinese-Malaysian meals, we spent a lot of time meeting with our Burmese refugee school director collaborators and with non-Burmese refugee school directors who were ethnic minority citizens of Malaysia—Indian- and Chinese-Malaysian. Our HELP University collaborators were two psychology professors who were Indian- and Chinese-Malaysian, and the graduate students were the same ethnicities. In many ways, these university and refugee school collaborators were our cultural brokers since they opened doors to more hidden refugee schools and translated many leadership and education customs (e.g., value of religion combined with education; casual warmth combined with respect for authority and hierarchies) in addition to restrictive Malaysian government refugee policies.

Goals and target problems were identified through meetings with our collaborators, UNHCR, school visits, and via a meeting with a large number of refugee school directors. In these meetings, refugee student emotions, attention, and behavior in addition to classroom management were raised as concerns by most of the refugee school directors. The experience of identifying our study's "emotions, attention, and behavior" socioemotional model involved our collaborators describing their concerns about the

students and our labeling those concerns and confirming with our collabora-tors that the emotions, attention, and behavior model captured the issues they raised. Student emotions seemed to be driving some of their attention and behavior concerns. *Attention* was identified when our collaborators described some students' distractibility and lack of academic engagement. *Behavior* was identified when our collaborators described students acting out and being rowdy in class.

Therefore, our initial goal for the focus groups was to understand class-room management and refugee student emotions, attention, and behavior from the perspective of community refugee teachers, who were refugees themselves. We were curious about how behavior and management were similar or different "back in Burma," as many of the refugee school directors would say. We also explored the unique hidden Burmese refugee education culture in Malaysia.

Refugee student socioemotional functioning

An important PCSC step is to identify existing research on the topic before conducting qualitative research. No systematic research, however, has been conducted on the experiences of urban, postconflict refugee education in Malaysia; most refugee education research has been conducted in the United States (e.g., McBrien, 2005). Refugee students tend to struggle with socio-emotional problems, and these socioemotional problems can affect their learning, with most research conducted in the United States and one related study of Burmese Karen refugees in Thailand border camps (McBrien, 2005; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008). Refugee children in the United States tend to have high rates of depression and anxiety, and they often struggle with posttraumatic stress syndrome (PTSD; Lustig et al., 2004).

In this study, the authors entered the collaborative relationship with a preconceived definition of socioemotional functioning based on literature and operationalized as child emotions and behavior in a social context (Parke & Clark-Stewart, 2011). With a Western conceptualization of psychopathol-ogy, we assumed that such emotions and behavior would fall under the umbrella of mental health for these refugee students (Lustig et al., 2004). PCSC posits that the definition we identify shapes how research questions are asked and data analysis is approached (Nastasi et al., 2000). Indeed, the authors' definition informed how the authors and their collaborators first discussed the research question regarding refugee student socioemotional functioning. We put words to our collaborators' descriptions and concerns, in addition to our observations of the refugee students' socioemotional indicators in class. Then, we came to a consensus with our collaborators and decided to use emotions, attention, and behavior as a framework that

might best capture potential socioemotional indicators in this unique socio-political context.

Among nonrefugee students, such mental health issues have socioemotional consequences in the classroom, such as emotional withdrawal and attention problems, in addition to poor academic functioning (Grover, Ginsberg, & Ialongo, 2007; Masia Warner & Fox, 2012). Limited research on these issues in refugee children in the United States suggests that schools may serve a protective function for the socioemotional consequences of being a refugee (McBrien, 2005). For example, one researcher reported that refugee students' sense of school belonging was associated with lower depression among Somali adolescents in the United States (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). In Israel, a study of Ethiopian and Russian legal refugee students concluded that expressing feelings is valuable even if the emotion expressed is anger (Ben-Peretz, Eilam, & Yankelevitch, 2006). Ben-Pertz et al. (2006) argued that emotion-based acting out in class might be a call for help due to the chronic stress experienced by refugee students. Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, and Curran (2004) posited that prejudice and hostility toward students in society may affect the students' socioemotional problems in the classroom. This may be especially relevant to postconflict refugee schools, as both students and teachers have fled from politically charged situations in their home countries to face further discrimination and oppression in Malaysia (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). In summary, the sociopolitical context, stress, and emotional health of refugee children may affect their socioemotional functioning in school.

Classroom management

A major goal of this study was to understand how teachers conceptualize classroom management of refugee student socioemotional functioning, as operationalized as emotions, attention, and behavior. A minor goal was to determine how the teachers' management practices fit a more traditional teacher-centered approach or have changed. Classroom management can vary depending on the teacher's and students' cultures (Weinstein et al., 2004). The educational culture in Burma has typically been teacher centered, with a heavy emphasis on teacher respect (Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008; O'Neal, 2011). Due to refugee students' new, postconflict urban culture, their norms regarding teacher-centered, respectful behavior may differ from those that existed in Burma (Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008). Given the different demands of a postconflict country and UNHCR to use less teacher-centered approaches in refugee schools, it is possible that refugee teachers' notions of effective classroom management may be shifting away from the more traditional, teacher-centered approach they experienced in Burma toward a more student-centered approach. We operationalized traditional classroom management as teacher centered with an emphasis largely on punishment as a consequence for teacher disrespect. We operationalized what

refugee teachers and school directors deemed "modern" classroom management as student centered, with a wider range of classroom management strategies than punitive; the teachers likely also operationalized modern as practices that have recently become more widely accepted in Western culture. We were interested in the teachers' perspectives on the range of modern classroom management in postconflict refugee classrooms compared to traditional management "back in Burma."

We used a PCSC ecological framework to explore (a) Burmese refugee students' strengths and socioemotional challenges; (b) classroom management strategies of socioemotional problems in refugee schools; (c) ways teachers engender hope and motivation and build relationships with students; and (d) cultural and contextual factors unique to the refugee education environment and classroom management.

Methods

First, we describe the overall design. Then, the Methods and Results sections are organized in two parts because the findings from the preliminary data collection stage led directly into primary data collection. Thus, we labeled sections Preliminary Methods and Preliminary Results, then Primary Methods and Primary Results. See Figure 1 for the flow of the research method steps, including the timeline, methodological steps, and target samples.

Overall design

Similar to the goal of PCSC to conduct formative research on individual and cultural factors preintervention (Nastasi & Jayasena, 2014), the goal of this study was to identify teacher perspectives on student socioemotional needs and strengths in addition to cultural and contextual factors unique to the refugee education environment and classroom management. The research
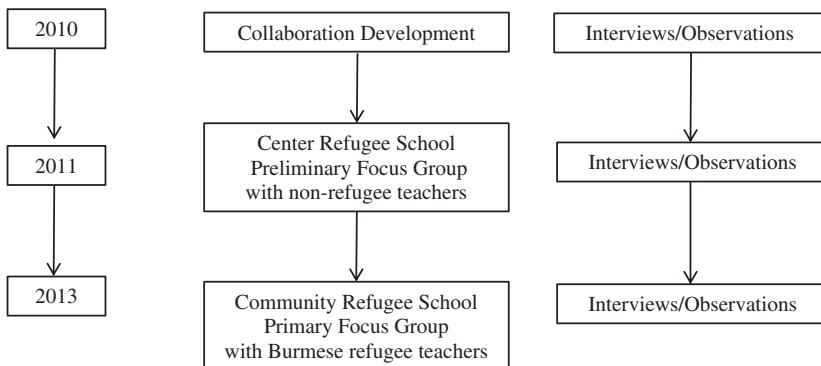
Figure 1. Data collection timeline and target samples.

method was a multimethod, multisource approach including focus groups, individual interviews, and qualitative observations. PCSC calls for in-depth ethnographic research to first investigate the culture-specific needs of individuals and the community using an ecological model to frame multiple levels of influence. After the formative research phase, the development of a culture-specific theory occurs, then program development. Similar to the study by Nastasi et al. (2000), this is a multiyear project, and we report qualitative research conducted from 2010 to 2013. We first briefly describe a preliminary focus group with largely citizen teachers of refugees in a "center refugee school." Center refugee schools are relatively well resourced and funded by UNHCR. Then, the results are centered on the primary focus group with refugee teachers who are Burmese refugees working in nine different Burmese "community refugee schools," and we supplement these results with informal interviews and classroom observations (see Figure 1 for timeline and methods). Community refugee schools are under resourced and largely have teachers who are refugees. We then plan to use these qualitative results to develop a culture-specific intervention with refugee teachers.

The focus groups serve as the backbone of the results section. Both focus groups were convenience samples, which we accessed via our relationships built with our collaborators. We frame the center refugee teacher focus group as a first step, a preliminary study that, in turn, informed the second step of the primary community refugee teacher focus group (see Figure 1). Note that the preliminary focus group center teachers were all nonrefugee Malaysian citizens, except for one refugee and two foreign-born citizens from other countries. Given that Burmese teachers who are refugees are the main focus of this article, we only report the primary focus group results of Burmese community refugee teachers in detail. We found great value in first piloting the focus group and initial themes with a refugee teacher group with whom we had easier access: center teachers. After conducting the center teacher focus group in 2011, we were then able to develop relationships with community refugee schools over a couple years, which allowed us to conduct the primary community refugee group in 2013. Having learned from our experience with the center refugee group, we were able to identify important questions, explore potential themes, and better prepare for conducting a focus group in the unique context of community refugee schools with Burmese refugee teachers.

We conducted focus groups with community refugee teachers at one of their schools; the center refugee group was located at the center refugee school. Qualitative observations by the first author were also conducted in refugee classrooms. In addition, semistructured interviews were conducted by the first author with UNHCR–Malaysia education staff and refugee school leaders and administrators. The overall purpose of our methods was to be open to an ongoing inquiry process that was informed over time by

participant interactions in order to best describe perceived and observed phenomena in the "natural context" (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005, p. 182).

Preliminary methods

Preliminary participants: Refugee center teacher focus group

The center refugee school we selected for the first focus group had primarily nonrefugee teachers in a school in which 74.9% of the students were refugees; 85.2% of the center school's refugee population was from Burma, of diverse Burmese ethnicities. This was the largest refugee school in Malaysia, serving approximately 764 students from preschool to middle school.

The ten teachers selected by the center school leader for the focus group included six female and four male teachers ranging in age from 17 to 44 years (M = 25.5 years). Six of them were Malaysian citizens; three were citizens of other countries, including only one refugee who was Burmese. Over their lifetimes, the teachers had taught for an average of 31.5 months, ranging from 3 months to 11 years. Most had only taught at the center refugee school for a year or less, suggesting that they had very limited experience teaching refugees; one outlier had taught at the center for 7 years. In terms of highest education level reached, eight had a college diploma (3- or 4-year colleges), one had completed high school, and another had completed middle school. Ten of the 15 center teachers recruited by the school director chose to participate.

Preliminary procedure

Thick description of context

The intent of this qualitative article is to give an in-depth, systematic, contextualized description of the inquiry process and procedure, including decisions made, relationships built, and collaborations (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The majority of relationships and collaborations were built as a part of the preliminary study from 2010 to 2011. We worked toward a collaboration with refugee schools guided by the long-term goal of developing a culturally informed refugee classroom management intervention based on refugee teachers' perceptions of refugee student socioemotional and teacher classroom management needs. Given the necessary mistrust of outsiders by a refugee community living in a country hostile to refugees, the authors' relationships with refugee schools and teachers were first established with help from World Vision-Malaysia, HELP University-Malaysia, UNHCR–Malaysia, Muslim and Christian groups, and other local community refugee school leaders starting in 2010, with the most intense relationship building conducted from 2010 to 2011.

The scope and practices of the agencies with whom we first built relationships are important to identify (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). World Vision-Malaysia is a Christian philanthropic organization that is the most respected nonprofit in Malaysia for their work in marginalized students' education, and they fund the largest center refugee school, where we did our preliminary focus group. The American author, like a typical secular American researcher, had assumed upon entry to Malaysia that she would not be working with a religious organization, given that she never had done so in her previous U.S.-based research. Therefore, the author entered the relationship with World Vision with an initial bias of concerns about working with Christian organizations for research purposes. The bias was turned around after being convinced by a U.S. academic who had done research in Malaysia and the local academic faculty colleagues in Malaysia who described World Vision as the best organization to open doors for this kind of isolated education research. The local Malaysian academics trusted World Vision because World Vision, in their view, did the humanitarian and educational work that local academics wished the government would do. Biased or not, we would like to acknowledge that our respectful viewpoint on World Vision–Malaysia is profoundly subjective.

The World Vision–Malaysia leader, in turn, introduced the authors to the largest center's refugee school leader. There are eight center refugee schools funded by UNHCR-Malaysia, and these schools are largely staffed by citizen teachers using Malaysian textbooks. Then, the largest center refugee school leader introduced the authors to UNHCR-Education officials and most of the community refugee school leaders at a UNHCR- and center refugee school–organized training where the authors gave a brief overview of their interest in developing collaborations and exploring refugee student socioemotional functioning and classroom management. The scope of UNHCR–Malaysia is both limited and essential to refugee education. UNHCR has to step gingerly since they are barely welcomed into the country by the government, given that the government is not a signatory to the U.N. convention protecting refugees. Therefore, UNHCR's lobbying efforts on behalf of refugees and refugee education are restrained. UNHCR funds trainings of some community refugee teachers at the largest center refugee school, but only around curriculum and content (e.g., math, English). Their supports for teachers sometimes include small resources such as a small salary stipend for certain teachers, curriculum handouts, fans, and curtains to provide privacy and shelter from the sweltering sun in the refugee classrooms. The UNHCR–Education department has only two or three staff with high turnover, and refugee education seems to rank low on the UNHCR hierarchy of needs.

HELP University was another partner. HELP University is a private higher education institution with one of the strongest psychology undergraduate and graduate programs in Malaysia. The Malaysia-based HELP faculty member who is an author on this article does qualitative counseling research in

Malaysian schools and community nonprofits. The U.S.-based author of this article is a professor who was a Fulbright teacher/research scholar based at HELP University (2010–2011); another U.S.-based author on this article is a graduate student with the U.S faculty author. The scope of HELP's official involvement in refugee education was nonexistent at the time, but faculty and students volunteered to be part of this research project from 2010 to 2013. The U.S. and Malaysian faculty members conducted a preliminary focus group in 2011 with center refugee school teachers who were largely citizens.

Preliminary focus group procedure

The preliminary focus group open-ended questions addressed (a) unique socioemotional needs and strengths of refugee students, organized around student behavior, attention, and emotions, and (b) teacher classroom management of student behavior, attention, and emotions (see questions in Appendix A). The 3-hour focus group was audio recorded, was held on-site at the center refugee school, and provided lunch and a lunch break. Questions were asked one at a time, with follow-up questions for more depth. Participants gave consent in the beginning of the focus groups, and there was no debriefing after the focus group other than casual discussions with some of the teachers and school directors about how the focus group was experienced by the participants.

Primary methods

Primary thick description

After the U.S. author returned to the United States in 2011, she received an award from the Fulbright New Leaders Group to collaborate with another HELP professor and graduate students to continue refugee student education research via continued student mental health assessments and brief therapy, in addition to preliminary teacher training. Then, from 2012 to 2013, the U.S. author and HELP professor received funding from the Fulbright Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund, in collaboration with many of the agencies and refugee schools listed in the preceding, to conduct a focus group with Burmese community refugee teachers. Next, our collaborators and we developed a community refugee-teacher-train-refugee-teacher initiative, which is now reported in a separate article.

Primary focus group sample: Burmese community refugee teachers

The community focus group included nine Burmese refugee teachers from nine different community refugee schools that served approximately 1,100

refugee students, with the majority of students in elementary school. The focus group was conducted at one of the nine schools. Across schools, student ethnicities were reported by teachers as 716 Chin, 20 Kachin, 87 Karen, 19 Shan, 3 Karenni, 50 Mon, and 56 Arakenese. The Chin majority in this group reflected the Burmese refugee population in Malaysia as a whole. Note that each of these community refugee schools was largely monoethnic (e.g., Chin only), and the teachers were from the same ethnic Burmese group as their students. Four of the nine teachers reported that 52% of the students living with their family or extended family were estimated to not have a refugee card. Of the three schools reporting card status for unaccompanied refugee students not living with their family, 75% of the students did not have refugee cards. While refugee cards provide very limited protection in Malaysia, refugee adults reported that refugee cards were looked upon as a gateway to resettlement, may provide limited resources such as housing for unaccompanied refugees, and, in some rare cases, were a way to get UNHCR's attention if placed in detention. Therefore, the lack of refugee cards could put these students and teachers in a more vulnerable position than those with cards.

The Burmese refugee teacher focus group participants were six male and three female teachers, ranging in age from 24 to 35 years ($M = 30$ years of age). Most were Christian ethnic minority refugees, which was a marginalized group in Burma. All of these teachers were Burmese refugees, including teachers from the following Burmese ethnic groups: 2 Chin, 2 Shan, 1 Arakanese, 1 Mon, 1 Kachin, 1 Karenni, and 1 Karen. We attempted to recruit a Rohingya Burmese refugee teacher representative, but the extreme stress and turmoil faced by the Rohingya in Malaysia (Dryden-Peterson, 2015) made it difficult for them to participate. Two of the nine reported they had not yet obtained a UNHCR refugee card; often, it can take years before one receives a card. Seven of the nine reported that they had had some teacher experience in their country of origin. Their education included one with less than high school, four with high school completion, and four with some college or college completion. The teachers had taught for a couple years, on average, at their community refugee schools, ranging from 1 month to 4 years of teaching at their community school. They had lived in Malaysia for 3 years, on average, ranging from less than 1 year to 7 years.

Primary focus group procedure

The primary focus group adapted, expanded, and built on the preliminary focus group questions. The open-ended questions addressed (a) unique socioemotional needs and strengths of refugee students, focused on student behavior, attention, and emotions, and (b) teacher classroom management of student behavior, attention, and emotions (see questions in Appendix A). The 3-hour focus group started with the consent process, was audio recorded, was held on-

site at one of the schools, and provided dinner and a dinner break. Questions were asked one at a time, with follow-up questions for more depth.

Focus group coding

The focus groups were transcribed to identify themes in participant responses to the research questions. Coding had the deductive goal of (a) framing socioemotional needs of refugee students in terms of emotional, behavioral, and attention issues and (b) understanding refugee teacher classroom management. The inductive coding goal was to let themes emerge around refugee teachers' conceptualization of socioemotional problems and classroom management practices (Nastasi et al., 2015).

This study had two coders separately review focus group transcripts, come up with themes, and identify quotes to match each theme. The coders were the authors. Two professors coded the center refugee focus group. One of the professors and a psychology graduate student coded the community refugee focus group. One of the coders was a professor with extensive qualitative research expertise, so this professor trained the other coders in the method for identifying themes. No coding software was used. We did, however, create tables in order of the focus group transcript, with each focus group participant's comments in the cells. Each coder separately identified themes for each comment. Then, we separately came up with common themes across comment-specific themes. To establish consensus for common themes across both coders, overlap between coders' themes was examined (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). The two coders discussed the perceived similarities between the themes that each coder thought emerged from the transcript. Themes were then reached by consensus. When there were difficult themes on which to find consensus, final decisions were made by the first researcher. It was rare, however, that there was not consensus on themes. There was no interrater reliability data collected on the coding.

Interview sample and procedure

The interviews were conducted in Malaysia with a range of refugee school administrators and NGO leaders with expertise on refugee education in Malaysia. Interviews were done in an informal manner and were located at interviewees' offices, churches, or schools. Officials at UNHCR–Education and UNHCR leadership were interviewed, with a focus on schools and on previous and potential policy changes regarding refugees in Malaysia. Interviewees included leaders at World Vision-Malaysia, Human Rights officials at U.S. Embassy–Malaysia, a local reporter, refugee school leaders, and NGO leaders (e.g., Malaysian Care president) who support refugee schools. In total, 22 administrators and leaders were interviewed. Appendix

B lists all possible informal interview questions asked. Not all questions were asked to each interviewee; questions were selected depending on the interviewee's area of expertise and interview time available. The interviewees preferred that their interviews not be audio recorded, but extensive notes were taken. Interviews were as short as 15 minutes to as long as 2 hours.

We extracted information and examined themes across interviews that were related to the following variables: socioemotional functioning, student engagement, teacher classroom management techniques, classroom resources and climate, sociopolitical pressures, and school location. We decided what information to extract according to relevance to these variables and how common the reported information was across interviewees. We did not conduct formal coding of interview responses given the informal, non–audio recorded, and often brief nature of the interviews. While we did not do formal consent for the interviews, we did explain our roles, how the information would be used, and the limits of confidentiality. A couple interviewees requested that their comments be "off the record," which also confirmed the interviewer's hunch that some viewed the interviewer's role as similar to a journalist.

Observations, sample, and procedure

The authors conducted informal observations across one center refugee school and nine community refugee schools focused on refugee student socioemotional functioning, classroom management, and environment. A total of 19 classes were observed. The goal of the observations was to build relationships with community refugee educators, inform our focus groups, and enhance our focus group results with on-the-ground observations. The convenience sampling method targeted Burmese refugee schools, and our selection of schools was dependent on access to schools with which our collaborators had contact. The community refugee schools we observed had Chin, Karen, Rohingya, and/or a few other Burmese ethnic minority students. The observations were conducted both before and after the Burmese focus group occurred. Each observation was between 30 minutes and an hour and was focused on the same variables as the interviews and focus groups: socioemotional functioning, student engagement, teacher classroom management techniques, classroom resources and climate, sociopolitical pressures, and school location. Formal recording and coding of observations were not conducted given the chaotic environment and brief observations. Depending on how available the staff were, we also asked a quick set of questions to the teachers and head teachers about the resources, student and teacher turnover, teacher management, family needs, and student socioemotional functioning. Notes were taken after each observation was complete. Formal consent was

not conducted for the observations, but teacher verbal assent was obtained before every observation.

Data integration

This multimethod, multisource process requires integration of results across methods and sources. The integration of results in this article was built on the backbone of the community refugee teacher focus group results. Community refugee teachers are the main focus of this article, so information from interviews and observations in community refugee schools was necessary to put focus group themes in context. Therefore, we also included refugee policy information, observations of the use of the cane in the classroom, for example, and other on-the-ground information. This information can only be collected when observed or in one-on-one, confidential interviews with administrators and school leaders. As a result, the first author, in consultation with the other authors, examined information and themes across sources and across interviews and observations in order to put the community refugee teacher themes in a sociopolitical–environmental context. Discrepancies across methods were resolved by further interviews and observations and consensus among authors.

Data trustworthiness

Qualitative methodological rigor is judged by numerous procedures that establish trustworthiness of the data, defined as reliability, validity, and objectivity of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). Such procedures include credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability. This study was able to conduct a limited number of trustworthiness checks. First, the multimethod nature of this study allowed triangulation, operationalized as cross-checking themes and data collected across multiple methods or data types. We used three qualitative methods—focus groups, observations, interviews—to confirm, contrast, enhance understanding, and give context across methods; however, we did not triangulate by using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Second, we only did an informal member check with community refugee teachers about whether or not the community refugee focus group results and themes were an accurate representation of their community's views. To do so, we described some of the themes and concerns raised in the community refugee teacher focus group during a later meeting with other community refugee teachers, and they largely confirmed the themes and concerns, with similar variation across schools. We did not check back with focus group participants. Third, we took some of the information and themes we collected from the preliminary center refugee teacher focus group to inform our primary community refugee focus group questions so we could check some of the themes and information collected during the center refugee group with the community

refugee school teachers. For example, center refugee responses informed development of our community refugee questions, such as "How do you keep their respect for your authority in the class?"

Fourth, we conducted "persistent observation" and "prolonged engagement" over 3 years, which was essential to developing an understanding of the full diversity and scope of the refugee education phenomenon in Malaysia. Our multiple observations and interviews over 3 years helped us work toward our goal of deep identification of the phenomenon with typical and atypical teacher and student narratives and behavior (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). We were not able to reach full saturation with our community refugee focus group; we would have liked to do a second group to insure saturation. We conducted peer debriefing regarding data interpretation with colleagues in Malaysia who were familiar with refugee education. In addition, we conducted negative case analysis (i.e., a search for quotes that contradict or do not support the main themes) to identify atypical or outlier cases to promote the richness and variation of phenomenon description.

Results

We identified themes from the data around the following broad topics: (1) challenges in the refugee school environment, (2) student socioemotional needs, and (3) teacher classroom management. The results in each theme are augmented by classroom observations and interviews. First, we give a brief review of and limited set of quotes from the preliminary focus group with largely citizen center teachers. The goal is to explain how the quotes and themes set the stage for the primary community refugee teacher focus group. Then, we give in-depth data supporting the themes from the primary Burmese community refugee teacher focus group. We explain how we pulled out the key themes from the data, made decisions about themes, and identified information that was central to theme formation.

Preliminary center refugee focus group results

We identified initial themes from the center refugee focus group and give a brief sample quote for each. The first theme was that the refugee classroom environment exacerbates refugee student socioemotional problems and ability to learn. For example, one center teacher complained "… the noise level … I'm not able to teach … It's a battle … the class is so big." A second theme was that refugee students exhibit internalizing and externalizing emotions and behavior. For example, one teacher said she knew that students were upset when they "Disengage …, and withdraw from activities." A teacher of the youngest students added, "… And some, they separate … will sit in one

corner. They don't want to participate in any activities. Some are crying in the beginning."

A third theme was that refugee teachers use a mix of traditional and modern classroom management strategies. In our preliminary meeting with school leaders, many leaders referred to alternatives to corporal punishment as modern classroom management techniques, and they referred often to traditional classroom management from "back in Burma," including use of the cane. In the center focus group, the one center teacher who was a refugee from Burma described how when she was a student back in Burma, her teachers would use the cane on her back to force her into prayer position when she refused to kneel for Buddhist prayers because she was Christian. She fled Burma partly due to such Buddhist majority discrimination. She seemed intent on using alternative modern classroom management, which was not "traditional" classroom punishment in Burma. This Burmese teacher and the school leaders were our first encounter with teachers describing traditional techniques from back home and more modern techniques, which they may associate with the West and countries other than Burma. A veteran center teacher described the importance of seeming like the authority in the classroom: "I just assert the authority by my tone of voice. And I've managed to calm them down because it's a case of like bad cop, good cop. And I've realized now I've became bad cop ... they know that I am teacher under authority." Alternative approaches included inspiring hope, from a teacher of the few older secondary school students: "We [tell] them that if they study ... they will achieve in the future." In addition, due to high student turnover, a "buddy system" was developed by some center teachers in which they used older students to orient younger, new students: "We will actually use one of the most sensible and self-motivated students ... to show [new students] around."

A fourth theme was that center refugee teachers were reliant on the cane to manage serious behavior problems. One senior teacher said, "I know ... we cannot use cane, but we just have to hold it in case. Then, okay, [the students know the] teacher is angry ... And then they are quiet." We used the four themes developed with the center refugee group to inform the questions asked and theme identification and interpretation of the community refugee focus group.

Primary community refugee focus group results

Theme: Societal stressors and the refugee classroom environment exacerbate refugee student socioemotional problems and ability to learn

Limited and insufficient school resources. Teachers in community refugee schools are the most important yet most limited resource, unlike in center

refugee schools, which receive more funding and have more nonrefugee teachers. Community refugee teachers' responsibilities are many and exhaustive. The teachers reported that they not only teach but have responsibility to raise funds for rent, supplies, and food. Many students live at the community schools since some of their parents live far away or cannot care for them. Unlike in center refugee schools, most community school teachers also live at the school, so they have to manage both teaching and caregiving 24 hours a day. Please note that all of the following quotes are from the Burmese community refugee teacher focus group, unless specified otherwise. One Burmese community refugee teacher said the following:

> Teachers have no free time. After class, we have to go shopping for supplies. We also need to study as we are not qualified teachers ... We also need money to pay teachers; we try to ask money from the children's parents but it can be difficult for them to pay. Because the children also live in the school, it can be very noisy sometimes.

We observed that, at best, classrooms had basic amenities. The heat in refugee classrooms was unbearable at times and an obstacle to student attention. Refugee students were trapped in class without recess because neighboring citizens threatened to call immigration officers if refugee children played on local fields or playgrounds. A community teacher explained that "in Malaysia, our students cannot move around. They have to stay at the center/apartment [school] and they cannot go outside as many are not registered with UNHCR and it is not safe."

Teachers and UNHCR–Malaysia reported that high levels of student physical activity indoors may lead neighbors to complain to landlords or authorities, putting these schools at risk. We directly observed rowdy behavior of refugee students who had little opportunity to release their energy. The lack of classroom resources also contributed to student attention problems. A community teacher said, "We cannot afford tables and chairs. We ask them to sit on the floor so their sitting position is not comfortable for them, and it is hard for them to concentrate in class."

Refugee schools were underfunded and had between 30 and 50 students with only one teacher, often in an overcrowded apartment. Classes were held for a half day to meet the high refugee demand for even a brief, rudimentary version of an elementary school education.

Refugee student educational backgrounds. Community teachers reported that there was a wide range of student educational backgrounds and abilities in most refugee classes. Younger children were often in the same class with older children. The teachers' refugee students had a history of sporadic or poor quality education that teachers said affected academic confidence in older students, in particular, and made it hard to manage the class: "The other difficulty is that

sometimes there are different levels of children [grades 1–6] studying together and so it is more difficult to control them and for them to follow the lesson plan."

Refugee students with suspected learning disabilities were the most disadvantaged (Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008), and refugee teachers reported having difficulty providing the individualized care these students with disabilities required.

> There is one child who cannot grasp simple calculations and simple problems. He seems to have difficulty in learning. I have tried different methods to help him ... [like] simplified teaching and I also asked his friend to ... [help him] do the sums. The methods have not been effective thus far.

High rates of student and teacher turnover. Instability was a real concern for students and teachers due to their refugee status and changing needs of their families. Teachers reported that students seem to view their stay in Malaysia as temporary: "This is my temporary life. I don't need to do homework. I don't need to memorize vocabulary." Teachers also reported that many students drop out for reasons other than resettlement, such as familial pressure on children to leave school and start work or get married.

Turnover among teachers is a concern for these schools as well. UNHCR–Malaysia Education officials reported that, on average, refugee teachers only act as a teacher for 6 months to a year, and about 30% of them leave their schools each year. Only 10% of teachers leave the classroom because they are resettled. Turnover typically occurs because the majority of community refugee teachers in Malaysia do not get paid for their work. Refugee teachers are only paid if they are registered as a refugee by UNHCR, receive a year of UNHCR-funded training, and are working at schools with a minimum of 50 students; their salary ranges from U.S. $70 to $200 per month. UNHCR officials and school directors explained that high teacher turnover results from many teachers needing to find jobs to pay off the "bond" owed to the agent who facilitated their flight from Burma to Malaysia. Many teachers are arrested and detained. One teacher we observed had been arrested and detained for 6 months. Her refugee school director told us that he needed to scrape together enough money to pay a hefty bribe to get the teacher out of detention. Beyond detention, having too few teachers due to resettlement can feel overwhelming to remaining teachers. Note, however, that it was atypical of the teachers to express concerns about other teachers getting resettled and leaving them understaffed. A community refugee school teacher said,

> Our head teacher [and three other teachers were resettled to] ... a third country. So we have a problem now. We only have three teachers—there are not enough teachers ... We have six classes ... So I have to teach different classes at the same time and run between classrooms.

In summary, limited refugee school resources, student education background, attendance, no physical outlet, and teacher turnover were significant classroom environment obstacles that exacerbated refugee student socioemotional challenges and disrupted student learning in the refugee classroom. While for the authors it was largely clear that the school environment affected teacher and student performance and socioemotional challenges, teacher voices were less explicit about linking societal pressures to the class environment and student outcomes. However, the interviewees clearly drew the link. Indeed, UNHCR officials repeatedly drew connections among societal stressors, teacher turnover, classroom environment, and student behavior. In the end, we decided that societal pressures identified by the teachers do tend to underlie the school environment and student outcomes, with teachers either directly or indirectly alluding to societal pressures such as no government salaries for refugee teachers; citizen discrimination and threat of deportation keeping teachers and students inside refugee schools; and excessive demands on teachers (e.g., 24-hour caregiving for students) due to parents having to work illegally, far from home, because the Malaysian government does not let refugees work legally.

Theme: Refugee students exhibit internalizing and externalizing emotions and behavior

Many students used internalization to manage emotions and behavior.

UNHCR-Malaysia interviewees reported that many refugee students often seemed excessively shy, withdrawn, apathetic, and unmotivated to learn. They noted that it was especially difficult for new refugee students to engage when they first started school, perhaps due to their being internally emotionally preoccupied as a new refugee. One focus group teacher commented that students expressed emotions by keeping quiet, apparently not caring about the teacher, and not making eye contact with the teacher.

Focus group, interviews, and classroom observations suggested that many refugee students tended to keep their emotions in, and refugee teachers did not seem to feel comfortable actively helping their students manage their internalizing emotions. Most of the Burmese teachers in our sample had difficulty verbalizing how they knew a student was upset. One pointed out that it is a cultural norm to not focus on feelings with students, so maybe the discomfort is related to a cultural choice to not focus on student feelings. A senior community teacher said,

> We do not focus on such feelings as it is not our culture to do so. We, as teachers, cannot control our students' emotions because it is not our culture to do so. We focus on the subject matter and we run the school to teach them for their future.

There was some indication that it may be appropriate to not acknowledge one's own and others' emotions in Burmese culture. It was hard, however, for

the authors to distinguish between Burmese cultural influences on and refugee student adjustment problems in managing emotions.

Students used externalization to manage emotions and behavior. With over-crowded classrooms in addition to familial and societal stressors, it is not surprising that externalizing emotions and disruptive behavior were a problem in the refugee classroom. Teachers reported that many refugee students expressed externalizing emotions such as anger and frustration in the classroom, often in a disruptive manner. Externalizing behavior problems run the gamut from mild (e.g., insolence) to serious (e.g., physical aggression). It was more atypical than not for refugee teachers to voice concerns about serious physical aggression. Mild misbehavior included rowdiness and rebellious antiauthority. The most problematic mild behavior was a rowdy atmosphere leading to a distracted class that was hard to control, as described by a community teacher: "[T]he children … can be very noisy and disrupt the [school]. I tell them not to make noise but we cannot manage …"

Students have difficulty paying attention. Community focus group participants and interviewees consistently commented on attention problems, including student boredom, distractibility, exhaustion, and attempts to distract their friends during class. At community schools where many children live on-site, teachers noted that students get restless and inattentive from being stuck in the school 24 hours a day. Teachers and school directors observed that new refugee students, especially, seemed unaccustomed to classroom discipline and were easily distracted. In addition, learning was disrupted by children working to support their families. One community teacher commented that "some children also work at night as they have part-time jobs to support their families but this means they want to sleep and not do homework." Some teachers seemed frustrated by the students seeming to choose not to pay attention. For example, one teacher said, "They don't do homework; they don't concentrate; and they joke in class."

Teachers' and interviewees' descriptions of student emotions, attention, and behavior seemed to be best described by the theme of internalizing and externalizing behavior. It is possible, though, that our selection of these terms reflects our bias toward Western models of psychopathology given that the teachers, themselves, never used the words "internalizing and externalizing behavior."

Theme: Refugee teachers use a mix of traditional and modern classroom management strategies

Overall, there seemed to have been a shift toward what many teachers referred to as modern, more positive approaches to classroom management (e.g., relationship building). At the same time, there was continued use of

what teachers called "old" or "traditional" management (e.g., use of the cane). Many teachers employed modern, relationship-focused approaches with mild misbehaviors, such as using verbal communication instead of traditional public humiliation. Some teachers reported using praise, relationship building, and giving responsibilities to the students. Many teachers, however, seemed to struggle with or were not focused on engaging students' interest.

Relationship-building and promoting self-regulation was part of classroom management for some teachers

One teacher who lived and taught in the refugee school with the refugee students said teachers' relationships with students prevented misbehavior and helped with classroom management:

> The teachers and students stay together, watch TV together, etc. It is only when we are in a classroom that we are like teachers. But outside of the classroom, we are like friends. We will play together. It is more like a family. We find this works.

Given that meditation is used by many in Burma, since it is a largely Buddhist country, meditation in some community refugee schools was used as either a consequence for misbehavior and/or a self-regulation tool promoted by the teachers, but the intent was not clear when expressed by a community teacher: "When they don't come to class on time, we don't punish them physically, we make the students practice meditation, and the teachers will tell them how to take care of themselves. Sometimes it works; sometimes it does not."

Engaging student interest was not a focus of all teachers

Some refugee teachers did not seem focused on employing engaging activities to evoke student emotions of "interest" or "curiosity." Other teachers, however, said they tried to engage students with storytelling and dance. In addition, a few reported using praise, stickers, gifts, and prizes for engaging in and completing work: "I think that doing activities is good. Kids like activities. For example, we get them to compete and give them points when we teach vocabulary. This also helps them to remember more, and makes them more active in class." Another teacher said,

> My students will sit around in a circle so I can see their faces. If I see that someone is not paying attention and playing, I will ask them to do more activities so they will keep quiet. [E.g.] to repeat things from the lesson to me. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't.

Student attendance can be viewed as a form of engagement, and attendance was a big concern for teachers, with one commenting, "Some students will be absent … but their parents will allow them to not come to class. Sometimes parents will tell children they don't need to do their homework."

A big teacher concern was that if students did not attend school, they would get into some sort of trouble on the streets of Kuala Lumpur: "We tell them not to be absent. But if we expel them, they will be with other street boys." And another teacher said: "Generally, we don't expel students for this behavior [not cleaning up], but we just keep telling them not to do it. We don't want them to be roaming the streets as this will make their lives worse." Being expelled or not attending school could have serious consequences for refugee students who live in what refugee teachers viewed as unsafe streets.

Motivation and hope

Teachers shared that it was easier to motivate students back in Burma where students were able to get jobs. Student motivation was repeatedly a big concern of the refugee teachers in Malaysia. They explained that motivating students in Malaysia was difficult because (a) refugee students in Malaysia have no clear future in Malaysia; (b) resettlement may or may not happen eventually; and (c) refugees are unable to get legal work. A community teacher explained,

> Working in Myanmar and working in Malaysia as a teacher is very different. In Myanmar, we can tell students to study hard, to do well, and get good opportunities—they can go to University if they get good marks in their high school. Here in Malaysia we can't say that as there is no incentive for them—if they study hard and do well in school, they will just get a little prize. It is difficult for the teachers to encourage the students to study.

Despite challenges, teachers said they try to give their students hope in order to instill motivation to behave well and stay focused in class:

> [Students] think that when they are resettled [in a third country], they will study properly. We tell them that if they don't do it here, they won't be able to do it [in the third country]. We hear feedback from resettled people that we should encourage [students] here to study hard as it is very hard [in the third country].

In summary, some teachers referred to positive management techniques such as rewards, relationship building, self-regulation, instilling motivation and hope, and storytelling as engagement. At the same time, other teachers did not express explicit strategies for engagement and were frustrated by the lack of "concentrating," participation, and attendance in class. The decision to develop this theme around modern classroom management techniques as positive techniques was difficult because we were aware of our own Western bias toward positive alternatives to corporal punishment. However, a combination of modern and traditional techniques seemed to best capture the teachers' voices since some teachers have described using positive techniques as more modern techniques they have come to rely on in recent years, while also feeling the need to defend corporal punishment. The key information extracted

to determine this theme was the long list of positive, modern techniques teachers identified, but also the limitations they saw in only using the modern.

Theme: Traditional Burmese corporal punishment is used to promote teacher authority

The cane is commonly used in Burmese schools and in Burmese refugee schools across the border in Thailand (O'Neal, 2011). The cane is a tough switch cut from bamboo or a tree. In Malaysia, we observed, teachers reported, and UNHCR–Malaysia confirmed that corporal punishment with the cane is common in most Burmese refugee schools. Of the nine Burmese focus group teachers, only two teachers said that, in general, they do not "beat" their students. However, one of these two explained that he actually does cane his students, but only "if they fight." One Malaysian expert interviewed on refugee education explained: "The teachers are scared that without the cane there would be a riot." A community teacher said, "If you don't beat the children [with the cane], you cannot control them so you have to shout at them until you have sore throat pain and you will get fed up." Many refugee teachers of Burmese students argued that corporal punishment with the cane was necessary with Burmese students because Burmese students are especially "stubborn" and only cooperate when the cane is brandished: "I will beat the children. They are very afraid of me. I am just like a warrior. If they misbehave, I will command them to stop and they will." A community teacher said, "If you ever dare to call yourself a teacher you should also dare to use cane when it is necessary. There are times, nothing but cane, needs to be used, but with love and prayer."

Common forms of corporal punishment in refugee schools include hitting the children with the cane on their hands, buttocks, and thighs. When asked whether corporal punishment was effective in changing behavior, one teacher shared that it works sometimes, but teachers have to vary the corporal punishment by hitting other parts of the body.

Refugee teacher cane use in Malaysia may be linked with the cultural system that children must show respect for elders and that respect of elders occurs through physical punishment. A community teacher said, "It is part of our culture that we beat students as punishment. Senior monks do it to younger monks. It is part of our tradition."

When observing a Burmese community classroom, we witnessed a teacher using the cane as a form of attention regulation. For example, the teacher slammed the cane against student desks to help them with the tough transition from a wild recess in the classroom to studying math. The refugee students appeared nonplussed by the loud threat of the cane, but after

enough dramatic cane flourish, the students seemed to slowly get focused on their studies.

Teachers' choice to use the cane also depended on the student. One teacher argued that "there are some students who really need a beating." Some teachers, however, argued that the cane is not so effective in school since Burmese students often get caned more harshly by their parents at home, making them almost immune to the punishment. When asked how they decide which student gets the cane, one teacher said:

> Caning is mostly for boys as they are naughtier. Usually for girls, things such as making them stand up and sit down repeatedly … Also for children from families where the father is always scolding and beating them, this doesn't work if we do the same to them in school. Instead, we will speak softly to them.

An important theme emerged that teachers of refugee students were scared they would lose their authority if they gave up the cane and used more positive approaches to classroom management. Building relationships with students, engaging students in a positive way, and rewarding students seemed to feel uncomfortable to many. They were worried that students would no longer respect them, cooperate, and pay attention as a result. A community teacher said, "Sometimes, when the teachers are close and make it fun for the students, the respect of the students to the teachers is getting less … how to get students' respect even though we make fun and friendly to the students?"

Some teachers felt the new, more positive classroom management styles (such as those encouraged by UNHCR) go against the cultural systems and methods they experienced back in Burma. A community teacher said,

> The method [the UNHCR staff] use is not what we are used to/grow up with. For example, they say that a very disobedient boy, we cannot punish them but we must try to understand them, maybe they have some problems, but our emotion at that time as teachers is not like that because we … are brought up to punish so it is very difficult … We are very focused on being better and better and this becomes our burden/stress.

There is a clear tension between modern (i.e., positive approaches to classroom management) and traditional (i.e., the cane) classroom management. This conflict between old and new made some teachers feel stressed. Many teachers were torn between the cane and more positive, modern classroom management techniques that did not rely on the cane but allowed them to keep their authority in the classroom at the same time. Some teachers argued with their colleagues about the cane, saying that nonviolent methods were more humane and modern and that they wanted to leave behind the techniques of "old Burma."

Harsh verbal classroom management occurs, but not often

The teachers had trouble admitting to using harsh words with students. However, speaking with administration at their schools, it was clear that some teachers yelling and being harsh to the point of verbal abuse was a real, if infrequent, phenomenon. Such yelling may be due to teachers being very overwhelmed, as suggested by a community teacher:

> I don't have enough time to take care of myself. I have to take care of the children, e.g., wash the clothes of the children. At night I have to manage what subjects to teach them the next morning. Have to also plan for their meals. I am very tired. I have to be patient—sometimes I want to yell out.

Some teachers also reported using humiliation and deprivation methods instead of corporal punishment, such as making students stand in front of the room with their hands raised over their heads for a long period of time, not giving them lunch, or making students stand in front of the class and jump up and down, holding their ears in an embarrassing manner.

In summary, harsh verbal and corporal punishment are used across most Burmese refugee schools, with teachers expressing concern that they will lose their authority if they stop using these methods. However, some less traditional approaches are also used, such as building relationships and instilling hope in students. This theme of using corporal punishment to promote teacher authority was easy to decide since the teachers were very explicit about their use of the cane, the intention behind cane use, how the cane promotes their authority, and their concerns about what happens if they do not use the cane.

Overall, we noted that themes were very similar across both the center and community refugee focus groups. Community teachers, however, were refugees whose experience was different in some ways from that of the non-refugee center teachers. Community teachers voiced being overwhelmed by working and living with students 24 hours a day in addition to having fewer resources than center teachers. Community teachers also relied on a different approach to student emotions compared to center teachers.

Discussion

Using a PCSC model, we conducted formative, qualitative research on refugee student socioemotional functioning and refugee teacher classroom management, with the goal of using these results to inform consultation intervention. We also examined ways teachers engender hope and motivation and build relationships with students, in addition to cultural and contextual factors unique to the refugee education environment and classroom management. Four broad themes emerged from the research, and these will be discussed from the PCSC perspective that culture and multiple ecological

levels affect student and teacher behavior. We also discuss implications for consultation, with a focus on training and mental health consultation. First, we address power in the research process and relationships among the researchers, collaborators, and participants.

Power

The framework of relative power between the researchers and participants is an important context for data collection and results. Researchers may have seemed as if they were conducting groups from an expert power base (Erchul & Raven, 1997) due to their educational and Fulbright status. In addition, some participants may have believed that the American researcher would aid in their resettlement to the United States if they joined the focus groups, so they may have viewed researchers as working from a reward power base (Erchul & Raven, 1997), despite the American researcher consistently explaining that she was not a representative or decision maker affiliated with UNHCR or the U.S. embassy.

Regarding the power dynamics of insider/outsider status, the primary researcher was an outsider as an American. She partnered with relative insiders who were Malaysian graduate students and professors. Indeed, a Malaysian professor and graduate student helped lead our refugee focus groups. Merriam et al. (2001) described an insider/outsider partnership in which a Malaysian and White researcher collaborated to interview older Malaysian adults. Through her insider status, the local researcher was able to gain access to and familiarity with participants, while the outsider researcher came from the perspective of relative cultural ignorance, which facilitated participants explaining what insiders might consider common knowledge. Both Merriam et al. (2001) and Kerstetter (2012) described that when it is rare to see a White woman in a community, then being White can invite community member curiosity and a willingness to engage. A similar process may have occurred in our focus groups, but, as Merriam et al. (2001) further explained, culture is not monolithic, and the Malaysian insider collaborators in our study may have been viewed as different too because they came from backgrounds of education and relative wealth and were not refugees. As described in the Methods section, the relative power balance also likely affected the collaborations and decisions made prior to data collection. Indeed, the American researcher's position as a White, well-educated, Fulbright scholar probably influenced our local collaborators agreeing to frame their concerns as socioemotional functioning operationalized as behavior, emotions, and attention. It is also likely that the American researcher's background in socioemotional functioning and emotions swayed the local collaborators to include emotions, given that the many of the local collaborators did not typically use emotions as a framework.

Theme: Societal stressors and the refugee classroom environment exacerbate refugee student socioemotional problems and ability to learn

In keeping with the PCSC link of societal factors with the lives of students, discrimination against refugees by Malaysian refugee policies, authorities, and citizens was reported by teachers and interviewees. They also discussed how the challenging refugee experience in Kuala Lumpur affected the school environment, the refugee students, and their classroom management. For example, teachers said they cannot take their students out for recess or field trips due to Malaysian policies that lead to a lack of safety as a refugee. Teachers also acknowledged that their students were not allowed to go to public schools. Lack of school resources and the hidden nature of the schools contributed to an untenable classroom environment (e.g., excessive heat). Teachers were conscious of societal and familial pressures on refugee students (e.g., the need to drop out of school to earn money for their family; discriminatory policies not allowing refugees to work or access public K–12 or higher education) as obstacles to student learning, motivation, and attendance. Since we completed our research, Low, Kok, & Lee (2014) conducted qualitative interviews with six refugee teachers in Malaysia and found results similar to our themes around the effect of the macrolevel environment on teachers who are refugees, with such teachers experiencing multiple stressors outside the classroom—discrimination by neighbors, fear of arrest or detention. Some received salaries, but these salaries were insufficient for food and utilities. It is notable, though, that teachers did not explicitly link societal pressures with student behavior in our study. Certain links between societal pressures and student outcomes, however, were clear. For example, the societal pressure of Malaysia not allowing refugee parents/caregivers to work legally clearly led to the negative effect of children working at night on their attendance, performance, and behavior.

Theme: Refugee students exhibit internalizing and externalizing emotions and behavior

A meta-analytic study (Lustig et al., 2004) supports the relation of child refugee mental health with internalizing and externalizing problems (e.g., Jensen, Skårdalsmo, & Fjermestad, 2014), including higher rates of PTSD symptoms compared to nonrefugees (e.g., Rothe et al., 2002). Indeed, nonrefugee children across many societies have a reaction to stress of externalizing and internalizing behaviors (e.g., Kim, Conger, Elder, & Lorenz, 2003). Teachers in this study were most concerned about disruptive externalizing emotions and behavior (e.g., anger and rebelliousness), but many reported that students withdrew, similar to internalization. While we did not directly examine the stress and mental health of these

students, it is likely that some of the internalizing and externalizing behaviors resulted from the stress of being a refugee.

It may be culturally adaptive in Burma to regulate emotions in an emotionally contained manner (Ahmed, 2004). Emotion regulation strategies vary by culture in dimensions such as expressivity (Morelen, Zehman, Perry-Parrish, & Anderson, 2012). For example, Korean Americans and Asian Americans displayed fewer observable emotions, such as exuberance and sadness, than European American children (Louie, Oh, & Lau, 2013). Children of some Eastern cultures are less likely to communicate negative emotions than children of Western cultures (Cole, Bruschi, & Tamang, 2002). Therefore, emotion containment may be a function of culture. An alternative or complementary theory may be that refugee children contain their emotions or externalize emotions because they have trouble trusting adult authority, given their mistrust of adult abilities to care for them and the lack of predictable safety in their lives (Lustig et al., 2004). Another alternative is that refugee externalizing and internalizing behavior problems may have been exacerbated by caregiver and teacher corporal punishment, which has been known to make such problems worse among nonrefugee students (Mulvaney & Mebert, 2007). Perhaps refugee students exhibited emotional withdrawal due to their recent flight from Burma, similar to Burmese refugee student emotional concerns and related learning difficulties in Thai refugee schools (International Organization for Migration, 2011). Burmese refugee students' sustained emotional challenges, however, cannot be explained away by cultural differences or refugee flight. In conversations about these results with UNHCR–Malaysia and other refugee experts in Malaysia, many suggested that the following factors may lead to emotional challenges: the effect of harsh Malaysian refugee policies on families and teachers (Low, Kok, & Lee, 2014), the liminal state of uncertainty (Suárez-Orozco,Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011) when stuck in a country hostile to refugees after fleeing another country hostile to ethnic minorities, and not knowing when or whether your family may be resettled to a safer country.

Student misbehavior was a comfortable discussion among focus group teachers, but other emotional issues were identified and discussed more carefully by refugee teachers. A Burmese teacher voiced the opinion that Burmese tend not to address their own and their students' emotions, as has been reported in a number of Asian cultures (Ahmed, 2004; Kiong, Elliot, & Tan, 1996). We observed careful expression of emotion as a shared trait of both Burmese students and Burmese teachers. Care with emotions may be a strength that has helped refugees through many trials, so we suggest treading equally carefully when addressing emotions among Burmese refugee students or teachers. Adjusting teaching to Burmese refugee students' unique patterns of emotion expression and management may prove to be a culturally responsive classroom management approach (Weinstein et al., 2004).

Attention issues ranged from students being internally preoccupied to students being easily distracted by peers. We noticed that teachers lacked training in academic engagement via culturally responsive engagement methods, such as congruent communication (Brown, 2004; Weinstein et al., 2004). A cultural expectation that students pay attention out of respect for teacher authority (O'Neal, 2011) may explain some teachers' lack of conscious engagement. At the same time, some of the teachers identified a number of activities they do to get students excited about, and engaged in, school, such as storytelling and dance.

Theme: Refugee teachers use a mix of traditional and modern classroom management strategies

Some teachers were aware that their traditional Burmese management strategies were different from what they labeled *modern approaches* used outside of Burma. The teachers also seemed aware that their students behaved differently from students back in Burma and had different demands on their lives as refugees. Many refugee teachers felt torn between the traditional, teacher-centered management styles they grew up with (O'Neal, 2011) and a modern, student-centered approach.

Teachers were more comfortable using a student-centered, relationship-focused, and positive reinforcement approach with mild behavior problems. By contrast, they tended to use more traditional management approaches (e.g., the cane) with more serious behavior problems. The "tough love" combination of a positive relationship and being a firm authority seemed important to some refugee teachers, consistent with tough love reported as an effective, culturally responsive classroom management approach with U.S. urban, ethnic minority students (Brown, 2004). Across schools, it was also striking how much teachers wanted to engender student respect toward teachers via firm teacher authority.

The authors were careful not to voice the opinion that school should be more student centered. At the same time, the invisible influence of the American author's position as a Western researcher and the other authors' positions as local Malaysian citizen researchers may unknowingly have drawn out more student-centered opinions than if Burmese refugee researchers had conducted this study (Kersetter, 2012; Merriam et al., 2001). We speculate, however, that the awareness of a shift toward student-centered education by some refugee school directors and teachers occurred before we started our study. Indeed, we suspect that the mere act of leaving Burma opened a whole new world of educational possibilities for refugee teachers. UNHCR–Malaysia also indicated that they put some soft pressure on refugees to use more student-centered practices (UNHCR–Malaysia, 2013).

Theme: Traditional Burmese classroom management is used to promote teacher authority

A clear theme was that refugee teachers were reliant on the cane to manage serious behavior problems. Teachers were concerned that they would lose their authority if they replaced the cane, or the threat of the cane, with more positive management techniques. Burmese reliance on the cane may be similar to that in other Asian societies—tolerance of corporal punishment is greater in Asian than in Western societies while the rate of corporal punishment has declined in the Western world (Kiong et al., 1996). Lansford (2010) indicated that depending on how normative corporal punishment was in their culture, teachers, parents, and children may view corporal punishment as effective discipline, but corporal punishment is related to more behavior problems regardless of the culture. While the relationship between corporal punishment and behavior problems is weaker in countries where corporal punishment is the norm, countries with normative corporal punishment also have higher levels of societal violence (Lansford, 2010), as in Burma. Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [UNHCHR], 1990) and the World Health Organization, in addition to UNHCR, have a goal of reducing corporal punishment, the West is not a role model for corporal punishment abstinence in schools, as many believe. Indeed, corporal punishment is legal in 19 of the states in the United States, and there is disproportionate use of corporal punishment against Black students, almost 3 times as much as against White students (Anderson, 2015).

Guided by the PCSC model (Nastasi et al., 2000), the connection between Burmese corporal punishment culture back in Burma and Burmese refugee classroom management was one of the important results from this study. This result informs the design of future culture-specific consultation in refugee schools by highlighting that Burmese refugee teachers straddle the classroom management of the old Burma they grew up with and new, modern classroom management. At the same time, we addressed our own biases toward alternatives to corporal punishment, and it is important to note that our focus group leaders made a point not to be judgmental when they led discussion around corporal punishment. We noted that corporal punishment was a sensitive issue, probably partly due to focus group participants' implicit awareness of our bias, but also because there was a history of UNHCR–Malaysia voicing a prohibition against cane use in refugee schools, even though UNHCR has no real power to prohibit cane use.

Limitations

There is limited generalizability of these results to nonrefugee or non-Burmese refugee students. At the same time, this study was deliberately designed to examine one cultural group to inform future culture-specific consultation development within that cultural group. A study of refugee teachers and students over time would better explain change in socioemotional functioning and classroom management as they adjust to their new environments. In addition, a multimethod study including quantitative measurement of refugee teacher and student stress and depression would be important. Furthermore, this study is a case study of one urban region, and this model should be compared across different urban areas with different refugee policies to better isolate societal-level influences. Student and parent perspectives on stressors, acceptable behaviors, classroom management, and adjustment concerns would also be informative (Nastasi & Jayasena, 2014). While a number of refugee teachers complained about parents' lack of commitment to education, it would be worth pursuing parent valuing of education given our observations that many refugee families seemed so focused on survival that they may have lacked the long-term perspective necessary to commit to their child's education.

The influence of a power imbalance can disturb the equity of decision-making power in a relationship (Erchul & Raven, 1997). Therefore, it is possible that the American researcher's assumptions and biases about targeting and operationalizing socioemotional functioning were different from those of our local collaborators and their culture. As detailed in the results, the U.S. author's notion of healthy emotion coping was probably different from that of some of our local collaborators. Some of our local collaborators may have framed socioemotional functioning in the classroom more in terms of showing respect for the teacher and their learning process given that teacher respect is a theme in our results. Given the U.S. author's position of power and privilege as a White Fulbright researcher, it is likely that decisions during this goal identification process were driven, at least partly, by the American author's interpretations and agenda. In addition, the collaborators seemed interested in focusing on the American author's area of expertise—classroom management and socioemotional problems and strengths among ethnic minority students—which may have been partly driven by the high value placed on education and hierarchy among many in the education community with whom we worked. At the same time, the local collaborators and teachers seemed to find the operationalization of socioemotional functioning as emotions, attention, and behavior to be user friendly and an accessible way to frame our discussions in focus groups.

Implications

Postconflict refugee education has been identified by UNHCR as a major priority due to the concern that without an education, refugee children will become a "lost generation" (Phillips, 2013). In Germany, alone, 15,000 new teachers will be hired to manage the influx of refugee students from Syria (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Consultation can play a role in helping policy makers, schools, students, and teachers manage postconflict education (O'Neal, Gosnell, & Ng, 2015).

This article highlights some of the postconflict issues facing refugee students and teachers and informs ways we can use a culture-specific consultation approach to help refugee students learn (Nastasi et al., 2000). As the next step in the PCSC process (Nastasi & Jayasena, 2014), we recommend continued consultation and collaboration with an international partner. Guided by a training consultation model, the international partners could, for example, translate the results of this study into a culture-specific model and sustainable intervention such as a refugee-teacher-train-refugee-teacher program in which more senior refugee teachers are empowered to train new refugee teachers in refugee student socioemotional issues and classroom management. In addition, a mental health consultation approach could be used with the administration via program-focused consultation to help empower teachers to manage student mental health and face the many stresses of refugee education via consultee-centered consultation (Caplan & Caplan, 1993). Such consultation approaches could be adapted for refugee education in other countries, with implications for refugee education globally.

Classroom management, however, cannot tackle insurmountable obstacles posed by countries hostile to refugees—the recent waves of refugee students need improved rights and conditions in many postconflict countries. Countrywide efforts are needed to include refugees in government schools, with international financial support for host countries that cannot afford to incorporate an influx of refugee students in their schools (Phillips, 2013). This article holds significant implications for the practice of consultation and intervention development in refugee education in the United States, among other countries. Using consultation not only as a culture-specific intervention approach but also as advocacy (Hoffman et al., 2006) may improve access to and quality of refugee education, with potential long-term consequences for empowerment, job access, and political participation of disenfranchised refugees (Johnson & Stewart, 2007).

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Appendix A

Refugee teacher focus group questions

(1) What are some challenges in teaching refugee students?
(2) What are the challenging parts of working with refugee students around the following:
  (a) Attention: What kind of attention problem do you notice in class? What do the kids do that lets you know they are not paying attention? How do you help them focus, as a teacher?
  (b) Emotion: How do the children's emotions affect their ability to learn? How do they typically express and how do you respond to their negative emotions? How do you help them feel positive emotions such as curiosity, interest, or excitement about their work?
  (c) Behavior: What are the worst behaviors you've seen in class from students, and how do you handle those behaviors, as the teacher? Any particular behaviors you want help with?
(3) What are some of the strengths or abilities you notice about the children in your school/community around attention, emotions, and behavior?
(4) How do the students manage their emotions and problems in class?
  (a) Discussion points: Political, community, familial, and cultural roots of the students' stress, emotions, and problems (e.g., early marriage for girls)?
(5) What classroom management strategies do you use to manage behavior, emotions, or attention?
  (a) Discussion point: If a student does not listen to or cooperate with you, what do you do?
  (b) Discussion points: Management strategies in the context of the teachers' community, school, and classroom environments?
  (c) Discussion point: How were the classroom management strategies different back in Burma, when you were a student?
  (d) Discussion point: What might make it hard to use more positive ways to manage the students' behavior?
  (e) Discussion point: Any other concerns about your classroom management or changing your classroom management?
(6) What are the most effective strategies you've used or seen other teachers use in managing students' attention, emotions, and behavior?
(7) What are the most ineffective strategies you've used or seen others use in managing students' attention, emotions, and behavior?
(8) How do you develop a relationship with each student in your class?
(9) How do you keep their respect for your authority in the class? How might you be concerned you might lose the students' respect if you are more positive in how you handle their misbehavior?
(10) How hopeful about their future are the students?
  (a) How do you help them feel hopeful and motivated to learn?

Appendix B

Informal interview questions

(1) Refugee student socioemotional issues in class?

(2) Refugee family stressors?
(3) Refugee teacher stressors?
(4) Refugee teacher adaptive strengths in classroom management?
(5) Refugee teacher challenges in classroom management?
(6) Refugee classroom environment and resources?
(7) How does treatment of refugees in Malaysia affect refugee schools, students, and their families?
(8) How did student and families' experiences in Burma and fleeing Burma affect them in school in Malaysia?

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