How Syrian Refugees Expand Inclusion and Navigate Exclusion in Jordan
A Framework for Understanding Curricular Engagement

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Following the influx of Syrian refugees starting in 2011, the government of Jordan adopted an inclusive model of refugee education. This model integrates refugees into the national education system such that they study the Jordanian curriculum in Jordanian schools. While the national curriculum limits the possibilities of inclusion for Syrian refugee youth, this paper demonstrates that students assert agency to engage with and respond to the curriculum in creative ways. This article offers a framework of curricular engagement comprising four mechanisms students employ in response to the curriculum: extension of the curriculum, leadership in the curriculum, uncertainty and curricular engagement, and resistance of the curriculum. This framework positions refugee youth as active agents in the classroom with power to construct spaces of inclusion and respond to exclusion, thereby giving new cultural meaning to inclusive refugee education. I argue that in the context of inclusive refugee education that centers on a national curriculum which does not reflect the lives and experiences of many refugees, students function in a fluid educational space where they can include and build on their lived experiences.

Keywords: refugee education, inclusive education, Jordan, Syrian refugees, curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

I sat with Amina in Miss Sawsan's civics lesson focused on social problems faced by youth in Jordan. Amina was one of the many refugee youth studying at Forseh Tanieh[1] (FT), an accelerated educational program in Jordan that includes both Jordanian students as well as refugee youth, primarily Syrians. Miss Sawsan read aloud the underlying causes of social problems listed in the textbook: "family disintegration/divorce; bad friends; unemployment; disputes between siblings; social isolation; deprivation and poverty" (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 170). Amina raised her hand.

"Miss Sawsan, resettlement for refugees is another problem that youth in Jordan face," she added. Miss Sawsan nodded in agreement, adding that several students in the class were waiting to hear from the United Nations about their resettlement options. Miss Sawsan then continued reading from the textbook, stating that "appropriate employment opportunities for youth can be a solution for these youth problems." Although Miss Sawsan had only moments prior acknowledged some of the challenges faced by refugees, her assertion that employment could be a solution instantly excluded them, given the tight legal restrictions around refugee employment. Miss Sawsan was fully aware of the challenges Amina's own family faced finding work, which has pushed them deeper into poverty. Amina told me later she was pleased to be able to bring the refugee experience into the classroom, but she was frustrated by the emphasis on employment, which was actually a social problem for her, her family, and her friends, rather than a solution.

This small interaction reveals the challenges refugee students in Jordan face when studying the official curriculum alongside national students. By official curriculum, I refer to the learning objectives, content, and materials designed and approved by FT in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (Guo & Maitra, 2017). The anecdote above illustrates the curricular tension that exists in contexts of inclusive refugee education, where refugees are integrated into the national education system of their host country. While there are opportunities for refugee youth to contribute to the conversation and expand the lesson to reflect their lived realities, as Amina did in the example above, refugee students also sit through exclusionary lessons that run contrary to their experiences. This model of inclusive refugee education is upheld for its promise of providing high-quality education that recognizes the likelihood of long-term asylum in the

host country (Dryden-Peterson, 2016), but it uses the national curriculum, which is frequently centered around the nation-state and not reflective of refugees' experiences. This tension is particularly salient in Jordan, a country educating millions of refugees in their public schools, including Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Sudanese, and Yemenis.

This article highlights the tension between an inclusive model of refugee education and a national curriculum that only minimally includes refugees. While the official curriculum limits the possibilities of inclusion for Syrian refugee youth, I demonstrate that students assert agency to engage with and respond to the curriculum in creative ways. This article offers a framework of curricular engagement comprising four mechanisms students employ in response to the curriculum: extension of the curriculum, leadership in the curriculum, uncertainty and curricular engagement, and resistance of the curriculum. This framework positions refugee youth as active agents in the classroom with power to construct spaces of inclusion and respond to exclusion, thereby giving new cultural meaning to inclusive refugee education. Thus, in the context of inclusive refugee education that centers around a national curriculum which does not reflect the lives and experiences of many refugees, students function in a fluid educational space where they can include and build on their lived experiences.

In the sections that follow, I overview the Jordanian context and FT, the site of study, and review the relevant literature on curriculum for refugee education. I bring together critical theory in education (Apple, 2013), cultural production (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996), and the ecological view on agency (Biesta and Tedder, 2007) as a framework for analyzing curriculum. I provide a textual analysis of the FT curriculum, highlighting its key themes and analyzing ways that the curriculum is both inclusive and exclusive of refugees. I then draw on ethnographic data to illustrate the four key mechanisms students use to engage with the curriculum and construct new cultural meanings. My conclusion highlights how this article contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between curriculum and inclusive refugee education, pointing to the implications for policy and practice.

RESEARCH CONTEXT: EDUCATING SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN

Since 2011, more than 650,000 Syrians have registered as refugees in Jordan. Over 80 percent of Syrian refugees are urban refugees, living in

cities and towns throughout Jordan, and more than half of them are under the age of 18 (UNHCR, 2020). To accommodate the educational needs of Syrian refugees in urban areas, the government of Jordan opened its schools to Syrian refugee children and youth. Syrian refugees attend Jordanian schools, study the Jordanian curriculum from Jordanian teachers, often alongside Jordanian students. This model of inclusive refugee education was identified by the United Nations as the preferred approach to providing refugee education (UNHCR, 2012). However, within this model of education, Syrian refugees face many challenges, including high registration costs and hidden fees, long distances to school and lack of transportation, harassment and violence from Jordanian students and teachers, and challenges with the language and curriculum (Ahmadzadeh, Çorabatır, Hashem, Al Husseini, & Wahby, 2014; Education Sector Working Group, 2015; Jalbout, 2015).

Syrian refugees also have the option to attend FT, a two-year accelerated education program (AEP) for youth in Jordan—Jordanians and refugees alike—run in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. AEPs are "flexible, age-appropriate programmes, run in an accelerated timeframe, which aim to provide access to education for disadvantaged, over-age, out-of-school children and youth—particularly those who missed out on, or had their education interrupted due to poverty, marginalisation, conflict and crisis.… [They] provide learners with equivalent, certified competencies for basic education" at an age-appropriate level (Accelerated Education Working Group, 2017, p. 7). AEPs are a common model for education in emergency settings and have been established by the ministries of education to support the education of Syrian refugees around the region (SB Overseas, 2018; UNICEF, n.d.). The FT program is unique in that it includes Jordanian students in the preferred model of inclusive refugee education.

FT was established to provide education for Jordanian students who had dropped out of school and wanted to continue their education, but were ineligible to return to the public school system.[2] It caters primarily to population of low-income and marginalized youth. FT expanded its reach to include refugees starting in 2003, with the wave of Iraqi refugees entering the country. Students attend their designated FT center two hours a day, five days a week, throughout the entire year, including summer. Like most schools in Jordan, FT classes are segregated by sex and this research focused primarily on FT centers for girls. The shortened hours of the school day allow students to attend school while ensuring time to hold jobs or

support household obligations. Students graduate FT with a tenth grade certificate from the Ministry of Education and are then eligible to complete their public school education or attend the national vocational training program. FT students comprise of Jordanians and refugees, including Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians. At the time of my research, approximately 40 percent of FT students were Syrian refugees.

FT's two-year curriculum covers material from grades one through ten, in four primary subjects: Arabic, math, English, and computers. The program consists of three levels that approximately correspond to grades one through five, six through eight, and nine and ten. The curriculum is written collaboratively by FT and the Ministry of Education and reflects an abridged version of the public school curriculum. Although students are required to pass an exam written by FT and the MoE to move from one level to the next and to receive the 10th grade certificate, the exams and the course content are not as stringent as the public school. The day to day learning is not as strict and structured as it is in the public school and students face much less pressure than in public school, as they do not receive regular grades or much homework in FT. FT emphasizes the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as building vocational and entrepreneurial skills.

FT teachers are all public school teachers, certified by the Ministry of Education, who elect to work additional hours for FT for additional pay. FT teachers receive training from FT in student-centered pedagogies that seek to make learning participatory for all students. Drawing on principles of critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000) and social-emotional learning, FT strives to provide a supportive and engaging learning experience for all its students. Teachers create "a welcoming and safe environment in which youth [feel] valued, respected for who they [are], encouraged and supported" (Magee and Pherali, 2017, p. 7). Through the use of activities and in-class discussions as well as efforts to relate learning to students' lives, FT strives to cultivate an environment where students are respected and, as a result, comfortable engaging in the classroom (Cohen, 2019).

CURRICULUM AND REFUGEE EDUCATION

There is limited research that analyzes curriculum in the context of refugee education in countries of first asylum.[3] Scholars and practitioners of refugee education initially called for the use of curriculum from the country of origin (Sinclair, 2001; Aguilar and Retamal, 1998), typically

understood as a way to prepare refugees for future repatriation (Dryden-Peterson, Adelman, Bellino, & Chopra, 2019). The Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies asserted that curriculum could "face both ways," meaning that it included aspects of curriculum from both the country of origin and country of asylum (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2010, p. 54). However, the evolving nature of conflict has led to more protracted refugee situations, thus shifting that debate; today, scholars and policy makers alike recognize that integration of refugees into national school systems of the host country provides the best opportunity to prepare students for long-term displacement in the host country (Dryden-Peterson, 2016; Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019; UNHCR, 2012). The UNHCR Global Education Strategy (2012) called for the "integration of refugee learners within national systems where possible and appropriate" (p. 8), suggesting that the inclusion of refugees into national systems will increase access to education, offer greater protection to refugee children, and allow for a focus on quality education not only for refugees but for the entire education system in the host country. While some research has looked at the challenges refugee children face in these inclusive education settings, particularly with teacher-centered pedagogy and language barriers, limited attention is given to students' responses to these challenges and their educational experiences (Dryden-Peterson, 2015; Mendenhall et al., 2015).

Other scholars have looked more closely at curricular content and argued that curriculum for refugees must be relevant to refugees' lives and lived experiences. Scholars assert that a relevant curriculum should be accredited and offer formal certification from the Ministry of Education (Nicholson, 2007). Curriculum can be made relevant to refugee students' lives by considering the varying futures they may face and ensuring that they are prepared for multiple possibilities (Dryden-Peterson, et al., 2019). This can be done through vocational training and professional skills along with life skills and values education that will enable refugees to make positive contributions to their communities, whether in their country of origin, host country, or country of resettlement (Karanja, 2010). In Zakharia's (2013) analysis of a Shi'a school in post-conflict Lebanon, she asserted that the curriculum supported marginalized communities by giving them opportunities to critically analyze and reflect upon their experiences of direct and structural violence. She argued that this sort of relevant curriculum, infused with a social justice component, can support inclusion and equity. Other scholars posit that by providing a curriculum relevant

to students' lives and education may foster a sense of inclusion (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012; Arnot & Pinson, 2005; Block, Cross, Riggs, & Gibbs, 2014). Such curricula should promote respect for diversity and reflect a multitude of experiences. This article contributes to the literature by centering the analysis on the context of inclusive refugee education in the particular case of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Further, I illuminate the tension that exists between the formal curriculum employed in the context of inclusive refugee education and student engagement with curriculum.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND AN ECOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF AGENCY

It is generally accepted that curriculum is not a neutral collection of knowledge to be disseminated to students; rather, it is a purposeful selection of ideas that seek to legitimate and reproduce dominant social, political, and economic ideologies through schooling (Apple, 1993). The official curriculum, that is, the curriculum as it is prescribed by the state, is typically written by individuals in positions of power and serves to legitimate and enforce a particular set of politics and ideology (Guo & Maitra, 2017). It produces knowledge of dominant social groups and subjects that reinforce the hegemonic cultural forms of those groups (Meshulam & Apple, 2010). In doing so, the curriculum seeks to shape students into particular types of citizens and legitimizes certain ways of knowing and understanding the world. Thus, school curriculum holds power in in the ways in which it selectively presents knowledge as legitimate and dominant (Apple, 2013).

Schooling and its curricula may be designed to reproduce dominant cultural ideologies, but scholars have argued that they are also sites of struggle through which students and teachers participate in the production of alternative forms of culture (Levinson et al., 1996). While there are reproductive efforts embedded in curricular design and enactment, Giroux contends that power is not unidimensional but, rather, students engage with the curriculum through a social process by which "different social groups both accept and reject the complex mediations of culture, knowledge, and power that give form and meaning to the process of schooling" (Giroux, 1983, p. 62). Through this process, students build on their own lived experiences to engage with the curriculum and make it meaningful to them. Thus, examining curricular engagement entails an analysis of the ways that students embrace, contest, reject, and resist the official curriculum and, in doing so, produce new cultural forms.

Embedded within the theory of cultural production (Levinson et al., 1996) is the notion that individuals do not passively uphold and reproduce curricular ideologies, but rather their agency renders them a part of a dynamic process of navigating, reshaping, and resisting constraints of social structure, such as curriculum. Thus, this article illuminates and explores the tension between curriculum as a structural means of state-driven cultural transmission and the agency of students to engage with the curriculum and make it meaningful. I employ an ecological view of agency (Biesta and Tedder, 2007) whereby the ability to achieve agency depends on the interaction of individual capacities and ecological conditions. As Biesta and Tedder explain, "[Actors always act by means of their environment … the achievement of agency will always result in the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations" (Biesta and Tedder, 2007, p. 137). The extent to which students assert agency varies based on a range of contextual factors, thereby shifting over time (Priestley, Edwards, Priestley, & Miller, 2012). Thus, students engage with the curriculum in different ways, tied to the social and political context as well as their own individual experiences. Thus, the ecological view of agency illuminates the delicate balance between curricular structure and individual agency, while recognizing the capacity of individuals to take assert themselves and take action. This approach sheds light on the conflicting actions of students and allows for the possibility of both curricular acceptance and rejection.

RESEARCH METHODS

The data for this article comes from a year-long ethnographic study conducted from September 2016 to August 2017 that examined the inclusion and exclusion of Syrian refugee youth in FT. This article seeks to answer the following questions: (a) How does the official curriculum shape possibilities of inclusion/exclusion for Syrian refugee youth? (b) How do students engage with the curriculum in response to this inclusion/exclusion? The study took place at three FT centers: the Hashemite Youth Center (HYC), the Rufayda Center, and the Asma Center.

This study draws on participant observations and semi-structured interviews with FT students and teachers. I conducted participant observations once a week at the Rufayda Center and Asma Center and twice a week at the HYC, where I observed classes and participated in class

activities. During observations, I paid attention to the teachers' approach to and enactment of the curriculum and the ways in which students engaged with and responded to it. Through informal and unstructured conversations with students and teachers before and after class, I learned about their educational experiences at FT and the ways in which they understood the curriculum.

I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with 40 FT students, including 17 Jordanian students, 21 Syrian refugee students and two students from other national backgrounds. During interviews, I asked students questions about their experiences in the classroom in addition to questions about key themes from the curriculum, their understanding of those themes, and their role in the classroom. I also interviewed seven teachers from the three centers and one administrator, asking specific questions about the curriculum and how they approach it and broader questions about key curricular themes. Interviews served to augment observational data and provide greater insight into the educational experiences of students and teachers. I audio recorded all formal interviews, which took place in Arabic, and worked with a research assistant to translate and transcribe the interviews in English afterward. Working with an assistant helped me understand the nuances of the language and ensure accuracy in my analysis.

In addition to observations and interviews, this study draws on a content analysis of the Integrated Curriculum (IC), which teaches religion, civics, social studies, and vocational studies (Ministry of Education, 2004a; Ministry of Education, 2004b). It includes 16 units that are used across the three levels of FT (see Appendix 1) and addresses a range of topics including rights and responsibilities of citizens, the structure of Jordanian government, careers in Jordan, and Islam. I selected the IC as its emphasis on social studies spoke most directly to social life in Jordan and was most relevant to issues of inclusion and exclusion (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2004). I read through the entirety of both textbooks in Arabic and paid attention to the general themes and ideas that emerged. I then worked with a translator to translate segments of the text into English, including readings, activities, and notes to the teachers.

I coded and analyzed across the data (including interviews, field notes, and textbooks) through an inductive coding process using ATLAS.ti. As I read through the data, I organized it by various themes, including citizenship and patriotism, Islam, and employment, which reflected key themes in the textbook. I also coded for themes of leadership and aspirations, which reflected ways that students engaged with the curriculum. I systematically

sorted through each code and engaged in pattern coding, grouping the first cycle of codes into a smaller number of categories, themes, and constructs (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). The examples presented in this article are selections from the data that represent the broader data set and demonstrate key themes and trends from my analysis.

A NOTE ON POSITIONALITY

As I began this research, which I conducted completely in Arabic, I worried that my American identity would raise suspicions about me and my intentions, as occurs frequently to researchers in the Middle East (Herrera, 2010; Hett & Hett, 2013; Radsch, 2009). I was concerned this suspicion would be exacerbated if people connected my Jewish name to particular ideas of Zionism. While some certainly expressed reluctance to speak with me, overall, I was able to build strong relationships with many teachers and students at the FT centers. My American identity positioned me as an outsider, which allowed some research participants to speak more freely with me, though it certainly evoked quiet caution from others. Throughout my research, I remained aware of and tried to address the unequal power relations between us as well as the ethical dilemmas and practical challenges of conducting research in a highly politicized environment such as this one (Norman, 2009).

AN ANALYSIS OF THE FT CURRICULUM

My curricular analysis of the two IC textbooks used across the three levels of FT aligns with other scholarly analysis of education in Jordan (Adely, 2012; Shirazi, 2012; Kubow, 2010) and reveals three primary themes in the curriculum: Islamic beliefs and values, Jordanian citizenship and nationalism, and employment. In this section, I provide a brief overview of these three themes to illustrate how they work together to shape parameters of inclusion and exclusion for FT students. I show that the lessons around Islam emphasize Muslim unity and serve to reinforce an inclusive discourse among Muslim students. While Syrian and Jordanians ascribe to a diverse range of religions, all students in my three research sites were Sunni Muslim; therefore, the notion of Muslim unity played a potentially inclusive role in these centers. In contrast, lessons about Jordanian citizenship and employment can be exclusive of Syrian refugee youth who may not feel a sense of connection to Jordan and have limited employment

opportunities. Taken together, these curricular themes create a complex and nuanced picture of who is included and who is not.

It is important to note that the textbooks used in FT were published in 2004, well before the recent influx of Syrian refugees and even before the influx of Iraqi refugees in 2006. Perhaps it should not be expected that the textbooks would address issues of forced migration that are prevalent in society today. Yet, during the time of my research, these textbooks were in use in FT as part of the formal curriculum distributed by the MoE. Therefore, my intention is not to anachronistically read a text from 2004 through the contemporary political and social situation, but rather to shed light on how the text is read and understood by students and teachers today.

"Muslims Are All Brothers in Religion": Islamic Beliefs and Values in the Curriculum

The religion of Islam is featured prominently across the textbooks, presenting a particular set of Islamic beliefs and values and, in doing so, asserting a sense of unity among Sunni Muslims across nation-states. The curriculum establishes the importance of adhering to Sunni Islam (Adely, 2012) and serves to legitimize the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan by connecting the monarchy to the Prophet Mohammed (Anderson, 2001). The curriculum explicitly and implicitly reinforces the unity of Muslims, thereby opening the possibility of inclusion for FT students with a Muslim identity, both Jordanians and Syrians.

The textbooks include various lessons on the unity of all Muslims, despite their nationality. One lesson focuses on treating people properly, citing the Quran to emphasize communal responsibility toward Muslims in the community, regardless of citizenship status. In another lesson, the textbook states: "Muslims are all brothers in religion, even if their colors, countries, and languages differ. They believe in one God and pray in the same direction" (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p. 45). That is, regardless of differing backgrounds, their religious affiliation unites them together.

The curriculum also reinforces the centrality of Islamic beliefs and values to life in Jordan by using verses from the Quran and Hadith to teach secular subjects. For example, in the unit about careers, the curriculum highlights the value of trustworthiness at work, linking it to particular Islamic values. The lesson begins with a story about the Prophet Mohammad, who was loved and trusted by all. Khadija "heard of his trustworthiness" and hired him to work for her (2004a, p. 202). The text states that "he was sincere in his work … which made her respect him and love him" (p. 202). Thus, a lesson about the value of honesty at work is tied to Islam.

The predominance of Islam in the textbooks, and throughout the curriculum at large, creates discursive opportunities for inclusion for all Muslim students—whether they are from Jordan, Syria, or elsewhere in the Muslim diaspora.

"I Love You, My Country": Jordanian Citizenship and Nationalism in the Curriculum

A second theme of the curriculum that shapes parameters of inclusion is Jordanian citizenship and nationalism. The centrality of Jordanian patriotism in the curriculum, and the limited attention given to (forced) migration (Kubow & Kreishan, 2014), discursively excludes Syrian refugees. Moreover, the curriculum focuses entirely on Jordanian citizens, and does not allow for the possibility of noncitizens living in the country.

The textbooks open possibilities to exclude Syrian refugees through its use of possessive language. The textbooks make frequent reference to the country of Jordan as "your country," "my country," or "my nation." A lesson about Jordanian geography shows a map of Jordan and asks students, "Identify *your* city's name on the map" and "What is the sea that is in *your* country" (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p. 147, emphasis added). There is a lesson about the country entitled "I Love You, My Nation" and one about Amman called "My Nation's Capital." The use of possessive pronouns asserts that the reader should have a possessive connection to the country. This focus on the personal and/or historical connections to Jordan potentially excludes many refugees who may not feel that Jordan is "their country."

The textbooks focus on the role of the state and its laws in serving and protecting its citizens. In doing so, the textbooks conceal the presence of noncitizens in the country. They define a citizen as "a person who lives in a country and holds its nationality" (2004b, p. 76), thereby excluding non-Jordanians living in the country. For example, the textbook asserts that the state functions to "provide services *to citizens* such as education, health care, water … protection of individual freedoms" (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 76, emphasis added). Specifying that these services are for citizens inherently leaves out noncitizens. There is no mention of ways that noncitizens, such as refugees, might access public services or receive protection from the state. These lessons, then, may be viewed as irrelevant or exclusive by Syrian refugee youth in the classroom.

Finally, throughout the curriculum, the nation is intertwined with religion, drawing on Islam to legitimize the nation and, therefore, the

importance of a Jordanian national identity. As Kubow (2010) argues, the work that textbooks do to connect Islamic identity to the nation seeks to foster obedience to the state. This connection can be seen in a lesson on citizenship that notes that citizens have a responsibility to the state to uphold Islamic values and that Islam "should be practiced as a way of life" (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 81). Another lesson connects the nation to Islam by asserting that the state's defense institutions guard the borders out of obedience to God. In this way, loyalty to God legitimizes the actions of the Jordanian Armed Forces and their efforts to protect the nation, potentially including Jordan's intervention in the Syrian Civil War and Jordan's border policies toward Syrian refugees. Thus, the connection between citizenship and religion poses a tension for many Muslim refugee youth who, on the one hand, may feel a loyalty to Islamic values and lessons, yet may not feel a loyalty to the state of Jordan and may, in fact, hold resentment toward their military actions or border policies.

"Work Is a Means of Contributing to Society": Neoliberal Parameters of Inclusion and Exclusion

A third prominent theme in the curriculum is the strong value placed on employment. Indeed, as Hantzopoulos and Shirazi (2014) illustrated, education reform in Jordan has been based on a neoliberal agenda that positions education as an effort to develop human capital and contribute to economic growth. Neoliberalism is an economic ideology driven by "the belief that the market operates most efficiently and effectively without regulation," which seeks to reconstitute education as a part of the market (Lakes and Carter, 2011, p. 108). As I illustrate below, the neoliberal ideology is illustrated in the curriculum in the ways it upholds the importance of obtaining and valuing employment. This element of the curriculum also has potential to exclude refugees in light of the complexities around their employment possibilities in Jordan (International Labor Organization, 2015; Barbelet, Hagen-Zanker, & Mansour-Ille, 2018).

The curriculum stresses the importance of employment through multiple units and activities that discuss careers and build skills for income generation. These units send a message that working is an essential aspect of the students' future. To encourage participation in the labor market, the textbooks emphasize the value of work and glorify employment. The first lesson in the unit on work and workers is entitled "Love of Work" and begins as follows: "Workers love their job because it makes them feel alive and useful to society" (Ministry of Education, 2004a, p. 223). In a lesson

on *halal* earnings, students are instructed to fill in the blanks below. I have emphasized the correct answers:

1. The most honorable earning is the earning a man makes _____ (asleep, *with his hands*)
2. The working person is _____ than the unemployed person (worse, *better*)
3. We _____ with our hands (become lazy, *work*). (2004a, p. 204)

This activity stresses not only that work is important, but also sends an explicit message that those who do not work are lazy and inferior. Yet, for Syrian refugees, opportunities to work in Jordan are complex. At the time of this research, they were only allowed to work legally in a limited number of sectors. Many do work informally, but they often accept jobs with poor working conditions, low wages, and other exploitative conditions (Abu Hamad et al., 2017). Thus, the emphasis on valuing work may be received with mixed perspectives by Syrian refugees.

The value of work is further emphasized by connecting work to Islamic values, once again creating possible tensions between the various subject positions constructed by the textbook. The textbook asserts that "Islam ties work with worship and urges Muslims to work in many sectors, such as agriculture, trade, etc." (Ministry of Education, 2004b, p. 161). In a lesson about the religious value of honesty, honesty is explained through acts of an honest merchant. In this way, the textbook ties the values of Islam directly to the actions of a worker, pointing to their interconnection. By connecting work to religion, the curriculum legitimizes employment as a religious aspect of life in Jordan.

As these three themes have shown, the official ideology inscribed in the textbooks puts forth the values of a unified Muslim community, a patriotic love of Jordan, and a desire to work toward the country's development. Although the theme of Islamic beliefs and values may create an opportunity to include Syrian refugees in the narrative, the themes of nationalism and employment have potential to exclude Syrians. Moreover, the intertwined nature of the three themes constructs a tension between inclusion and exclusion through which Syrian refugee students must navigate.

EXPANDING INCLUSION AND NAVIGATING EXCLUSION: MECHANISMS OF CURRICULAR ENGAGEMENT

While the official curriculum imposes a particular perspective and set of ideologies rooted in nationalist priorities, schools are not merely reproductive and educational actors are not passive recipients; rather, schools are sites of cultural negotiation and production where students assert agency

to shape their educational experiences and participate in the production of new knowledges and cultures (Kincheloe & McClaren, 2002; Levinson et al., 1996; Priestley et al., 2012). Through my research, I identified a framework of four mechanisms through which students engaged with the curriculum and responded to potentially exclusive messages: extension, leadership, uncertainty, and resistance. Through these mechanisms, Syrian refugee students creatively engaged with the curriculum in ways that built opportunities for inclusion and responded to exclusion.

Extension as a Means of Curricular Engagement

The first mechanism through which students engaged with the curriculum was the extension of the curriculum. Through in-class discussions and activities, Syrian refugee students inserted themselves and their lived experiences into the lessons by making comparisons to life in Syria or sharing their experiences as refugees, thereby expanding the lessons to include themselves. Teachers provided ample opportunities for students to contribute to class discussions and bring in their own experiences, which Syrian students did by talking about Syria and inserting their experiences into the broader classroom narrative.

During a social studies lesson on agriculture and livestock in Jordan, I saw Madha, a Syrian refugee student at the HYC, extend the curriculum, and her teacher, Miss Nivin, embrace this flexible curricular engagement during a lesson from the textbook entitled "Agriculture and Livestock in Jordan." This lesson is part of a broader unit on the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan that taught about Jordan through a patriotic lens. Miss Nivin taught the lesson by eliciting information about students' experiences with agriculture, asking them "Who grows things at home?" Madha raised her hand and described the vast fields her family had back in Syria. Miss Nivin accepted Madha's curricular extension and expanded it further by asking Madha questions about her fields in Syria, and Madha smiled proudly while she described the stretches of greenery where she would pick fruits and vegetables with her family. This inspired Madha's friend, Isra, to share her agricultural experiences in Syria, too. Madha and Isra's contributions allowed for an extended discussion of agriculture across Jordan and Syria, and Miss Nivin used this as an opportunity to discuss Jordan's history of importing produce and other commodities from Syria. While the lesson was meant to focus on agriculture in Jordan, the discussion-based structure of the lesson enabled Madha to share her own experiences, thus pushing to extend the curriculum in a way that included her lived experience.

When I talked to Madha about this lesson in our interview, she expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak about agriculture in Syria. She felt happy that Miss Nivin engaged her in the conversation and allowed her space to share about her life in Syria. Madha explained, "It was nice. We [Syrian students] were the ones doing all the talking … because we knew about it best." Although the curriculum focused on Jordanian agriculture, Madha was able to bring in her own experience, and Miss Nivin drew on her own knowledge and that of her students to expand and strengthen the conversation.

This vignette encapsulates the ways that students in FT demonstrated flexibility to extend the curriculum in ways that were inclusive of Syrian students and reflected their lived experiences. Through the many instances I saw of this curricular extension, Syrian refugee youth asserted agency to carve a space for themselves in the classroom, thereby cultivating a space that included and reflected their experiences.

Leadership as a Means of Curricular Engagement

A second way that refugee youth in FT asserted their agency in the classrooms and creatively engaged with the curriculum was by taking on leadership roles in the classroom. Refugee youth did this in numerous ways: by volunteering to do extra tasks, by helping their friends with difficult materials, and by formally leading small groups of students. I saw numerous instances of Syrian refugee students taking leadership roles in their classroom; I present the vignette of Raneem, below, as an illustrative example.

Raneem, a Syrian refugee student at the Rufayda Center, often volunteered to take on extra tasks in the center or serve as a role model in the class. For example, when working in small groups, Raneem like to take a leadership role in her group and help other students when they struggled with a concept. Because of this, teachers frequently asked Raneem to work one-on-one with a student who needed extra help. According to Raneem, taking this leadership role among students helped her build relationships with them. She told me:

> I teach [the girls] in a different way [from the teachers]. If they are upset, I ask them, "Why are you upset?" and I talk to them and help them. After doing that, I felt like the girls felt close to me and they would open their hearts to me. (Interview, July 24, 2017)

Taking on leadership roles in the class enabled Raneem to grow close to students and, as a result, she felt included as a valuable member of the classroom community.

In addition to helping students with academics in the class, Raneem also helped to organize an art exhibit based on the extracurricular art activities students did at the Rufayda Center. Raneem set up a display of the students' artwork and arranged for some of the students to recite poetry they had written. They invited parents and other community members to come see the display. Raneem was very proud of this exhibit and felt that it helped her carve a space for herself in the classroom. As a leader in the classroom, she positioned herself as a vital member of the classroom community.

By taking leadership roles in the classroom and in the school, Syrian students like Raneem supported their peers and built a position for themselves as valuable members of the community. By taking on leadership roles in the classroom, gaining attention and encouragement from their teachers, and being relied on for help by their peers, refugee students made space for themselves where they could contribute their own knowledge and experiences, thereby furthering their integration and inclusion in the classroom

Uncertainty around the Curriculum

A third way in which Syrian students engaged with and responded to the curriculum was through a sense of uncertainty, which primarily tied themes of citizenship or employment. Although some refugee youth participated in these lessons and shared their reflections on Jordan or professional aspirations, many Syrian refugees privately revealed ambivalence or confusion regarding these lessons.

During a lesson on the capital city of Amman, Dana, a Syrian refugee student at the Youth Center, listened attentively, answered questions when asked, and took notes as instructed by her teacher. After class, however, I asked her how she felt learning about Amman and she expressed conflicting feelings, pointing to her uncertainty around the topic. Dana began by stating that it was valuable to learn about the city in which she lives. She continued, however, by explaining that she does not like Amman and does not care to know much about it. She declared that "Amman is ugly.… You look out and all you see is trash." She compared the dirty, urban landscape of Amman to her home in Syria, which she said was full of trees and greenery, expressing her longing for home and her hope to return soon. Although she began the conversation appreciating the knowledge she gained about Amman, she ended by wondering aloud why she bothers to study about Amman when she sees her future in Syria.

I also observed uncertainty tied to the curricular theme of employment. While many refugees may have held hope for economic participation in Jordan, they also recognized the complexities embedded within these messages. When I interviewed Raneem, she explained her future plans as follows:

> I came to the center and they encouraged me a lot to become a student in the vocational training. So, in October, I will start vocational training. Well, I might register, but I might not. There is a possibility that I could go back to Syria or that I will be resettled in Germany. Well, I was rejected from resettlement in Germany. Maybe I can go to Syria or maybe I'll just stay in Jordan, I don't really know. I have dreams of becoming a university professor, but that won't happen. But I could also study pastry-making or jewelry making in vocational training and be successful.

Embedded in Raneem's explanation is a significant sense of uncertainty. While Raneem was encouraged to attend vocational training, she was not sure if she would enroll and she did not know what she wanted to study. This rested on the larger uncertainty of whether she would stay in Jordan to attend vocational training, seek repatriation to Syria, or resettle in Germany. In the interview, she explained that in each possible future she envisioned a different career, which required different training. Thus, pastry skills developed through vocational training in Jordan would not serve her in Syria where she would pursue a career in cosmetology. If she resettled in Germany, she imagined she could attend university and become a doctor.

Both Dana's ambivalence toward studying about Amman and Raneem's indecision about her future occupation are reflective of their "unknowable future" (Dryden-Peterson, 2017, p. 21), the long-term uncertainty that refugees face. Refugee trajectories no longer align with the traditional pathways laid out for refugees, repatriation, local integration, or resettlement. Rather, "they are non-linear and complex permutations of migration, exile, and consistently re-imagined futures" (p. 21). Because of Dana's unknowable future, she held conflicting feelings regarding the study of a city that may not be her home for very long. Raneem's unknowable future led her to imagine three different versions of her future employment possibilities, based on where she could possibly be living.

Resistance as Means of Curricular Engagement

A final practice of curricular engagement was resistance. That is, sometimes refugee students responded to curricular material by refusing to

participate in the learning. I observed instances in which Syrian refugees silently refused to participate in class discussion, drew Syrian and Palestinian flags during lessons, or even skipped class to avoid exclusive course content.

One illustrative instance of curricular resistance occurred at the Rufayda Center, when Miss Haya, drawing on materials from the textbook, led a discussion about the police as public servants who protect and defend the people of Jordan and keep them safe. She asserted that police presence should make the students feel safe in their homes and their communities. In the discussion, students shared their love and appreciation for the police and police presence in the community. Yamama, a Syrian student typically quick to participate in class, remained silent.

Miss Haya instructed students to make posters illustrating the role of the police in the community. She paired Yamama with two Jordanian students, Zayneb and Basma. Yamama was an artist and typically embraced the opportunity for creative work. In this activity, however, the Jordanian students enthusiastically planned the poster, while Yamama doodled silently in her notebook. She drew hearts and flowers around a crying eye with the word Syria in it.

As they worked on their poster, I asked the students if they really felt that the police kept them safe. Zayneb and Basma responded enthusiastically that they trusted the police and appreciated their protection. I turned to Yamama, who initially nodded in agreement but then noted that the police in Syria did not keep people safe. When Miss Haya asked students to present their posters, Zayneb and Basma went to the front of the room to share their drawing. Miss Haya invited Yamama to join them, but she refused.

This was an instance in which the teacher drew on the curriculum to reinforce the hegemonic, nationalist ideology embedded within the curriculum (Apple, 2004). In doing so, she (perhaps unintentionally) asserted the dominance of the state, without considering (a) the ways that the state—and the police in particular—plays an oppressive role in surveilling, threatening, arresting, and even deporting Syrian refugees in Jordan (Swan, 2017; JIF, 2018) or (b) the violent history of police in Syria. By not engaging with a form of domination, Yamama's resistance to this lesson highlights the ways that the oppressed are not passive recipients of the curriculum, but rather active agents in the classroom (Giroux, 2006). Her resistance reminds us that "power is never unidimensional; it is exercised both as a mode of domination and as an act of resistance" (Giroux, 2006,

p. 36). This resistance to the content and themes of the curriculum, then, is another mechanism by which Syrian refugee youth engaged with the curriculum. Rather than making space for themselves in a curriculum that excluded them, they refused to participate and legitimize that knowledge.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Inclusive refugee education, where refugees are integrated into national education systems, is upheld as the ideal model for refugee education that will cultivate access to high quality education (UNHCR, 2012). While this globally positioned goal is noble, inclusive refugee education at the local level limits the possibilities of inclusion and belonging (Dryden-Peterson, et al., 2019). Through their integration into the national education system, schooling and its curricular content is controlled by the government (Johnson, 2013), such that refugees study a curriculum designed to legitimize the state and assert and maintain its political, social, and cultural dominance (Apple, 2013). The national curriculum privileges particular, national identities and marginalizes others (Kumashiro, 2000), which, as I have suggested in this article, creates an exclusive environment for refugees, who are typically not represented in the national environment and, therefore, positioned as outsiders. While inclusive refugee education seeks to offer high-quality education for refugee students, it must be acknowledged that schooling is not inherently beneficial, and simply integrating refugee students into the national schooling system has limitations. As I have demonstrated through my analysis of curriculum, it can exclude children's lived experiences, cultivate further uncertainty and confusion, and assert political, cultural, or social domination over minoritized and otherized groups. Schooling can reinforce a student's status as an outsider.

In the face of structural, curricular constraints drawn by the national curriculum that create possibilities for exclusion, students are agentic beings who navigate and respond to these boundaries in different ways. In this way, curriculum is not merely reproductive; rather, students, too, hold power to negotiate the curriculum and respond to curriculum. This article has presented a framework consisting of four ways in which students negotiate and engage with the curriculum, at times making it more inclusive and, at other times, acknowledging and responding to its limitations. As students are not a homogenous entity bound to a singular response (Bajaj, 2008), refugee youth may engage with one mechanism of the framework or multiple mechanisms. Moreover, the ecological view of agency reinforces

the ways in which the same students may respond to oppressive messages differently at different times, depending on a range of contextual factors (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). The framework of curricular engagement I have presented highlights ways that students act to make spaces for themselves in schooling but also demonstrate their ambivalence toward and rejection of the national narratives embedded in curriculum. It also shows how the same students navigate the curricular structure and schooling experience in myriad, shifting ways.

This article makes two central contributions to the study of education and holds implications for refugee education policy and practice. First, I have presented a framework of curricular engagement that can be used in educational research in and beyond refugee settings to analyze student response to and engagement with the curriculum. This framework highlights the ecological agency of students, positioning them as key actors in the process of cultural production in the classroom. It illuminates myriad and shifting ways that students work to create inclusion and respond to exclusion. Centering analysis on refugee students who hold power to reshape and mold the curriculum in various ways builds our understanding of refugees as active agents rather than passive recipients of educational aid.

Second, recognizing the agency of refugee students to navigate inclusion and respond to exclusion should not take away from the need for curricular reform. My curricular analysis demonstrates that even though the UNHCR global strategy for refugee education prioritizes the inclusion of Syrian refugees in national education systems, physical inclusion is not sufficient to create an inclusive environment. The curriculum serves as another national mechanism that limits the possibilities of inclusion. In the case of Jordan, I have shown that Syrian refugees remain absent from the curriculum, rendering it only somewhat relevant and possibly exclusive to the experiences and backgrounds of Syrian refugees. Without revising the national curriculum in a way that better reflects the experiences of refugees in the country, holds sociopolitical and cultural relevance to their lives, students (Bajaj & Bartlett, 2017), responds to the needs of refugee students, and cultivates a welcoming environment for them, the promise of inclusive refugee education as a means of high quality education for refugee students is limited.

In the absence of national curricular reform, teachers and leaders in the context of refugee education can employ student-centered pedagogies that lend themselves to student agency and engagement. That is, when teachers make room for the active participation of students, they are able to extend

and lead the curriculum in ways that make it relevant and inclusive. Similarly, it allows space for students to doubt or reject a curriculum that is exclusive of their lived realities. Through student-centered pedagogy, refugee students are able to navigate inclusion and exclusion in the official curriculum.

CONCLUSION

Through this article, I have argued that the three primary curricular themes of Islamic beliefs and values, Jordanian citizenship and nationalism, and employment shape complex notions of inclusion and exclusion for Syrian refugees where they are simultaneously rendered visible as part of a Muslim community and invisible as noncitizens. I drew on ethnographic data to present a framework of student curricular that builds on and elevates their lived experiences. The framework includes four mechanisms through which refugee students demonstrate their active engagement with the curriculum and respond to the nuances of inclusion and exclusion: extension, leadership, uncertainty, and resistance. Through these mechanisms, students engage in the social process of cultivating inclusion and responding to exclusion. I demonstrate that refugee students are not passive recipients of the curriculum but, rather, active participants with agency to engage with the curriculum in various ways. With the educational priority placed on inclusive refugee education, it is essential to recognize the constraints of the national curriculum as well as the ways in which students actively navigate and negotiate those constraints.

Notes

1. Forseh Tanieh, along with names of all students, teachers, and FT centers, are pseudonyms.

2. In Jordan, students who have been out of school for three years or more are not allowed to reenroll in public school.

3. Country of first asylum refers to the country in which refugees live after fleeing from their country of origin before their resettlement (Dryden-Peterson, 2015).

APPENDIX 1. FT INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

Textbook 1

Unit 1: Pillars of Islam (includes lessons on the five pillars of Islam)
Unit 2: Treatment of Others (includes lessons on treatment of others, manners, and Islam's stance on the Other)
Unit 3: My Body and Health (includes lessons on injuries, diseases, medicine and nutrition)
Unit 4: Social Institutions (Includes lessons on public and private employment sectors, defense institutions, the national anthem)
Unit 5: Knowledge in our Lives (includes lessons on using knowledge to build a profession, using knowledge to build the country)
Unit 6: Pillars of Faith (includes lessons on the pillars of faith in Islam)
Unit 7: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (includes lessons on loving the nation, the government of the country, the various cities, and agriculture in the country)
Unit 8: Environment around Us (includes lessons on the relationship between living beings, caring for animals, sources of pollution)
Unit 9: Careers (includes lessons on career opportunities in Jordan, levels of work ranging from skilled worker to specialist)
Unit 10: Work and Workers (includes lessons on loving work, occupational health and safety in Jordanian law)

Textbook 2

Unit 1: Family (includes lesson on reproductive health)
Unit 2: Health (includes lessons on puberty, techniques for disease detection, and lawful washing in Islam)
Unit 3: Citizenship (includes lessons on government structure and the rights and responsibilities of citizens)
Unit 4: Religion (includes lessons about the Prophet Mohammed)
Unit 5: Youth (includes lessons on youth and society, youth and work, work and sacrifice, youth issues and how to overcome them)
Unit 6: How to Establish a Small Business (includes lessons on contracts, small businesses in Jordan, project management and implementation)

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