



# **Familial Capital and the Education of Refugee-background Youth: A Local Case with Global Implications**

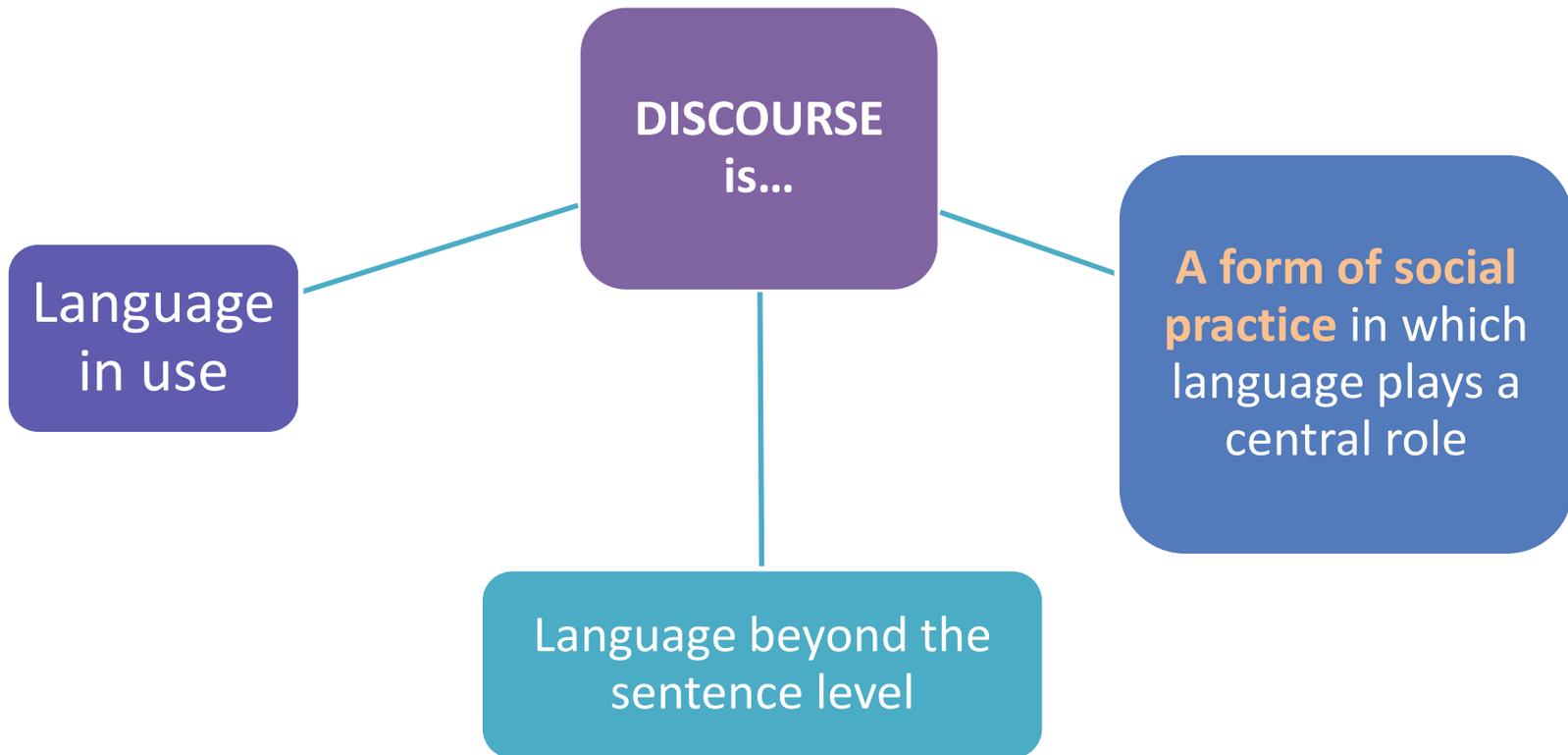
**Dr. Shawna Shapiro**

**Writing Program & Linguistics Program**

[sshapiro@middlebury.edu](mailto:sshapiro@middlebury.edu)

<http://sites.middlebury.edu/shapiro>

# What is “discourse”?



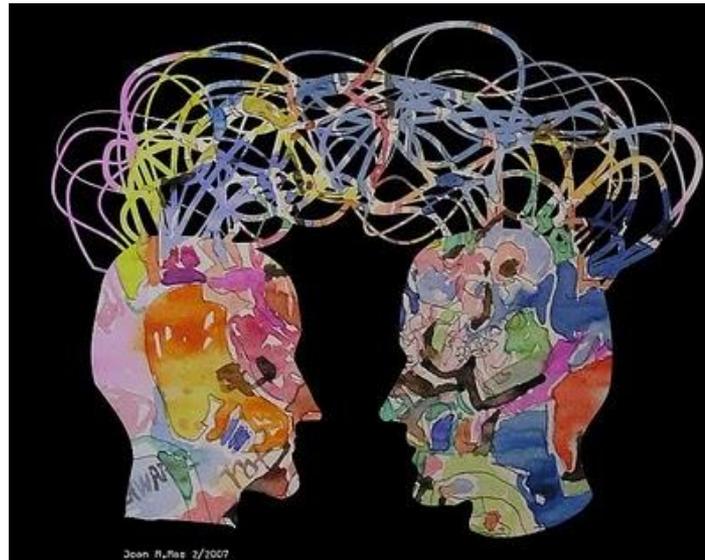
Cameron & Panović, 2014, p. 3

# Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Discourse not only reflects but *reinforces* power dynamics

Therefore....

By critiquing (and perhaps broadening) the discourse, we might change attitudes—and even actions!

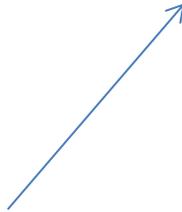




“Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by [power relations]. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it **the definitive story** of that person.”

# Dehumanizing Discourse and the current “Refugee Crisis”

- “Syrian refugee crisis”  
(grammatical ambiguity)
- \_\_\_\_\_ of refugees  
“swarm” or “hoards”  
“flood”  
“waste” (of globalization)
- Stories of...  
Trauma...  
Neediness...  
Desperation....
- “refugees” or “migrants”?



ON **THE MEDIA** THIS WEEK BLOG PODCAST SHOW A

NEWSLETTER **SIGN UP**

## REFUGEES OR MIGRANTS?

Friday, September 11, 2015

▶ 00:00 / 00:00 ◀

▶ + ↓ ↔ 📶



(Fotosr52/Shutterstock)

As the crisis in the Mediterranean intensifies, news outlets have been wrestling with terms: should we say “migrant crisis” or “refugee crisis”? Which is most accurate, or which more ethical? Bob speaks with Barry Malone, co-editor for Al Jazeera English, about **his outlet's decision** not to say migrant, and why.

SONG: “Flugufrelsarinn” - Kronos Quartet, composed by Sigur Rós

GUESTS: Barry Malone  
HOSTED BY: Bob Garfield  
TAGS: international news, language, media, migrant crisis, news, refugees, twittercard

# “Refugee” as a discursive construct

Poverty Crisis Relocation Exodus Men  
Violence Crisis Influx Boarder Seekers  
War **REFUGEES** Stranded World Newcomers Emergency  
Migration Children Flee  
Reception Quotas Cope Wave  
Control Men Problem Work Asylum  
Women Ravaged Urgency Relief  
Dignity Chaotic Migrants Centers

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# My goals as a (CDA) researcher

## Identify and “unpack” deficit discourse in educational settings

- Focus on student perspective

## Examine impact of those discourses on students

- Potential “missed opportunities” in schools and community

## Highlight alternative discourses

- e.g.,
  - “refugee-background students” (vs. “refugees”)
  - “resilience” and “aspiration” (as well as trauma)
  - potential (as well as challenge)

## Work in local community to promote change

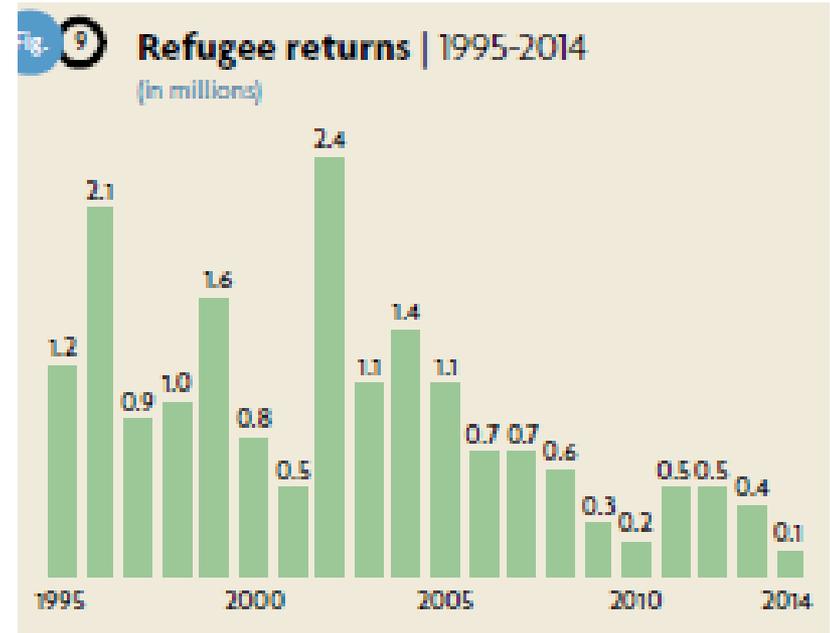
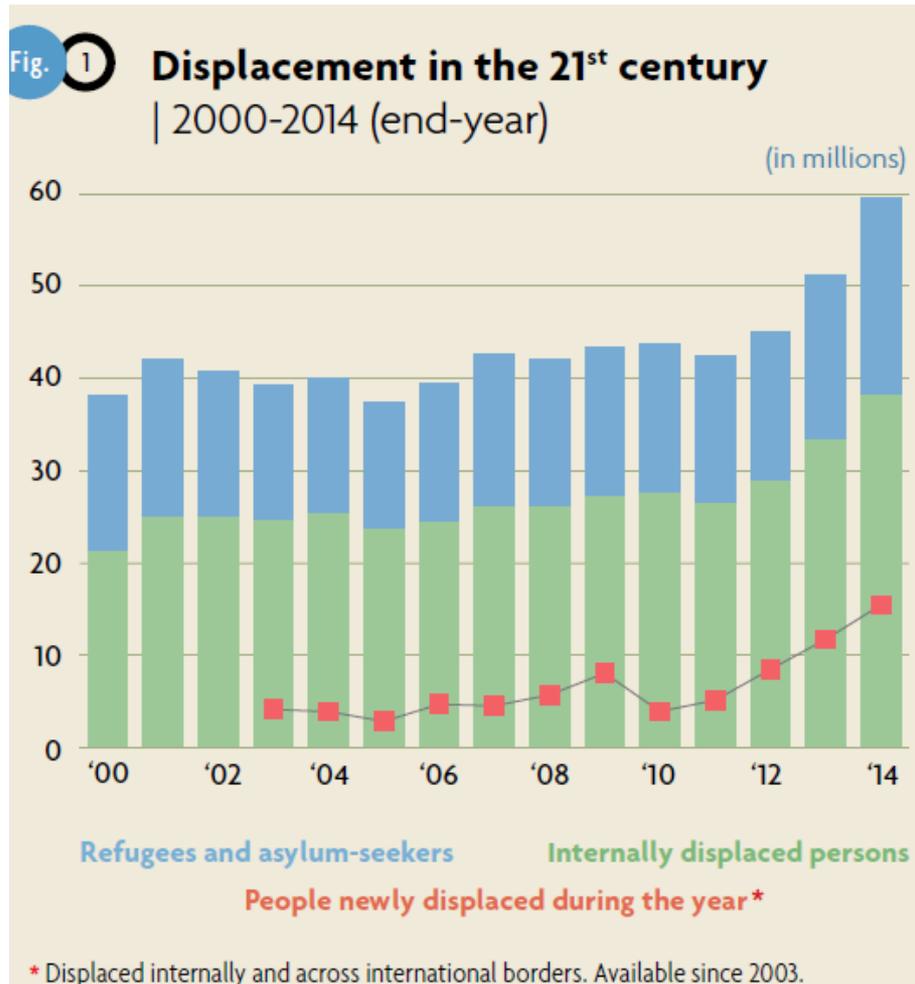
# What is a refugee?

A refugee is someone who  
"owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, **is outside the country of his [or her] nationality**, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, **is unwilling to avail himself [or herself] of the protection of that country.**"

(1951 Refugee Convention)

<http://www.unhcr.org/>

# Global displacement trends

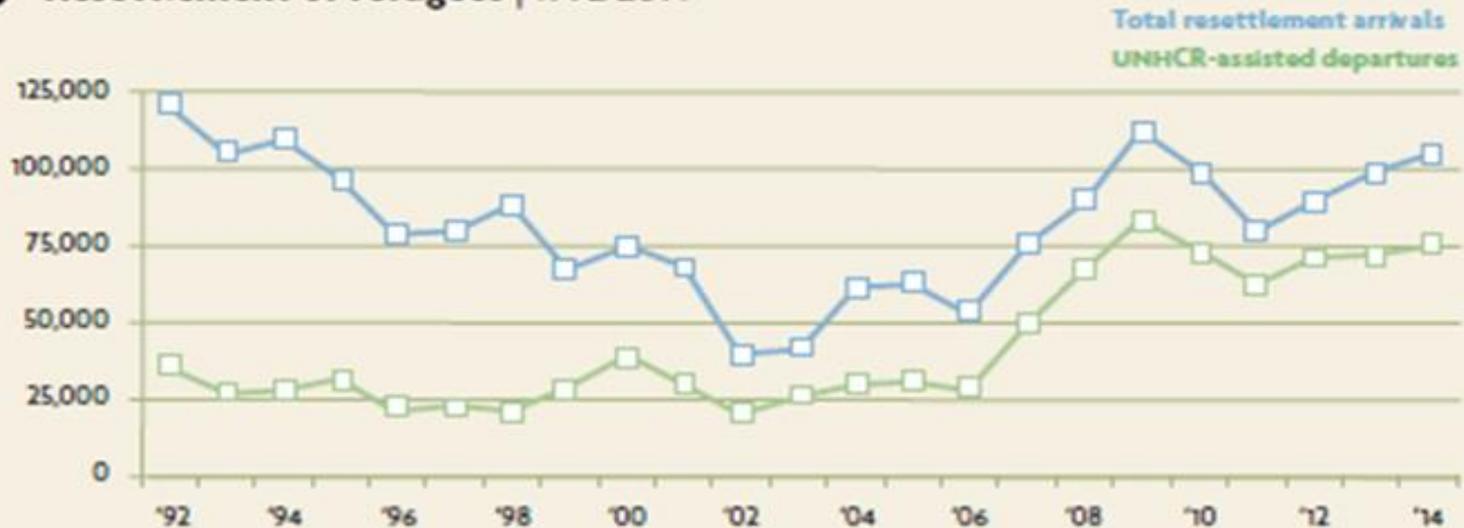


source: UNHCR

# Global resettlement trends

Fig. 10

Resettlement of refugees | 1992-2014



## Top 3 countries of resettlement:

1. USA
2. Canada
3. Australia

source: UNHCR

# Vermont trends

## US Refugee Admissions

### FY 2014

- ▶ US
  - ▶ 69,926 refugee admissions
  - ▶ 10,000 SIVs
- ▶ VT
  - ▶ 327 refugees
  - ▶ 1 SIV

### FY 2014 Groups

- ▶ Afghanistan 1
- ▶ Bhutan 173
- ▶ Burma (Myanmar) 24
- ▶ DRC 15
- ▶ Eritrea 1
- ▶ Iraq 56
- ▶ Somalia 47
- ▶ Sudan 10

source: USCRI Office

## For comparison

**Majority of refugees submitted for resettlement by UNHCR since 2005 were from thirteen countries of origin**

Over the last ten years, a total of 920700 refugees have been submitted for resettlement by UNHCR. 95 per cent were from the following thirteen refugee populations:

<b>Myanmar</b> 27% / 246,900 persons	<b>Syrian Arab Rep.</b> 3% / 27,200 persons
<b>Iraq</b> 19% / 175,600 persons	<b>Islamic Rep. of Iran</b> 3% / 23,700 persons
<b>Bhutan</b> 12% / 109,400 persons	<b>Sudan</b> 2% / 20,200 persons
<b>Somalia</b> 12% / 106,600 persons	<b>Burundi</b> 2% / 18,300 persons
<b>Congo (DRC)</b> 7% / 61,500 persons	<b>Ethiopia</b> 2% / 14,000 persons
<b>Afghanistan</b> 4% / 34,600 persons	<b>Colombia</b> 1% / 12,800 persons
<b>Eritrea</b> 3% / 27,500 persons	<b>Other</b> 5% / 42,000 persons <sup>a</sup>

source: UNHCR 2014 data

# Age of arrivals in Vermont

<u>FY of Arrival</u>	<u>Total Resettled</u>	<u>Age 0-17</u>	<u>Age 18-64</u>	<u>Age 65+</u>	<u>Age 0-3</u>	<u>Preschool Age 4-5</u>	<u>Elementary School Age 6-10</u>	<u>Middle School Age 11-13</u>	<u>High School Age 14-17</u>
FY08	329	124	195	10	26	19	31	24	24
FY09	334	133	193	8	27	12	34	28	32
FY10	304	97	197	10	26	9	28	13	21
FY11	361	107	239	15	33	9	24	14	27
FY12	350	99	229	22	26	7	24	17	25
FY13	323	114	194	15	21	15	29	15	34
FY14	327	112	194	21	24	10	28	19	31
AVG	333	112	206	14	26	12	28	19	28
TOTAL	2,328	786	1,441	101	183	81	198	130	194

# Town trends

## Resettlement by town

### FY 2014

- ▶ Number of apt rented in Burlington: 41
- ▶ Number of apt rented in Winooski: 32
- ▶ Number of apt rented in Essex Junction: 6
- ▶ Number on apt rented in South Burlington: 2

### FY 2015 through May

- ▶ Number of apt rented in Burlington: 20
- ▶ Number of apt rented in Winooski: 18
- ▶ Number of apt rented in Essex Junction: 4
- ▶ Number of apt rented in South Burlington: 0

Source: USCRI Office

**15-18%** of Burlington students are English Language Learners (ELLs)

**40-43%** of Winooski students are ELLs

# Research overview

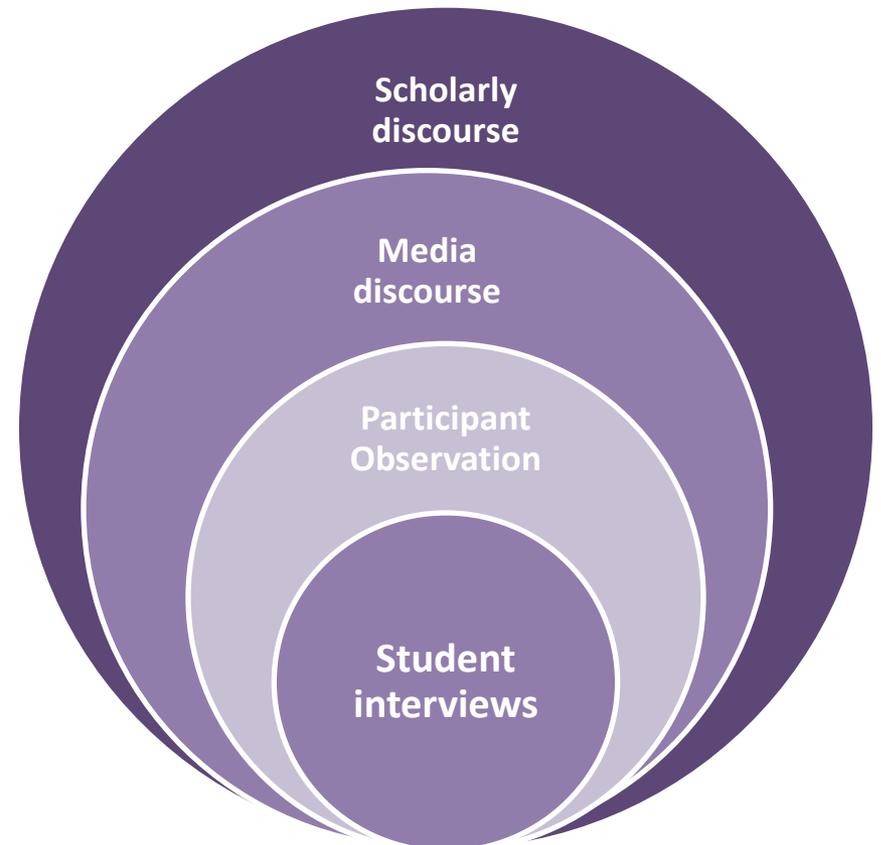
## Primary research question:

What are the pathways and barriers to higher education for ELLs in Vermont?

## Secondary question:

What assets and resources are overlooked in public and scholarly discourse about refugee-background (RB) students?

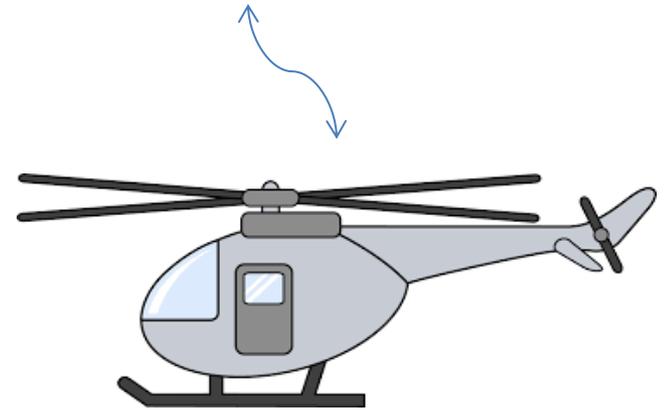
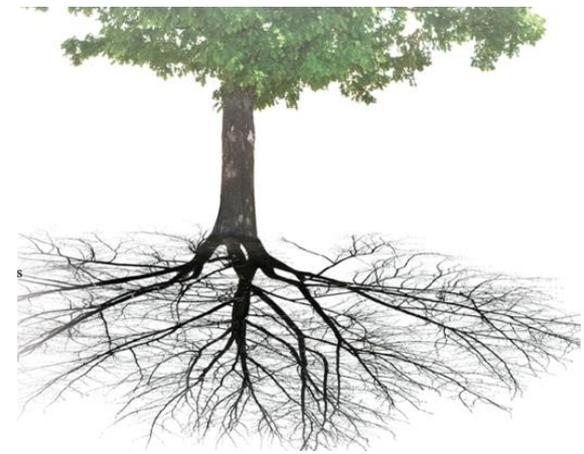
## Data Sources



# Familial Capital

For first-generation college students, parental investments may be...

- ❖ Indirect
- ❖ Invisible to schools
- ❖ Underrecognized by researchers



(e.g., Auerbach, 2006; Yosso, 2005)

# Definitions of familial capital

“The ensemble of **means, strategies, and resources** embodied in the family’s way of life that influences the future of their children [and] is implicitly and explicitly reflected through behavior, emotional processes, and core values.”

(Gofen, 2009, p. 115)

A form of “**community cultural wealth**” that “carr[ies] a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition. . [and] engages a commitment to community well being.”

(Yosso, 2005, p.79).

A concept often encapsulated in the phrase “**moral support.**”  
(Auerbach, 2006)

# Focal questions

1. What do refugee-background (RB) students say about the role of family in their educational trajectory?
2. How does this compare to findings on other 1<sup>st</sup> gen/students of color?

*in other words...*

**What's missing in the 'scholarly story' about the role of family in the education of RB youth?**

# Student participants

Gender	Name (pseudonym)	Country of birth	College/Career goal (at time of interview)
F	<i>Fardowsa</i>	Somalia	Pre-med
F	<i>Madina</i>	Kenya (family from Somalia)	Teacher Education
F	Mariela	DRC	Nursing
F	Valerie	DRC	Nursing
M	Abdul	Somalia	Physical Therapy
M	Botende	DRC	Psychology, then Law
M	Fahim	Saudi Arabia (family from Somalia)	Medicine
M	Najib	Somalia	Business / Community Devt
M	Tsering	Tibet	Hospitality/Tourism
M	Yusef	Sudan	Psychology
M	Vincent	Bosnia	Computer Science, then Politics

# Fardowsa



# Madina



# Theme 1: Laying a foundation

**Familialism** “sees the family as a central referent, source of support, and obligation for individuals. . .”  
(Auerbach, 2006, p. 278)

*educado* (not just “educated”)





## (T1) Family as motivation

“I think for people to be successful they need to have people that they’re afraid to let down. **So I think my mom is that one person for me.** I’m just afraid to disappoint her—to do something she wouldn’t be proud of. Everyone needs to have that one person . . . That’s what did it for me.”

e.g., [I wanted to live off campus, but] “My mom was **not** having that.”

-Botende (DRC, psychology/law)



## (T1) Family as personal grounding

“Your family, they want their kids to be really, really respect[ful] and make sure that they don’t do stupid stuff, because we have a religion. Make sure that you don’t forget your culture.”

- Najib (Somalia, Business)

**NOTE:** This does not mean there weren’t cultural clashes in Najib’s family!





# (T1) Valuing school practices that honor familialism

Fardowsa (Somalia, Pre-med):  
“leftover lunch” story



Abdul (Somalia, Physical Therapy):  
Appreciation for staff member who “knows my whole family” and “asks my siblings about me– Did he go to college?”

BUT...

Doesn't this violate  
school codes and norms??



# Theme 2: Modeling resilience

“[T]he core idea underlying the concept of family resilience is that a family can overcome adverse circumstances by using its behavioral, emotional, and relational assets. Furthermore, resilient families emerge from difficulties feeling strengthened and more confident.”

(Gofen, 2009. p. 106)





## (T2) Descriptions of hard work and sacrifice

“My mother’s hands were cracked and cut. Her hands were blistered and callused. . . . It was very hard work. . . .The women used their hands to rub this plaster into the house, and their hands would get cut on sharp sticks and sometimes on pieces of glass that were in the dirt. . . She did this painful job . . . to help the family.”

-Najib (Somalia, Business)

“I have to show my kids—you have to work hard.”

-Mariela (DRC, Nursing [and mother of two])





## (T2) Stories of overcoming

Mariela's story: reuniting with her husband after 7 years— shows “**strength**” and “**courage**”

“You have to **encourage** students [by saying], ‘You can do it! . . . . You have to push the kids. Because we didn't have this opportunity .”

Botende (DRC, Psychology/Law)- mother finishing her Master's degree, while working 2 jobs and caring for 4 children:  
“She's proud of me, but I'm more proud of her.”

# Theme 3: Cultivating aspiration



*Aspirational capital* is “evidenced in those who allow themselves and their children to dream of possibilities beyond their present circumstances, often without the objective means to attain those goals”

(Yosso, 2005, pp. 77-78).

Many immigrant and refugee families “sustain high aspirations even when [their] circumstances make them seem impossible to achieve.”

(Oropeza, Varghese, and Kanno, 2010, p. 219)



## (T3) Making education a priority

Madina (Somalia, Teacher Education) had “personal drive” to go to college, but her mom’s emphasis on “education, education, education” helped to “push[ ]” her as well.

Najib (Somalia, Business)- mother said “We don’t need anything from you. You just educate yourself as much as you want to.”

Tsering (Tibet, Hospitality/Tourism)- “single mother” worked as “ESL aide” in part so she could support him in school.



## (T3) Using experience as a cautionary tale (“consejos”)

[My father always told me] “Don’t use your back. Sit in the chair and give orders.” -Vincent (Bosnia, Computer Science/Law)

“[My mother said] Learn some basics, so you don’t have to be a janitor.” -

-Najib (Somalia, Business)

“My parents were having a tough time not being able to ask for simple things, like going to the bathroom. They were trying to provide for us. I decided that’s not something I want to go through.”

-Fardowsa (Somalia, Pre-med)

# Theme 4: “Clearing the path”

Families make personal and collective decisions that improve educational opportunities for their children.

This sometimes requires “a shift away from some traditional norms” (Auerbach, 2006, p. 283).



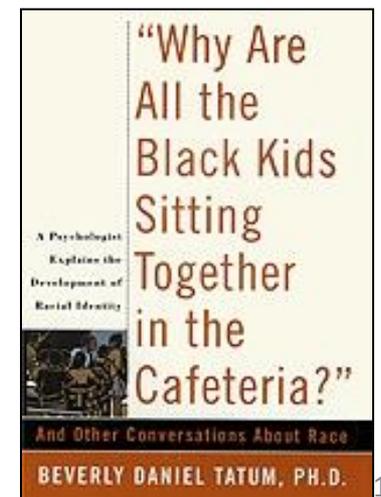


# (T4) Moving to better communities and/or school districts

Yusef (Sudan, Psychology)- My family moved away from “city life” in search of “better environment”

Other students’ families moved into a school district with

- Better services for ELLs (Fahim [Somalia, Pre-med])
- More resources to support struggling students (Vincent [Bosnia, CS/Law])
- More social integration, because “In the cafeteria, it was like group, group, group (Tsering [Tibet, Tourism])





# (T4) Negotiating family responsibilities

## **Family support for focus on academics and extracurriculars**

- Noteworthy for oldest females from large families  
e.g., Madina (Somalia, Teacher Ed) and Fardowsa [Somalia, Pre-med]
- Community organizations may help with communication  
(e.g. Valerie [DRC, Nursing])

## **Reconsidering other cultural norms**

- Delaying marriage  
(e.g., Fardowsa “My mom was always on my side.”)
- Living away from home (e.g., Najib)
- When and how much to work

# Extending kinship networks

## “Family friend”



“She helped my parents a lot with making them understand the school system here. . . . How to save money, stuff like that. . . . She became like a family member to us.”

-Valerie [DRC, Nursing]

“She’s like my white mom

-Najib [Somalia, Business]

# Key findings

- ❖ Students perceive family as asset
  - Even though they experience challenges and disagreements
- ❖ Students appreciate schools' recognition of family-as-asset
  - And feel alienated when that recognition isn't made explicit (e.g., stereotypes, low expectations)
- ❖ Family networks can be extended



# One lingering question...

**Can schools become an extension of family, and/or learn from the family as a model of caring?**

(Valenzuela, 1999)

“I’m gonna just say, **this is about making family**. . . Maybe every month or every other month, if you bring all kids together and you’re telling them . . what is good for them. . . . You show them how kids go to jail, how they get treated, and you show them someone success[ful] and big smile on his face. You show the PowerPoint on it, [saying] ‘This is what you need to be. We want you to have a family, a future, and **we’ll be working hard on you.**’ . . . **We just got to bring more love to the community.**

- Najib (Somalia, Business/Community Devt)

# Implications

## How can schools show that they recognize family as an asset?

### Outreach

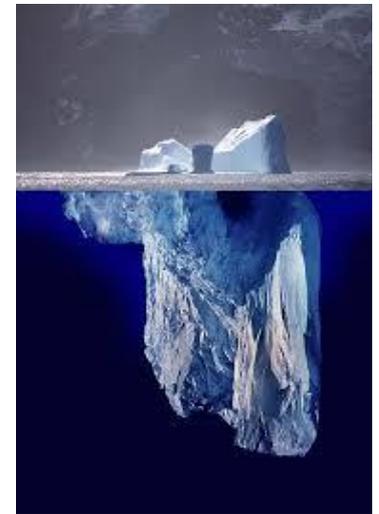
- Proactive conversation--sharing stories and aspirations
- Communicating explicit (and high!) expectations

### Curriculum

- Beyond “Heroes and Holidays”- e.g., Resilience, Global citizenship, ‘Deep culture’
- Family-centered assignments (e.g., interviews/oral histories, storytelling, photo/item sharing)

### Other programming

- Mentoring programs
- “School for parents”



# My next steps

## In my research

- Examine current data for more on “critical caring”
- Expand research to include more students (and families!)
- Document change (and barriers to change) in school
- Connect with other scholars working in refugee resettlement communities (e.g., current book project)



## In schools/community

- Talk with multilingual liaisons (who “bridge” school and family)
- Continue to consult with districts and community organizations (re: program design, assessment, professional development, etc.)
- Cultivate reciprocal relationships with schools and community organizations
  - E.g. Winter term Intro to TESOL course- “curriculum kit” project

# (Re)Humanizing Discourse

“Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.”



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# Thank you!!

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<http://sites.middlebury.edu/shapiro>

Or email me directly:

[sshapiro@middlebury.edu](mailto:sshapiro@middlebury.edu)